The History of Interpretation of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology from 1927 to 2015

by

Andrew Dale Rowell

Duke Divinity School
Duke University

Date:_____

Approved:

_____ _____

Stanley Hauerwas, Co-Supervisor Curtis Freeman, Co-Supervisor

_____

William Willimon

_____

Joseph Mangina

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology
in the Divinity School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the interpretation of Karl Barth's ecclesiology from 1927 through 2015. The history of interpretation of Karl Barth's ecclesiology has never been attempted in such a comprehensive way as what is attempted in this dissertation. That is its basic contribution.

The primary argument of the dissertation is that Barth's ecclesiology has been mischaracterized in five different ways. The investigation reveals that Karl Barth's ecclesiology has thrilled and puzzled interpreters. They end up characterizing Barth in a largely appreciative way or dismissive way but in whatever way, it is reductive. When all the secondary literature is investigated it is revealed that Sacramental interpreters applaud the fierceness with which he defends the importance of the church in the midst of a confused world but are disturbed by what they perceive to be his lack of attention to the institutional church. Free Church interpreters gloat in his denunciation of infant baptism and his preference for congregational polity but wonder why he is not even more firmly congregationalist. Architectonic interpreters bask in the genius of his Trinitarian and Christological descriptions of the church but then criticize him when he does not hew to their elegant explanations. Actualistic interpreters, disenchanted with the institutional church, relish his attacks on religion in his early commentaries on Romans but ignore that he calls his magnum opus, the *Church Dogmatics*. Missionary

interpreters trumpet his emphasis on witness but play down his obsessive denunciation of syncretism. When all of this is seen, it becomes clear that Barth's ecclesiology defies easy characterization. The specific evidence for different characterizations are identified and analyzed in light of what Barth really said. Sometimes the characterizations are due to a misreading of what Barth was saying. Other times Barth's interpreters have identified an isolated statement that Barth developed elsewhere more adequately. The great advantage of this close analysis is to convey the complexity and nuance of ecclesiology. Someone who generally shares Barth's approach to ecclesiology may learn what objections may be posed by other church traditions. For people critical of Barth's ecclesiology, they can more adequately weigh whether indeed their critiques are well-founded.

The secondary argument of the dissertation, impossible to prove, is that Karl Barth's ecclesiology is reasonably solid ecclesiology. The dissertation seeks to take seriously the major accusations hurled at his ecclesiology and they are found wanting. The dissertation concludes with what Barth wanted the church to be—over against the five schools of interpretation—practicing, local, catholic, confessing, and witnessing.

Dedication

To all those who are glad that “through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known” (Eph 3:10).

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Regarding the length, I blame 36-year-old Karl Barth who wrote to his good friend 34-year-old pastor Eduard Thurneysen on February 16,1923.

> I only ask myself whether you might not and could not do what I have so often done: begin with a certain audacity to write (quite without reflection whether or not what you write is new or good, etc.) without hesitating until you are finished so that you have on paper, a corpus of, let us say, fifteen or twenty chapters, out

> of which then the remainder could crystallize and which could then be always worked over.[1]

I was in my late-thirties when I wrote this work and took Barth's advice.

[1] Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans., James D. Smart (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 132.

Preface: Formally articulating the contribution and arguments of the dissertation

The most basic contribution of this dissertation: This is an unprecedented survey of the literature on Karl Barth's ecclesiology.

Until now there has never been a thorough analysis of the history of interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology. The brief summaries of the literature by James Buckley[1] and Kimlyn Bender[2] do not attempt to capture the full range or history of the interpretations of Barth's ecclesiology.[3] The most similar work to this one is the 2001

[1] James J. Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," in *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 205.

[2] Kimlyn J. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 20, no. 1 (2005): 100; Kimlyn J. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," in *Confessing Christ for Church and World: Studies in Modern Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 43.

[3] Kimlyn Bender's book Kimlyn J. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, Barth studies (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). based on his Princeton Theological Seminary dissertation gives a very good summary of Barth's ecclesiology but Bender only engages with the secondary literature in the conclusion. Wessel Bentley's book also does not engage the secondary literature in detail. Wessel Bentley, *The Notion of Mission in Karl Barth's Ecclesiology* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010). James Buckley's dissertation compares Barth's ecclesiology with that of Karl Rahner and again does not substantively engage the secondary literature though he briefly discusses Colm O'Grady's work. James J. Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1977). Bill Austin reviews Barth's ecclesiology in light of Christological criteria. Bill R. Austin, "A Critique of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of the Incarnation Emphasis in His Church Dogmatics" (Ph.D., Baylor University, 1977). Elizabeth Barnes compares two aspects of Barth's theological method: theologizing from the social situation with the poor in Safenwil and his Anselmian methology which works from revelation. Elizabeth B. Barnes, "Theological Method and Ecclesiology: A Study of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church" (Ph.D., Duke University, 1984); Sheldon Warren Sorge, "Karl Barth's Reception in North America: Ecclesiology as a Case Study" (Dissertation, Duke University, 1987). Sheldon Sorge looks at how Donald Bloesch, and Carl F. H. Henry and James Cone have used Barth's theology, especially his ecclesiology. Phillip R. Thorne, *Evangelicalism and Karl Barth: His Reception and Influence in North American Evangelical Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Allison Park, PA: Wipf & Stock / Pickwick Publications, 1995). Whereas, Philip Thorne and Albert Mohler do not focus on ecclesiology but review more generally in their dissertations how Karl Barth's theology has been received in the United States by evangelicals. Mohler treats seventeen different evangelical theologians but does not treat Yoder. Richard Albert Mohler, Jr., "Evangelical Theology and Karl Barth: Representative Models of

Drew University dissertation by Edward E. Blain, which seems to be almost totally uncited by other works, in which Blain gives a general overview of how a few Catholics and Protestants have read Barth's ecclesiology.[4]

This dissertation attempts to analyze carefully a significant portion of what has been written on Barth's ecclesiology from 1927 to 2015. Though this review of the criticism and appreciation of Barth's ecclesiology is thorough, it is of course impossible to be comprehensive, given the amount of secondary literature in every possible language since Barth began writing his theology in the 1920's. Still, this ambitious survey of interpretations surely identifies most of the ways Barth's ecclesiology has been characterized. In short, those who read Barth's ecclesiology and are repulsed or delighted can now consult this work to see if others have shared their response and to see how else Barth's ecclesiology has been understood. This dissertation provides a

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Response" (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989). Thorne treats about twenty-six theologians and briefly summarizes Yoder's treatment in *Karl Barth and the Problem of War.* Thorne, *Evangelicalism and Karl Barth: His Reception and Influence in North American Evangelical Theology*, 172-174.

[4] Edward Eberlin Blain, "Karl Barth and His Critics: A Study in Ecclesiology" (Ph.D., Drew University, 2001). This work was only discovered on Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global database on November 21, 2016 after this dissertation was totally written and defended. It does not seem that Blain has written other articles in theology; nor is it apparent where he is currently working. Blain's writing is clear and the work is well-researched but the theological analysis is thin in comparison to this work. If one is particularly interested in studying one of the people he treats in his dissertation, it would be valuable to read. Blain treats Jérôme Hamer, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Colm O'Grady, Cornelius Van Til, Robert Jenson, Donald Bloesch, Nicholas M. Healy, Joseph Mangina, Elizabeth Barnes, Bruce McCormack, Eberhard Busch, Craig Carter, and John Howard Yoder. All of those people except Van Til and Bloesch (who do do not write much about Barth's ecclesiology) are drawn upon in this dissertation though a number of them are just in the footnotes.

preliminary map to the discussion. Even if the arguments below are unconvincing, this work is still a valuable contribution to ecclesiology and to the study of Karl Barth.

The primary argument of the dissertation starkly put. Karl Barth's ecclesiology has been mischaracterized.

This dissertation attempts to answer one question: Do the ways Karl Barth's ecclesiology have been characterized stand up to scrutiny? Karl Barth's ecclesiology has been given a multitude of labels. Sometimes the label is meant to highlight a flaw in his ecclesiology. Sometimes the the label is used appreciatively. Five different streams of interpretation can be identified. (1) Sacramental interpreters argue Barth's ecclesiology is insufficiently continuous with the history of the church. (2) Free Church interpreters argue that Barth was unconsciously searching for Baptist or Mennonite ecclesiology. (3) Architectonic interpreters argue that Barth's ecclesiology can be explained by social Trinitarian or Christological dogmatic formulae. (4) Actualistic interpreters argue that Barth is rightly suspicious of the institutional church. (5) Missionary interpreters argue that Barth's ecclesiology can be explained by his prioritizing the church's missionary orientation. All five interpretations contribute to an understanding of Barth's ecclesiology but all are flawed without the others.

The method of this dissertation is to work through the various interpretations of Karl Barth's ecclesiology in more or less chronological order. It is shown why the

interpreter arrives at their interpretation and why their characterization is an inaccurate way to characterize Barth's ecclesiology.

This clearing of the ground is the main argument of this dissertation. It is deconstructive in the sense of attempting to burn down the facile labels of Barth's ecclesiology.

The secondary argument of the dissertation that is less strongly argued: Karl Barth's ecclesiology is an excellent resource.

The second argument of the dissertation, argued with less forcefulness, is that Karl Barth's ecclesiology is (1) against the Sacramental critics, catholic enough; (2) against the Free Church interpreters, not particularly Free Church; (3) against the Architectonic interpreters, less elegant theologically than biblical; (4) against the Actualistic interpreters, quite church affirming; and (5) against the Missionary interpreters, also internally oriented.

There is here not just correcting of readings of Barth but also implicitly arguing that Barth's ecclesiology is not as flawed nor as one-dimensional as these interpreters suggest. It is a defense of Karl Barth's ecclesiology. The defense is not that Barth's ecclesiology is flawless, indeed some quibbles are mentioned, but that it cannot easily be dismissed. The implicit argument is that Barth's ecclesiology is a superb starting place for dogmatic ecumenical discussion of the church.

Surely some readers of this dissertation will grant the validity of the first deconstructive argument named above that many current interpretations have been flawed. However, they may still find this secondary argument that Barth's ecclesiology is quite solid unconvincing. They will still find Barth's ecclesiology insufficiently catholic, or not adamantly congregationalist enough, or not as theologically elegant as it should be, or not as apocalyptically tempered as it should be; or not as missionary as it should be. This secondary argument of the dissertation—that Barth's ecclesiology is generally excellent—is much harder to argue. Still, implicitly the argument that Barth's ecclesiology is a rich resource worthy of attention is an implicit argument throughout the dissertation.

As will be said in the conclusion, Barth thinks the church should not so much be sacramental, Free Church, elegant, actualistic, or missionary; but instead: practicing, local, catholic, confessing, and witnessing.

Introduction: The five interpretations of Barth's ecclesiology

Below are sketched the five interpretations of Barth's ecclesiology that will emerge in the survey of the interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology from 1927 to 2015. Each characterizes Barth's work in a different manner. The rest of the dissertation will investigate these characterizations in detail. Already in the summary below it becomes apparent that no single characterization of Barth's ecclesiology is likely to accurately summarize his ecclesiology. As will be seen later in the dissertation, many of the flaws and extreme features noted here in Barth's ecclesiology can be explained more accurately than is done by these interpreters.

Sacramental interpreters

For the Sacramental interpreters, Barth's ecclesiology sections (§62, §67, and §72 in volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics*), written in the 1950's, are inadequate in that Barth does not delineate specific clerical and worship practices. These "Sacramental Interpreters" (called in a first draft of this dissertation Catholic Interpreters) are not just Roman Catholics but others as well with high church or liturgical or episcopal polity or sacramental inclinations including Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists. Though they all are attracted to Barth's ecclesiology in some respect, they suspect that Barth's

treatment of the church is a continuation of his overreaction thirty years earlier against "religion" in his second edition of his commentary on *The Epistle to the Romans* (usually referred to by its German name, the *Römerbrief)* published in 1922.[1] Colm O'Grady who wrote an early 2-volume analysis of Barth's ecclesiology published in 1968-1969 (Barth died in 1968) writes about the significance of the *Römerbrief* theology:

> An understanding of his theology of 'crisis' is absolutely necessary for the understanding of Barth . . . it presents also the departure for the basic problem which will occupy him for the rest of his life: the relation or connexion between God and man, between revelation and history, between God's activity and man's activity. It presents this problem in its most blatant form, in that it asserts a total diastasis between them. One can see in it the root of his troubles.[2]

Barth, O'Grady writes, is so anxious to separate humanity from God that he dismisses God's own chosen vessel, the church.

Along the same lines, Reinhard Hütter worries that Barth has such a reverence for the dynamic inbreaking of the Holy Spirit that he is overly reluctant to affirm that the Holy Spirit is working in and through the regular activities of local churches. "Barth's dialectical catholicity . . . should not be followed—precisely in order to stay in touch with the concrete catholicity of the church." [3] The contention is that Barth's relentless

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[1] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans., Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief: (Zweite Fassung), 1922 (GA II.47)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010).
[2] Colm O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1968), 34.
[3] Reinhard Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," in *Bound to Be Free: Evangelical Catholic Engagements in Ecclesiology, Ethics, and Ecumenism*, ed. Reinhard Hütter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 93-94.

dialecticism—insisting that God is wild and free from limitation—effectively diminishes any meaningful appeal to the church's wisdom.

The contention is that despite Barth's claim to be "evangelical-catholic"[4] (affirming both the gospel and the church working together) and his extensive reflection on what the church "catholic" means,[5] in his theology, the "evangelical" side of the tandem, "the gospel," functionally drowns out the church. When church teaching seems to conflict with Barth's understanding of the gospel, the church's position is dismissed as inadequate.

These Sacramental readers worry that Barth's ideological stress on God's authority and fear of investing the human institution of the church with authority ends up backfiring and leading to full blown individual subjectivism under the guise of "obedience to God." In other words, Sacramental interpreters worry that rather than seeking the wisdom of the church's tradition, individuals are in effect encouraged by Barth to decide with their Bible what they should do "under the guidance of the Spirit." Invariably, when it is inconvenient, these Protestant Christians will set aside the wisdom of the church and rationalize it with the claim the Spirit's speaking through the Bible means they do not need to heed the admonition of the church and are free to set it aside.

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[4] Karl Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, trans., K. R. Crim (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 18.
[5] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 parts vols. (Edinburgh, New York: T&T Clark, 1956-1969, 1975, 2009), IV/1, 701-712.

In this way, Barth enables the subjective liberal Protestant theology that he is hoping to oppose. These concerned Sacramental interpreters see a lack of support for church authority as a path to the liberal Protestant wilderness of quasi-relativism sprinkled with Christian jargon. They include the early Erik Peterson, Wendell Dietrich, Colm O'Grady, the earlier work by Nicholas M. Healy, Reinhard Hütter, Joseph Mangina, and Stanley Hauerwas. A number of these people are associated with "postliberalism" also called the "Yale School."[6] They are united in their appreciation of Barth's denouncing of liberal theology as vividly demonstrated in the *Römerbrief* but worry that his skepticism of the church will lead to subjectivism.

Free Church interpreters

There is also the view that Barth's ecclesiology is strikingly similar to Free Church ecclesiology in Barth's aversion to the language of sacrament, rejection of infant baptism, his inclination toward congregational church government, his protest of

[6] A number have connections to the "Yale School" or "postliberalism" of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck. Dietrich, Buckley, Healy, Mangina, Hauerwas, and Willimon are Yale Ph.D. grads. But a number also seem to come to their concerns independently so for the purposes of this dissertation, there is no reason to label them "postliberals" as a group or movement as if there is a historical or organizational connection among them. More accurate would be to say that they are all opposed to liberal theology. Cf. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); George A. Lindbeck and James J. Buckley, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); George A. Lindbeck and others, *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic: Conversations With George Lindbeck, David Burrell, and Stanley Hauerwas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012); Ronald T. Michener, *Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); C. C. Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture* (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2005).

Hitler's governmental overreach into the church, his opposition to nuclear proliferation, and his embrace of the Scripture principle which relativizes church tradition.[7]

They are led by John Howard Yoder whose writings on Barth have only been available together since 2003.[8] Craig Carter too has briefly sketched this argument. Carter writes, "I agree with [James William] McClendon that there is such a '[baptist] style of Christian thought,' and I will argue in this paper that Barth embraces it insofar as ecclesiology is concerned."[9] Edward E. Blain also writes, "In conclusion, I have tried to argue that Barth's ecclesiology is best classified as 'Free Church.'"[10] Tracy Stout has come to a similar position: "Attending to Barth's doctrine of baptism provides us with the best approach to reading Barth's ecclesiology . . . Overall, Barth's understanding baptism and his view of the church lean toward the believers' church tradition . . . He is able thus to maintain a high Christology and a free church ecclesiology."[11] To these readers, the brief treatment of church offices and the sacraments is not a sign of a lack of catholicity but rather a congregational instead of an episcopal one.

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[7] "Scripture principle, the unconditional rejection of a Church tradition rivalling Holy Scripture as a source of revelation." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 546.
[8] John Howard Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2003).
[9] Craig A. Carter, "Karl Barth's Revision of Protestant Ecclesiology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 22, no. 1 (1995): 35.
[10] Blain, "Karl Barth and His Critics: A Study in Ecclesiology", 198.
[11] Tracey Mark Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series; 139 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 182, 183.

Architectonic interpreters

There is another set of Protestant readers who defend Barth's ecclesiology by pointing to neat Christological and pneumatological formulations found in Barth that these interpreters believe should allay the concerns of the Sacramental critics. They include T. F. Torrance, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, George Hunsinger, Paul Louis Metzger, Kimlyn Bender, Todd Cioffi, and John Flett. Hunsinger, Metzger, Bender, and Cioffi argue that Chalcedonian Christology is the key to ecclesiology: as the nature of Christ's divinity is related to Christ's humanity, so is the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, related to the body, the church. George Hunsinger writes that though Chalecedonian phrasing was first formulated to describe Jesus' divine and human natures, "There is virtually no discussion of divine and human agency in the *Church Dogmatics* which does not conform to this scheme."[12] They insist that the brilliance of

[12] George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 177. Bender writes, "In Barth's thought, however, it [the Chalcedonian pattern] also serves as the regulative pattern for all divine and human relationships." Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 3. then cites Hunsinger. Similarly, Metzger writes, "Indeed, the union of Christ and humanity in Christ is different from God's union with the world, humanity, and human culture . . . Having said this, it is maintained that for Barth, Christological and Trinitarian categories come to serve as the basis for understanding all other patterns of relation between God and the world and Christ and culture by means of analogical extensions."Paul Louis Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 57. T. F. Torrance wrote long before in 1954, "we may seek cautiously to apply the conceptions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* to the Church." Thomas Forsyth Torrance, "The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7, (1954): 254. and he advised Barth do the same: "I suggested that he [Barth] might work out more fully the implications especially of the *enhypostasia* for the doctrine of the Church." Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 133. Johnson too draws on concepts from areas of dogmatics outside of ecclesiology—arguing the *concusus Dei* provides the key. Keith L. Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," in *Karl Barth and*

Barth's dogmatic syntheses has not been understood and from these misunderstandings arise the facile claims that Barth's ecclesiology is not sufficiently catholic. They defend Barth's ecclesiology because of its brilliant structural balance.

Actualistic interpreters

There is another group of Protestant critics who agree to some extent with the Sacramental interpreter reading of Barth insofar as they recognize Barth's pervading dialecticalism but for them, this is a virtue not a flaw in Barth's work. Their favorite quote might be Barth's quip: "In the Church we may be just like a bird in the cage, which is always hitting the bars."[13] Eberhard Jüngel demonstrates this view when he says Barth's work is rightly "critical" of the church.

> The whole of the *Church Dogmatics* is to be read as textbook of church leadership. It is therefore an eminently critical text, for it measures the reality of the church against the criterion of evangelical truth, namely, the person of Jesus Christ . . . The *Church Dogmatics* assails the church (and not only the church) with the gospel. That is what makes it of service to the church.[14]

American Evangelicalism, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

[13] Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 147. Cf. Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 249; Eberhard Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 (1990): 87.

[14] Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 127. It is this "critically realistic dialectical" approach that Bruce McCormack finds lacking in "Sacramental" readings of Barth. Note the word "critical" in Jüngel's quote which Bruce McCormack will echo in describing Barth's theology as "critical realistic dialectical theology." Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)."The adjective 'critically realistic' is meant to get at the uniqueness of Barth's version of dialectical theology—that is, that which distinguishes it from the more nearly idealistic versions advanced during the course of the 1920s by Bultmann and Tillich . . . 'Realism,' then, means that the being of God is something complete, whole and entire in itself, apart from and prior to all human knowledge of it." Bruce L.

This group tends to be quite critical of the Sacramental interpreters. Eberhard Jüngel, John Webster, Bruce McCormack, Paul Nimmo, and Nathan Kerr hail Barth for trumpeting the *diastasis* (the gap or the separation) between God and human beings (and their religion). Nimmo writes,

> Precisely in its continual dependence on the grace of God, the Church cannot arrogate to itself the role of moral teacher or former of moral character without also insisting that it is such only in a relative and indirect manner. The consequent lack of concretion that Hauerwas finds so problematic is, for Barth, ultimately unavoidable.[15]

John Webster insists the "gospel and church exist in a strict and irreversible order, one in which the gospel precedes and the church follows"—they are asymetical.[16] He is concerned about the "inflation of ecclesiology" that has taken place by those associated with "postliberalism" and by those who "describe the church through the language of

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McCormack, "Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 159.

McCormack distinguishes his reading of Barth from that of Sacramental critics, "In spite of this rather straightforward affirmation of what I would call the realism of Barth's theology, such elements do not receive the kind of attention one might have expected" in the work of Hans Frei. Ibid., 122-123. McCormack associates with Frei a number of the other Sacramental critics. "The new orthodoxy is Orthodox and Catholic in its inspiration . . . The movement is diverse ranging from evangelical Catholicism of Robert Jenson, Carl Braaten, George Lindbeck, and Reinhard Hütter to the 'radical orthodoxy' of John Milbank and the communitarian ethics and theology of Stanley Hauerwas." McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 230.

[15] Paul T. Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 84.

[16] John B. Webster, "The Church and the Perfection of God," in *Community of the Word* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 76.

'practice'" such as Hütter and "in such a way . . . distort the asymmetry of gospel and church."[17]

For these actualistic interpreters, the "catholic" predicate (describing the church in the Nicene Creed) is nominally affirmed but must be understood in terms of the heading of the third article: "We believe in the Holy Spirit." A relativizing of "catholicity" is no real loss but rather freedom from the bonds of stultifying tradition. For them, Barth rightly reprimands the church for overreach and rightly insists on the need for the Holy Spirit (and mission) to beat back against the encroaching vines of "religion." D. Stephen Long refers to these interpreters when he says, "One cannot help but see the influence of this nonecclesial form of Barthian theology in more recent English-speaking interpreters who interpret Barth independent of the church."[18] Some, but perhaps not all, are on the left of the political spectrum. When they discuss mission, it has to do with doing justice.

Missionary interpreters

There is finally one more set of readers of Barth's ecclesiology who are struck most by Barth's emphasis on the church's missionary responsibility to witness. These

[17] Ibid., 77.
[18] D. Stephen Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 114-115. Long cites especially Trutz Rendtorff as beginning this line of interpretation and cites McCormack's use of it. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 28.

readers include Eberhard Busch, Darrell Guder,[19] Wessel Bentley,[20] Keith L. Johnson, and John Flett. They note in Barth's ecclesiology its missiological seriousness. There is a zeal for mission as justice among the Actualistic interpreters as well but it is generally critical toward the church. The Missionary interpreters are more interested in the church utilizing the tools of missiology for effective church ministry.

The difficulty of pigeonholing the interpreters of Barth's ecclesiology

The chapters that follow investigate the various characterizations of Barth's ecclesiology. Often it is argued that the interpreter has misread Barth at one point or another—that their characterization is not precisely perfect. That is to say, there is some nitpicking. Often they nitpicked at Barth first. Here in this dissertation it is argued that their nitpicking of Barth is not quite correct. But the purpose of this arguing is beyond minutiae.

These interpreters would say along with Flannery O'Conner, "I like old Barth. He throws the furniture around."[21] They read Barth and argue about his work because Barth provokes his readers to plumb the depths of their assumptions about the church.

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[19] *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
[20] Bentley, *The Notion of Mission in Karl Barth's Ecclesiology*.
[21] Flannery O'Connor, Brainard Cheney, and Frances Neel Cheney, *The Correspondence of Flannery O'connor and the Brainard Cheneys* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), Letter to Brainard Cheney (1963), 181.

The writer of this dissertation has had the opportunity to meet or correspond with many of the living theologians that are here mentioned. These are not compliant plodders who endorse their denomination's polity and traditions blindly. They read widely and are not afraid of a fight. They have thrown a little bit of ecclesiological furniture in their day. They are cognizant that the church is always needing further reformation. They have taken Barth's challenge that "The Church . . . has always needed, and it always will need, self-examination and self-correction. It cannot exist except as *ekklesia semper reformanda* [the church always reforming].[22] They are good heirs of the One who upset some furniture in the temple long ago.

Stanley Hauerwas thinks that "the *Dogmatics* should be read as a training manual for Christian speech."[23] One could attempt to understand Barth's ecclesiology just by reading it but wrestling with the reactions to it from these great theologians from different Christian traditions helps us see things we might not have noticed. The process of listening to and analyzing characterizations of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics,* as documented in this dissertation, is an exercise in ecclesiological training—helping at least one person to more accurately speak about what the church is and does.

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[22] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 690.
[23] Stanley Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 1 (2003): 93.

Chapter 1: How to read Karl Barth's ecclesiology

It is important to note a few preliminary issues that are often explicitly omitted in the scholarly literature but then crop up and derail productive conversation.

Barth has explicitly ecclesiological writings.

Someone asks, "So what do you think of Karl Barth's ecclesiology?" "What ecclesiology?" is the typical quip. Though this is tongue-in-cheek joking, many theologians believe there is a kernel of truth here. James Buckley writes in his overview article on Barth's ecclesiology in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* that even those who are familiar with the ecclesiology sections of the *Church Dogmatics* often dismiss Barth's ecclesiology because it is missing elements they consider standard. "Most critics of Barth's theology of Christian community, baptism, and Lord's Supper have proceeded by ignoring it—not always out of ignorance of Barth's theology, but often because they think Barth himself ignores the important issues in this regard."[1] Barth's three ecclesiology sections give scant attention to church polity (governance structure) and church offices (i.e. bishops, elders, and deacons) which some consider the most basic aspects of "ecclesiology." In a more recent overview of the secondary literature, Kimlyn

[1] Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 205.

Bender, author of *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*,[2] says that the predominant view of Barth's ecclesiology is that "Barth fails to give adequate attention to the church's socially embodied existence and its particular and constitutive practices and in turn provides an abstract and dehistoricized ecclesiology."[3] As we will see, Barth does have an "ecclesiology" but there are many scholars who think it is either incomplete or overly abstract.

Barth treats the doctrine of the church explicitly in three sections in volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* (§62 in IV/1 "The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian Community", §67 in IV/2 "The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community", §72 in IV/3.2 "The Holy Spirit and the Sending of the Christian Community") totaling 490 pages in the English translation.[4] §62 is the most abstract so perhaps that keeps people from finishing the rest.

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[2] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*.

[3] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 100; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 43.

[4] Barth's three ecclesiological sections: §62, §67, and §72: in the original German Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, 4 vols. in 13 parts vols. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1932, 1936-1968, 1970, 1980), IV/1, 718-825, IV/2, 695-824, IV/3.2, 780-1034.; or in English translation: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 643-739, IV/2, 614-726, IV/3.2, 681-901. A number of scholars have summarized this material in their summaries of the *Church Dogmatics:* Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 162-269; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 85-88; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 191-194, 211-214, 232-237; Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, Great Theologians Series (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 152-161; O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 250-337.

Barth titles these sections with the German phrase *der christlichen Gemeinde* ("the Christian community" or "the Christian congregation") rather than using the German word for "church": *Kirche.* But towards the beginning of his treatment of the "Christian community," he uses *Kirche* in apposition with *Gemeinde* and ties these words to the Greek word for church: ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). "The Christian community [*die christliche Gemeinde*] . . . the Church [*die Kirche*] . . . in all this we are simply paraphrasing the basic meaning of the word ἐκκλησία."[5] He spends almost all of §62 working through the four adjectives associated with the church in the Nicene Creed: "one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church" (Greek: μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν; Latin: *unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ekklesiam*). In §67, Barth exposits the phrase the "communion of saints" found in the Apostle's Creed[6] and the biblical phrase "the body of Christ."[7] Surely then these three sections are Barth's attempt to articulate his "ecclesiology."

There is another version of the jocular scenario mentioned above. A student may say, "I want to study Barth's ecclesiology." This professor does not say Barth does not have an ecclesiology. This professor responds, "The *Church Dogmatics* are all about the church!" The idea here is that everything Barth wrote was about helping the church

[5] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650-651; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 727.
[6] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 641.
[7] Ibid., IV/1, 659-668.

sharpen, discipline and articulate its theological claims better. But not everything he wrote was "about the church." Barth wrote specifically about the topics normally classified as "ecclesiology"—that is, how is the church to think of itself, its practices, and its relationship with the world in his three sections of volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics*: §62 in IV/1; §67 in IV/2; and §72 in IV/3.2.

There is a relatively circumscribed secondary literature on Barth's ecclesiology

There is a relatively circumscribed secondary literature on Barth's ecclesiology in the Anglo-American theological world. One indication that one is part of the Barth's ecclesiology discussion is interaction with Colm O'Grady's two volumes on Barth's ecclesiology from 1968-1969. A recent indication that they are participating in the Barth's ecclesiology conversation is their citation of Nicholas Healy's 1994 article "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology"[8] or an article that refers to it.[9] Those who are more interested

[8] Nicholas M. Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," *Modern Theology* 10, no. 3 (1994).

[9] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 100-101, 103, 109-111; John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 228-229, 266; Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, With afterword published 2013 ed. (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 145, 192; Nicholas M. Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57, no. 3 (2004): 295; Reinhard Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non* (Journal Article)," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 2 (2000): 149, 151; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90-91, 93; Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 204; Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 185; Joseph L. Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and

in ethics or Christology or pneumatology do not mention or deal with O'Grady's books or Healy's article and the discussion in other literature surrounding it.

In other words, despite the fact that Barth is critically analyzing the church's speech in all of the *Church Dogmatics*, there is still a recognizable body of literature that implicitly recognizes Barth's ecclesiology as an appropriate topic of investigation.[10] This dissertation attempts to contribute to, analyze, and further that discussion.

There is consensus about the value of Barth's critical perspective but there are questions about his constructive

Hauerwas," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52, no. 3 (1999): 273, 278; Ian A. McFarland, "The Body of Christ: Rethinking a Classic Ecclesiological Model," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 3 (2005): 226, 230, 231; Adam McIntosh, "The Contribution of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Appropriation to a Trinitarian Ecclesiology," in *Trinitarian Theology After Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Pickwick Publications, 2011), 231; Arne Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder," in *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 102-103; Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 97; Webster, "The Visible Attests the Invisible," 99; William H. Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 256-257; John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 59, 108, 111, 118.

[10] In addition to the articles that engage Healy's 1994 article, the following works also interact with similar material. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*; Kimlyn J. Bender, "The Church in Karl Barth and Evangelicalism: Conversations Across the Aisle," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Todd V. Cioffi, "Stanley Hauerwas and Karl Barth: Matters of Christology, Church, and State," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). Kyle A. Roberts, "The Church as 'Witness': Karl Barth and the Missional Church," in *Karl Barth and the Future of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn and John L. Drury (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014). Note however that Robert E. Willis has a chapter in his treatment of Barth's ethics on the church: "Life under grace: the ethical modes of the Christian community" Robert E. Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 273-427. There is of course no clear line between ethics and ecclesiology or many other topics.

ecclesiological program—though Barth intends to be both critical and constructive.

There is unanimity in the secondary literature about the value of Barth's critical perspective but there is much less agreement about whether there is anything left after Barth torches what is wrong with the church. Eberhard Busch admits that, "Barth spoke often of the church with a good deal less than respect."[11]

It is useful to sketch a brief picture of why Barth's theology had a critical edge. In 1914, Barth was shocked to see the theological professors he had admired supporting a war of German aggression because of their German nationalist impulses.[12] Barth's dismay culminated in the first edition of his commentary on the epistle to the Romans that was begun in 1916 and was published in 1918. Karl Adam famously said it was like "a bombshell which exploded on the playground of the theologians."[13] Barth roared against the crass association between human proclivities and God's intentions. He denounced in the harshest possible terms the conflation of German values with the will of the utterly transcendent God.

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[11] On the first page of his article on Barth's ecclesiology, Eberhard Busch assembles a number of quips from Barth about the church that lead to his reputation as a critic of the church. Busch goes on to say though that "Barth's critique never overstepped the limits." Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 87-88. Cf. Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 249-250.

[12] Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 81.

[13] See more on this quote by Karl Adam at: Richard E. Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2001; reprint, Eerdmans), 42.

In 1932, Barth was a Swiss citizen teaching in Bonn, Germany. In his project, the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth wanted to systematically decimate arguments that glibly associated German nationalism with Christian tradition. In the preface to the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* written in 1932 when Adolf Hitler had not yet a position in the German government but was merely the runner-up in the April 1932 presidential election to Paul von Hindenburg, Barth denounced the insipid theology that had allowed the racist ideology of the *Führer* (the term for party leader that the Nazi Party was using for Hitler) to grow.

> Or shall I rather bemoan the constantly increasing confusion, tedium and irrelevance of modern Protestantism . . . and that many of its preachers and adherents have finally learned to discover deep religious significance in the intoxication of Nordic blood and their political *Führer*?[14]

When in January 1933, Adolf Hitler rose to power by being appointed Chancellor, and the foggy and foul popular sentiment that "Hitler was sent by heaven"[15] grew, Barth responded further. In March of 1933, Barth addressed the political situation in his address "The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom"[16] but then did so even more explicitly in *Theological Existence To-day* which appeared in June 1933.[17] On July 1st,

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[14] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Preface, I/1, xiv.
[15] Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 76.
[16] Karl Barth, "The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom," in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986).
[17] Karl Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933).

he sent Hitler a copy. A second edition had to be printed July 8, 1933. It was banned a year later by the Nazis on July 28, 1934.[18] Later, in May 1934, Barth drafted the Barmen Declaration which denounced "the errors of the 'German Christians' of the present Reich Church government which are devastating the Church and also therefore breaking up the unity of the German Evangelical Church."[19] He continued to write essays and pamphlets from 1933 through the end of the war—decrying German aggression. Barth's interpreters unanimously appreciate Barth's roaring against Hitler and the German Christians colluding with the Nazis.

But Barth's interpreters are divided about whether Barth was successful in carrying out his attempt to add a constructive account of the church's life to his accurate denunciation of churches capitulating to the cultural winds of the day. Readers of Barth tend to acknowledge that that the slashing critical perspective has its place: when Hitler is seen as God's savior sent to the German people, the critic need not have a fully formed alternative before denouncing such a development and declaring that there must be a more faithful alternative. Theologians agree that denouncement of unfaithful expressions of church may clear space for the faithful church to take root and be recognized. But there is disagreement about whether Barth's positive or constructive

[18] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 227.
[19] Karl Barth, "Theological Declaration of Barmen," in *The Church's Confession Under Hitler*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 237.

account, his alternative, is substantial enough. Nicholas M. Healy captures the sentiment when he wrote at the beginning of his book on ecclesiology that he appreciated Barth in every area except ecclesiology. "I make infrequent mention of Barth, but my proposals are meant to be largely compatible with his work outside the area of ecclesiology."[20]

It is true that the accuracy with which he identified and condemned nascent Hitlerism is surely part of why Barth has received such a wide hearing; but Barth is far more than a great quipper, activist, roar-er, "futurist," or lucky guesser—mixing it up over contemporary issues or grabbing headlines with witty predictions of future trends. The image of Barth as the *Römerbrief* bomb-thrower and Barmen Declaration protest-writer must be counterbalanced by another image of Barth plodding with a wheelbarrow full of his *Church Dogmatics* volumes.

Barth saw his work not as responding to current events but rather dutifully scrutinizing what the church believes. Barth writes, "I endeavor to carry on theology, and only theology, now as previously, and as if nothing had happened."[21] Barth argues that if Christians are situated on firm theological ground, they will be in a position to evaluate and speak to the circumstances of the day.

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[20] Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

[21] Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom*, 9. Yoder notes this quote in John Howard Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," in *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, ed. Mark Nation (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2003).

> I believe that it is expected of the Church and its theology . . . that it should keep precisely to the rhythm of its own relevant concerns, and thus consider well what are the *real* needs of the day by which its own programme should be directed.[22]

That is to say—one of the chief dangers for Christians according to Barth was to get so immersed in contemporary currents of thinking that the starkness of God's revelation is swept aside. Therefore, Barth's life work—the *Church Dogmatics*—is not organized by contemporary concerns. Instead, he proceeds "scientifically" by which he means logically and thoroughly—probing the church's stance on issues—measuring, evaluating, analyzing and then trying to articulate a coherence.[23] His aim with the *Church Dogmatics* is to pile up a robust, exacting alternative description of the world with every thread tied taut to Jesus Christ.

That is to say Barth does not want merely to be a chair or bomb-thrower but also someone producing something substantive to counteract the facile sentiments that "surely God is at work in . . . the ascension of Hitler" or anything else for that matter—exposing such pronouncements as short-sighted, puny, paltry, inconsistent, and indisputably adrift from the Christian tradition. Barth's 8,000 pages of the *Church*

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[22] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Preface, I/1, xvi.

[23] Here is the first programmatic thesis of the *Church Dogmatics.* "As a theological discipline, dogmatics is the *scientific* self-examination of the Christian Church with respect to the content of its distinctive talk about God." Emphasis mine. Ibid., I/1, 3. Thirty years later he has not changed his mind. "The special theological science, research, or doctrine concentrates on the testing of the whole communal enterprise in the light of the question of truth."Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 41.

Dogmatics are intended to model the massive reverent church-wide-theological-introspection that is needed.

Barth himself had significant church experience which entered into his reflection.

It is not as if Barth's career was devoid of practical church experience. As described later in the dissertation, many, especially the Sacramental critics, have criticized Barth for being overly abstract or vague in his ecclesiology but it would be difficult to attribute this flaw, if indeed it is one, to Barth's lack of experience with the trenches of church politics. If Barth's ecclesiology is detached from reality, it is not chiefly due to ivory tower naiveté.

It may be useful to briefly describe some of the challenges that Barth faced and was aware of explicitly to get a glimpse of the type of ecclesial issues in the background of the *Church Dogmatics.* Barth hoped good theological thinking might bring sanity and clarity to church life but the length of the *Church Dogmatics* indicates Barth's appreciation for the complexity of the task. If church leadership were simple and easy, Barth would have had little to write.

Barth was a young pastor with congregations in Geneva and Safenwil, Switzerland from 1909-1921, where he preached, led catechetical classes for youth, and was attentive to social injustice issues in the factories in the area. But Barth was often in

danger of being fired by the congregation. One time after Barth was rumored to have spoken up about a political issue "four of the six members of his church committee resigned."[24] Another time Barth was denied a pay raise after he had been working at almost the same salary for seven years.[25] When the resolution to increase his salary was finally passed, it was "with 99 dissenting votes."[26] Nor could Barth find another congregation where support would be more forthcoming. He was considered for two other churches but they did not offer him a position.[27]

Nor was Barth unaccustomed to the fractious institutional dynamics at theological institutions—regardless of their place on the ecclesiological spectrum. In Germany, he had been a professor at Göttingen, a Reformed school; Münster, a predominantly Roman Catholic school;[28] and Bonn, a predominantly Lutheran school. At each, his relationships with other faculty were strained. Additional faculty were hired to "cancel out" his influence and his successors usually had theological views that were the polar opposite of his.

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[24] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 106.
[25] Ibid., 107.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 122-123.
[28] "The Roman Catholicism of this corner of Germany was and is a formidable and deeply rooted reality. Beyond that, the Roman Catholic faculty at the university was much larger and older than the Protestant one, and it attracted and still attracts many more students." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 81.

Nor was Barth naïve about the difficult choices and proceedings of Christian organizations. In Hitler's Germany, Barth had drafted the Barmen Declaration in 1934 but then watched the impotency, disunity, and then destruction of the Confessing church. After the war, he watched the rebuilding of the church in Germany—disappointed that it was to a large extent a rebuilding project of what he regarded as the discredited pre-war ecclesial structure (as opposed to a more fundamental rethinking). Moreover, Barth kept in contact with many Christians in Eastern Europe under Soviet domination—most notably Joseph L. Hromádka[29]—where churches were faced with many difficult choices under an atheistic ideological totalitarian regime.[30] From 1951 to 1953, he served on a committee with 24 other theologians to do preparatory work for the second World Council of Churches meeting in 1954; but he almost resigned his responsibilities because of his frustration trying to work with Reinhold Niebuhr.[31] Furthermore, Barth was aware of the real threats to the integrity of the Christian church in the United States and South Africa because of entrenched racism.[32] Again, Barth was under no illusion that a few finely chosen theological formulations would resolve issues associated with the church dealing with issues of apostasy, persecution, ecumenical

[29] Karl Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 82-84, 94-95, 103-106, 165, 343-345.
[30] Karl Barth, *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land* (New York: Association Press, 1959).
[31] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 395-396.
[32] Wolfram Weisse, *Maintaining Apartheid or Promoting Change?: the Role of Dutch Reformed Church in a Phase of Increasing Conflict in South Africa* (New York: Waxmann, 2004), 103-104.

dialogue, and entrenched racism. His work was intended to address these issues but not with facile answers.

Barth was also quite familiar with the massive changes at foot in the Roman Catholic Church during his lifetime, which also served as backdrop for his writing on ecclesiology. Considering previous eras, for a Protestant theologian, Barth was remarkably interested in the Roman Catholic Church and interacted frequently with Roman Catholic theology and theologians. Despite being a cobelligerent with Roman Catholic theologians against liberal theology, his concerns with Roman Catholic theology lasted until the end of his life. Barth was invited as a special observer to Vatican II (1962-1965) but declined because of poor health but later made a visit in which he met with the pope personally. He was deeply moved by the experience but remained critical of the Roman Catholic Church to the end—posing strongly worded questions in a letter to the pope shortly before he died.[33] His critical questions of the Vatican II documents, which he directed to the Roman Catholic hierarchy during his visit, as delineated in *Ad limina apostolorum* are polite but pointed.[34]

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[33] Letter to Amleto Giovanni Cardinal Cicognani in Rome from Karl Barth in Basel, 28 November 1968. Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*, 333-335. See also Reinhard Hütter's reflection on Barth's visit to Rome. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 79-80.

[34] Here is an example of Barth being polite and respectful: "Complete clarity of formulation was thus not attained, nor could it be expected." Here is a sharp criticism framed as a "clarification" question. "How is this decree [Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church] related to the Constitution on the Church, to that on the Church in the Modern World, and to the Declaration on Religious Freedom? On the basis of these other documents the reader is not prepared for the magnificent thesis of this decree according to

When he treats churches as institutions in the "Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community," he lists the challenges that churches encounter.[35] He includes in his list of issues churches face: the order of worship, division of responsibilities, discipline, relations with other churches and with the state. But he resists giving specific guidance regarding the details of church matters—arguing that many of the issues related to church governance should be worked out locally rather than by systematic theologians. "We cannot undertake to develop and answer in detail these questions of order. This is a matter for canon law rather than dogmatics. But dogmatics cannot refrain from considering the standpoints normative for canon law."[36] In other words, these specific situations require policy making and decision making at the local level; Barth is willing to address considerations or "standpoints" that are transferrable and "catholic"—apply everywhere—but space must be made for local considerations for the application of these considerations. Given the breadth of ecclesiastical and institutional difficulties he was familiar with, it is understandable why Barth would be hesitant to glibly prescribe practical advice which would apply to the local pastor in Switzerland, the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, the World Council of Churches, the Vatican in

which 'the Church is missionary by her very nature.'" Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 54, 33.

[35] "For the sake of clarity we will mention some of the most important points at which the problem of order continually arises and demands an answer."Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 677-678.

[36] Ibid., IV/2, 678.

Rome, the church behind the iron curtain in Eastern Europe, and reformers in South Africa. Some rue Barth's avoiding more specific description of the visible church but given the number of local church situations Barth was familiar with, it seems wise that he would pause before doing so. What Barth believed he could do was provide theological reflection that might be useful in a number of different local circumstances. He did not give more practical guidance because he lacked experience in church leadership but rather because he had so much of it and knew that much decision-making must be local drawing on wisdom from other churches.

Barth's ecclesiology is useful material for ecumenical dialogue because of how widely it has been reflected on.

Because Barth is such an influential theologian and has been read and critiqued from across the ecumenical spectrum, his ecclesiology provides a useful way to access the ecumenical conversation surrounding ecclesiology. It is indisputable that Barth has attracted a rich breadth of ecumenical interpreters: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed, Baptist, and Mennonite. Furthermore, in a manner impossible for theologians of previous centuries, in his long life, Barth had the opportunity to interact with people from a wide spectrum of ecclesiologies. Barth is among the first generation of theologians to be familiar with the range of ecclesiological alternatives after Christendom. Barth mentions Quakers, Baptists, Mennonites, Moravians, Pietists, Reformed, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox.

Barth is also unique in that he resisted the lining up of his ecclesiology with any of these options. Instead, he had the ambitious aim of trying to articulate theology (and ecclesiology) that would be applicable to churches across the ecumenical spectrum.

Moving forward to the present, if we are interested in the churches increasingly finding common ground—responding to Jesus' prayer that his disciples "may be brought to complete unity" (John 17:23)—then it is easy to see why Barth's theology and ecclesiology may be useful material for dialogue. Though there are today ecumenical dialogues taking place, there is still profound misunderstanding and disagreement about ecclesiology across the ecumenical spectrum. For example, as Robert Jenson puts it mildly, the "mediation or instrumentality of the church" is a "sensitive concept" in Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogue.[37] Though of course studying the Scriptures together is a better way to find unity and understanding across the denominations than studying Barth's theology, perhaps studying Barth's theology (including his ecclesiology) may (by the Holy Spirit) be a way of jostling old logjams and stimulating greater study of the Scriptures.

[37] Robert W. Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 91.

Barth's comments against Roman Catholicism and positions against infant baptism and for congregationalism loom in the background of much ecclesiological discussion

While the conversation around Barth's ecclesiology may have some ecumenical character, there are some aspects of Barth's ecclesiology that are unpalatable to some theological traditions. He begins volume I/1 of the *Church Dogmatics* by expressing his polemical intent to distinguish his position from that of Neo-Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. He characterizes liberal Protestantism as leading to "the plain destruction of Protestant theology and the Protestant Church;" while he sees Roman Catholic usage of the concept of "the *analogia entis* [the analogy of being] as the invention of Antichrist"[38] because it posits God can be known by looking at human beings, instead of human beings looking to God to understand themselves. To lump Roman Catholics in with liberal Protestants is an insult to the devout Roman Catholics. But Barth says it. Both "Modernism" (Protestant liberal theology) and Roman Catholicism are flawed because of their relegation of Scripture beneath other considerations.[39] Barth wishes to avoid both "the error of the Roman Catholic Church . . . and the error of modernistic Protestantism."[40] In 1948, Barth said that Protestants should be evangelizing Roman

[38] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Preface, I/1, xiii.
[39] "Roman Catholicism—not unlike Modernism in this respect—sees something quite different from proclamation take place at that centre of the Church's life." Ibid., I/1, 67.
[40] Karl Barth, *God in Action*, trans., Elmer George Homrighausen and Karl Julius Ernst (Manhasset, NY: Round Table Press, 1936; reprint, Wipf & Stock), 21. Reinhard Hütter emphasizes that Barth admits if he was forced to choose, the Roman Catholic way is far better than the Neo-Protestant way but Barth emphasizes

Catholics, not trying to work ecumenically with them.[41] In the 1950's, he is reported to have said, "Roman Catholicism is a terrible thing, because it means the imprisonment of God Himself!"[42] Later, in the *Church Dogmatics*, he derides "apostolic succession" as "equivocal" and he ridicules its logic.[43]

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the Roman Catholic way is also unsatisfactory. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 82-85.

[41] Cf. Barth's comments in 1948 at the World Council of Church meeting in Amsterdam when the Roman Catholic Church declined to send a representative. "I hope that we are not disappointed because a cardinal sent by the Vatican has not come to sit at the presidential table with Mr. Boegner. Let us not be sentimental. We cannot associate with the Roman Catholic Church. Things being what they are, the Catholic Church could not take towards Amsterdam an attitude different from the one it took. I thus suggest that you renounce the useless tears that some are tempted to shed because of the absence of Rome. Where one says 'not only Jesus, but Jesus and Mary,' where an earthly authority is acknowledged as infallible, we can only say a resolute No. Our only attitude towards Catholicism is mission or evangelization, not union. Those who know Calvin should agree with me on this and not hold that it is a Barthian fancy." Émilien Lamirande, "The Impact of Karl Barth on the Catholic Church in the Last Half Century," in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Waterloo, ON: The Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies in Religion in Canada, 1974), 119. Quoting Karl Barth, "Les Eglises réformées au sein du Conseil oecuménique," *Foi et Vie* 46, (1948): 495. German slightly altered version: Karl Barth, Jean Daniélou, and Reinhold Niebuhr, *Amsterdamer Fragen und Antworten* (München: C. Kaiser, 1949), 16. Cf. on Amsterdam: Hans Küng on Barth the supposedly "anti-Catholic rabble-rouser." Hans Küng, *Great Christian Thinkers* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 188, Cf. 185-212. and Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement," *Ecumenical Review* 32, no. 2 (1980): 143-144; Émilien Lamirande, "Roman Catholic Reactions to Karl Barth's Ecclesiology," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 14, no. 1 (1968): 30-31.

[42] Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 43.

[43] "Thus the apostolicity of the Church cannot and must not be sought on historical and juridical grounds. The particular temptation in this respect is the equivocal notion of the 'apostolic succession.' . . . . It is obvious that neither the Holy Spirit nor faith is necessary for this purpose, but only an uncritical or critical archæological knowledge of the lists." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 715. This repeats his earlier position "This is why we cannot endorse the Roman Catholic doctrine of succession." Ibid., I/1, 104. Roman Catholic biblical scholar Raymond Brown, (not responding to Barth specifically), states that the crude form of apostolic succession criticized here by Barth is not the Roman Catholic doctrine. Brown points out that "there is nothing to support the thesis that, by a chain of laying on of hands, every local presbyter-bishop could trace a pedigree of ordination back to 'the apostles' . . . For ecumenical purposes, a study should be made on how the impression has been created (erroneously in my judgment) that such a 'tactile' succession is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church." Raymond E. Brown, "Episkopê and Episkopos: The New Testament Evidence," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 2 (1980): 332. Brown argues that the itinerant Paul only (and not the Twelve) appointed local elders (Acts 14:23) but these local churches were still under his supervision, rather than authority being delegated to a successor bishop. Ibid., 329. In the Pastoral Epistles, overseers ("bishops") and deacons are to be appointed by Paul's delegate Timothy or Titus but the churches are still

To some extent, Roman Catholic theologians worry about all Protestant ecclesiologies because they reject the orienting mechanism of the papacy. For a Roman Catholic, no Protestant has a substantive enough understanding of the Church; all Protestants are unfaithfully wriggling and wiggling out from under the authority of the Church. But Barth is not even a Lutheran or Anglican. He rejects not only the Church's leader, the Pope; but rejects all languge of "office."[44] Indeed, Barth not only criticizes Roman Catholic positions, he also veers from an even larger slice of Christian traditions in calling the language of "sacrament" a mistake, rejecting infant baptism,[45] and preferring congregational church government.[46]

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overseen by the apostolic authority. Again, no successor bishop is appointed by the apostle but rather a number of overseers (bishops) and deacons who will be under apostolic authority. "There is no indication we are to think of Titus and Timothy as presbyter-bishops; theirs is a semiapostolic role." Ibid., 331.

[44] "There can be privileges and claims and dignities only in and with the duties and obligations and burdens of service . . . Even linguistically, it must avoid the fatal word 'office' and replace it by 'service,' which can be applied to all Christians . . . Even where this is recognized in theory, true canon law will have to be all the more vigilant against practical clericalism." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 690-691, 694.

[45] "My radically new view (especially in relation to the concept of 'sacrament,' which even Calvin did not scrutinise sharply and hence did not remove) was enunciated in the lectures of 1959-60 . . . In face of the exegetical conclusions in my son's book, I have had to abandon the 'sacramental' understanding of baptism, which I still maintained fundamentally in 1943, in so far as the reference is to the work of the candidates and the community which baptises them." Ibid., Preface, IV/4, ix, x. Joseph Mangina writes, "The book caused a major theological uproar. Barth here rejected not only the practice of infant baptism, but the traditional understanding of baptisms as a sacrament." Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 161.

[46] He calls denominational connections useful but not strictly necessary because he declares that the congregation can be "church" without these additional structures. About a denomination, "such an organ or institution is not an integral constituent of the essence of the Church." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 673. Barth denies that a local church is not a local church in itself. It may be wise and prudent to put together associations to coordinate them but no other unity is needed besides Jesus Christ. Ibid., IV/1, 671-674. "Each in and for itself and with its local characteristics can only be the whole, as others are in their own locality." Ibid., IV/1, 672. Cf. Karl Barth, *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 104.

However, Barth's strong statements or positions on these issues are rarely mentioned in the secondary literature on Barth's ecclesiology. Instead, a quibble with an abstract theological issue such as pneumatology, Christology, or human agency is argued. But what seems to lie behind the argument is the Roman Catholic / Anglican / Lutheran / Methodist puzzlement about Barth's rejection of the episcopacy and infant baptism; or the Presbyterian puzzlement about Barth's preference for congregationalism; or the Mennonite puzzlement about why Barth never became a pacifist; or the Baptist puzzlement about why Barth had concerns about Biblicism and evangelism;[47] or the Radical apocalyptic actualistic socialist puzzlement about why Barth ends his mature ecclesiology with a description of twelve (rather traditional) forms of ministry of the church.[48] Finally, all wonder how Barth's ecclesiology allowed him to bring his beloved theological assistant Charlotte von Kirschbaum into his home, work, and travel, causing scandal and pain to his wife and family.[49]

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[47] "And now evangelism. What a word! I wonder if anyone among you could tell me where this word evangelism comes from! In my youth I never heard of it, and now everybody is speaking about evangelism. Is it an invention of my friend [D.T.] Niles? In a good sense, evangelism means the renovation, the reformation of the Church, and reformation means coming back to the gospel." Barth describes evangelism as the need for both Christians and non-Christians to hear the gospel. He then goes on to describe the missionary task, which is more intentionally outward-reaching. Karl Barth, "Fragebeantwortung bei der Konferenz der World Student Christian Federation [Englisch]," in *Gespräche 1959-1962 (GA IV.25)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1995), 434-435.

[48] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 864-901.

[49] "In the early stages of this study, I felt certain that the two were lovers and that anyone who doubted it was painfully naïve. Further inquiry and review led to diminished certainty. I think one must be careful not to think one can know." What Selinger thinks is "piercingly correct" is that "any married man who devoted as much time and attention to another woman as Karl Barth did to Charlotte von Kirschbaum was committing adultery." Suzanne Selinger, *Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth: A Study in Biography and the*

There are some theologians who analyze Barth's ecclesiology with little interest in these practical matters. Others who write about his ecclesiology do not even know about their differences with Barth on these practical matters. But for others, perhaps unconsciously, there is lurking beneath the abstract theoretical subtle analysis, a silent passionate debate regarding these practical matters. It is not customary for theologians in journal articles to sketch their denominational affliliation but once it it can be ascertained and Barth's most biting statements considered, the vehemence of an interpreter's criticism is sometimes easier to understand.

The sheer unwieldiness of Barth's theology necessitates some methodological best practices

Interpreters of Barth's ecclesiology struggle with the sheer unwieldiness of Barth's ecclesiology. Will Willimon wryly notes that Barth wrote so much that those who decide to read him can scarcely read anyone else.[50] Of course the length and number of his writings also challenge straightforward analysis. Sometimes an interpreter will expound on a quote by Barth assuming that it represents his position on an issue. Other interpreters will retort that the quote is taken out of context or that Barth later changed

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History of Theology (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 13. Cf. Karl Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum, *Karl Barth - Charlotte von Kirschbaum Band 1 1925-1935 (GA V.45)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008); Renate Koebler, *In the Shadow of Karl Barth: Charlotte von Kirschbaum* (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1989).

[50] Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching*, 2.

his mind about that point. They will cite something from a different volume of the *Church Dogmatics* which seems to contradict that position. As Stanley Hauerwas writes, "Gerhard Sauter reports that he jokingly tells his students 'You cannot quote Barth,' because a countercitation can always be found from Barth himself."[51]

The careful interpreter of Barth does well to navigate and adjudicate between such cases of dueling proof-texts by noting the possibility of tensions, contradictions, overstatement, and development within the breadth of Barth's work while also being attentive to Barth's claim that there is an overriding consistency, continuity, and coherence to his theology.

> In the twenty-three years since I started this work [the *Church Dogmatics*] I have found myself so held and directed that, as far as I can see, there have so far been no important breaks or contradictions in the presentation; no retractations have been necessary (except in detail); and above all—for all the constant critical freedom which I have had to exercise in this respect—I have always found myself content with the broad lines of Christian tradition. That is how I myself see it, and it is my own view that my contemporaries (and even perhaps successors) ought to speak at least more circumspectly when at this point or that they think they have discovered a 'new Barth,' or, what is worse, a heresy which has seriously to be contested as such. Naturally, I do not regard myself as infallible. But there is perhaps more inward and outward continuity in the matter than some hasty observers and rash interjectors can at first sight credit.[52]

Barth acknowledged small refinements, qualifications, clarifications, and adjustments within his theology—for example, he names his book on Anselm as a significant

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[51] Stanley Hauerwas, "On Honor: by Way of Comparison of Karl Barth and Trollope," in *Dispatches From the Front: Theological Engagements With the Secular* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 58.
[52] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, preface.

developmental move—but he issued few if any major retractions after the second edition of the commentary on Romans. Proponents of a major break, numerous contradictions, or a late declension in Barth's theology must be prepared for significant resistance by other interpreters of Barth because of Barth's own vigorous denial that there was such a change and the lack of consensus among Barth's interpreters that there is in Barth such a capricious inconsistency.

For example, responding to John Yocum's suggestion that Barth's late distancing from the concept of the sacrament is a drastic departure from his earlier work,[53] John Flett writes, "The truth is that Barth's late change is more nonmenclatural than substantive . . . By no stretch of the imagination does this change 'undermine' the whole of his earlier theology."[54] Rather, these controversial ecclesiological conclusions are the logical unfolding and continuation of his theology, says Flett. Reinhard Hütter, a critic, also argues Barth's ecclesiology is consistent but problematically so.[55]

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[53] "Nonetheless, even if his account fails to convince, even if it is deeply flawed, the very idiosyncrasy of Barth's account forces one to re-engage the meaning of sacraments, and the significance of ecclesial mediation of God's grace in general." Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*, xi.

[54] John G. Flett, "A Review of John Yocum's *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*," *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 20, no. 1 (2005): 149.

[55] "Here we approach the very root of Barth's ecclesiology. In order to find it fully fleshed out we have to turn to volumes II and IV of his *Church Dogmatics.* It will become clear that by moving ahead in Barth's development and writing, we are not doing him any injustice, because he remains fully consistent with his central theological principle." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 86. Hütter's article was originally published in 2000 and then was revised for publication for his 2004 book in which it forms a chapter.

That being said, there still are a few considerations for those trying to navigate Barth's massive corpus. Bruce McCormack's theory about development and change within Barth's corpus is respected by current Barth interpreters even if it is not universally accepted. George Hunsinger and McCormack, both at Princeton Theological Seminary, have engaged in a debate about the degree to which Barth changed his mind within the *Church Dogmatics*. Hunsinger calls Barth's theology from 1932, when the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* was published, his mature theology; whereas McCormack argues that volume II/2, published in 1942, marks the beginning of his mature theology with early indications of it as early as 1936.[56] For the sake of caution, if

[56] George Hunsinger writes, "On the one hand are the 'traditionalists' (for lack of a better term), who contend that throughout the *Church Dogmatics* Karl Barth never changed his mind that the triune life of God was prior to the divine decision of election. On the other hand is a growing tribe of 'revisionists' who maintain that for the later Barth the situation was much the reverse in that God's pre-temporal decision of election actually gave rise to the Trinity." George Hunsinger, "Election and the Trinity: Twenty-Five Theses on the Theology of Karl Barth," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 2 (2008): 179. Hunsinger calls himself a "traditionalist"—one who argues the *Dogmatics* have a thorough going consistency whereas McCormack sees a significant break with II/2 (1942). McCormack "proposed that in 1942 Barth's doctrine of God underwent a sea change with the appearance of his doctrine of election [*Church Dogmatics* II/2] . . . I refer here (and throughout this essay) to the mature Barth, not to anything he may have written prior to 1932." Ibid., 196. McCormack agrees that their debate is about the degree to which Barth changed his mind but, he argues, that Hunsinger is the revisionist . "As the debate has unfolded, it has centred upon three areas of questioning: 1) the genetic-historical question of how Karl Barth's theology developed, whether his mind changed on important issues and in what way . . . Hunsinger characterises his own position on Barth's understanding of the relation of Trinity and election as 'traditionalist'; he characterises my position as 'revisionist'. I would say that this characterisation gets things exactly backwards where the historiography is concerned." Bruce McCormack, "Election and the Trinity: Theses in Response to George Hunsinger," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no. 02 (2010): 203, 204. McCormack argues that Barth's mature theology begins in volume II—especially II/2. "Already in *Church Dogmatics* II/1, intimations of the coming change are present. The explanation for this lies in the fact that Barth had begun to rethink his doctrine of election as a consequence of hearing a lecture on the subject by Pierre Maury at the 1936 celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation of Geneva. But the shift was completed only in the writing of *Church*

we heed McCormack's belief about Barth's development prior to 1942, references to volume I of the *Church Dogmatics* may need qualification or amplification with textual support from the later volumes of the *Dogmatics.* But statements in the *Church Dogmatics*—especially those in II/2 and following—can be generally relied upon to be consistent with Barth's mature theology. One application of this respect to McCormack's model is that Barth's discussion of the church as the body of Christ in I/2[57] should be supplemented with Barth's discussion of the body of Christ in IV/1.[58] But most of Barth's discussion of ecclesiology is in volume IV and is therefore not as cluttered with claims of Barth's development and change.

Similarly, the date of Barth's voluminous letters and essays should also be noted so that the reader can roughly relate them to what scholars often refer to as Barth's "major developments" expressed concurrently in his formal works: the publication of the first version of the commentary on Romans (1918), the publication of the second version of the commentary on Romans (1921), his book on Anselm (1930), *Church Dogmatics* I/1 (1932), and II/2 (1942), IV/1 (1953).

The McCormack and Hunsinger debate also illustrates the exacting—some will say scholastic and tedious—analysis that is sometimes unavoidably necessary to

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Dogmatics II/2, in which Barth made the astonishing claim that Jesus Christ is not only the object of election but also its subject (i.e. its author)." Ibid., 213-214.

[57] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 209-242, especially 215-221.

[58] Ibid., IV/1, 659-668.

pinpoint "Barth's position" on an issue. The reputable interpreter of Barth will want to carefully identify the statements that they perceive to be important, decisive or problematic rather than generalizing what Barth thinks about an issue. Additionally, they will want to check the context to see whether Barth qualifies the statement that they find so decisive. Barth is famously repetitive—utilizing what Hunsinger calls a spiral technique—returning again and again to address a topic from all angles.[59] He often addresses objections to his points in the pages immediately following a provocative statement. Furthermore, where the exact wording of the English translation is crucial to a subtle or technical argument, these should be checked with the German original to verify that Barth is indeed making the decisive subtle move that the English reader is led to believe.

[59] "The more deeply one reads Barth, the more one sense that his use of repetition is never pointless. Rather, it serves as a principle of organization and development within an ever forward spiraling theological whole." Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, 28.

Chapter 2: 1927-1968: Criticism of Barth's ecclesiology during his lifetime: Bonhoeffer, Peterson, Balthasar, Brunner, Dietrich

Each of the main lines of interpretation and criticism of Barth's ecclesiology are present in Barth's lifetime and he responded to many of them.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Investigating Dietrich Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth's ecclesiology is particularly interesting because it started in 1927 and over the next seventeen years, Barth himself later praised it, later theologians often use Bonhoeffer over against Barth, and the implications of ecclesiology can be illustrated through stories. In this section on Bonhoeffer, his various critiques are analyzed to discern to what extent Bonhoeffer identified flaws in Barth's ecclesiology and where the difference between them regarding ecclesiology can be found.

In *Sanctorum Communio,* Bonhoeffer sketches the relationship between the church dogmatically and its sociological structure

Dietrich Bonhoeffer began his theological career writing *Sanctorum Communio*: a project—attempting to synthesize Barth's privileging of theology over sociology and yet still reflecting on sociological description of the church. Bonhoeffer writes his

dissertation just six years after the publication of Barth's second edition of his commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans* in 1921. In his 1927 dissertation *Sanctorum Communio,* Bonhoeffer attempts to give a theological description of the church after Barth's successful unmasking and denouncing of human-centered "religious" understandings of the church. In other words, Bonhoeffer found Barth's denunciation of "religion" persuasive but then asks the subsequent question: if the church is not to be religious, how should church—central enough to be mentioned in the Apostle's Creed as the *sanctorum communio* communion of saints—be described? Bonhoeffer reviews and condemns as inadequate various sociological descriptions of the church that are fueled by unarticulated assumptions about the church and religion. Bonhoeffer insists that for Christians explicit theological grounds must control description, rather than theologically unarticulated yet problematic sociological categorization. He begins the published book this way, "In this study, social philosophy and sociology are employed in the service of theology . . . This work belongs not to the discipline of sociology of religion, but to theology."[1] Bonhoeffer disagreed with the prevailing reductionist descriptions of the church proffered by Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch but also felt Barth had not yet articulated constructively how God's revelation intersected with

[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, trans., Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 21.

human life. Referring to Weber and Troeltsch on the one hand, and then Barth and other "dialectical theologians" on the other, Bonhoeffer writes, "There are basically two ways *to misunderstand the church . . . the former confuses the church with the religious community, the latter with the Realm of God*."[2] Bonhoeffer agrees with Barth that the church can only be understood from revelation rather than by historical description or general observations about "religion," but worries that Barth's concern about God being reduced to the human level leads him to overreact and depict a church that is wholly other-worldly.

Instead, says Bonhoeffer, God has indeed from the beginning deemed to be bound up with human beings. While "religion" defined in terms of elevated human feelings might be the antithesis of the utter sovereign reign of God, the church is inseparable from any Christian treatment of the relationship between God and human beings. Bonhoeffer rejects the idea that the church is something peripheral and derivative that is tacked on after all the important theological matters have been worked out. Just because the church is often treated late in a systematic theology course should not imply it is unimportant, says Bonhoeffer. "When works of doctrinal theology end by presenting the concept of the church as a necessary consequence of the Protestant faith, this must not imply anything other than the inner connection between the reality of the

[2] Ibid., 125. Emphasis original.

church and the entire reality of revelation."[3] The doctrine of God and the doctrine of the church are intimately and intricately related. Therefore, the church can only be treated secondarily and derivatively if it is also made clear that the doctrine of God is incomplete without acknowledging that God loves (is *for* and *with*) human beings. "Only if the concept of God is understood to be comprehensible when exclusively connected to the concept of the church is it permitted, for technical reasons of clarity of presentation, to 'derive' the latter from the former."[4] In other words, any talk about God must necessarily include God's outreach to form a people called church. It is unacceptable to speak about God and the church as if the church is somehow optional or an accident. It is God's plan to work with human beings so one cannot describe God apart from it.

Whether Barth borrows from Bonhoeffer or comes to the same insights himself, Barth came to solder the doctrine of God and the people of God together in his doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics* II/2. Bonhoeffer had written in 1927, "The church-community [*Gemeinde*] exists through Christ's action. It is elected in Christ from eternity."[5] Barth, writing in 1942, describes the church in similar terms, "the election of

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[3] Ibid., 134.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 137. Jesus Christ is both object and subject of election. McCormack gives credit to Pierre Maury for influencing Barth in this direction and that may very well be the case as it is not clear when Barth read Bonhoeffer's 1927 book *Sanctorum Communio.* "Already in *Church Dogmatics* II/1, intimations of the coming change are present. The explanation for this lies in the fact that Barth had begun to rethink his doctrine of election as a consequence of hearing a lecture on the subject by Pierre Maury at the 1936 celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation of Geneva. But the shift was completed only in the writing of *Church Dogmatics* II/2, in which Barth made the astonishing claim that Jesus Christ is not only the object of election

Jesus Christ, is simultaneously the eternal election of the one community [*Gemeinde*] of God."[6] Later, writing in 1955, Barth explicitly praises *Sanctorum Communio* in gushing terms.[7] In other words, in Barth's early work that Bonhoeffer was inspired by, Barth kept a firm dialectic between God and human beings. However, Bonhoeffer saw that the dialectic might be bridged by situating God's connection with human beings in God's very character. Later, Barth, either by his own thinking, other influences, or Bonhoeffer—came to make the same move.

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but also its subject (i.e. its author)." McCormack, "Election and the Trinity: Theses in Response to George Hunsinger," 213-214.

[6] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 195.

[7] Ibid., IV/2, 641. "I may again refer to a book by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This is the dissertation which he wrote and published—when he was only twenty-one years of age—under the title *Sanctorum communio, Eine dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche*, 1930. If there can be any possible vindication of Reinhold Seeberg, it is to be sought in the fact that his school could give rise to this man and this dissertation, which not only awakens respect for the breadth and depth of its insight as we look back to the existing situation, but makes far more instructive and stimulating and illuminating and genuinely edifying reading to-day than many of the more famous works which have since been written on the problem of the Church. As Ernst Wolf has justly remarked in his preface to the new edition of 1954, many things would not have been written if Bonhoeffer's exposition had been taken into account. I openly confess that I have misgivings whether I can even maintain the high level reached by Bonhoeffer, saying no less in my own words and context, and saying it no less forcefully, than did this young man so many years ago." Bonhoeffer is almost unique in being praised by Barth in the area of ecclesiology. Barth mentions church history professor Ernst Wolf here in this quotation. Jürgen Moltmann describes Ernst Wolf as one of his most influential theological mentors. Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 243 Cf. 48. "He had founded the periodical Evangelische Theologie in 1934 as the mouthpiece of the Confessing Church." One of the few others who Barth explicitly praised regarding ecclesiology was professor of law Erik Wolf (no relation to Ernst). Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 677, 680-682, 719. See however a recent very critical treatment of Erik Wolf's cooperation with the Nazi party by Emmanuel Faye in his chapter "Law and Race: Erik Wolf Between Heidegger, Schmitt, and Rosenberg." Faye claims to provide "irrefutable proof of the radicalness and constancy of Erik Wolf's pro-Nazi commitment" in contrast to "his almost hagiographic image as 'resistant.'"Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger, the Introduction of Nazism Into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 192, Cf. 173-202.

From 1929 to 1932, Bonhoeffer pressed Barth on whether there might be a way of affirming the being of the church, which Barth later embraced

Writing his second dissertation and book *Act and Being* in 1929-1930, Bonhoeffer still had not yet met Barth and so wondered how far Barth's actualism or dialecticalism went. Was he an existentialist? Bonhoeffer commends Barth for his use of Kant to highlight the vast distance of human beings from God but does not think this should preclude Barth from setting forth constructive comments about the church. For example, Bonhoeffer writes that in Barth's theology "the danger of a theology of experience is indeed wholly averted; but this occurs at the expense of the historicity of human beings."[8] Bonhoeffer first heard Barth in person July 10, 1931 and submitted the revisions to the proofs of *Act and Being* four days later on July 14, 1931.[9] However, after meeting Barth, Bonhoeffer realized Barth's rhetoric had not accurately conveyed the seriousness with which Barth took "the historicity of human beings." After this first encounter in person, Bonhoeffer wrote, "Barth was even better than his books . . . I have been impressed even more by discussions with him than by his writings and lectures."[10]

[8] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, trans., Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 99.
[9] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 11 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 32-33.
[10] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 383. Cf. "it is important and surprising in the nicest way to see how Barth still stands beyond his books." Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 37, Cf. 32-43.

Still, Bonhoeffer sensed that somehow he and Barth were somehow different in their approaches.

In *Act and Being* and his April 23, 1932 lecture on the "nature of the church," Bonhoeffer continues to affirm Barth's "actualism" but to press him about whether there is not indeed also a place for speaking about the church's continuity or "being."

> The Catholic concept of church seems not to include thoughts of claims on the church ([rather] the church is a being!) Barth: seemingly speaks only of claims and sees therein the essential nature of the church. (The church is *actus.)* One must speak of the being and act of the church together.[11]

In other words, Roman Catholics have little doubt whether their church is the church. They are even overconfident in its existence ("being") as a church. Barth on the other hand is hyper-aware that the church is only the church as far as it is "acted upon" by God (actualism). Bonhoeffer wants to find a way of embracing both. On the one hand, Bonhoeffer effusively praises Barth's "actualism"—that the church must acknowledge the fact that God will act when God wants to—saying it is the only "adequate way to speak of grace."[12] But after affirming Barth's actualism, Bonhoeffer adds that on the other hand the church has some reason to believe that God's presence does reside in

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[11] Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 274.

[12] "In all of recent literature no one is seriously equal of Barth. To understand the *solo fide* requires the concept of God's radical freedom. Barth's term 'from time to time [*je und je*]' (does justice to this concept. Only this is an adequate way to speak of grace. By nature God is understood as act [*Akt*], without predicates of being, because otherwise [we would be conceiving of God] as an object." Ibid., 242. In other words, Bonhoeffer thinks Barth is right to emphasize that God is always the grammatical subject. This has the practical implication that the church cannot presume that it is acting in the name of God. The church must always acknowledge the need for God's presence.

some sense in the church. The church has been given some stability, some continuity. God of course was not compelled by anyone or anything to do so but has seen fit to share his work with the church. For example, when Jesus says he has given them the power to forgive sins. The Scriptures teach that "Everyone in the church-community may forgive the sins of one another."[13] The church has not usurped this power but has been given it by God. The church's exercise of this function does not entail less function by God. "It is God who has promised that I may speak for God to others; from that church-community lives in freely given continuity, which is the very presence of Christ, but not directly as an object, rather only through faith."[14]

Barth too, in the first pages of the *Church Dogmatics*, affirms the church has a profound identity: "the being of the Church, namely, Jesus Christ."[15] Later, in volume IV, this is specified to: "The community is the earthly-historical form of existence of

[13] Ibid. Bonhoeffer writes earlier after talking about his disagreement with Barth on this point, "At present, it almost seems to me as if one would have to bring in the concept of sacrament . . . The whole question of the interpretation of the *potestas clavium* [power of the keys] belongs in here." Ibid., 121. Bonhoeffer is referring here to "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:18). In other words, it certainly seems that God has handed over some power to the church from this verse—that there is earthly action that does divine work, i.e. "sacramental" action.

[14] Ibid., 242.

[15] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 4.

Jesus Christ Himself"[16] to distinguish the church from the ascended Jesus who exists in a "heavenly-historical" form.[17]

This acknowledgement by Barth that Christ exists in the church does not entail a repudiation of his earlier actualism. On the first page of his defining the Church in volume IV, he writes, "Its act is its being."[18] Riffing on the word "ekklesia," which means "gathering," Barth writes the church exists "only as it is gathered and lets itself be gathered and gathers itself by the living Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit."[19] In other words, the church would not exist—be the body of Christ—if the Holy Spirit did not gather it (passive agency), the church allow the Spirit to gather it (a receiving prior agency), and the church to exert some agency in gathering itself (active agency). This is all to say, that Barth, takes very seriously both aspects of the act and being of the church

[16] Ibid., IV/1, 661.
[17] Bonhoeffer addresses the question of "*how Christ may take form among us today and here.*" Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans., Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 99. Emphasis is in the original. But the difference between Christ and the church is not as carefully delineated as Barth would think necessary. In a 1949 address, "The Christian Proclamation Here and Now," Barth reflects on similar material (using the phrase "now and here" and "reality"). Barth too discusses Jesus Christ as the true reality but insists human beings do not fully access that reality which is present in Jesus alone. "In Jesus Christ—the one who is for all others—human existence is reflected in its vertical reality . . . and in its horizontal reality . . . we must go on to say that man does not exist in that reality in which he might exist, in relationship with God and his fellowmen." Barth, *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger*, 8. Bonhoeffer asks "how Christ may take form?" Barth answers that the church is the "earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ Himself." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 661. Note the qualifier: "earthly-historical." "Jesus Christ also lives as the Crucified and Risen in a heavenly-historical form of existence; at the right hand of the Father, before whom He is the advocate and intercessor for all men as the Judge who was judged in their place, the One who was obedient for them all, their justification." Ibid.
[18] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650.
[19] Ibid.

and holds them together very carefully and intentionally as Bonhoeffer had suggested he should.

From 1932 forward, Bonhoeffer sees a lack of concreteness in Barth's ecclesiology

After meeting Barth, Bonhoeffer no longer frames his criticism of Barth in terms of a lack of "historicity" but instead with a similar concept: "concretion" [*Konkretion*]. "The problem of ethics. Barth's conception of it as demonstration excludes any concrete teaching."[20] Bonhoeffer wishes Barth would be more "concrete." *Konkret* seems to represent what Bonhoeffer wanted to do in theology: to articulate what God's work looks like specifically at the level of human everyday life. Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth on this score ranged from 1932 through 1944.

It is worth noting that there may be something lost in translation here when the German "*konkret*" and its cognates are translated "concrete" in English. Whereas in

[20] Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 243. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ökumene, Universität, Pfarramt 1931-1932*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, vol. 11 (Gütersloh: C. Kaiser, 1994), 212-213. This is the in the context of an extended lecture entitled "The History of Twentieth-Century Systematic Theology" in which Barth is praised throughout. Cf. another translation of the sentence. "The Barthian view of ethics as 'demonstration' rules out all concrete ethics and ethical principles." Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, Rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 184. It strikes Bonhoeffer that Barth's insistence that the church merely demonstrates God's work, merely points to, witnesses to God's work, (instead of saying the church does God's work) leads to an inappropriate avoidance of ethical guidance. Barth seems to be implying that ethical action need only approximate God's work, that it is futile or delusional to invest it with more meaning. Cf. Barth on "demonstration." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 432-433, 474, 492-504.

English, we might think of concrete blocks and of cement; in German a different word is used for concrete blocks: *Betonblöcke*. The way Bonhoeffer and Barth seem to use *konkret*, it means "specific," "definite." In the context of theology, we will also see that a connotation of *konkret* is "practical." As opposed to cement blocks—the English connotation, there may also be something "personal" and perhaps even "warm" or "communal" about *konkret*.[21] Again, the English reader should begin with basic meaning thinking of "concrete" (*konkret)* as "specific" or "definite." The context will reveal what concrete is being contrasted with.

Bonhoeffer thinks it is not that Barth was uncaring about historical events but Barth is unwilling to be as practical as Bonhoeffer thinks is necessary. Bonhoeffer wants correct dogmatic principles but also application of these principles to the "concrete" situations people are experiencing. "Our messages from the church have so little power because they sit in the middle, between general principles and concrete situations. The trouble with the church [is] also the trouble with the theological faculties."[22] Then Bonhoeffer praises Luther for doing both dogmatics and practical theology / special

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[21] Later when we look at Barth's congregationalist reflections, we will also see that Barth criticizes the word *Kirche* (church) for not connoting "concrete" like *Gemeinde* (community) does. Karl Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," in *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 82; Karl Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," in *Die Schrift und die Kirche*, Theologische Studien (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947), 26; Karl Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," in *God Here and Now* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 66-67.

[22] Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 244.

ethics. "Luther was able to write *On the Bondage of the Will* and his piece on usury at the same time. Why can't we do that anymore? Who will show us Luther!"[23] Again, writing in 1940-1941 in *Ethics* Bonhoeffer suggests what is needed is "a concrete ethic." "Because of the form of Christ, the form of the real human being is preserved so that *the real human being receives the form of Christ.* Thereby we are turned away from any abstract ethic and toward a concrete ethic."[24]

Late in his writing of *Ethics,* after reading the galley proofs for *Church Dogmatics* II/2, Bonhoeffer appreciated Barth's recognizing that there might be a problem in becoming overly rigid in the way that one approaches practical theology. Barth identifies "empirical positivism" (natural theology) and "metaphysical-religion positivism" (looking to the church hierarchy as "direct manifestations of divine will"[25]) as problematically clunky, rigid, and devoid of attention to the Holy Spirit. Bonhoeffer agree that the problem with both "positivisms" was their sterile, detached character as "timeless principles"[26] or "ethical rules."[27] Bonhoeffer embraces Barth's phrase "the commandment of God:" saying that Barth is correct that "the only possible subject

[23] Ibid.
[24] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 99.
[25] Ibid., 377.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 378.

matter of a 'Christian ethic' . . . [is] the 'commandment of God.'"[28] Bonhoeffer exposits this not as a harsh imposition but rather "permission to live before God as a human being."[29] Bonhoeffer thinks Barth's suggestion here has the potential to lead to an appropriate level of concreteness—excellent practical theology that avoids the rigidity of positivism. "God's commandment is God's speech to human beings. Both in its content and in its form, it is concrete speech to concrete human beings."[30]

But in the summer of 1944 while Bonhoeffer is in prison, he returns to suggesting that Barth himself never takes the step of doing "practical theology" himself. Barth never finally makes time to write concretely. "It was not in his [Barth's] ethics that he eventually failed, as is often said—his ethical observations, so far as they exist, are as important as his dogmatic ones . . . but . . . he gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics."[31] In other words, according to Bonhoeffer, Barth's ethical insights are solid, but they are not "concrete" enough, not fleshed out enough at the level of practical advice—"guidance." Why does Barth not write "practical theology?"

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[28] Ibid., 363, 378. Barth later reflects on Bonhoeffer's use of the "commandment of God" language. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 14-15.
[29] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 382.
[30] Ibid., 378. In *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Yoder says Barth's idea that "ethics must be derived from the Word of God in the situation" has "existentialist and intuitionist" tendencies. Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 87. Note though that Barth explains that "It is naturally not the case that the command of God is real only in a series of innumerable individual revelations of particular form and content." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 16.
[31] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, trans., Isabel Best, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 429.

asks Bonhoeffer. Being in prison, likely Bonhoeffer was unaware of Barth's prolific wartime writings from Switzerland.[32]

Because of these comments, many Bonhoeffer scholars tend to think that Bonhoeffer's focus on the concrete is what distinguished his theology from Barth's. The "Editor's Afterword to the German Edition" of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works volume *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work* reads, "One notable difference between Bonhoeffer and his theological role model [Karl Barth] was Bonhoeffer's concentrated interest in the church's *concrete* ethical proclamation."[33] An original suggestion of this dissertation is that this family of words related to "concrete" might be clarified by associating it with the task of "practical theology" or "special ethics."

Upon reflection, Bonhoeffer does not identify a theological chasm[34] between the two but rather one of form, genre, and style. Both Bonhoeffer and Barth agree that the

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[32] Karl Barth, *This Christian Cause (A Letter to Great Britain From Switzerland)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941); Karl Barth, *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day* (New York: Scribner, 1939).
[33] Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 480. Emphasis added.
[34] John Howard Yoder writes that this desire to be practical and "concrete" led Bonhoeffer astray. Yoder argue that Bonhoeffer's version of concreteness is too concrete in the sense that it condones the world as it is; while it is not concrete enough in terms of being casuistically specific with the Scriptures. (Yoder thinks that Barth, in his mature theology, avoids both flaws). Yoder finds Bonhoeffer's systematic formulations overly "Logological" so that the use of "the word 'incarnation' serves as the label for a commitment to the sweeping acceptance of things as they are." John Howard Yoder, "The Christological Presuppositions of Discipleship," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmerman and Brian Gregor, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Pickwick Publications, 2010), 144-145. This however underemphasizes the degree to which Bonhoeffer's conclusions were radically different from the world and shaped by the Scriptures. Yoder is right to criticize excesses in moves from the affirmation of the human body in Jesus Christ to "humanity"—what will be criticized later in the dissertation as a lack of carefulness in using Christology for ecclesiology. Yoder's sharp critique, being rare in the reading of Bonhoeffer, is valuable for raising questions about whether a lack of clarity or

goal of the Christian life is to live out in practical ways, obedience to God but that practical guidance dispensed by a theologian could become rigid if it was too specific. Barth later reflects that the theologian or Christian ethicist must on the one hand attend to "concrete" issues but on the other hand recognize the theologian / ethicist cannot give practical guidance for every situation. And Barth quotes Bonhoeffer on this point:

> To this extent there is a practical casuistry . . . It consists in the unavoidable venture . . . of understanding God's concrete [*konkretes*] specific command here and now in this particular way, of making a corresponding decision in this particular way, and of summoning others to such a concrete [*konkreter*] and specific decision. On the other hand, there is no such thing as a casuistical ethics . . . no method or technique of applying this text to the plenitude of conditions and possibilities of the activity of all men . . . To quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*op. cit.*, p. 208, E.T. p. 236): 'An ethics cannot be a book in which there is set out how

specificity in Bonhoeffer has led to the vast amount of different interpretations of his work and life. Yoder criticizes *Ethics* for its "Logological" perspective, "there is thus, no substantial distinction between an ethic of the orders of creation and a Christological ethic." Ibid., 143. The incarnation is used to justify human beings are we know them to be rather than having Jesus Christ redefine what human means. Yoder worries about Bonhoeffer's four orders of preservation or "mandates." Yoder writes that for Bonhoeffer "the concreteness of our ethics must be drawn not from Jesus but from the four 'mandates' of labor, marriage, government, and the church." Ibid., 143-144. Yoder complains that all of these cases are a fundamental rolling back of their commitment to the priority of revelation. Similarly, Yoder critiques Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* for its focus on "obedience." These are "demands which could be made of me by any moral teacher or any lord." Ibid., 137. Bonhoeffer does then turn to the cross and suffering but Yoder complains that "the language is weak in concreteness . . . there is no description of how he [the disciple of Christ] behaves differently." Ibid. Bonhoeffer has merely urged "obedience." Yoder asks, "does the meaning of bearing the cross exist on a level unrelated to such concrete decisions?" Ibid., 138. The Beatitudes are exposited in terms of attitudes to avoid. There is an absence of specific examples. Ibid., 139. Yoder cannot tell if renunciation of violence is intended or not. Cf. Barth on the mandates: "It is along these lines that we certainly have to think, and we may gratefully acknowledge that Bonhoeffer does this, even though it may be asked whether the working out of his view does not still contain some arbitrary elements. Why, for instance, are there only four (or five) mandates and no others? Is it enough to say that these particular relationships of rank and degree occur with a certain regularity in the Bible, and that they can be more or less clearly related to Christ as the Lord of the world? Again, does the relationship always have to be one of superiority and inferiority? In Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the mandates, is there not just a suggestion of North German patriarchalism?" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 22.

> everything in the world actually ought to be . . . An ethic cannot be a work of reference for moral action which is guaranteed to be unexceptionable.'[35]

The "concrete" is not dependably available as something static that can be delineated for all time but is rather a "concrete event"[36] and he praises Bonhoeffer for recognizing this.

> The same critical point is made in some words of D. Bonhoeffer . . . special ethics cannot actually proceed except in the framework of this reference to the event of God's concrete command [*das Ereignis des konkreten Gebotes Gottes*] and man's concrete [*konkreten*] obedience or disobedience. Whatever it may have to say regarding the concrete [*konkrete*] form of the command and its bearing upon man's concrete [*konkrete*] action, it will always have to repeat and underline and sharpen this reference.[37]

Barth also praises Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* for its reflection on "concretion."

> 'Follow me' is the substance of the call in the power of which Jesus makes men His saints. It is to this concretion [*Konkretion*] of His action that we must now turn . . . Easily the best that has been written on this subject is to be found in *The Cost of Discipleship*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (abridged E.T., 1948, of the German original *Nachfolge*, 1937).[38]

This is merely to show that Barth finds Bonhoeffer insightful about the need for the theologian to press for the practical application but that the theologian must also be restrained about being prescriptive—lest the theologian crowd out the Holy Spirit and the details of a local situation.

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[35] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 9-10.

[36] Barth, *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger*, 96.

[37] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 14-16.

[38] "We do not refer to all the parts, which were obviously compiled from different sources, but to the opening sections,'The Call to Discipleship,' 'Simple Obedience' (omitted in the E.T.) and 'Discipleship and the Individual.'" ibid., IV/2, 533.

Bonhoeffer's friend Paul Lehmann too recognizes that it was an oversimplification to criticize Barth for being insufficiently concrete.

> In the writings of Bonhoeffer, as is well known, the question of concreteness is the focal point of his *Ethics,* for which his two major earlier books, *Sanctorum Communio* (1930) and *Akt und Sein* [*Act and Being*] (1931) prepare the way, and from which the *Widerstand und Ergebung* [*Letters and Papers from Prison*] (1951) delineates a movement towards involvement in a genuine worldliness.[39]

However, Lehmann does not see Barth neglecting the concept.

> The words: *konkret, Konkretheit*, together with their Latin equivalents*: in concreto, concretissimum, concretissime*, occur with conspicuous frequency . . . If, then, one takes into account *konkret* (concrete / 716 occurrences), *Konkretheit* (concreteness / 47 occurrences), *in concreto* (in the concrete / 63 occurrences), *concretissimum* (very concrete / 9 occurrences), *concretissime* (most concretely / 1 occurrence), and their cognates, e.g. *Gegenständlichkeit* (objectivity / 146 occurrences), *Wirklichkeit* [reality / 3308 occurrences], *Aktualität* [actuality / 105 occurrences], *Besonderheit* [particularity / 342 occurrences], and the very frequent "nicht *in abstracto*" [not in the abstract / 20 occurrences] it is not too much to say that the driving preoccupation of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik [Church Dogmatics]* is with the question of concreteness in theology.[40]

Lehmann's depiction of the relationship and correspondence between Barth and Bonhoeffer 40 years ago (before the critical editions of Bonhoeffer's work were published and computer searches could be done) has astonishing staying power. Lehmann sketches correctly their warm but wary relationship with one another and their legitimate but "kindred" disagreement over what it means for theology to be

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[39] Paul L. Lehmann, "The Concreteness of Theology: Reflections on the Conversation Between Barth and Bonhoeffer," in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Waterloo, ON: The Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies in Religion in Canada, 1974), 57.
[40] Ibid., 56-57. Lehmann lamented that he "was unable to apply a computorial count to its pages" but it is possible now! So occurrences with the help of the Digital Karl Barth Library and translations are added to Lehmann's quote.

"concrete." Barth worries about "insufficient safeguards against the loss of the specificity of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, worries about Barth's . . . insufficient safeguards against the loss of the human specifics to which the specificity of Jesus Christ is directed."[41] Again, we might say this is the difference between Barth's

[41] Ibid., 65. Lehmann also correctly identifies the furor over Bonhoeffer's comment about Barth's "revelational positivism" as an "intense misunderstanding." Ibid., 67. However Lehmann is incorrect to describe the disagreement in terms of the classic divide between Lutherans (like Bonhoeffer) and the Reformed (like Barth) on the capacity of God to inhabit the finite; i.e. the Lutherans have affirmed this more strongly while the Reformed have denied it. Ibid., 66-67. Barth does not affirm the Reformed line. Nor does Bonhoeffer hew to the Lutheran one. Barth writes that "The saying *finitum non capax infiniti* [the finite cannot contain the infinite] cannot really prove what has to be proved at this point . . . As a philosophical saying it does not interest us in the slightest. We do not say *finitum* [the finite] but *homo peccator non capax* [the human sinner cannot contain]." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 220. Barth is here identifying a difference between Jesus and the church. Barth says his objection is of course not to Christ's bodily nature: "not only in Christ—who could or would oppose that?" but rather to the idea that the infinite god dwells in every human heart and that humans can access this if only they look within. Ibid., I/1, 211-212. As Jesus demonstrates, the infinite can come to dwell in the finite. However, God must overcome human sinfulness to use the church. Barth wants to say that each time God uses human beings, it is by a special act of the Holy Spirit. The human capacity, image of God, has become sufficiently warped that it is not able to access God apart from God's grace. Barth denies emphatically that there is an "aptitude of man for this experience." Rather, "God hands something over to man in the sense that it really passes out of God's hand into the hands of man" and through that "this man now acquires autonomy and independent interest as a participant in the reality of the Word." Ibid. What Barth is concerned about is the idea of human beings presuming they possess God and need only to access him by meditation, looking deep within themselves for God inside themselves, what Barth refers to here as "mysticism." Andreas Pangritz writes, "In the Christology lectures of 1933, he [Bonhoeffer] spoke of the Lutheran '*capax'* only in terms of what sound like a Reformed proviso: *Finitum capax infiniti, non per se sed per infinitum!* –'The finite can hold the infinite, not by itself, but it can by the aid of the infinite!' Barth could have put the matter that way." Cf. Andreas Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 11, Cf. 9, 47, 69. quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 12 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 346. Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, and Protestant Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10; John D. Godsey, "Barth and Bonhoeffer: The Basic Difference," *Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1 (1987). Godsey too describes Barth and Bonhoeffer's slight disagreements and the constellation of other factors which led to their misunderstandings. Like Lehmann's analysis, Godsey's wise and personal analysis (thirty years after having done his dissertation with Barth on Bonhoeffer) continues to resonate with wisdom even if one does not accept his formulation that "Barth's theology tends toward a *theologia gloriae* in order to ensure the graciousness of God's action in Christ. In contrast, Bonhoeffer's theology is a *theologia crucis* in order to ensure the costliness of God's grace in Christ." Ibid.

careful dogmatic approach—protecting the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as compared with Bonhoeffer's sense of the need for practical guidance.

Barth failed four times in giving "concrete guidance" to Bonhoeffer personally

There is one more background piece of information we can provide that illustrates Bonhoeffer's frustration with Barth's lack of concreteness. Four times, Barth gave Bonhoeffer rather poor "concrete guidance." Bonhoeffer was disappointed by this.

Bonhoeffer and Barth met for the first time in July 1931. Bonhoeffer was 25 and Barth was 45. Bonhoeffer had interacted extensively with Barth in his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio* and habilitation *Act and Being*; while Barth had read nothing by Bonhoeffer. Barth was indisputably Bonhoeffer's most influential contemporary theological mentor. In 1927, Bonhoeffer's dissertation advisor Reinhold Seeberg noted about *Sanctorum Communio*, "here and there one finds references to Barth."[42] Writing in the English introduction to the critical edition, Clifford Green writes that Seeberg had no idea how influential Barth was on Bonhoeffer and would continue to be.[43] Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's close friend and biographer, emphasizes that despite the criticisms Bonhoeffer lodged against Barth's theology, Bonhoeffer was fundamentally loyal to Barth. "Whatever the implications of Bonhoeffer's criticisms of Barth . . . Bonhoeffer

[42] Reinhold Seeberg, "Report on Bonhoeffer's proposed Licentiate dissertation *Sanctorum Communio* in July 1927," in Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 8.
[43] Clifford J. Green, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in ibid., 2-3.

viewed these criticisms as coming from within, not without, the Barthian movement."[44] It is not only Bonhoeffer interpreters who acknowledge the massive influence of Barth on Bonhoeffer; it is also clear from Bonhoeffer's own writing that he treasured the time he spent with Barth and longed for Barth's feedback and approval. For example, in a letter to Barth on December 24, 1932, Bonhoeffer writes:

> I should like you to know that I know no one else who can free me from these persistent questions as you can, and therefore you are the one with whom I feel I must talk like this. It's hard to say why, but with you I just have this very distinct feeling that the way you see things is somehow the right way. It's just that when I am talking with you, I am brought right to the heart of the matter, whereas before I only kept circling around it at a distance. That for me is the very unmistakable sign that here is where I am right on target. And since nowhere else is this awareness with anything like this intensity, I shall have to keep asking you now and then for the gift of some of your time; at such times, please forgive me.[45]

In prison, when he wrote a few probing critical reflection about Barth to Bethge, he also wrote to Barth—"there are only a few who have remained as loyal to you in countless conversations over these years as I have attempted to do."[46] But Barth did not share the same trust of Bonhoeffer. We are not sure what he had read of Bonhoeffer's but he did not interact in writing with Bonhoeffer's theological work until 1945 when Bonhoeffer was in a concentration camp and then executed.

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[44] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 178.
[45] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, 81-82.
[46] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Conspiracy and Imprisonment, 1940-1945*, trans., Lisa E. Dahill and Douglas W. Stott, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 16 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 278.

In their correspondence during the Third Reich years, four times Bonhoeffer earnestly sought Barth's advice on practical issues and each time Barth responded skeptically about Bonhoeffer's judgments. Thirty years later, Barth acknowledged that Bonhoeffer was prescient on all these issues (which we might call "concrete") and that his mistrust of Bonhoeffer was misplaced.

First, on September 9, 1933, Bonhoeffer inquired of Barth whether he supported their leaving the national church because it had adopted the Aryan Clause which removed Christian pastors with Jewish backgrounds pastors from their positions. Barth wrote back two days later urging him to take up a posture of "waiting."[47] In his letter to Bethge in 1967 Barth notes his regret about this. "Especially new to me was the fact that in 1933 and the years following, Bonhoeffer was the first and almost the only one to face and tackle the Jewish question so centrally and energetically. I have long since regarded it as a fault on my part that I did not make this question a decisive issue."[48]

Second, on October 24, 1933, Bonhoeffer wrote to Barth of his decision to emphatically protest the farce that the German church had become under the Nazis by taking a post in London.[49] While there, he worked constantly warning people outside

[47] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, 164-169. Cf. Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 47-51.
[48] Karl Barth, "Letter to Eberhard Bethge, 22 May 1967," in *Letters, 1961-1968* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981).
[49] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *London, 1933-1935*, trans., Isabel Best and Douglas W. Stott, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 13 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 263.

Germany of the disaster the Nazis represented and urging them to put protest the Nazi government's oppression of dissent. On November 20, 1933, Barth wrote back a sharp letter urging Bonhoeffer to return to Germany—accusing Bonhoeffer of deserting his post.[50] In a 1968 letter, Barth regrets "the advice he had once given Bonhoeffer to return from London to Germany . . . a return which had finally led to his execution."[51]

Third, on September 19, 1936, Bonhoeffer wrote a letter to Barth explaining that future pastors he was working with in Finkenwalde needed a "completely different kind of training" including "communal seminary experiences."[52] They come to him "utterly burned out," as well as desperately in need of "theological knowledge," "familiarity with the Bible," peers probing their "souls," and space to learn to pray.[53] Bonhoeffer's guidance to these students is not "legalistic" but necessary formation. But when Barth wrote Bonhoeffer on October 14, 1936, he writes of reading an "Introduction to Daily Mediatation" written by Eberhard Bethge explaining the practices of the community at Finkenwalde.[54]

> Although I read it attentively, I cannot really say that I was pleased by what I read. I just cannot go along with the kind of fundamental distinction between theological work, on the one hand, and edifying reflection, on the other, such as emerges in this piece of writing and in your letter. I was also bothered in this piece by the smell—one rather difficult to articulate—of monastic eros and

[50] Ibid., 39-41.
[51] Editor's summary of Barth's letter: Barth, "Letter to Hendrik Berkhof, 10 October 1968," 316.
[52] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education at Finkenwalde, 1935-1937*, trans., Douglas W. Stott, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 14 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 253.
[53] Ibid., 253-254.
[54] Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 430-433.

> pathos, for which I for now have neither the appropriate sensorium nor any really use, though they might well represent new possibilities compared to previous experiences in this area.[55]

Bonhoeffer continues to wrestle with these questions. The opening chapter of *Life Together* can be seen as a response to Barth's concerns. "God hates this wishful dreaming."[56] The chapter is one long disclaimer about what he does in the following chapters—persuasively describing his vision of a Christian community. Bonhoeffer wants to make clear to Barth and others his awareness of the dangers of faddish Christian community. And he also makes clear in *Discipleship* that Christians "are to remain in the world in order to engage the world in frontal assault"[57] lest anyone think that his withdrawal is anything but training for the struggle. In 1968, Barth wrote to Bethge that he appreciated that Bonhoeffer was seeking "the renewal of personal and public worship . . . I can only endorse his intention as such."[58]

Fourth, in May 1942, Bonhoeffer goes to visit Barth in Basel for the third time. Before he arrives, Bonhoeffer writes that he is disappointed to hear from a number of

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[55] Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education at Finkenwalde, 1935-1937*, 268. Barth at this time also worried that Bonhoeffer's Finkenwald experiment reflected Buchman's Oxford Group emphases—something that Emil Brunner was enthralled with as will be shown below. "I have witnessed an almost uninterrupted barrage . . . finally also the Oxfords, along with Emil Brunner." Ibid., 267. Cf. Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 57-58.

[56] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, trans., Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 5 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 36.

[57] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans., Barbara G. Green and Reinhard Krauss, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 244.

[58] Barth, "Letter to Eberhard Bethge, 22 May 1967," 251-252. Cf. Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 57.

people that Barth is "unsettled as to the objectives" of Bonhoeffer's visit. Barth's assistant Charlotte von Kirschbaum writes back that indeed Barth is unsettled about any effort to "rescue Germany," which Bonhoeffer is in some sense doing by seeking to plan for a post-Nazi regime.[59] In 1967, Barth acknowledges that Bonhoeffer rightfully saw the need to engage in "political action" whereas Barth neglected the area after moving from his native Switzerland to Germany.

> First is what Andreas Lindt in his new essay in *Reformatio* has called Bonhoeffer's way from Christian faith to *political* action. This was my theme, too, when I left theological Liberalism, in the case of religious socialism in its specifically Swiss form . . . This theme slipped into the background for me when I got involved in the *Romans* and especially when I went to Germany in 1921. I made less of an impression on my German readers and hearers in this regard than in what was now my primary effort to reinterpret the Reformation and make it relevant. In Germany, however, burdened with the problems of its Lutheran tradition, there was a genuine need in the direction which I now silently took for granted or emphasized only in passing: ethics, fellow-humanity, a serving church, discipleship, socialism, the peace movement, and in and with all these things, politics. This gap, and the need to fill it, Bonhoeffer obviously saw keenly from the very first, and he felt it with increasing intensity and expressed it on a broad front. This supplementation which had been missing so long and which he represented so vigorously, was and still remains to a great extent at least (and we hope decisively) the secret of the impression that he has rightly made especially when he became a martyr, too, for this specific cause.[60]

[59] Bonhoeffer, *Conspiracy and Imprisonment, 1940-1945*, 274-282. "All in all, in the way Eberhard Bethge presents it in his superb Bonhoeffer biography, the theological closeness between Bonhoeffer and Barth is minimized more than it is overstated." Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 70. In other words, Barth and Bonhoeffer are very close in their theology.

[60] Barth, "Letter to Eberhard Bethge, 22 May 1967," 251.

What Barth had "emphasized only in passing" Bonhoeffer "saw keenly from the first" what had "been missing [for] so long." Barth thinks this activity and reflection on these "political" issues was Bonhoeffer's greatest strength and contribution.

To reiterate the point of these anecdotes, Bonhoeffer was quite right in saying that Barth was limited in the quality of his "concrete guidance." Bonhoeffer looked up to Barth like no one else and yet four times he had been misunderstood and given what Barth recognized later to be flawed advice. However, it is important to note how all of these misunderstanding were exacerbated by and perhaps wholly due to the vicious oppression of the Nazis when no choices were without stain. Should they declare the only church is Germany apostate after Hitler had only been in power for 8 months? Should Bonhoeffer try to bring change outside Germany since he had failed inside it? Should Bonhoeffer improvise by being a double agent instead of serving as a drafted German soldier at the front? Should Bonhoeffer attempt to form pastors in innovative ways for the unprecedented trials ahead? To all of these questions, Bonhoeffer responded yes and Barth responded no; but they were all emergency decisions caused by the Nazi insanity and the Nazi pressure also kept them from being able to discuss the issues in person at length.

In prison, Bonhoeffer criticizes Barth's "positivism of revelation" which Bonhoeffer contrasted with compassionate, worldly helpfulness

In prison, Bonhoeffer laments that Barth did not write more on specific, practical matters because this absence conveys a callous posture toward the suffering of the world. Bonhoeffer writes that Barth "gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics. Here he reaches his limit, and that why his theology of revelation has become positivist, a 'positivism of revelation,' as I call it."[61] The context surrounding this passage is extremely important for understanding it.

Andreas Pangritz writes that Bonhoeffer's advisor Erich Seeberg had commended the "positivism of revelation" approach. "E. Seeberg seems to have meant something like this: in 'positivism of revelation' the word of God revealed in Jesus Christ is accepted as something positively given, that is to say, as a truth of faith natural reason cannot analyze or question."[62] Bonhoeffer himself was the one promoting the "positivism of revelation" approach against Barth's actualism in *Act and Being*. Pangritz writes, "No doubt: in his habilitation dissertation, Bonhoeffer himself is the one who represents positivism of revelation, for whom the positivity of revelation concretizes itself in that of the church. On the basis of this Lutheran understanding of the positivity of revelation in the church, he chides Barth for *insufficient 'positivism'* inasmuch as the

[61] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 429.
[62] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 73.

positivity of revelation evaporates dialectically in him."[63] Recall as discussed above that it was Bonhoeffer who was worrying that Barth did not have a substantive enough view of the being of the church. But in *Act and Being* Bonhoeffer was responding to Barth's *Römerbrief.* Here in *Letters and Papers from Prison,* Bonhoeffer is reflecting on Barth's *Church Dogmatics* work and feeling deeply how lost and confused the Christians in Germany are under the Nazis and how Barth's dogmatics is only accessible and helpful to the theologians. "A positivism of revelation" is platitudes, stale tradition and Bonhoeffer worried this was what Barth was contributing, instead of "concrete guidance" to the world.

> Barth was the first theologian—to this great and lasting credit—to begin the critique of religion, but he then put in its place a positivist doctrine of revelation that says, in effect, "like it or lump it." Whether it's the virgin birth, the Trinity, or anything else, all are equally significant and necessary parts of the whole, which must be swallowed whole or not at all. That's not biblical. There are degrees of cognition and degrees of significance. That means an "arcane discipline" must be reestablished, through which the mysteries of the Christian faith are sheltered against profanation. The positivism of revelation is too easygoing, since in the end it sets up a law of faith and tears up what is—through Christ's becoming flesh!—a gift for us. Now the church stands in the place of religion—that in itself is biblical—but the world is left to its own devices, as it were, to rely on itself. That is the error.[64]

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[63] Ibid., 76. Bruce McCormack thinks Bonhoeffer was more accurate in his *Act and Being* in marveling at Barth's actualism than in *Letters and Papers in Prison* when he accuses Barth of the opposite flaw. It is George Lindbeck who "is prone to the charge of a 'positivism of revelation' . . . in a way Karl Barth never was . . . What he [Barth] did instead was to elaborate a nonmetaphysical, actualistic (divine and human) ontology." McCormack, "Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology," 133.

[64] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 373. Pangritz writes, "In light of the foregoing, we formulate this *thesis*: in his charge of 'positivism of revelation,' Bonhoeffer wanted above all to warn against the danger of saying too much in dogmatics and of becoming 'loquacious.' It is likely that Barth's holding on to

Bonhoeffer grants that a strong "No!" had to be said to the world as it swallowed Hitler's ideology. But Bonhoeffer wishes Barth would now take a different stance of stooping and offering compassion. Barth appears aloof—offering declarative theses. Bonhoeffer detects in Barth's dogmatic approach a disdain or defensiveness toward the world. Barth communicates that the church has received revelation and its offer to the world is "take it or leave it." Some areas of theology such as the Virgin Birth and the Trinity should not be shoved in the face of the world saying "Here are the hardest parts. Now do you accept Christianity or reject it?" Instead, these are mysteries, Christians are to mull over and ponder. When Bonhoeffer speaks of an "arcane discipline," he seems to be thinking about Jesus' counsel in Matthew 6:6. "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Just as praying boastfully in front of everyone will not be received well by outsiders, so talk about the Virgin Birth and Trinity boastfully are not likely to win the suffering. The positivism of revelation approach is tone-deaf as to how it comes across. The problem with Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, says Bonhoeffer here, is that it has so adamantly intended to be thinking God's thoughts after God (i.e. "revelation"), it is so intent on not watering down the

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the doctrine of the virgin birth, more than anything else, caused him to utter the charge." Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 114 Cf. 99-114.

message of the Scriptures, that it has unnecessarily put off people by its antagonistic approach so that people fail to see that God is for them. Barth's theology functions as an intimidating ("revelation") bully. Bonhoeffer is not surprised that the world has rejected it. But, he says, God does not have a "take it or leave it" approach toward humanity: "That's not biblical." The Bible itself is not a monolith but rather its sixty-six books reflect the messy, flesh and blood of humanity both in the story it tells and how it is told by its many tellers. And God himself comes near—"through Christ's becoming flesh!" Bonhoeffer says.

Bonhoeffer says something similar later in his letters from prison. Barth's theology has led to a defensive posture.

> Barth and the Confessing Church have encouraged people to entrench themselves again and again behind the notion of the 'faith of the Church' rather than asking and stating honestly what they believe . . . Saying that 'it depends not on me but on the church' can be a cheap clerical excuse and is always perceived that way outside the church.[65]

Bonhoeffer wishes Christians would at least attempt to explain to outsiders what they believe in a way they might understand rather than just reverting to parroting that they stand where the church stands and there can be no more discussion. Bonhoeffer is not surprised that this clerical sort of attitude is off-putting to outsiders, even if they had been sincerely inquiring.

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[65] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 502-503. Quotation marks added to 'it depends not on me but on the church" to clarify the translation.

Some have wondered whether Bonhoeffer is advocating for the Christian faith to be diluted, dumbed down, or "translated" into concepts that every non-Christian can understand. This seems unlikely because this would be a complete repudiation of Bonhoeffer's entire career.[66] As a theologian shaped by Barth, he explicitly rejects liberal theology, and the context is his reflecting on the church's strategies or tactics. Bonhoeffer is grappling with the disconnect between the "average" people he is interacting with in prison and what the church is preaching. The good news is not being heard as good news by the people. Bonhoeffer is thinking about what might be done about that after the war ends.

In response to the accusation that Barth is a particularly antagonistic toward the world, a few things might be said. First, it seems quite understandable that anyone in prison would wonder whether those outside are utilizing their freedom to the utmost and doing all they can. Second, Bonhoeffer, as a long-time Berlin insider with family and friends active in all aspects of German leadership, was more aware of how to put "a

[66] Barth says the answer to the "crusader" or "monastic" who are failing in their communication of the gospel is not to fall into the opposite "liberal" error of being indistinguishable from the world. Barth then says that if Bonhoeffer fell into the liberal error, it was not typical for him. "Dietrich Bonhoeffer possibly had something of this in view in his last years when he made certain rather cryptic statements in his posthumously published *Widerstand und Ergebung* (ed. E. Bethge, Munich, 1951; E.T. *Letters and Papers from Prison* [1971]). Did he perhaps take this line only under extraordinary impressions and experiences? If so, one should not claim that it represents the true scope of his life's work." Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 199-200.

spoke in the wheel"[67] in order to disrupt the machinations of the Nazi regime. Third, as mentioned above, Barth was engaged in a multitude of letters and pamphlets for newspapers and popular magazines at the time, which Bonhoeffer was unaware of.

Fourth, Barth would increasingly trumpet that the church exists "for the world"[68] and is to be in "solidarity with the world."[69] Barth even implicitly takes up the terminology of Bonhoeffer's prison letters to say that in a sense the church must be "worldly." The church "can only approach the world in a sincerely worldly character, making it obvious that in good and ill alike it belongs to it." [70] Fifth, Bonhoeffer is correct that dogmatics devoid of local practical guidance—though necessary if dogmatics are going to be useful to churches all over the world—may not be received well by a typical non-Christian. However, Barth would agree—dogmatics are only one part of the church's task. It is the church's responsibility as a whole to witness and the dogmatician's responsibility is to watch over the content of what is being taught.[71]

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[67] Renate Wind, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992). The critical edition botches the translation with "seize" which implies in English grabbing the steering wheel and taking over as driver. "The third possibility . . . that the church can take vis-à-vis the state . . . is not just to bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself." Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, 365. Better translations are "halt the wheel itself" Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 275. or "arrest" or "stop" the wheel. Ibid., 978, 994..

[68] See the sub-section of §72 entitled "The Community for the World." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 762-795.

[69] Ibid., IV/3.2, 773. The point on being "with the world" is ibid., IV/3.2, 773-776.

[70] Ibid., IV/3.2, 776.

[71] "broadly speaking, the task of dogmatics is to test Church doctrine." Ibid., I/2, 844.

Therefore, on further investigation, it seems unlikely that there is a major difference between Barth and Bonhoeffer regarding the need for the church to give "practical guidance" and to not leave the world "on its own."

In prison, Bonhoeffer criticized Barth for enabling a mindset of "conservative restoration" of the church

Bonhoeffer also wondered whether self-described Barth followers took Barth's focus on dogmatics rather than practical theology to justify the status quo. The Confessing Church, often heralded today for its courage in opposition to Hitler, had in Bonhoeffer's eyes always been a rather weak-willed compromised endeavor that had collapsed by 1944 when he was writing. He is writing all these letters to his good friend Eberhard Bethge who is serving in the German army in Italy. Indecision among the churches and pastors had led to this sorry state of affairs where Nazism had effectively incapacitated the church. The Confessing Church had clung to the status quo in a time of crisis and Bonhoeffer partly blames Barth for not intervening to stop it. Because Barth did not give "concrete guidance," the Confessing Church did not take strong steps early enough. Barth's silence enabled conservatism. "To a great extent the Confessing Church now has forgotten all about Barth's approach and lapsed from positivism into conservative restoration. Its significance is that it holds fast to the great concepts of

Christian theology, but it appears to be exhausting itself gradually in the process."[72] In other words, rather than seeing Barth's contribution for what it was—a bombshell—upsetting religion, the Confessing Church instead tried to return to the past as if Barth's destruction of religion was only intended to hold back the tide of liberal theology rather than to refashion the church (as Bonhoeffer from the time of *Sanctorum Communio* had recognized). Barth had not done enough to disabuse them of this idea.

> If religion is only the garb in which Christianity is clothed—and this garb has looked very different in different ages—what then is religionless Christianity? Barth, who is the only one to have begun thinking along these lines, nevertheless did not pursue these thoughts all the way, did not think them through, but ended with a positivism of revelation, which in the end essentially remained a restoration.[73]

Rephrasing his criticism of Barth's posture of defensiveness toward the world, Bonhoeffer notes: "Confessing Church [=] revelation theology . . . [=] standing against the world . . . [=] Church defending itself."[74] To summarize Bonhoeffer's comments about Barth in *Letters and Papers from Prison*: Bonhoeffer maintained that Barth's dogmatic approach ("he gave no concrete guidance"[75]) was disengaged toward the world ("positivism of revelation") fosters a situation where the Confessing Church holed up with their precious doctrines and let the world burn—thinking (wrongly) that this was what Barth intended. As Pangritz writes, "Bonhoeffer's charge is in fact

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[72] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 429.
[73] Ibid., 363-364.
[74] Ibid., 500. Equal signs are added here to signify Bonhoeffer's use of these terms in apposition.
[75] Ibid., 429.

directed less against Barth himself than it is against a certain conservative 'Barthianism' in the Confessing Church . . . This charge leveled against Barth in Bonhoeffer's prison letters was primarily a critique of conservative Lutheranism and its theology in the Confessing Church."[76] The roarer of the Barmen Declaration had retreated to Switzerland; so these conservatives decided that they should retreat too. Bonhoeffer had tried to wake them but they had wanted to keep sleeping and waiting.

It is important to look more carefully at how Bonhoeffer and Barth thought about conserving the status quo of the institutional church.

Bonhoeffer on the need for church forms to change

Bonhoeffer had long seen how dire was the condition of the church in Germany. It is uncertain how much he and his family attended church growing up. In the original 1927 dissertation but not in his 1930 published version of *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer had a long section in which he reflected on the need for the church to be continually reformed[77] but his advisor Reinhold Seeberg did not approve of these comments and he was also the publisher of the book so it did not make it into the published version. Seeberg wrote about this section, "Likewise his critical comments on church practice, or his hopeful optimism regarding the proletariat along with his

[76] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 77, 82. ibid., 82.
[77] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 269-273.

contempt for the middle class, are superfluous, since they do not arise out of the principles of the thesis but are merely subjective value judgments."[78] In this deleted section, Bonhoeffer wrestles with what Weber and Troeltch called the sect and the positive traits they saw in it. In this section, Bonhoeffer criticizes the "conservatism" of the church, and praises "charismatically gifted personalities," the insights of "the younger generation,"[79] the contributions of the "free churches,"[80] and the interests of the "proletariat."[81] He is not surprised that his contemporaries are turned off by the "bourgeois" church in which the sermon, art, and music are hopelessly irrelevant.[82] Bonhoeffer wants to see the lower classes reached by the church. "We do not seek the proletarian spirit as such, nor to imprison freedom within socialist doctrine, but instead want to take the church-community to the proletariat, and to transform the 'masses' into 'church-communities.'"[83] Seventeen years later, his sense that the church was not reaching the masses remained: "Sociologically: no impact on the broader masses; a

[78] Ibid., 8.
[79] Ibid., 270.
[80] Ibid., 271.
[81] Ibid., 272.
[82] "The sermon serves the need to experience something beautiful, learned, and moral during the free hours of Sunday . . . One simply has to take a look at the pictures hanging in Christian-education facilities and church fellowship halls, or think about the architecture of churches of recent decades or the church music of Mendelssohn and others." Ibid., 273. Cf. "Ecclesiastical action concerns itself mostly [only] with [the] *petite bourgeoisie*; it cannot incorporate intellectuals, capitalists, and workers." Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 277.
[83] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 273.

matter for the lower and upper-middle classes."[84] In other words, the church in Germany was not only inadequate during the *Kirchenkampf* (Church Struggle) against Nazi persecution, it was inadequate in the 1920's. He had been calling for change since then. This is why Barth's silence on the subject is so frustrating for Bonhoeffer.

Underscoring that Bonhoeffer's enigmatic concerns in the prison letters have to do with the visible church is Bonhoeffer's attention to the topic in his stunning "The Visible Church-Community" chapter in *Discipleship*.[85] Moreover, he explains in the preface to *Life Together* (which has only been available in English since the 1996 critical edition) that what he is attempting to do in the book is to further a discussion about "new ecclesial forms" (*neuer kirchlicher Gemeinschaftformen*).[86] He pleads with others to join him in theologically reflecting on these forms.

> The subject matter I am presenting here is such that any further development can take place only through a common effort. We are not dealing with a concern of some private circles but with a task entrusted to the church. Because of this, we are not searching for more or less haphazard individual solutions to a problem. This is, rather, a responsibility to be undertaken by the church as a whole.[87]

His practices in *Life Together* are intended to be suggestive or provisional so as to provoke a larger conversation. He ends the preface this way, "The following remarks are intended to provide only one individual contribution toward answering the extensive

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[84] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 500.
[85] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 225-252, Cf. 110-114.
[86] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, 25. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Gemeinsames Leben; Das Gebetbuch der Bibel*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, vol. 5 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1987), 14.
[87] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, 25.

questions that have been raised thereby. As much as possible, may these comments help to clarify this experience and put it into practice."[88] In other words, *Life Together* is intended to start a conversation about new forms of church community. Surely, Bonhoeffer has this kind of thing in mind when he criticizes Barth for a lack of "concrete guidance" and for Barthians reverting to "conservative restoration." Given this, it is not surprising that Bonhoeffer in prison hopes to explore this topic further in a future book. Early on in the letters he writes that "The questions to be answered would be: What does a church, a congregation, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life, mean in a religionless world?"[89] And when he presents an "Outline for a book," he reiterates that questions of the practical theology implications of ecclesiology interest him:

> Conclusions: The church is church only when it is there for others. As a first step it must give away all its property to those in need. The clergy must live solely on the freewill offerings of the congregations and perhaps be engaged in some secular vocation. The church must participate in the worldly tasks of life in the community—not dominating but helping and serving. It must tell people in every calling what a life with Christ is, what it means "to be there for others."[90]

Bonhoeffer here suggests that church buildings are overrated and that government salaries for clergy should be abolished. Bethge writes,

> he had a fairly clear idea that the church should get rid of many things after the catastrophe of 1945[91] and find new constructions . . . He hardly assumed that the *Volkskirche* that had become so discredited during the Nazi era could simply

[88] Ibid.
[89] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 364.
[90] Ibid., 503.
[91] By "1945" Bethge means the time period from the 1930's to 1945 of the whole National Socialist experiment.

> survive . . . He did not imagine that the financial and organizational structures would emerge little changed.[92]

It is not difficult to see why Bonhoeffer would venture such radical ideas. Bonhoeffer and the preachers' seminaries had been forced to operate in hiding, without government funding, seeking out temporary lodging, depending on the generosity of sympathetic donors (like his fiance's grandmother), and they had thrived until they were shut down by the Gestapo.

The backstory of the *Life Together* experiment was that in 1935 the traditional institutions of theological education (colleges and university divinity schools) had been effectively shut down by the Nazis. However, there was also a tradition of what we might call field education, supervised ministry, internship, residency, or practicum. The denomination required students to set aside six to twelve months halfway through their academic theological training to improve their practical ministry skills, which they thought the academic institutions were poor at developing.[93] Bonhoeffer himself had done his "internship" as an assistant pastor at a German-speaking Lutheran church in Spain so that he did not have to "waste his time" going to one of these lowly preachers' seminaries.[94] But once the academic divinity schools had been totally co-opted and corrupted by the Nazis, these preachers' seminaries became a loophole for theological

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[92] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 887.
[93] Ibid., 420.
[94] Ibid., 98-99.

education. The Gestapo initially considered them too insignificant to merit their attention. The previously disdainful Bonhoeffer became the preachers' seminaries' greatest champion.

Bonhoeffer began his role as director / abbot / professor / principal / dean in April 1935 and the group moved to Finkenwalde in June.[95] Bonhoeffer and his assistant's first class consisted of 22 ordination candidates. They had to find and fix up the places where they lived. They sought out donations of food and money. They would "graduate" after a six-month term. Since many of them had had their academic theological training interrupted when the divinity schools were shut down, Bonhoeffer included significant theological instruction in his curriculum—most notably the lectures that would become his book *Discipleship.* After the first group "graduated," Bonhoeffer asked a few to consider staying around to help the next "class." Bonhoeffer called the six ministers[96] who stayed from the first class the "house of brethren."[97] They functioned as colleagues of Bonhoeffer—we might think of them as camp counselors / staff / assistants / residents. Finkenwalde was closed down by the Gestapo in the autumn of 1937 after "five courses" or "terms."[98] Bonhoeffer wrote *Life Together* in September 1938 describing

[95] Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile vs. The Third Reich* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 262.
[96] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 468.
[97] Ibid., 466.
[98] Ibid., 469.

the practices he had developed. For another two years he would continue to facilitate a modified form of ordinand training in which young pastors situated near to one another would try to assemble regularly for supplemental training and community.[99] In this way, five more "courses" were completed.[100] In March 1940, the Gestapo found the place they were meeting and every able-bodied man was forcibly conscripted into the German army. Bonhoeffer then resorted to writing letters to his former students. Bonhoeffer himself had pioneered "new ecclesial forms" (*neuer kirchlicher Gemeinschaftformen*)[101] and suggested that the dissolution of the church under the Nazis presented an opportunity for reinvention after the war. Merely seeking to restore past forms ("conservative restoration") was a lost opportunity.

Barth on the need for church forms to change

Barth did not articulate a flexible approach to church structure until his mature ecclesiology in the 1950's but a strong theme in his second edition to his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans is the danger of an undue focus on the church's own affairs.[102]

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[99] Ibid., 589. Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile vs. The Third Reich*, 298-299, 360.

[100] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 589.

[101] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, 25. Bonhoeffer, *Gemeinsames Leben; Das Gebetbuch der Bibel*, 14.

[102] Barth decries "religion" for dealing with only temporal things when it claims to be talking about God. Only fear of the Lord and an acknowledgement of the need for forgiveness mitigate the abominable presumption that we understand God. "This inevitability of judgement affects all religions in so far as their reality is merely the reality of temporal and concrete things. It affects religion, even when it is upright and sincere and genuine, even the religion of Abraham and the Prophets, even the religion of the Epistle of the Romans—and it affects, of course, the religion of any one who undertakes to expound the Epistle . . .

Barth says that people who think that the church only needs minor reforms do not recognize the seriousness of the problem. It is "far deeper than this or that corruption, however corrupt it be, which men suppose they can remove."[103] For Barth, the issue of religion is much more serious and pervasive than that which can be removed by adjustments in procedures or by starting afresh. For the prophets and apostles, the primary focus is the fear of the Lord and their awareness of their need for forgiveness; out of this fount flows the parameters for community life together.

But Barth criticized those who were critical of the church but had little to offer in terms of a positive, constructive vision.

> Anti-religious negation has no advantage over the affirmations of religion. To destroy temples is not better than to build them. The silence of devotion is not superior to the words of the preacher. Amaziah AND Amos, Martensen AND Kierkegaard, all the protestations against religion from Nietzsche down to the

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Whenever men suppose themselves conscious of the emotion of nearness of God, whenever they speak and write of divine things, whenever sermon-making and temple-building are thought of as an ultimate human occupation, whenever men are aware of divine appointment and of being entrusted with a divine mission, sin veritably abounds (Romans 5:20)—unless the miracles of forgiveness accompanies such activity; unless, that is to say, the fear of the Lord maintains the distance by which God is separated from men (Romans 1:22, 23). No human demeanor is more open to criticism, more doubtful, or more dangerous, than religious demeanor." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 136. Cf. Ibid., 242. Barth goes on to argue that when religion is operating, it becomes all the more clear the distance between it and the God of whom it hopes to speak. "No religion is capable of altering the fact that the behavior of men is a behavior apart from God. All that religion can do is to expose the complete godlessness of human behavior." Ibid., 276.

[103] Ibid., 340. He writes that if the issues were minor, the severe tone of the biblical prophets and apostles must merely be superfluous ranting. If the issues were small, they would have been blithely confident that that a new people or could easily replace and surpass the corrupted old version. "Were it merely a question of human failings, or of some kind of deterioration, the fiery wrath of Prophets and Apostles and the Church would be inexplicable. Why, if that were so, did they not patiently set themselves to introduce reforms? And if that failed, why did they not forthwith erect a new and better Church? Why did Paul and Luther for so long avoid the construction of a new road? And why did they finally construct it only under compulsion?" Ibid. Translation revised. "only construct it under compulsion" has been changed to "construct it only under compulsion" to better capture the emphasis on *only*.

> most degraded and loud-voiced anticlericals, the whole anti-theological romanticism of aestheticism, socialism, and the Youth Movement in its multifarious ramifications, are without exception enveloped in haze, and incompetent to provide security.[104]

Here—in perhaps Barth's most polemical critical work—he criticizes those who only know how to criticize. "We do not escape from sin by removing ourselves from religion and taking up with some other and superior thing—if indeed that were possible."[105] Later in the commentary, Barth goes on to distance himself from more anti-religious idealists. He names Marcion, Heinrich Lhotzky, Leonhard Ragaz, Johann Tobias Beck (J.T. or "old Tobias") the leaders of the old school of Württemberg including Johann Christoph Blumhardt ("the older Blumhardt" or "Pastor Blumhardt"), and even his own first edition of the commentary on the epistle to the Romans as deficient on this score.[106] Repeating his charge later in the commentary, Barth finds the worst aspects of "religion" even in those who specifically attempt to get away from religion altogether including virtually all of his theological heroes in 1921.

> Religion neither overcomes human worldliness nor transfigures it; not even the religion of Primitive Christianity or of Isaiah or of the Reformers can rid itself of this limitation. Nor is it merely fortuitous that an odor of death seems, as it were, to hang about the very summits of religion. There proceeds, for example, from Zwingli an insipid bourgeoisdom, from Kierkegaard the poison of a too intense pietism, from Dostoevsky an hysterical world-fatigue, from the Blumhardts,

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[104] Ibid., 136.

[105] Ibid., 241.

[106] Ibid. and for more background on these people, see references to them in Barth's correspondence in Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*.

> father and son, a far too easy complacency. Woe be to us, if from the summits of religion there pours forth nothing but—religion![107]

The answer says Barth is not to escape religion but to pursue faithful participation knowing its dangers. "Let us be convincedly nothing but religious men; let us adore and tarry and hurry with all the energy we possess; let us cultivate, nurse, and stir up religion; and above all, let us reform it; nay more, revolutionize it."[108] This involves becoming "fully aware of the tension and disturbance and impossibility of our situation as religious men" where one's best efforts are still tainted by sin—dependent for their legitimacy and efficacy on the mercy of God.[109] Later in the book, Barth writes specifically about the church. He has harsh words for those who are dismissive of the church. It is they who are irrational and blind. "Why is it only lesser, overwrought, hysterical, religious spirits . . . [who engineer] direct, anti-ecclesiastical behavior"?[110] Faithfulness is not made by lessening our involvement in the church.

> We must not, because we are fully aware of the eternal opposition between the Gospel and the Church, hold ourselves aloof from the Church or break up its solidarity; but rather, participating in its responsibility and sharing the guilt of its inevitable failure, we should accept it and cling to it.[111]

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[107] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 276.
[108] Ibid., 254-255.
[109] Ibid., 255, Cf. 256-257.
[110] Ibid., 340.
[111] Ibid., 334, Cf. 340.

Barth makes clear that he is not against the church. He is not distancing himself from the church. Criticism of the church is criticism of ourselves. It is exposing our own weaknesses.

> The description of the Church which we have just given is often blamed as being typical of those who oppose the Church or who, at least, hold themselves aloof from it. But blame such as this [misses the mark] . . . our critics go on to propose that we ought to leave the Church if we think of it [like that] . . . we are bound to state that we could not contemplate such a proposal, and would do our best to dissuade others from even considering it. It would never enter our heads to think of leaving the Church. For in describing the Church we are describing ourselves.[112]

In volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth warns of the "sacralisation" of the church—a church fixated on its own affairs. Barth instead exhorts the church to see its task as that of a witness to the world, for the world. Barth argues that it is easy for Christians to slip into enjoying being important, breezily substituting God's work for their own, functionally declaring to the world the wonderful "gospel" of themselves. Barth notes that this tendency to become dead religion is not limited to churches with a big centralized government (such as Roman Catholics or those with episcopal polity) but rather even "the tiniest of sects."[113]

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[112] Ibid., 371.

[113] "And in so doing, by trying to be important and powerful within it [the world] instead of serving, by trying to be great instead of small, by trying to make pretentious claims for itself instead of soberly advocating the claim of God, it withdraws from the world . . . For if it does, its own common spirit replaces the Holy Spirit, and its own work the work of God—its offices and sacraments, its pure preaching of the Gospel, its liturgies and confessions, its acts of witness and love, its art and theology, its faithfulness to the Bible, its sovereign communities or collegiate governments or authoritarian heads with or without their vestments and golden crosses, its institutions and the specific events of its encounter with God's revelation, its whole *Kyrie eleison*, which is no longer a cry for the mercy of God and in which it does not even take itself

In *The Christian Life*, unfinished fragments of *Church Dogmatics* IV/4 published posthumously, Barth describes this same phenomenon (sacralisation) in terms of "the church in excess" because it overextends itself—claiming more for itself than is fitting. Too much church and not enough God = excess church. (This is contrast to the pointing of John the Baptist to Jesus saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" in John 3:30 as depicted in Matthias Grünewald's altarpiece—a copy of which hung over Barth's desk).[114] In these late fragments, Barth again emphasizes that all sorts of church traditions, not just the Roman Catholic Church, are susceptible to this preoccupation with their own affairs "even down to the Baptists." Barth also calls "the church in excess" or "the church succumbing to sacralisation," the "introverted church" because it is more interested in itself than its Lord. This church begins thinking that somehow Jesus is in their hands to wield: "the church takes to mean that he [God] is in its hands" as if the tail wags the dog. In its presumptuous assumption that everything that it does is

literally, let alone allow the world to do so. And the result is the development in the world—for why should not Christians too enjoy some measure of worldly success?—of ecclesiastical authorities which in some degree, greater or smaller or even very small, are self-exalting and self-established. In this respect we are not thinking only of the Pope and his Church, but of what can happen in even the tiniest of sects. We are thinking of what can and does always and everywhere happen in a hundred different forms; of the slipping of the community into the sacralisation in which it not only cuts itself off from its own origin and goal and loses its secret by trying to reveal it in itself, but also separates itself for its own pleasure from poor, sinful, erring humanity bleeding from a thousand wounds, trying to impose itself where it owes its witness, and denying and suppressing its witness by witnessing only to itself." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 669-670.

[114] Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 6.

what Jesus is doing, it is "leaping over the barrier between it and him" so that "the church makes it hard to see how far he is over it, how far he is its Lord."[115]

However, that does not mean that the church can ignore church structure entirely. Barth asserts that the notion proffered by Rudolph Sohm and Emil Brunner and others of an unstructured, un-institutional church is similar to an un-bodily church—that is a Docetic-like ecclesiology. Barth argues Sohm's and Brunner's allergy to church law is impractical and inconsistent. Sohm and Brunner emphasize the importance of turning away from church policies to listen to the Spirit; but Barth finds this foolish. By obstinately refusing to put into place such guidelines, unstated laws will fill the vacuum.[116] Correct ecclesiology or what Barth calls "living Church law" should resist

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[115] "The one form of the denial and apostasy is the church in excess, the presumptuous church which exalts itself and puffs itself up. At this point one is naturally inclined as a Protestant to think especially of the Roman church. There may be something in this. But one should keep in view that the Roman church is not just a church in excess, involved in apostasy only on this side. One should also keep in view that, even if in less striking and classical form, the church in excess, in apostasy on this side, may be very clearly seen in the non-Roman Christian world, not only on its right wing among the Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and Lutherans, but also on the left wing, even down to the Baptists, though only on the margin.. . . It becomes and is the church in excess by boasting about him in order to be able to boast about itself . . . That he gives himself to it, the church takes to mean that he is in its hands. . . . In dealing thus with him, in leaping over the barrier between it and him, the church makes it hard to see how far he is over it, how far he is its Lord." Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 137-138.

[116] "The enslavement of the Church to law is, we are told, the great evil, or "misunderstanding," which has to be set right in this drastic fashion. . . . . But a community which does not ask concerning law and order, inevitably abandoning its life to chance and caprice and confusion, will be just as much in contradiction to the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ as one which sets its answers to this question above or in place of the Holy Spirit. Enslavement to law is certainly one of the great dangers which threaten the Church (in the wider context of what we have described as sacralisation). But is it the only one? And can we really meet it by disputing and anathematising the whole idea of Church law?" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 681. The quotations in the block quote are Barth quoting Brunner. The English translation of the Latin is in brackets.

such "crude or refined ecclesiological Docetism."[117] Barth insists that it is no great virtue to be vague about that which is clear.[118] Barth is aware of the possibility of the church becoming constricted and choked by too many rules and regulations but he also does not think rules are the antithesis of the Holy Spirit.[119] Good ecclesiology should give specific answers as far as it is able.[120] Though it is possible for an ecclesiology to go wrong by being too specific, one should not claim that it is "spiritual," that is, keeping with the Holy Spirit, to put off taking a position on an issue indefinitely. It is appropriate to have declare provisional judgments about an issue.[121]

While people often think of Barth's critique of religion, echoing points he made in the *Römerbrief*, Barth is also critical of those that confidently reject traditional churchly

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[117] Ibid., IV/2, 712.

[118] Good church ecclesiology "does not mean law which is formless, which is unexpressed, which exists only in instincts and emotions, which finds utterance in uncontrollable inspirations and intuitions, which escapes juridical statement and codification . . . Nor is it characterised by the greatest possible vagueness, by a restriction to general lines, by a purposeful elasticity in its detailed provisions which allows the greatest possible latitude of interpretation. It is not distinguished and commended as Church law by the fact that its significance for the life of the community is reduced to a minimum." Ibid., 712.

[119] "They [Christians] can and must venture these provisional insights and conclusions. Where there is the genuine dynamic from above, the power of the Holy Spirit (who is obviously no sceptic), the community cannot refuse this venture." Ibid., 711. Barth's reference here to the church venturing provisional findings from the Holy Spirit is reminiscent of the line from the letter to the Gentile Christians in Acts 15:28, "ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν" "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

[120] "answers which involve the establishment and execution of ecclesiastical and congregational ordinances in which one thing is commanded, another forbidden and a third permitted, or left to free and responsible judgment within certain limits in which explicit decisions are made according to the best of our knowledge and conscience." Ibid., IV/2, 711.

[121] "They must be answers which have legal form and precision, although without unnecessary refinement. If the inquiry is genuine, it will not seek to prolong itself *ad infinitum*. Those who ask will seek answers, definite insights and conclusions, on the basis of which they can then proceed to further inquiry. They will not be afraid of finding answers." Ibid., 711.

religiosity and embrace "non-Christian culture"[122] – in effect, forming new religiosities. In the volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth notes that the church is constantly threatened by what he calls the "secularisation" of the church—by which he means the insidious seeping of the world's values into the church.[123] The church[124] that is succumbing to secularisation, is "accommodating itself to it [the world], being 'conformed' (Rom. 12:2) to its pattern, and therefore belonging to it."[125] And later, Barth writes in *The Christian Life* that Protestants (as opposed to Roman Catholics and Orthodox who tend to take their ecclesial practices seriously) are particularly prone to collapsing and conforming to the world.[126] The "church in defect" is Barth's phrase in

[122] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264.
[123] Barth uses "secularisation" and "alienation" interchangeably. The church "may fall victim to . . . alienation (secularisation)." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 667. German: *Sie kann . . . der Fremdhörigkeit (der Säkularisierung) . . . verfallen*. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 754. But the word "secularisation" instead of "alienation" is used in this dissertation because it conveys more accurately in English the sense of the church becoming like the world. It is true that "secularization" is most often used to describe how whole societies are becoming less religious but the idea that churches are becoming more secular still makes sense. It is doubtful whether *Fremdhörigkeit* of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* is best translated "alienation" as it is in the English translation of the *Church Dogmatics.* It should rather be translated something like foreign-bondage, stranger-bondage, alien-bondage or foreign enslavement or hostile takeover. There are only four instances of *Fremdhörigkeit* in ibid., IV/2, 754, 754, 756, 758. "Alienation" in English has more of a sense of being exiled or banished by the people who once communed with you; whereas *Fremdhörigkeit* has more to do with allowing oneself to be seduced by the stranger—listening to them. *Säkularisierung* is used 22 times in the *Church Dogmatics*—another reason to use it as the more important descriptor of the phenomenon.
[124] Barth is here using the German word *die Gemeinde* usually translated "community" in the *Church Dogmatics* but it is quite clear that Barth is talking about "the Christian community" as this is how he describes *Gemeinde* repeatedly in the beginning of the section. See *der christlichen Gemeinde* repeatedly on Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 695. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 614.
[125] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 667.
[126] "The other form of apostasy is the church in defect, the church which does not take itself seriously enough because it is only half sure of its cause, which takes up this cause only hesitantly and with reservations and compromises, which only in a timid and uncommitted way ventures to give itself to its

the *Christian Life* for the church that thinks too little of itself and is too impressed by the world.[127]

Though Bonhoeffer worried that Barth was encouraging conservative resistance to changing the structure of the church, Barth from his time writing the commentary on Romans through volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* seems well-aware of the problems of the existing church structures and supported change and never seems to have urged restoration.

Pangritz's suggestion that Barth and Bonhoeffer differ in their approach to the missionary task.

Andreas Pangritz suggests that Barth and Bonhoeffer had very different ideas of what it meant for the church to be "for others."[128] For Barth, it had to do with verbal proclamation. Whereas Bonhoeffer thought the church must merely be for others in

task. At this point Protestantism of every denomination has reason to think first of itself." Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 137.

[127] For the sake of clarity: because Barth uses this technical vocabulary "the church in defect" in *The Christian Life,* this dissertation has tried to conform to Barth's usage by reserving the use of the cognate adjectives such as "defective" and "deficient" and "inadequate" to refer to what Barth calls the "church in defect"—what he calls in IV/2 the church susceptible to "secularisation." (Correspondingly, these adjectives are generally not used in the dissertation to describe the other major church problem: sacralisation. Barth calls churches being too "sacralised" (IV/2) in *The Christian Life* "the church in excess" or "the church of excess").

[128] Jennifer McBride holds Bonhoeffer and Barth together in their visions of a church "for others." "Barth and Bonhoeffer both emphasize conformation to Christ and share an understanding that the church's true words must, like Christ, be an incarnate interconnection of word and deed." Jennifer M. McBride, *The Church for the World: a Theology of Public Witness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28 Cf. 23-29.

"prayer and righteous action."[129] Pangritz writes, "In Barth 'the triumph of grace' appears to work itself out in a missionary consciousness in the elect that is not far removed from ecclesiastical triumphalism and the eagerness to convert the 'godless' world. For Bonhoeffer, the church's service for the world consists simply in 'being for others.'"[130]

Regarding Barth, this phrase "the triumph of grace," which is drawn from the title of G.C. Berkouwer's 1956 book,[131] does not in Berkouwer's book have to do with ecclesiastical triumphalism or eagerness to convert, nor are these characterizations from Bonhoeffer, nor are they common in the literature on Barth's ecclesiology; they are however typical criticisms hurled at conservatives from liberals (i.e. "ecclesiastical triumphalism" signifies ignorance and "eager to convert" signifies intolerance).

Regarding Bonhoeffer, it is not clear his solidarity with the suffering[132] was as theologically simplistic as Pangritz applies. Pangritz writes that "Bonhoeffer was less circumspect" about theological criteria to evaluate the contribution of secular voices "naming 'all suffering for a just cause' as a criterion in which the community may

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[129] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 94-96.
[130] Ibid., 124.
[131] G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, American ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956).
[132] "It remains an experience of incomparable value that we have for once learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, in short from the perspective of the suffering." Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 52.

discern the breadth of the lordship of Jesus Christ."[133] But this is a badly skewed reading of what Bonhoeffer says. The full quote makes clear that suffering for a just cause may draw people to Christ.[134] Bonhoeffer does not say verbal proclamation for conversation does not matter or that only solidarity with those suffering matters.

Besides the enormous amount of evidence in *Discipleship* and *Ethics* that Bonhoeffer believed in a visible church at work witnessing to the world in a way that exceeded mere solidarity with those who are suffering and the lack of evidence that Bonhoeffer in prison repudiated these views, Bonhoeffer also confided to Bethge in his prison letters that he thought he should be verbally sharing the gospel with fellow prisoners though he also admitted his inner reluctance to do so and he wondered why.[135] It is not farfetched to think that his reflection in later letters about the need to be able to speak with others about Christianity in nonreligious ways flowed from his experience of attempting to communicate the gospel to non-Christians. The people he met in prison had "come of age" in the sense that they were no longer susceptible to the appeal that they needed "religion." This motley crew did not think back about the smattering of

[133] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 137. quoting Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 347.
[134] "Thus the person persecuted for a just cause is led to Christ. Thus it happens that such people, in the hour of their suffering and responsibility—perhaps for the first time in their lives, in a way that is strange and surprising to themselves, but nevertheless as a most deeply felt necessity—call upon Christ and confess themselves to be Christian, because it is only at that moment that an awarenesss of belonging to Christ dawns on them." Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 347.
[135]Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 366.

Lutheran or Catholic "religious" worship services they had attended as the key to overthrowing Hitler. Bonhoeffer was convinced Christianity could be of help in situation but he was sympathetic that the impression conveyed by "religious" Christianity was not particularly compelling. Thus, Bonhoeffer spoke about nonreligious or religionless Christianity. Bonhoeffer felt the church must do more of this kind of talking with other people after the war. There is a clear sense in his outline for a book that the church has something to share. Pangritz's label "triumphalism" is theological shorthand for dismissing verbal proclamation but Barth makes quite clear that witness is merely "pointing a finger" to Jesus Christ—that the church can only boast in him. McBride says both Barth and Bonhoeffer articulate what George Hunsinger says is typical of Barth: "'exclusivism without triumphalism' or 'inclusivism without compromise.'"[136] Barth is very aware of the danger of sacralisation—the church pointing to itself—and is adamant that the church "declare, explain, and apply" the gospel in a way that does not allow it to be dismissed as religious talk.[137]

Barth and Bonhoeffer differ little on the Jews

Pangritz also suspects that Bonhoeffer's sense that Barth had a "positivism of revelation" may also have to do with what Pangritz characterizes as Barth's triumphalist

[136] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, 280. Cf. McBride, *The Church for the World: a Theology of Public Witness*, 26.
[137] See below in response to John Howard Yoder's concern about persuasion. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 843-844, Cf. 843-854.

double-predestination conversionist approach toward the Jews. Pangritz also suggests that Bonhoeffer and Barth differ over the Jews and *apokatastasis* (i.e. universalism). Pangritz depicts Barth as believing the Jews are damned as part of double predestination whereas Bonhoeffer believes the Jews are saved as part of *apokatastasis.* Pangritz writes about Barth, "This corresponds only too much to the church's traditional sense of having been chosen as the 'new' people of God over against Israel as the allegedly rejected 'old' one."[138] Whereas, "Bonhoeffer has conclusively renounced the idea of 'the conversion' of Israel that secretly still governs Barth's doctrine of Israel."[139]

In these comments, Pangritz misconstrues Barth's position on the Jews in *Church Dogmatics* II/2 and exaggerates the differences between the two theologians. Barth does not say the Jews are damned and is quite open to the *apokatastasis* while Bonhoeffer does not baldly declare Jews saved or embrace the *apokatastasis.*

Regarding the charge that Barth is supercessionist, damning, and missionizing toward the Jews, Eberhard Busch has the following to say about *Church Dogmatics* II/2. "For Barth, all Christian anti-Judaism is essentially rooted in this doctrine of the replacement of Israel by the Church, a theology that he thoroughly disputed."[140] "Israel

[138] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 125.
[139] Ibid., 128.
[140] Eberhard Busch, "The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews During the Hitler Era." http://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~ebusch/princeton.pdf.

is elected first. Because Israel remains elect in Christ, the only possibility for these Gentiles is their calling to be joined to the covenant."[141] "Mission to the Jews is thus excluded, since both together are witnesses of the electing God."[142]

There is no evidence that this topic was behind Bonhoeffer's critical comments about Barth's "a positivism of revelation" in 1944. Pangritz's theory is based on Bonhoeffer's hope to get to read more of "The Doctrine of Predestination" in *Church Dogmatics* II/2 in a letter from prison on December 19, 1943. Pangritz hypothesizes that having read it, his probing comments in 1944, which we have treated above, reflect displeasure with the themes of II/2.[143] In contrast, Charles Marsh comments that in prison, "The latest installment in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, volume II/2, thrilled Bonhoeffer endlessly."[144] There is no textual evidence in the prison letters that Bonhoeffer's critical comments in 1944 about Barth were related specifically to the content of volume II/2.[145]

Pangritz qualifies his earlier harsh statement that Barth crassly calls for the conversion of the Jews by saying that in volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth

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[141] Ibid., 10.
[142] Ibid., 13.
[143] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 232; Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 118-119.
[144] Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 357.
[145] Pangritz seems to have followed the suggestion of Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt who related Barth's approach to the Jews to the "positivism of revelation." Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 126-130.

expands upon aspects of his earlier position and rejects a missionary posture toward Jews. "What had already been materially suggested in the christological basis of the 'doctrine of Israel' in *Church Dogmatics* II/2, is now explicitly developed: the rejection of the 'mission to Jews.'"[146] But this is an overstatement in the opposite direction. Barth does say, "It is thus unfortunate to speak of Jewish missions. The Jew who is conscious of his Judaism and takes it seriously can only think that he is misunderstood and insulted when he hears this term [Jewish missions]. And the [Christian] community has to see that materially he [the Jews] is right.""[147] Talking to practicing Jews as if they are ignorant of God is not only insulting but also false. But that does not mean the church is not to witness to the Jews. "Does this mean that the Christian community has no responsibility to discharge its ministry of witness to the Jews? Not at all!"[148] "We certainly can and should hold talks with the Jews for the purpose of information."[149] But these "conversations" with Jews about Jesus will be totally different than speaking to a pagan who is totally unfamiliar with the Hebrew Bible. To Jews, "It [the church] must be able to set Him [Jesus] clearly before it [the Jews] as the Messiah already come"[150] and

[146] Ibid., 140.
[147] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 877.
[148] Ibid., IV/3.2, 878.
[149] Ibid., IV/3.2, 877-878.
[150] Ibid., IV/3.2, 878.

primarily in its ethics and love: "the life of the [Christian] community as a whole authentically lived before the Jews."[151]

Pangritz also qualifies his earlier statement that Barth relegates Jews to the damned as part of double predestination: "Bonhoeffer would certainly have attacked Barth less harshly had he discerned more clearly Barth's leaning toward *apokatastasis* which already qualifies his 'doctrine of Israel.'"[152] Furthermore, Pangritz admits that Bonhoeffer does not fully embrace the *apokatastasis*. Pangritz says that when Bonhoeffer alluded to it in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being,* he did not want to make it into "a self-evident point of departure for a dogmatic train of thought."[153]

The most definitive difference is Bonhoeffer's strength in practical theology as compared to Barth's in dogmatics

In a later letter, Barth wonders whether the corollary of his failures to give good practical theology advice is that Bonhoeffer for his part, was not as strong in dogmatics: "very softly I venture to doubt whether theological systematics [*die theologische Systematik*] (I include his *Ethics*) was his real strength."[154] At first glance, this appears a bit harsh and defensive. Barth had effusively praised *Sanctorum Communio* and

[151] Ibid.
[152] Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 139.
[153] Ibid., 130-131. quoting Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 171 Cf. 286-287. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 160-161. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 230.
[154] Barth, "Letter to Eberhard Bethge, 22 May 1967," 252.

Discipleship and borrows the *analogia relationis* concept from Bonhoeffer's *Creation and Fall*.[155] But Barth reacted this way because he was annoyed that one isolated phrase "a positivism of revelation" from Bonhoeffer's prison letters was being used to characterize his 14 volume *Church Dogmatics*.[156] But to be fair to Barth, Bonhoeffer never did have a full-time professor position and never attempted to anything like the systemization and comprehensiveness of Barth's *Church Dogmatics.* In that sense, Barth is certainly correct to say that "theological systematics [*die theologische Systematik*]" was not Bonhoeffer's interest. Furthermore, Barth was not saying that Bonhoeffer's work was without value. Bonhoeffer's work could be described as "practical theology," "irregular dogmatics," or "special ethics"—all three of which Barth affirms to be necessary.

For Barth, practical theology must be local and contemporary; whereas dogmatics (or systematic theology) involves sketching concepts that are applicable to a wide variety of settings.[157] "Practical theology [*praktische Theologie*] must aim to give

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[155] Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, 194-196. Cf. Matthew Puffer, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Theology of Karl Barth," in *Karl Barth in Conversation*, ed. W. Travis McMaken and David W. Congdon (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 50-51.

[156]"The results of irregular dogmatics are more exposed than those of regular dogmatics to the danger of being purely accidental, for in form at least they nearly always tend to be strongly influenced by the person and biography of their authors." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 279.

[157] "Such a system, however, in the sphere of practical theology, could have only limited and passing validity. For even to-day the history of the community moves on from century to century. And under the influence of different traditions, but also of the different places and circumstances in which it exists, the community might well find itself inspired and summoned to new variations of the basic forms, and endowed for them. Our concern, then, is with the forms of differentiated ministry which persist in both past and present." Ibid., IV/3.2, 859-860.

meaningful directions [*sinnvolle Anweisung*] to the ministry of the community [*Gemeinde* / church] in the world."[158] Indeed, Bonhoeffer, as a native Berliner with familial ties to key German educational, legal, and business institutions, had far more perspective about tactics and maneuvering in church politics in Germany than Barth, the former rural pastor, and Swiss outsider, focused on immersing himself in the history of Christian theology. Barth reflects that he too had been heavily involved in politics in Switzerland when he was Bonhoeffer's age.

Early in the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth had affirmed "irregular dogmatics" (*irreguläre Dogmatik*) as rough preliminary reflection that leads to more "complete" "regular dogmatics" (*regulärer Dogmatik*).[159] In another place, he affirms "special ethics"

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[158] Ibid., IV/3.2, 881. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 1009. Cf. Practical Theology is seeking instructions [*Anweisungen*] from the other theological disciplines about what is "normative for the practice [*Norm für die Praxis*] of its ministry in every branch." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 880. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 1009.

[159] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 275-287. "By regular dogmatics we mean an enquiry into dogma which aims at the completeness [*Vollständigkeit*]. . . it must be as complete [*vollständig*]as possible." Ibid., I/1, 275-276. "By irregular dogmatics, on the other hand . . . there is thus no primary concern for the completeness mentioned above . . . In one respect or another, or even in many or all respects, it will be, and will mean to be, a fragment, and it will have to be evaluated as such." Ibid., I/1, 277. "It should also be noted that regular dogmatics has always had its origin in irregular dogmatics, and could never have existed without its stimulus and co-operation . . . it should be asked from time to time whether the aphoristic style of irregular dogmatics or the systematic style of regular dogmatics does more or less justice to the task of dogmatics. The call for the one or the other may become a necessity, just as it may also be necessary to confine either the one or the other to its proper limits." Ibid., I/1, 278. With regard to irregular dogmatics being fragments rather than completeness, note that Barth explicitly calls Bonhoeffer's reflections in *Letters and Papers from Prison* "fragments" as well. "The fragments of his theology (especially from his final years) have unfortunately become the fashion." Carl Zuckmayer and Karl Barth, *A Late Friendship: The Letters of Karl Barth and Carl Zuckmayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 42. See also "the brilliant *Ethik* of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German ed. 1949, E.T., 1955), which unfortunately exists only in a fragmentary [*fragmentarisch*] and provisional form." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 3-4.

[*speziellen Ethik*] (the exploration of ethics as a specialized field) as long as it is disciplined by dogmatics and there he explicitly affirms Bonhoeffer's work.[160]

Barth sees his job as a dogmatician to help Christians to consider the relevant "abstract principles" but it is the local church's responsibility to consider the best local strategy.[161] Barth thought that it was sometimes better for him not to be part of discussions where practical strategy was being considered lest his presence discourage others—who knew better than he what to do—from engaging.

> It may also be good, if I'm not there in person, to get used to, among other things, the fact that the younger generation now will have to more and more, with their own insight and responsibility, be the first line of advance in fighting sweeping battles on the *practical theological* front. Meanwhile I want to continue to work on, that which is also on the whole also a meaningful endeavor, the *Church Dogmatics,* important parts of which are still pending.[162]

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[160] "the ethical question . . . cannot rightly be asked and answered except within the framework, or at any rate the material context, of dogmatics . . . It is this connexion with dogmatics which guards ethics against arbitrary assertions, arguments or conclusions, and allows it to follow a secure path to fruitful judgments . . . In books and lectures ethics can be treated independently, that is, in external separation from dogmatics, so long as it is presupposed that this separation is understood and treated as purely technical, and therefore that dogmatics is not detached from its ethical content and direction and that the question of dogmatics remains paramount and decisive in ethics . . . the link with dogmatics is a commendable feature of the brilliant *Ethik* of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German ed. 1949, E.T., 1955), which unfortunately exists only in a fragmentary and provisional form." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 3-4.

[161] "For Hungary, though not only for this country, everything depends on whether the Church, not bound to abstract principles but to its living Lord, will seek and find its own way and also learn to choose freely the time for speech and the time for silence and all the other various other times mentioned in Ekklesiastes, Chapter 3, without thereby becoming confused by any law other than that of the gospel." Karl Barth, "Karl Barth's Reply (6 June 1948) to Emil Brunner's An Open Letter to Karl Barth," in *Against the Stream* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 118.

[162] Barth opposed nuclear proliferation but thought others needed to step up and reflect on how to proceed practically. Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 101-104. Karl Barth, "12 Gespräch mit der Kirchlichen Bruderschaft in Württemberg (15.7.1963)," in *Gespräche 1963 (GA IV.41)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005), 65-77. Karl Barth, "Brief an die Bruderschaft: 1958," in *"Der Götze wackelt": Zeitkritische Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960*, ed. Karl Kupisch (Berlin: Käthe Vogt Verlag, 1961), 177. My translation of: "Es hat vielleicht auch sein Gutes, wenn ich nicht

Bonhoeffer conclusion

Having looked at the criticisms of Barth's ecclesiology by Bonhoeffer, none expose a gaping flaw in Barth's ecclesiology. Bonhoeffer had pressed Barth regarding: a constructive account of the church, Christians' need for concrete guidance, the importance of Christians' solidarity with the world, and structural renewal of the Christendom-formed church. Barth agreed strongly with all of these and addressed each of these concerns. What did separate them were their different approaches: Barth's systematic theology and Bonhoeffer's practical theology.

persönlich dort bin - unter anderem auch dazu, daß die jüngere Generation sich nun mehr und mehr daran wird gewöhnen müssen, in die erste Linie vorzurücken und die an der *praktischtheologischen* Front zu schlagenden Schlachten in eigener Einsicht und Verantwortlichkeit auszufechten. Unterdessen will ich mich, was ja für das Ganze auch seinen Sinn haben wird, bemühen, die Arbeit an der „*Kirchlichen Dogmatik*", von der wichtige Teile noch ausstehen." Emphasis added to "practical theological" to contrast it with "dogmatics."

Erik Peterson

In his 1925 address. "What is Theology?" Erik Peterson criticizes Barth's theology as vulnerable to the most pernicious problem in Protestantism—utter independence from all church authority, which devolves into professors airing their own opinions.[163] Barth responded with a lecture entitled "Church and Theology" in October 1925, which was published in 1926, and revised in 1928.[164] This interaction is explored by Reinhard Hütter and Stanley Hauerwas in recent works treating Barth's ecclesiology.[165]

Five years later in 1930, Peterson became a Roman Catholic[166] (after having been Barth's colleague for nine years)[167] but even in this 1925 exchange Barth recognizes the

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[163] Erik Peterson, *Theological Tractates* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-14.

[164] Karl Barth, "Church and Theology," in *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings, 1920-1928* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 286-306. The lecture "Kirche und Theologie" was given on October 7 and 23, 1925. Versions were published in 1926. It was revised by Barth and published in the collection of essays in 1928. Karl Barth, *Die Theologie und die Kirche (Gesammelte Vorträge 2)* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag AG, 1950). Karl Barth, "Kirche und Theologie {2}: Vortrag, gehalten am 23.10.1925 in der theologischen Woche zu Elberfeld (Lecture, Delivered on October 23, 1925 at the Theological Week in Elberfeld)," *Reformierte Kirchenzeitung Kirche und Theologie* 76, no. 5 (1926); Karl Barth, "Kirche und Theologie: Vortrag, gehalten am 7.10.1925 an der Göttinger Herbstkonferenz und am 23.10.1925 in der theologischen Woche zu Elberfeld (Lecture Delivered on October 7, 1925 at the Göttingen Fall Conference and on October 23, 1925 at the Theological Week Elberfeld)," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 4, no. 1 (1926).

[165] See Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 5-22, 95-115. Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 177-178.

[166] Peterson, *Theological Tractates*, xv.

[167] Michael Hollerich writes, "At Göttingen and later at Bonn, Peterson became acquainted with Barth, who was quite taken with his younger colleague; in 1921 he recommended him to Bultmann for a position at Marburg . . . At the time of his conversion, Peterson wrote from Italy to ask Barth to announce the news of his conversion and resignation from Bonn [in 1930]. Barth obliged by publishing the letter, along with a gracious preface, in *Theologische Blätter*. The news came as no surprise to Barth, who had heard Peterson lecture sympathetically on Thomas Aquinas in the winter of 1923-24, and had recognized the catholicising tendency of the positions on theology and church developed in such treatises as *Was ist Theologie?* (1926) and *Die Kirche* (1929)." Michael J. Hollerich, "Retrieving a Neglected Critique of Church, Theology and Secularization in Weimar Germany," *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 3 (1993): 309.

concerns of Peterson as typical Roman Catholic arguments that can be more clearly addressed when formulated as such. "That it [Peterson's argument] is Roman Catholic and in more than one section super-Catholic, I certainly agree."[168] Still, Barth says Peterson must be taken seriously[169] because he has correctly identified a problem in much Protestant theology—the "contamination . . . from the Rationalism and Pietism which have so successfully infiltrated us . . . the evolutionary historicity, moralism, and idealism which rule our present-day theology."[170] Barth agrees with Peterson that most Protestant theologians do not have a church tradition which they look to for authoritative parameters under which they do theology. If asked the question, "What is authoritative for you as a theologian?" most Protestant theologians would tick off a list of commitments which underlie their theology. Barth writes that the typical Protestant theologian "unfortunately can give only a personal, contingent, unauthoritative answer."[171] Sometimes the materials which a theologian recognizes as authoritative are reputable orthodox sources but it is problematic that the list has been arrived at so subjectively. Barth says that the Protestant theologian typically mutters something like this: "I operate under the authority of . . .

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[168] Barth, "Church and Theology," 287.
[169] "I should not consider it right nor wise to give the all too obvious answer to Peterson's thesis that it is Roman Catholic in its presuppositions and conclusions and can therefore be met with silence as deserving to be ignored rather than discussed." Ibid.
[170] Ibid., 288.
[171] Ibid., 290.

> this and that confession of faith of the branch of the Church to which I am bound, established at the time of the Reformation and since then neither revoked nor substantially modified, together with this and that presupposed affirmation of the Ancient Church, on which the confession rests, constitute what I call dogma, when I am pursuing dogmatics."[172]

Barth says the problem with this answer is that it is subject to the theologian's own whims because it was arrived upon by the theologian themself. Barth writes that the problem is "this answer is *the theologian's;* and however well it is grounded, it not the answer that should be given here [in response to Peterson's question 'which dogma?'], precisely because it is *only* the theologian's answer."[173] Stanley Hauerwas concurs, "Barth sides with Peterson maintaining that theology requires that the theologian identify with this or that confession of faith and this or that branch of the church, together with this or that presupposed affirmation of the ancient church on which the confession ultimately rests."[174]

Barth says it is better for the Protestant theologian to be able to point to a specific church to which he or she belongs and its commitments: "even if it be only a small

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[172] Ibid. Translation altered: personal masculine pronouns substituted for the purpose of clarity. "He" and "his" substituted with "theologian" and "theologian's" to prevent confusion as to who the object of the personal pronoun refers. Quotation marks also added. See Gerhard Sauter, *Theologie als Wissenschaft; Aufsätze und Thesen*, Theologische Bu̇cherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20 Jahrhundert, Bd 43 Systematische Theologie (Mu̇nchen: C. Kaiser, 1971), 153-175.

[173] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290. Emphasis original. Translation altered as previous quotation. Barth does not think it is appropriate for "a single theologian" to by himself or herself answer the question "Which dogma, measured by the *norm* of *which* century, has *the* Church made *the* dogma?" Ibid. Instead, the theologian should refer this question to his or her church. "Here *the church* must bear the responsibility of a considered answer." Ibid. Emphasis added.

[174] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 177-178.

regional church or general synod which would be the legitimate representative of such a church."[175] In other words, Barth says that one need not switch to Roman Catholicism in order to have legitimacy as a theologian but one does need to be grounded in some church commitment. This provides some accountability, some resistance to the whims and winds that might beset theologians who attempt to arrive at what is authoritative by themselves.

Barth says that the rootlessness of Protestant theologians is partly their own fault because they do not consider this sort of churchly starting point necessary. They launch out on their own without belonging to a church or they ignore their church's confessions, yet they still claim to be doing "theology" when in fact, Barth says this unmoored reflection is "philosophy."[176] Instead, they should come together with others in the church to arrive at a "common confession."[177]

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[175] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290.

[176] Ibid., 292.

[177] "This task is the compelling practical ground why the faith of the individual cannot be, as it appears to be, a private matter, why the individual with his faith is responsible, why he is forced to come before the public of the Church, why he has to make his faith known to others and submit to their judgment, if he is legitimately to play an active part in that general search after a true faith. The meaning and purpose of the debate conducted in the Church is obviously not the debate as such, the encounter, the contact, the stimulating and instructive exchange on the task of the Church's proclamation. Otherwise it would degenerate into mere talk, or at any rate to the level of preparatory academic discussion such as we might find in a poor theological seminar. But the Church is not a poor theological seminar. Much less is it a religious debating club. Its debate stands under a binding purpose and this purpose is that of union or unions in relation to a true faith. The immediate goal cannot be that of remaining apart, but of coming together and standing together in view of the actual coming together in proclamation. The immediate goal and necessary result of a debate on true faith conducted in the Church is that those who take part in it should make a common confession of their faith." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 591-592.

The other culprit, however, says Barth, is the Protestant churches which do not stipulate clearly what is authoritative and voice their expectation that their theologians operate in reference to these foundational confessions. Barth writes,

> Here the church must bear the responsibility for a considered answer—even if it be only a small regional church or general synod which would be the legitimate representative of such a church. A fundamental cause of the weakness of our present-day theology is that fact that when we pursue theology we have no church behind us which has the courage to say to us unambigiously that, so far as we talk together, this and this is dogma in the highest concreteness (*concretissimo*).[178]

Barth then adds a rhetorical flourish.

> If the churches do not say this to us and yet demand that we learn and teach "Dogmatics," they are truly like King Nebuchadnezzar, who demanded that his wise men tell not only what his dream meant but also what he had dreamed.[179]

In other words, Protestant theologians can only execute their task insofar as they have some authoritative body of material to work with. Protestant theologians cannot be put in the position of both picking the material with which to work and expositing it.[180] There is too much danger of the theologian avoiding inconvenient material.

The proper procedure is for churches to stipulate what material is authoritative; and for Protestant theologians to then analyze it. Barth expands upon the church crafting a "confession" in §20 "Authority in the Church" in I/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*,

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[178] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290.

[179] Ibid.

[180] It is not that the church's confession will be necessarily that different from that of the individual theologian but the source is important. Barth was the main writer of the Barmen Confession, for example, but it would have mattered less as an individual statement. Compare the impact of the Barmen Confession with his little known solo work: Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom*.

written in 1938.[181] The church should articulate a common confession or dogma,[182] which the people of the church agree to live their lives by.[183]

> To sum up: The authority of the Church is the confession of the Church in the narrower meaning of the concept, i.e., the voice of others in the Church reaching me in specific agreements and common declarations and as such preceding my own faith and the confession of it. Church authority always consists in the documented presence of such agreements.[184]

This does not mean that the churches have unbounded authority. It is the task of theologians to probe and test the church's speech and actions by the authorities they ostensibly affirm. Theology's responsibility is to exercise "guard duty over the guards."[185] The theologians can criticize the church on the basis of the terms set forth by the church. For example, the theologian will protest when sermons diverge from what is taught in the Scriptures if the church has stipulated that the Scriptures are authoritative.[186]

In this way, Barth attempts to give Peterson a substantive response to his inquiry. Peterson had complained that theologians were unmoored from their churches,

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[181] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 620-657.
[182] "This third thing—which is not a middle term between the Word of God and the word of man, but a human word figuratively ranked before all other human words—is the confession or dogma of the Church." Ibid., I/2, 649.
[183] "The temptation naturally consists in the possibility of abandoning the confession." Ibid., I/2, 644.
[184] Ibid., I/2, 593.
[185] Barth, "Church and Theology," 303-304.
[186] "After this, as it were, privileged hearing of the Church confession, we have to go and tread our own way in the understanding, exposition and application of Holy Scripture. The confession cannot and will not deprive us of our own responsibility to Scripture. We shall enter that way 'confessionally determined.' But fundamentally that can only mean that we have dealt with the confession as an authority of first rank and taken the direction indicated by it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 650.

operating only in the universities and only in relation to one another. To the extent that this is the case, Barth agrees this is a problem. Peterson suggests that the strongest solution is that proffered by the Roman Catholic Church; here dogma is set forth clearly. Barth, for his part, thinks that a theologian can function just as well under the authority of "a small regional church or general synod," or even a local church[187] where two or three are gathered.[188]

Some have wondered whether Barth is truly convinced by this arrangement. They have suspected that Barth is troubled, sheepish, embarrassed, or insecure about this Protestant ecclesial authority. Eberhard Jüngel suggested that Barth was "alarmed"

[187] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290. "To sum up: on both sides, on the side of those who wield it and also on that of those who recognise it, the form of the Church's authority is determined by a decision in virtue of which the one side speaks in the light of Holy Scripture and the other hears what is spoken in the light of the same Holy Scripture. What is spoken and heard, as distinct from much else that is spoken and heard but not in this unity, constitutes, determines and conditions the form of Church authority. From this it follows that it is not theologically possible to denote and enumerate the authorities which are and have Church authority in this sense . . . Theologically, we can, properly speaking, only point out: (1) that wherever the Church exists and lives there will and must also be Church authority, and in a specific historical form; and (2) that granted the existence of this authority in a specific historical form, it has as such to be respected." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 596-597.

[188] "There must be two or three according to the saying of Jesus if, subjected with them to His Word, we are to hear from their lips the confession of the Church." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 591. "The *veritas catholica* [catholic truth] may undoubtedly lie with the minority. It may occasionally lie with the tiniest of minorities, in a veritable corner. It may lie only with the two or three gathered together (as in Mt. 18:20) in the name of Jesus Christ. That they number several millions is of no avail to those who are not gathered in His name. The whole legitimacy of the Reformation rests upon this possibility." Ibid., IV/1, 709. Mark Weedman is concerned about the visible global unity of the church. Weedman comments about Barth's 1948 address. "Barth takes this insight to a radical conclusion near the end of *The Church and the Churches*, when he argues that all church work, including unity, can only happen when we endorse the confessions of our own denominations." Mark Weedman, "The Spirit in the Church: The Universal Christ, Particular Spirit and Christian Unity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 (2009): 352.

by Peterson's attack and "considerably influenced" by it.[189] Stanley Hauerwas refers to "Barth's realization that he could not solve the ecclesial challenge presented by Peterson."[190] But as Barth moves through his analysis of Peterson's argument it becomes

[189] Eberhard Jüngel, *Barth-Studien* (Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1982), 133, 134.

[190] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 178. Hauerwas does not see Barth here proferring an alternative substantive approach to church authority. Hauerwas writes, "By using the creeds, and of course, Scripture, Barth was attempting to be held accountable to the church's witness, but he knew that such recourse still did not solve the ecclesial problem." Ibid. Both Reinhard Hütter and Hauerwas quote Barth's illusion to the Old Testament: "A fundamental cause of the weakness of our present-day theology is that fact that when we pursue theology we have no church behind us which has the courage to say to us unambigiously that, so far as we talk together, this and this is dogma in the highest concreteness (*concretissimo*). If the churches do not say this to us and yet demand that we learn and teach 'Dogmatics,' they are truly like King Nebuchadnezzar, who demanded that his wise men tell not only what his dream meant but also what he had dreamed." Barth, "Church and Theology," 290. Barth sketches what it might sound like: a theologian answer the question of what is authoritative to them with something like the following: "this and that confession of faith of the branch of the Church to which I am bound, established at the time of the Reformation and since then neither revoked nor substantially modified, together with this and that presupposed affirmation of the Ancient Church, on which the confession rests, constitute what I call dogma, when I am pursuing dogmatics." Ibid. It is not the content that is wrong with this, says Barth. What is off-putting is an individual theologian devising it. Barth writes, "But this answer is his; and however well it is grounded, it is not the answer that should be given here, precisely because it is *only* his answer." Ibid. The pronoun "his" here refers to the hypothetical "single theologian" that begins the paragraph, who Barth insists should not resort to striking out on his own solo. But Hauerwas understands Barth to not just be talking about other theologians but also about his own predicament—that Barth himself feels as if he is dangling unmoored from ecclesial guidance and thus forced to resort to freelancing solo. Hauerwas writes, "Yet Barth confesses the sad truth is that the answer is still *his* own, and however well grounded the answer may be, it remains only *his*." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 178. This is a plausible interpretation at one level. Barth has no illusions that his own denomination, the Swiss Reformed Church, adequately sets forth what is authoritative for their theologians. Barth received Peterson's rebuke as a valid criticism. It is even conceivable that Barth felt that the lack of clear guidance from his own church about what was authoritative left him partially setting forth his own parameters. Still, Barth was a life-long member of the Swiss Reformed Church even if he rarely makes clear that the Swiss Reformed Church confessions are his own starting point and boundary. But it is less clear that Hauerwas is correct in surmising that Barth was concerned that his stance as a Protestant "did not solve the ecclesial problem" ibid. and that he was bothered "that he could not solve the ecclesial challenge presented by Peterson." Ibid. Hauerwas is suggesting that Barth sensed that with regard to the "ecclesial challenge," Protestant church answers as to what is authoritative are inevitably "personal, contingent, and unauthoritative" Barth, "Church and Theology," 290. (as Barth characterized the Protestant theologian going it alone) as compared with the solidity that a Catholic theologian proceeds with. But as we will see below this goes against the tenor of the rest of what Barth says here in his response to Peterson. Barth calls for rigorous confessions by church bodies that serve as marching orders or parameters to their

quite clear he does not think that Roman Catholicism provides a surer foundation for theology. The different readings of Barth here are surely due to Barth's attempt to thread the needle between a number of his contemporaries while utilizing a colorful stylistic "wry sense of humor"[191] provoked by his Protestant colleague making Roman Catholic arguments. Barth agrees with Peterson against Adolf von Harnack.[192] But he sides with Wilhelm Hermann and Rudolf Bultmann over against Peterson. Bruce McCormack rightly points to letters Barth wrote to Bultmann about Peterson's essay. "The truth is

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theologians. But Barth made clear that "even . . . a small regional church or a general synod" would be adequate. Barth was not persuaded that Roman Catholicism truly rested on a superior foundation of dogma which he makes clear in subsequent pages.

[191] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290.

[192] Barth at one point affirms a point made by Peterson over against Harnack. "But here I must strike a blow on Peterson's side." Ibid. Adolf von Harnack also writes to Peterson that he has wildly misunderstood how the theology of the Roman Catholic Church developed. "I am of the opinion that actual religious community in the Christianity of all periods came into being exclusively through the 'non-binding character of a moral exhortation,' that is, through the experience and faith-witnessing of inspired persons which evoked resonance and light in other persons. This witness exists in all churches in spite of its monstrous encumbrance with alien material and requirements." Erik Peterson, Adolf von Harnack, and Michael J. Hollerich, "Erik Peterson's Correspondence With Adolf von Harnack," *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 3 (1993): 335. It is not surprising of course that Harnack would take such a position—his work being at the opposite end of the ecclesiological spectrum from that of Peterson. Adolf von Harnack's *What is Christianity?* (1900) was "almost from the time of its publication . . . recognized as a classic statement of liberal (i.e., non-dogmatic, non-ecclesiastical, non-sacramental, non-legalistic) Christianity." Hollerich, "Retrieving a Neglected Critique of Church, Theology and Secularization in Weimar Germany."; Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity? A Collection of Lectures Given at the University of Berlin, 1899-1900*, trans., Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper & Row, 1957). –literally: *The Essence of Christianity.* In letters to Erik Peterson in 1928, Harnack is not worried about the diffusion of authority. "What will become of the Evangelical Church, I do not know; but, as you correctly state, I can only *welcome* the development that leads more and more to independence and a purely intentional community in the sense—I do not shrink from this—of Quakerism and Congregationalism." Peterson, *Theological Tractates*, 22; Peterson, Harnack, and Hollerich, "Erik Peterson's Correspondence With Adolf von Harnack," 338. Nor is Harnack worried about whether theology will continue to be funded by public universities or about the disestablishment of the state church or about creeping American-style denominationalism. Harnack puts his faith in rooting Christianity in "historical knowledge." Ibid., 337. That "by historical demonstration and ethical and philosophical consideration, the basic ideas of the gospel can be placed in a bright and convincing light."Ibid., 338.

that Barth found it a 'bad' piece and he thought that it was probably written on a whim. 'Not for some time have I read something which so excited and angered me as this glittering and, in every respect, impudent pamphlet, by which we are all placed once again in the same corner as Herrmann. In this case [it is so poorly done, if we had to choose], we would probably have to put ourselves there [with Hermann over against Peterson]."[193]

In his response to Peterson, Barth questions ("not without a certain wry humour") whether "real dogma" has ever been anywhere as "isolated" as Peterson implies.[194] Barth is amused that Peterson thinks Roman Catholic theology should be characterized as happy reflection on a monolithic unanimous "dogma" that everyone recognizes. He smirks at Peterson calling Roman Catholic dogma *concretissimo* "very concrete" because Barth himself doubts whether this ulta-specifying is a desirable trait.

Peterson imagines that theology seamlessly unfolds out of settled dogma. Barth finds this an oversimplification. Rather, "dogma" is only one of the authoritative

[193] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 368. citing Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Briefwechsel 1911-1966 (GA V.1)*, 2., revidierte und erw. Aufl. ed., Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zuïrich: Theologischer Verlag, 1994), 50, 57, 53. These letters are unhelpful in the English translation as they are summarized rather than translated. Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981).
[194] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290.

resources that Catholic and Protestant theologians draw upon. Barth observes that theologians draw on a range of resources from more general to more specific:

> the newer Catholic dogmatics is founded, so far as I see, on the following authorities: (1) biblical passages, (2) the Church Fathers, (3) dogma, (4) wherever possible, new papal decisions.[195]

Peterson "ought not to have ignored the multiplicity of the authorities to which theology actually takes its appeal . . . It should have been evident to him that within the concept of the concrete authority of dogma there still remains one element after another."[196] In this way, Roman Catholic theology is quite similar to Protestant theology (if the Protestant theology is done in the churchly way Barth recommends). Roman Catholic theology, like Protestant theology, is the process of analyzing and synthesizing a number of sources: Scripture, creeds, and "dogma," while also taking into account the immediate local demands and situations. Barth tries to disabuse Peterson of the myth that Roman Catholic dogma is a coherent, monolithic foundation of material untouched by the tumult of time and place and competing voices, upon which the Roman Catholic theology builds. Roman Catholic theologians too are forced to grapple with making sense of the Scriptures, church fathers, and creeds. Barth says that both Protestant and Catholic theologians take into account "the decisions of the Church on the canon and

[195] Ibid., 291.
[196] Ibid.

text of the Bible" and "the normative Fathers"[197] while praying for "illumination . . . through Word and Spirit"[198] about the present moment.

Theology is more complicated than just expounding (authoritative, already-settled, static) dogma as implied by Peterson's mantra: "concrete obedience to concrete authority."[199] The problem with the phrase is that it downplays the dynamism that is involved as the Holy Spirit continues to guide God's people. God did not reveal himself once and for all—leaving human beings with static revelation. Nor do human beings just obey. "*Theology* is the continuing service to God's revelation, performed by specific men, in the form of conceptual thinking in a specific here and now."[200]

Barth also disputes that the Roman Catholic practice of drawing upon "new papal decisions" can be described benignly as "obeying established dogma" over against what Peterson characterizes as rebellious, presumptuous Protestant theologizing.[201] Barth shares Peterson's insistence that a theologian should be "obedient" to ecclesial "authority" but Roman Catholic dogma is continually being reformulated; it is not merely something static to be obeyed. Barth grants that the Roman Catholic Church has a mechanism for overseeing this theologizing. "In the Catholic Church this

[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., 288.
[200] Ibid., 289.
[201] Ibid., 291.

authority is enviably (not really to be envied) available, designated by the concept of the teaching office of the Church embodied by the Pope."[202] Barth says that the Roman magisterium is not rendering "deliberate" opinions for all time in every time and space; but rather is "really active in the real present" as it should be.[203] Reinhard Hütter praises Peterson but acknowledges that for Peterson, theology is so closely tied to dogma that theology becomes highly clerical and uncritical. "Basically, being a 'theologian' is not simply a constitutive part of being a Christian, but rather is a special, public ecclesiastical position within the church's teaching authority."[204] For Peterson, theology merely extends dogma. Therefore, it is not every Christian who should be reflecting on the Scripture, creeds, and church fathers, and pondering what the Spirit might be saying today, but only ecclesiastical officials appointed for that task. Hütter continues, "If theology as dogmatics coincides completely with binding church doctrine, one can no

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 99. In his earlier more complete analysis of Peterson prior to his conversion (like Peterson) to the Roman Catholic church, Hütter (while himself still a Lutheran) does not side entirely with Peterson. Hütter sees Barth and Peterson representing the "two dominant pneumatological-ecclesiological alternatives within the framework of Western theology." Ibid., 95. But his recent writing on Peterson is more effusive. "Germany's most famous convert from Protestantism to the Catholic Church between the two world wars, Erik Peterson was also one of the most gifted theologians of his generation, and, though Pope Benedict XVI has long been a student of his works, one of the least acknowledged." Reinhard Hütter, "Dogma's Defender," *First Things*, no. 223 (2012). Hütter writes, "Peterson unmasks Barth's early dialectical theology as a highly sophisticated but ultimately failed attempt at overcoming this liberal tradition. Camouflaging the otherwise obvious with a dazzling dialectic, Barth's theology suffers from same defects as liberal theology: the flight from authority and dogma—in short, from a view of revelation that has staying power, as it were, that can form and shape our identities as Christians." Ibid.

longer do justice to a theological discourse in which one can question, interpret, criticize, and argue in ongoing debate with different theological positions."[205]

Instead, Barth says, Protestants and Catholics alike should be attentive to "the definite command of each moment" as illuminated "through Word and Spirit."[206] They are to be critical: to consider the various authoritative sources (biblical passages, the Church Fathers, etc.) and analyze whether today and in specific circumstances, the church's teaching and actions correspond faithfully to these sources. Barth says proper obedience to the church (for Protestant and Catholic theologian alike) means submitting to the Scriptures ("the decisions of the Church on the canon and on the canonical text of the Scripture as revelation") and dogma ("certain assertions in the Church's message, more or less clearly accepted as fundamental, based on the former and explained by the words of the Fathers"). But the critical task is also necessary, that is, the church's listening to the Spirit in the present moment ("that command of the hour (which likewise is to be understood as given to the Church)."[207] The Spirit will always be challenging the church to more accurately be who it is supposed to be and therefore there will always be a need for theologians to explore this. Barth says, "there is no theology . . . without the immediacy of the eternal omnipresent Word and Spirit of

[205] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 101.
[206] Barth, "Church and Theology," 291.
[207] Ibid.

God."[208] Barth says Catholic theologians have no advantage here—they are doing the same things as the Protestants. Barth intends to try to help Protestants do it.[209]

The point for our purposes is that the alternative to Roman Catholic ecclesiology was not the elimination of church authority but rather local ecclesiology. For Barth "a small regional church or a general synod"[210] is not inferior to Papal authority. Barth will later go on to make clear that a local church is a church and that larger denominational

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[208] Ibid., 289. Barth's comments here to Peterson in 1925 on the authority of the church in relation to Scripture are very similar to those that appear in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* in §9 entitled "Authority" composed in 1924. Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 227-249. Cf. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 346-350.

[209] Hauerwas is right that both the future trajectories of both Barth and Peterson flow from their understandings here. "I cannot help but wonder if the massive character of the *Church Dogmatics* is not the result of Barth's realization that he could not solve the ecclesial challenge presented by Peterson. Peterson became a Roman Catholic. Barth wrote the *Dogmatics*." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 178. Cf. "The massive character of Barth's work is not incidental, given his understanding of the nature and task of theology." Ibid., 146. Hauerwas is right to suggest that for Peterson, if authority is more or less static and arrived upon by the Papal hierarchy, the appropriate response is to join the Roman Catholic Church and be obedient. The theologian can exposit and pass down authoritative doctrine to the masses. On the other hand, if, as for Barth, authority is found in God speaking through the Scriptures as it is interpreted by the church (the fathers, etc.), there is a massive need for sorting out how God has spoken, i.e., study of how the church has believed over the centuries God has spoken to them through the Scriptures. We might say Barth is gripped by the knowledge that God speaks. Therefore, Barth asks what God is saying. Barth then investigates what the church thinks God has said over the centuries. Barth is not persuaded that the Roman Catholic Magisterium should be the only one pursuing this synthetic task. The massive edifice of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is something of a Protestant answer to the Roman Catholic synthesis. Barth proffers an alternative account of almost the exact same materials that the Magisterium utilizes. The only quibble to be made with Hauerwas's observation is that Barth seems to have been operating with confidence rather than doubt. Barth did not consider it futile to attempt to make sense of God's revelation by listening to Scripture and Christians from throughout the centuries. The Protestant theologian who hews to the theologian's own denomination's confession regarding authoritative sources has little to feel inadequate or sheepish about. Barth is content to be commissioned as a Protestant theologian to work under the Scriptures and with the creeds and reflect after the Church Fathers and later theologians; he does not feel that this body of material he is commissioned to exposit and analyze is substantially different, more difficult, or more tendentious than the material a Roman Catholic theologian works with.

[210] Barth, "Church and Theology," 290.

structures are not dictated by Scripture.[211] The supposed clear authority of the Roman Catholic Church is not so univocal (as it too draws on and weighs a number of resources: Scripture, fathers, dogma, Spirit's voice). The fiction that it is specified dogma also problematically interferes with the importance of the Spirit speaking into the "specific here and now."[212] The "missionary" importance of the here (local) and now (contemporary) are precisely the reasons for local church structure.[213]

Hans Urs von Balthasar

The possibility of dogmatic ecumenical discussion of ecclesiology

Hans von Balthasar's book on Barth's theology was published in 1951, the year the first part of volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* by Barth was published. Volume IV is where Barth's mature ecclesiology is located so Balthasar did not have access to it when he wrote. A fellow Swiss, Balthasar was quite aware that there were differences between he as a Roman Catholic and Barth regarding various practical matters. Balthasar names

[211] "What we do not find in the New Testament is the existence of what might truly be called a Church government which is superior to the individual communities and the external guarantee of their unity as the community of Jesus Christ."Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 673.
[212] Barth, "Church and Theology," 291.
[213] "it is also essential to it [the church] that in its unity it should exist in this geographical separation and difference: a difference which corresponds to its environment and history and language and customs and ways of life and thought as conditioned by the different localities, and also to its personal composition. In this respect the same thing does not suit every Church or every place and time. This has never been taken seriously enough in our missionary thinking." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 671.

"for example, an infallible Magisterium, the number and praxis of the sacraments, the veneration of the saints and especially the Mother of our Lord. Certainly profound differences of opinion still exist here."[214] However, Balthasar writes that he is optimistic that Barth's dogmatic emphases are not incompatible with Roman Catholic ecclesiology.[215] Balthasar lists ecclesiology as the first area under "prospects for rapprochement." The differences between Barth and Roman Catholics, Balthasar says, are even smaller than those between Barth and Emil Brunner. (One would initially assume that Brunner would share many of Barth's convictions because he too was a Swiss Reformed theologian).

> But if we look at their deeper agreements while ignoring merely terminological differences [between those of Barth and Roman Catholic theologians], we will realize that these differences are certainly no greater (in fact they are less) than those, for example, between Barth and Brunner.[216]

Balthasar argues that obvious differences at the level of external matters between Barth and Roman Catholics may mask significant similarity at the level of dogmatic reflection. Here a Roman Catholic probes beyond external differences with regard to polity to possible dogmatic continuities. Wendell Dietrich writes in his 1960 dissertation,

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[214] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, Rev ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 386.
[215] D. Stephen Long's thesis in *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Preoccupation* is that Balthasar was throughout his life occupied with persuading Barth that Roman Catholic theology, rightly understood, is not so different from his; meanwhile, Balthasar was also trying to persuade Roman Catholics to heed Barth's warnings about liberal Protestant theology. Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 11-14, 285. This section was written prior to reading Long's book but is compatible with it.
[216] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 381.

> The strategic proposal offered by von Balthasar for dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics is: let the inflamed questions . . . . . be left aside for a time . . . especially the problems of the structure of the church, its infallible teaching office and its sacraments conveying grace; and the problems of the grace of cooperation in the churchly man, with their implication in the doctrine of merit and sanctity and Mariology.[217]

This insight parallels something we discovered in our analysis of Bonhoeffer above: that there may be significant common ground on the level of "dogmatics"—at least Balthasar thinks so—even if there may disagreement about the way these things look at the local level (i.e. "practical theology," "canon law," and "special ethics"). In temporarily setting aside "an infallible Magisterium, the number and praxis of the sacraments, the veneration of the saints and especially the Mother of our Lord"[218] for dialogue about ecclesiology at the dogmatic level, Balthasar implies that these doctrines are not so intricately intertwined with the rest of Roman Catholic theology that if one thread is pulled loose, the whole cloth must unravel. Roman Catholic interpreters tend to complain about Barth's lack of specifics regarding ecclesiology, but it is precisely because Barth resists musing on practical matters in the *Church Dogmatics* that Roman Catholics can imagine working out Barth's ecclesiological dogmatic principles in ways that might be compatible with Roman Catholic practices.

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[217] Wendell S. Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1960), 2-3, Cf. 246-247.
[218] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 386.

If Balthasar is correct, then there is reason to think that some ecumenical dialogue might be possible about ecclesiology even if the number of sacraments or the structure of the liturgy cannot be decided beforehand. Balthasar argues that because of common ground on the dogmatic level, it is possible that a Roman Catholic like himself and a Protestant like Barth, might have more in common than two Protestants in the same denomination such as Barth and Brunner. What this makes clear is that Barth's ecclesiology cannot be summarized as merely "congregational" or "baptist" or "evangelical;" there is an ecumenical substance to Barth's ecclesiological framework which transcends polity or canon law issues which fellow Roman Catholics including James Buckley and Nicholas Healy (in 2004) also both later recognize.

Balthasar's observation that Barth rightly rejects superimposing Christological categories on ecclesiology

Balthasar also summarized Barth's ecclesiology up to that point. He praised Barth for moving beyond the "tragic ecclesiology" or "catastrophic ecclesiology" of his commentary on Romans.[219] He notes how Barth in "The Concept of the Church" affirms

[219] "When ecclesiology becomes a function of Christology (as it does in the *Church Dogmatics*) . . . then we will have to admit that Barth's earlier ecclesiology from 1920 to 1930 is now outmoded." Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth (1st Ed.)*, trans., John Drury, 1st ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 91. Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 104.Cf. Ibid., 386. Keith L. Johnson argues Balthasar may have overstated the convergence here slightly; Johnson argues the *analogia entis* remains a difference between Barth and Roman Catholic theology but that Balthasar did convince Barth that there were Roman Catholic views closer to his own than Erich Przywara's. Furthermore, Barth became persuaded that theologians like Balthasar merited his encouragement rather than his polemical opposition despite their remaining differences. Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia entis*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 179. John Webster also

the four predicates of the church from the Nicene Creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic but "rework[s] them completely and radicalize[s] them, using his method of theological actualism."[220] Balthasar finds the radicalizing troubling. "Actualism, with its constant, relentless reduction of all activity to God the *actus purus,* leaves no room for any other center of activity outside of God. In relation to God, there can only be passivity . . . Once more everything collapses back into that unholy dualism of [Barth's commentary on] *Romans*."[221]

To this point, says Balthasar, Barth has not articulated a way to encourage the church's activity whatsoever. He urges Barth to "now construct a consistent ecclesiology that contains and reflects the results of his Christocentric theological anthropology."[222] Thus far Barth has stressed the biblical image of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12) with Christ the head—a biblical metaphor of the church that stresses the dependent and (the distant) secondary aspects of the church. Barth needs to be able to address how the biblical description of the church as "wife" (Eph 5:21-33) which may connote more

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argues that Balthasar's positing of a significant turn toward a less dialectical and more "analogical" (and more catholic or sacramental perspective) is often exaggerated. John B. Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 22-24.

[220] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 104. Cf. Barth, "The Concept of the Church."

[221] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 105. This is reminiscient of Bonhoeffer's criticisms prior from *Sanctorum Communio, Act and Being*, and others prior to the prison letters, treated above. Long cites this quote. Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 74-75.

[222] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 386.

interdependence and beauty. "Such a doctrine of the Church forgets that the Church is not only the *Body* of Christ but also his *Bride*."[223]

Balthasar detected that for Barth "ecclesiology becomes a function of Christology . . . in the [first three volumes of the] *Church Dogmatics*."[224] But Balthasar notes that some will wonder whether Barth's dualism could not be alleviated by using Christological terminology including the *anhypostasis* / *enhypostasis* formulations. As the ancient church attempted to articulate how Jesus' divine and human natures coexist in one person, the same language could be pasted onto the question of how head (Christ) and the church function. Does this not resolve the problem?

> Some might see the urgency of these questions but hold that there is a way out: the distinction between the *anhypostasis* and the *enhypostasis* of the human nature in Christ. When we speak of the Church, does this distinction not prove its utility? Is this not the actual model for a 'body' whose head is another, namely, God? Is the notion of *anhypostasis* not precisely what we need to uncouple Catholic authority, papacy, sacraments that work *ex opere operato* and every other form of Catholic works-righteousness and attempt to lay hold of God?[225]

As we will see, this is how George Hunsinger and Kimlyn Bender think Barth indeed does resolve the question. But Balthasar explains that though Barth considers that solution in I/2,[226] Barth rejects the move. Balthasar explains,

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[223] Ibid., 107.
[224] Ibid., 386.
[225] Ibid., 106.
[226] Confusingly, Balthasar and the translators keep Balthasar's 1951 idiosyncratic citation style of Barth's *Dogmatics* which admitted is explained on ibid., xi. For example, Balthasar refers to KD I/2 as KD 2. Therefore, Barth's references to the *anhypostasis* / *enhypostasis* that are referred to on ibid., 106-107. by Balthasar are to Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* / *Church Dogmatics* volume I/2. "Gottes im Predigtwort und im

> But to anticipate the answer, the *anhypostasis* remains the exclusive prerogative of the Redeemer, as Barth himself admits. This is so because Christ is precisely a divine subject and in no way a 'schema' according to which we may conceive the relation of creature to God. For Barth, an ecclesiology or theological ethic based on using the *anhypostasis* as an ideal for redeemed man would erase the distance that divides the divine subject from all human subjects.[227]

This Christological principle which applies to Jesus Christ cannot be applied elsewhere in theology. Barth "sets off Christ's *anhypostasis* necessarily and definitively from every other form of union with God."[228] As Barth puts it,

> The unity of God and man in Christ is, then, the act of the Logos in assuming human being. His becoming, and therefore the thing that human being encounters in this becoming of the Logos, is an act of God in the person of the Word. Therefore God and man, Creator and creature cannot be related to each other in this unity as in other men or in creation generally.[229]

The incarnation is not an equation to be applied elsewhere in Christian theology. If the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ apply to anything else like the divine and human aspects of the church, it is a distant approximation and should only be ventured via biblical evidence.

Sakrament . . . Seine Menschheit ist nur Prädikat seiner Gottheit." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 177-178. "It is the same with God's gracious presence in the word preached and in the sacrament . . . His manhood is only the predicate of His Godhead." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 162. Balthasar also cites Barth as saying "it corresponds to the *anhypostasis* of the human nature of Christ that the Church is absolutely forbidden in her essence to want to become independent of Jesus Christ" which translated in the *Church Dogmatics* as "it [the Church] corresponds to the *anhypostasis* of Christ's human nature. By its inmost nature the Church is forbidden to want independence of Jesus Christ." Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 107. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 236; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 216. Paul Louis Metzger thinks this quote is from II/1. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 57.

[227] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 106.

[228] Ibid. Metzger also cites this quote from Balthasar. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 56-57.

[229] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 162.

Similarly, Balthasar suggests another Christological solution suggested by Bonhoeffer. "Dietrich Bonhoeffer already realized this in his penetrating study *Akt und Sein,* which tried to unify a theology of actualism with a theology of being-in-Christ, that is, an ontology of the Church. Karl Barth cannot simply close himself off from this insight."[230] However, Balthasar again recognizes that Barth's reticence to making what Bruce McCormack calls "metaphysical" moves is intentionally specifically delimited.[231] Balthasar writes that Barth will talk about "cause" but "There must be no backsliding to philosophy. We must steadfastly hew to the theological crux: the interpretation of Scripture."[232] By seeing Barth's suspicion of applying Christological Chalcedonian categories to ecclesiology and similarly Barth's wariness toward the metaphysical, Balthasar again presciently senses Barth's trajectory.

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[230] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 365. Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth (1st Ed.)*, 272.

[231] Long engages McCormack's position throughout the book. "The Reformed theologian Bruce McCormack agrees . . . Barth had no interest in sustaining the *metaphysics* of Chalcedon." Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 93, Cf. 116n78. drawing on Bruce L. McCormack, "Karl Barth's Version of an 'Analogy of Being': A Dialectical No and Yes to Roman Catholicism," in *Analogy of Being*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). Long writes that "Barth's breakthrough is, as McCormack and Balthasar agree, retrieving the christological doctrine of the anhypostaton and enhypostaton." Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 93. That may be the case with regard to Christology, but even there Long also notes that Barth does not apply such doctrines in predictable ways or formulaic ways. "Barth then develops a Chalcedonian logic in some interesting and surprising ways." Ibid., 197. At some point, this is no longer "Chalcedonian logic" but rather as Balthasar says Barth's prioritization of "the interpretation of Scripture."

[232] Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 133.

This is confirmed in 1962 when Balthasar writes a new forward to the book—"acknowledging Barth has not changed his basic polemical position."[233] Barth writes to Balthasar, "I in turn am able neither to join nor be inclined to your high altitude flight in a beyond of philosophy and theology."[234] As Long explains, "Balthasar remained concerned with 'form.' But Barth had explicitly denied that the incarnation could be called a *Gesetz* . . . Barth simply didn't see why the conversation should begin here; it was too speculative, too philosophical. It is a starting point to which he never consented."[235] The incarnation for Barth was not paradigmatic concept that could be superimposed onto other theological dilemmas like how Jesus relates to the church, how the sacraments work, or how the church relates to the world.

Balthasar precedes a diverse group of theologians including Hermann Diem, Bruce McCormack, and John Howard Yoder who deny that it is significant that twice Barth applies *anhypostasis* / *enhypostasis* language to ecclesiology. As we will see later Thomas F. Torrance, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Reinhard Hütter, Kimlyn Bender, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Paul Metzger claim Barth's ecclesiology is Christological in this way. In other words, the Swiss Balthasar's early observations here in 1951 (later praised

[233] Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 52.
[234] Manfred Lochbrunner, *Hans Urs von Balthasar und seine Theologenkollegen: sechs Beziehungsgeschichten* (Würzburg: Echter, 2009), 348. translated and cited by Long in Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 52.
[235] Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 52.

by Barth) may coincide with Yoder's reading of Barth's ecclesiology (who was himself studying with Barth in Switzerland in the 1950's).

Emil Brunner

One might easily think that since Barth never repudiates the Swiss Reformed Churches denomination, of which he previously was a pastor, and arguably the most significant critique he made of the Reformed tradition is its forgetfulness under Christendom of the church's task of witness, that Barth would appreciate the ecclesiology of fellow Swiss Reformed Church theologian and missions advocate Emil Brunner. But Barth fiercely distinguished himself from Brunner's brand of congregational, evangelical, Reformed ecclesiology.

Throughout his life, Brunner trumpeted their similarities; while Barth privately and publicly emphasized the distance between their views. Brunner thinks that he is merely interested in ethical, missiological, and ecclesial issues that Barth is not inclined to address because he is addressing other matters. Brunner says he is more interested in functioning like a missionary—sharing the good news with the world; while Barth is more inclined in disposition and personality to be a theological watchdog or heresy policeman.

> Barth thinks as a churchman for the church; I think rather as a missionary. More and more I come to the view that the church nowadays speaks not chiefly to Christians, as it did in the Middle Ages and at the time of the Reformation and

> even a hundred years ago; it must speak primarily to 'heathen.' Therefore, in combating the secularism which this 20th century takes for granted, it must start out theologically from the Christian understanding of the nature of man.[236]

Brunner cites the issue of secularism in the 20th century as a determinant factor in how he sees his own function as a theologian. Whereas for Barth (as he said in a different context), "I endeavor to carry on theology, and only theology, now as previously, and as if nothing had happened."[237] Barth thinks responding to the latest trends cedes too much ground to that which is not God. Brunner says in the last sentence of the quote above that he thinks it is important to "start out . . . from . . . the. . . understanding of the nature of man." (Admittedly, Brunner does qualify that with the adverb "theologically" and adjective "Christian" but this emphasis on "man" is typical of Brunner and Barth's exasperation with him). Here in 1949, Brunner's plan is to "speak primarily to 'heathen.'" This is similar in 1932 to Brunner's seeking to identify a "point of contact" [*Anknüpfungspunkt*] in a culture upon which the gospel can then be presented.[238] This

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[236] Emil Brunner, "Toward a Missionary Theology," *Christian Century* 66, no. 27 (1949): 817.

[237] Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom*, 9. John Howard Yoder writes that Barth was not withdrawing from the events of the day. Yoder writes, "in the face of the Nazi program for taking over the country and the churches, that the discipline of theology should go on 'as if nothing had happened' . . . Karl Barth's statement about doing theology 'as if nothing had happened' appeared in the context of Barth's launching a pamphlet series entitled 'Theological Existence Today.'" Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian."

[238] John Hart says that Emil Brunner uses the word *Beziehungspunkt* (point of connection) in 1925 and then later *Anknüpfungspunkt* (point of contact) in 1929. John W. Hart, "The Barth-Brunner Correspondence," in *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 29-30. The formulation of *Beziehungs(punkt)* = "relationship (point)" or "personal interaction (point)". The formulation of *Anknüpfungs(punkt)* = "link (point)"or "tie." John Flett says *Anknüpfungspunkt* was not Brunner's invention. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 89. Flett does not mention the German word *Beziehungspunkt* but he

garnered Barth's "angry reply" "Nein!" (No!) to Brunner's *Natural Theology* in 1934. "I am not wantonly branding him a heretic, but . . . this really is how the matters stands."[239] Though some saw Barth's response as an unfortunate overreaction (and Barth could be ungracious with other theologians who deserved better such as Bonhoeffer), John B. Hart's account of their relationship depicts Brunner as repeatedly badgering Barth for time and written responses, but failing to listen to Barth's advice, so this angry response is hardly unprovoked especially given the circumstances in Germany.[240] Barth argued

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too distinguishes between the English phrases "point of connection" and "point of contact." However Flett seems to be making the distinction theologically rather than historically. Though he does a lot of historical work on *Anknüpfungspunk* and his heuristic distinction is useful. "First, 'point of contact' refers to the simple and necessary process of listening and responding to the questions of one's audience . . . The second sense, which I will call the 'point of connection,' includes the more problematic element of establishing or massaging cultural conduits as a necessary precondition for receiving the gospel." Ibid., 90-91. Brunner mentions *Beziehungspunkt* in one undated letter to Barth. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, *Karl Barth - Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel 1911-1966* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2000), 120. Brunner uses the term *Anknüpfungspunkt* three times with Barth in correspondence (Dec 13, 1932; Jan 16, 1933; Feb 26, 1934] in conjunction with his 1932 essay with that term in the title: "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie" ["The question of the 'point of contact' as a problem of theology"]. In the *Kirchliche Dogmatik,* Barth refers to *Beziehungspunkt** which is often translated "point of connexion" (British spelling) in the *Church Dogmatics* thirteen times including twice with regard to to Schleiermacher's description of the relationship between Christ and the church (with which Barth disagrees). Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik,* III/3, 376, IV/3.2, 863. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/3, 328, IV/3.2, 754. In the *Kirchliche Dogmatik,* Barth refers to *Anknüpfungspunkt* * twenty-nine times. In the last reference he criticizes the fetishing of other religions. "Missions presuppose both that they [other religions] will be valued and taken seriously, with a complete absence of the crass arrogance of the white man, and yet also that they [the other religions] will not be allowed to exercise any pressure on the Gospel but that this [the Gospel] will be opposed to [gegenüberstellen is better translated here as "compared with"] them in all its [the Gospel's] radical uniqueness and novelty, with no attempt at compromise or at finding [playing games of] points of contact and the like [ohne alles Spiel mit Anknüpfungspunkten und dergleichen]." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 1003. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 875. The point is that Brunner uses both these terms and Barth is wary about the use of both terms.

[239] Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, (1956) 2002), 90.

[240] John W. Hart writes in his conclusion of his book on Barth and Brunner that the two were quite similar on superficial issues, but dogmatically profoundly different. "It is the thesis of this book that Barth and Brunner

Brunner's poor theological description of natural theology gave comfort to the enemy—serving as a gateway for Nazi understandings of the church in 1934. "I can hardly say a clear 'No' to [Emanuel] Hirsch and his associates, but close my eyes in the case of Brunner, the Calvinist, the Swiss 'dialectical theologian.' For it seems clear to me that at the decisive point he takes part in the false movement of thought by which the Church today is threatened."[241] Brunner and his defenders however consider his emphasis on adjusting theology to contemporary realities to be a resource for the churches resisting Hitlerism.[242] As much as Brunner was interested in addressing contemporary realities, Alasdair McGrath, who is quite sympathetic to Brunner, admits Brunner was tone-deaf to pursue themes in natural theology and laud the Oxford Group movement in the

represent fundamentally different ways of doing theology." John W. Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner: The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 218. McGrath agrees, ""The two writers had quite distinct approaches to theology from the outset." Alister E. McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 23-24. McGrather writes that Brunner attempted to "cultivate Barth's personal acquaintance and seek his theological approval for his projects. Brunner wanted to be affirmed by Barth and at the same time felt threatened by him. For his part, Barth never had a particularly high regard for Brunner, and gradually came to see no reason to conceal this." Ibid., x. "Barth and Brunner would publicly disagree on this issue in 1934; this, however, was simply the open manifestation of differences that were already firmly established and mutually acknowledged by 1929." Ibid., 71.

[241] Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, 67. Emmanuel Hirsch was a colleague of Barth's in the 1920's at Göttingen who eventually supported Adolf Hitler and Nazi ideology. Robert P. Ericksen, "Emanuel Hirsch - Intellectual Freedom and the Turn toward Hitler," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 24, no. 1 (2011).

[242] "For Brunner, understanding the proper identity and function of Christian theology is about enhancing the theological readiness of the Christian communities to deal with cultural contexts which cannot comprehend, or are deliberately opposed to, the Christian proclamation." McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal*, 72.

midst of the Nazification of the German church in 1934 (while Brunner was in neighboring Switzerland).[243]

Brunner's interest is in contemporary trends: he loves the parachurch Oxford Group movement,[244] is deeply concerned about communism, and regards philosophical "personalism" as extremely insightful.[245] These were Brunner's starting points for theological reflection to a large extent. But for Barth, beginning with the "heathen" or with a "point of contact" leads inevitably to the wholesale accommodation to the world, which Barth calls in the *Church Dogmatics* the "secularisation" of the church and is vividly seen in the German Christians (where Christianity was overwhelmed by Nazi ideology).

Brunner maintained that he shared Barth's rigorous emphasis on God—that he was merely starting from human problems. Brunner writes, "There are tasks which also must be done, which you, rightfully, don't do at present, but which I have taken up."[246] It is true that even Barth's ecclesiology in the *Church Dogmatics* is almost exclusively

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[243] "Brunner's failure to grasp Barth's concerns reflected a deeper shortcoming, which partly arose from his isolation from the German context. Although Barth's caustic remark about Brunner's distance from the German situation appears harsh, there is an uncomfortable truth in his observation." Ibid., 114.
[244] "Yet Brunner's ecumenical instincts occasionally led him to make what might now be seen as misjudgments, particularly when he stood at some cultural distance from the movements he chose to favor. One such movement was the Oxford Group."Ibid., 85.
[245] Brunner, "Toward a Missionary Theology," 817-818.
[246] Barth and Brunner, Karl Barth - Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel 1911-1966, Emil Brunner, December 19, 1927 (#67), 163-165; Hart, Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner: The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936, 88.Cf. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, Karl Barth - Emil Brunner Correspondence (Continuum International Pub Group, 2013).

"dogmatics"—that is disciplined systematic theology reflection. Despite, the "Church" also in the title, issues of "polity" or as Barth calls it "canon law" are not often mentioned. Barth says that "canon law" (as opposed to dogmatics) deals wih public worship, the divvying up of individual responsibilities within the church, issues of church discipline, the relationship between congregations, and how the church relates to the state. Barth explains that "We cannot undertake to develop and answer in detail these questions of order. This is a matter for canon law rather than dogmatics. But dogmatics cannot refrain from considering the standpoints normative for canon law."[247] Admittedly, there is no absolute distinction between dogmatics and issues of canon law, but Barth feels that articulating "the standpoints normative for canon law" are crucial to the devising of adequate canon law. So instead of launching into practical theology with poor systematic theology, Brunner would be better off fixing his systematic theology, which Barth here hints. "Has it [revelation] ever been said and heard to such an extent that we might at least have sufficient time and energy left to turn to an 'other' task of theology?"[248]

[247] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 678.
[248] Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, 125-126.

In their explicit ecclesiologies, Barth makes clear the fundamental difference between the two. In §67 of IV/2, Brunner is Barth's most frequent sparring partner.[249] Brunner's zeal to be missionally, ethically, and philosophically relevant to the world rationalized as "being led by the Holy Spirit" worries Barth.

> Bruner writes, "'What we need is the Holy Ghost' (Brunner, *Misunderstanding of the Church,*115). Of course we do. But a community which does not ask concerning law and order, inevitably abandoning its life to chance and caprice and confusion, will be just as much in contradiction to the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ as one which sets its answers to this question above or in place of the Holy Spirit.[250]

Barth felt that Brunner's insistence on being led by the Spirit was naive and foolish—that thinking about such practical matters as church and mission demanded far more discipline.[251] Barth may be "evangelical" in comparison with a Roman Catholic, but Barth insists his approach is more catholic ("evangelical-catholic"[252]) than Brunner's which he repeatedly denounces as wrong-headed.

Our point here is that a theologian such as Brunner may have substantive agreement with Barth about congregationalism or the importance of missions but may have substantial disagreement with Barth on dogmatic issues. Meanwhile, a theologian

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[249] Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 9-10, 17, 53, 58-60, 84, 97, 107-111, 115-116; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 615-616, 640, 677, 679-685. Cf. Emil Brunner, *Das Missverstandnis der Kirche* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1951). Supposedly Barth said that Brunner's book was aptly named.

[250] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 681. Cf. Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, 115.

[251] Brunner's ecclesiology "offers what is probably best described as a Romantic idealization of the early church." McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal*, 201.

[252] Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 18.

such as Balthasar may appreciate Barth's dogmatic reflection but disagree about its outworking at the practical level. Hence to just label Barth as a "Swiss Reformed church theologian" with regard to ecclesiology would be reductive and would fail to recognize the distinctiveness of Barth's ecclesiology.

Wendell Dietrich

In his 1960 dissertation at Yale, Wendell Dietrich's analyzes Roman Catholic criticism of Barth's ecclesiology up to that point.[253] Interestingly, Hans Frei and George Lindbeck both served on Dietrich's committee. Frei and Lindbeck had themselves only five years earlier finished their dissertations at Yale.[254] Many of the Sacramental interpreters of Barth's ecclesiology have some connection to Frei and Lindbeck's postliberalism or "the Yale School."

[253] Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics". Dietrich would later be known for his work on "ethical monotheism" in which he sketched the theological and ethical common ground between Christianity and Judaism. Theodore M. Vial and Mark A. Hadley, *Ethical Monotheism, Past and Present: Essays in Honor of Wendell S. Dietrich* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001). Noting commonalities between Christianity and Judaism was also something John Howard Yoder pursued. Peter Ochs reviews both Dietrich's and Yoder's work along these lines. Peter Ochs, "Ethical Monotheism When the Word Is Wounded: Wendell Dietrich Reread," in *Ethical Monotheism, Past and Present* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001). John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). Ochs is a 1979 Yale grad.

[254] Hans W. Frei, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth, 1909 to 1922: The Nature of Barth's Break With Liberalism" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1956). George A. Lindbeck, "Is Duns Scotus an Essentialist?" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1955).

Recall that Barth's mature ecclesiology appeared in volume IV of his *Church Dogmatics*, which was published throughout the 1950's. Dietrich's 1960 dissertation focuses on the concerns about the direction of Barth's ecclesiology by Roman Catholic theologians (especially Charles Journet, Yves Congar, and Jérôme Hamer) before Barth's mature ecclesiology was published. Dietrich analyzes these early concerns in the light of Barth's mature ecclesiology.

Dietrich writes,

> Both Journet and Congar offer significant explicit critique of Barth's doctrine of the church. Neither of them has before him at the time of writing Barth's view of the church as the body of Christ as expressed in *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 and IV/2. However, Journet and Congar focus on elements which have remained constant, if somewhat qualified, in Barth's thought. The irreversibility of the relation of Christ and the church, the eventful character of the church's life in response to the presence of Jesus Christ, and the character of the church's visibility are the principal objects of Journet and Congar's criticism.[255]

[255] Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics", 228. Bouillard and Küng are not dealt with extensively by Dietrich. Cf. Henri Bouillard, *Karl Barth*, 3 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1957); Hans Küng, *Justification: the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, 40th anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967); Henri Bouillard, "Karl Barth et le Catholicisme," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 20, (1970). But Grover Foley includes them in his analysis a year later in 1961. About Bouillard, Foley writes, "for the first time in the history of Catholic criticism of Barth, existentialism has come of age in Bouillard . . . accounts are settled by Bouillard's rejection of this system with an appeal on every decisive point to no other than Barth's major opponent today, Rudolf Bultmann!" Grover Foley, "The Catholic Critics of Karl Barth In Outline and Analysis," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2 (1961): 146. About Küng, he writes "Yet the final problem is not Küng's Barthianism, but his Catholicism." Ibid., 144. Like Dietrich, Émilien Lamirande's brief 1968 article covers Hamer, Congar, and Journet but he also notes Bouillard, Balthasar, Küng, Foley, and Boniface Willems. Lamirande, "Roman Catholic Reactions to Karl Barth's Ecclesiology." Cf. Lamirande, "The Impact of Karl Barth on the Catholic Church in the Last Half Century." Cf. Bender's bibliographic footnote of Roman Catholic critics: Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 85.

Barth is not occasionalistic but may be too actualistic

However, it is worth stating that Journet like Jérôme Hamer calls Barth's ecclesiology "occasionalistic."[256] Divine agency, in Barth's system, utterly invalidates any finite causality. Nor does God "commit Himself to acting through a continuous order of finite secondary causality" (such as the church).[257] Hamer argues that Barth is "an occasionalist heavily indebted to the Kierkegaardian doctrine of the Instant."[258] And "Journet states the matter in terms of Barth's causal rivalry which always derogates human agency on behalf of the sole agency of the divine."[259] We will continue to see similar criticism of Barth especially in Colm O'Grady but already here in 1960 Dietrich concludes that Hamer and Journet mislabel as "occasionalism" what Balthasar rightly calls "actualism." Dietrich concludes, "Is Barth an occasionalist as Hamer and Journet suggest? The answer is clearly 'No,' especially with regard to the Barth of *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 and IV/2. Barth's position is more accurately described as actualism."[260]

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[256] Charles Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné; essai de théologie speculative* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1941), 1129-1171. Cf. Jérôme Hamer, *Karl Barth: L'Occasionalisme Théologique de Karl Barth; étude sur sa méthode dogmatique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949). English translation: Jérôme Hamer, *Karl Barth* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962). In the introduction to the 1962 English translation, Hamer remains unconvinced that Barth has addressed the flaws Hamer noted in 1949. "Nothing permits us to suppose Karl Barth has profoundly modified his Ecclesiology." Ibid., xvii. Cf. Edward E. Blain summarizes Hamer's criticism of Barth and notes Balthasar was critical of Hamer. Blain, "Karl Barth and His Critics: A Study in Ecclesiology", 33-43.

[257] Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics", 231.

[258] Ibid., 241.

[259] Ibid., 244.

[260] Ibid., 244-245.

Dietrich however concludes that Barth's actualism (though it is not "occasionalism") does have some flaws. "It is my judgment that Barth's doctrine of the church may indeed still give too exclusive a priority to the church's time over against the church's space. There may be a lurking Docetism there."[261] We will not further explore the question of whether Barth's ecclesiology is Docetic (since it is taken up later) except to say that he explicitly denies it.[262]

Robert Jenson has explored Barth's theology of time since his dissertation in 1959 at Heidelberg just one year before this quotation in Dietrich's dissertation.[263] James Buckley frames the discussion in terms of Barth's overemphasis on time over against space in 1994. "As the Catholic counterargument has been for some time, this seems to make the work of the Spirit (including the Church) occasion-specific (*ad hoc*) rather than occasion-comprehensive (catholic)."[264] As Buckley here suggests, for Jenson, this

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[261] Ibid., 246-247.

[262] Barth responds explicitly to the charge of "ecclesiastical Docetism" and "ecclesiological Docetism." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 653; IV/2, 712; IV/3.2, 724.

[263] Robert W. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 3 (1993); Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*; Robert W. Jenson, "Cur Deus Homo? : The Election of Jesus Christ in the Theology of Karl Barth" (University of Heidelberg, 1959); Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Nelson, 1963); Robert W. Jenson, "Response to Watson and Hunsinger," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 2 (2002); Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology. Vol. 1, The Triune God* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology. Vol. 2, The Works of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Robert W. Jenson, *God After God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1969).

[264] James J. Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," *Modern Theology* 10, no. 1 (1994): 87. Then again in 2004, Buckley summarizes Jenson's view nicely, "Barth's theology of time (Jenson suggests) comes down firmly on the side of Protestant discontinuity rather than Catholic continuity; his Christology only too often yields a church with something like two natures, only occasionally united (ecclesiological 'occasionalism' or 'Nestorianism'); his theology of the Spirit identifies the Spirit too closely

question evolves into one about pneumatology[265] (which is challenged by George Hunsinger)[266]—a discussion of which will reemerge later in Reinhard Hütter's concerns with Barth's ecclesiology. But James Buckley continues to think it is an argument best addressed by looking at its practical outworking in ecclesiology.[267]

Roman Catholic critics become aware of claiming Christ and church as a "reversible" relationship

Dietrich writes that for these earlier critics (before Balthasar) such as Hamer and Journet, the relationship between Christ and the church is often conceived as reversible: that is Church and Christ, Christ and Church—the order was inconsequential. But Barth helped Roman Catholics see the danger of this approach eventually. They criticized

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with the Son, leaving too little room for the Spirit's new and distinctive future work." Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 208.

[265] Dietrich also declares his sympathy with the Eastern Orthodox complaint (which that we will see Jenson, Hütter, and Joseph Mangina later raise as well but Buckley and John Flett deny) that Barth and Roman Catholics "share, in my judgment, a common defect. For both, the Spirit tends to proceed too exclusively from the Son . . . By neither is the Holy Spirit granted His proper significance as an irreducible though not an independent element." Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics", 258. But Buckley writes that Jenson and Dietrich then have another difficult problem. "Jenson's *prima facie* problem is how he is going to have pneumatological agency *other than* the Father and Son which is not *something other than* the Father and the Son." Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 85.

[266] George Hunsinger has been a vocal critic of Jenson's criticism of Barth here. George Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); George Hunsinger, "Robert Jenson's *Systematic Theology*: A Review Essay," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 2 (2002); Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*.

[267] After the initial round of exchanges in 1993 between Jenson and Hunsinger, Buckley argued that the disagreement between Jenson and Hunsinger surrounding Barth's theology was not so much about pneumatology or time but ecclesiology. "I will now shift gears and suggest another range of problems with Barth on the Spirit and the Church—a range of problems we can still call Catholic-Evangelical but which are quite distinct from the problems raised by Jenson or Hunsinger." Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 91. We will investigate Buckle's 1994 article later in the dissertation.

Barth for refusing to link the Christological doctrine of the "metaphysical principle of causal subordination" in the "union of God and man in Jesus Christ" with the ecclesiological doctrine of "participation of the church in Christ."[268] In other words, Barth agrees that when the human Jesus does something, God is doing it. But it is another thing to say that when the church does something, God is doing it. Barth especially rejects the clerical version of this latter concept: that what priests do, God does.

Dietrich writes that the error of the Roman Catholic critics is not the Thomist doctrines but applying them indiscriminately in Christology or ecclesiology. "The Thomist understanding of the relation of the divine and creaturely causality is joined uncritically with the Thomist version of the notion of participation in defense of what is to the Protestant the heretical doctrine of the reversibility of the relation of Christ and the church."[269] Roman Catholic theologians at the time readily spoke of this reversibility as "an instance of God's committing himself to a continuous mediated sequence of finite causes."[270] Dietrich says that Roman Catholics were "willing to state the matter in terms of the reversibility of the relation."[271] They did not understand it as Protestants do as an

[268] Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics", 249.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid., 251.

appalling heretical move involving "causal rivalry or derogation of the deity of God."[272] But Protestant sharp criticism like Barth's surely led to the increasing sensitivity among Roman Catholic theologians not to describe Christ and church as a "reversible" relationship.

Roman Catholics are pressed by Barth about calling the church's dogma, sacraments, and structure "sinless"

Roman Catholics would refer to the sinlessness of the church by saying this refers not to any individual member of the hierarchy or "the members of the church . . . but the irreformable dogma, the sacraments and the hierarchical structure."[273] But Barth objects to the implication that conforming to Roman Catholic dogma, sacraments, and structure is the same as conforming to Christ. Dogma, sacraments, and structure must also be evaluated by the light of Christ. To think otherwise, is "folly."[274]

[272] Ibid., 249.
[273] Ibid., 252.
[274] "Jesus Christ as the Head of His body is the primary acting Subject, compared with whom the acting human communion of saints can be regarded only as secondary . . . In the Church, law is that which is right by the norm of this relationship. Everything else is wrong. This is the axiom which dogmatics has to proclaim to all existing or projected canon law, by which even its most detailed provisions must be measured, and to the acknowledgment of which it is invited or recalled. It would be folly to try to derive canon law from any but a christologico-ecclesiological concept of the community." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 678-679.

Barth objects to the church's task as "coredemption"

The Roman Catholic can also refer to the church's role as "coredemption."[275] Dietrich writes that the Roman Catholic notions of "cooperation or coredemption" of the Church and Barth's understanding of the "correspondence" of the church is the point where "Barth draws closer to the Roman Catholic doctrine than at any other point"[276] but still there is wide gap between "coredemptive action" and Barth's "provisional" action.[277]

Summary of Dietrich analysis

It is interesting to read Dietrich's account of the early Roman Catholic critics because their critiques as so very Roman Catholic. Barth's church is described as occasionalistic; and he is criticized because he refuses to see that the church's actions are God's, the church's dogma and structures are sinless, and that the church coredeems. This is before Vatican II and obviously so. They were not listening to Balthasar and it shows. The later, as categorized here, "Sacramental critics" are often Protestants, and even the later Catholics like Nicholas Healy and James Buckley sound like Protestants in comparions to these pre-Vatican II Roman Catholics.

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[275] Dietrich, "Christ and the Church, According to Barth and Some of His Roman Catholic Critics", 256.
[276] Ibid.
[277] We will take up this issue which Robert Jenson calls the "sensitive concept" in Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogue of the "mediation or instrumentality of the church" later in our discussion of Joseph Mangina's reading of Barth. Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, 91, Cf. 90-106.

Chapter 3: 1968-1969: Catholic criticism of Barth's mature ecclesiology: O'Grady

Colm O'Grady's exposition and critique of Barth's ecclesiology

Colm O'Grady's two-volume work on Barth's ecclesiology published in 1968 and 1969 is the longest exposition and analysis of Barth's ecclesiology.[1] James Buckley writes in 1994, "The most massive critique of this reading of Barth [of 'the Church as event'] by a Roman Catholic remains Colm O'Grady's two volume work"[2] but Buckley also pointedly criticizes it in his 1976 dissertation as we will see. Taking into account Barth's mature ecclesiology published in the 1950's, in the first volume, O'Grady carefully describes Barth's ecclesiology. In the second volume, he unfurls his critique implied in the first volume.

The criticism regarding *diastasis*

O'Grady often commends Barth's work and cites lessons for Roman Catholics to take into account but his frustration with Barth's ecclesiology sometimes shine through.

[1] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*; Colm O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth* (London: G. Chapman, 1969). See Bender's explicit engagement with O'Grady but his whole book might be understood as a response to O'Grady's salvo. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 158-159.

[2] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 100.

His most unguarded moment comes early in the first (1968) volume. He writes that Barth's earlier theology portended flaws to come.

> An understanding of his theology of 'crisis' is absolutely necessary for the understanding of Barth . . . it presents also the departure for the basic problem which will occupy him for the rest of his life: the relation or connexion between God and man, between revelation and history, between God's activity and man's activity. It presents this problem in its most blatant form, in that it asserts a total diastasis between them. One can see in it the root of his troubles.[3]

To O'Grady, Barth exaggerates the *diastasis* (chasm, or separation) between God's activity and human activity in the second edition of his commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans,* and never overcomes this overstatement. He takes Barth to be saying the following in the *Römerbrief:*

> Since Christianity is completely unhistorical and eschatological and the crisis of everything historical, it follows that a visible, historical Church can have no 'part' in it. A visible Church is for him nothing but man's greatest 'titanic' achievement, the ultimate manifestation of his opposition to the Gospel . . . Barth's whole 'ecclesiology' is nothing but a denial of the Church, an out-and-out attack on the existing historical church.[4]

Note especially O'Grady's scare quotes around "ecclesiology"—O'Grady doubts whether Barth has such a thing as ecclesiology in the Romans commentary and Barth's later theology barely improves. O'Grady writes that Barth in *The Epistle to the Romans* stubbornly refuses to diverge from his dialectical posture.

> It is this infinite qualitative distinction [between God and human beings] which he strives above all to inculcate. Consequently, any talk of relative distinctions

[3] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 34.
[4] Ibid., 34-35.

> within humanity itself, such as between one Church and another, or concerning Church order and structural improvement, is pointless.[5]

O'Grady thinks that Barth is so wedded to his dialectical posture that he will not discuss denominational differences or practical theology of any kind. But already here at the beginning of his first volume, questions arise as to whether O'Grady is reading Barth fairly.

Even in these polemical pages in the *Römerbrief* which O'Grady cites, Barth is far more constructive regarding human agency in the church than O'Grady conveys. O'Grady quotes from Barth's exposition of chapter 9 of Romans entitled, "The Tribulation of the Church" with subsections "Solidarity" (Romans 9:1-5), "The God of Jacob" (9:6-13), and "The God of Esau" (9:14-29). Barth appears to say something quite harsh about the church but then he goes on to describe Christians' need to continue to participate in the church with the awareness that the church needs God.

Barth begins with the bracing salvo, "The opposition between the Church and the Gospel is final and all-embracing: the Gospel dissolves the Church, and the Church dissolves the Gospel."[6] But Barth does not intend this to be an "Evangelical" (anti-Catholic) rant as if Protestants reliably proclaim the gospel over against the Roman Catholic who does not. Protestants and Roman Catholics are both on the "church" side

[5] Ibid., 35. Here O'Grady cites Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 333-334, 341-342.
[6] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 333.

of the ledger—over against God and his Gospel.[7] Contrary to article VII of the *Confessio Augustana* [Augsburg Confession],[8] the Gospel cannot be purely taught by the church, says Barth.[9] The human church can only speak the gospel imperfectly. There can be no utopian dreams regarding the church.[10]

But the impossibility of being like God fully does not mean Christians should desert the church or seek to find fulfillment somewhere else. Barth mentions those who have left the church and the perception that they "are widely supposed to be both better and happier men"[11] but Barth doubts it. It is the seeking to be like the world that has led to the church's greatest disasters, says Barth. The failures of the church throughout history have tended to be "because of the pluck and force of its utilitarian and hedonistic illusions, because of its very great success, and because of the skill with which it trims its sails to the changing fashions of the world."[12] Instead, the church must be the church. That is not to minimize how vulnerable and flawed the church can be. "The more the Church is the Church, [the more] he [who hears the Gospel] stands within it, miserable, hesitating, questioning, terrified. But he [who hears the Gospel] does stand within the

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[7] Ibid.
[8] "*Est autem Ekklesia congregatio Sanctorum, in qua Evangelium recte docetur, et recte administrantur Sacramenta.*" [But the Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered].
[9] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 333.
[10] Ibid., 335.
[11] Ibid., 336. Cf. Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." Which Barth reflects on later. Ibid., 433f.
[12] Ibid., 335.

Church, and not outside as a spectator."[13] Barth reiterates that there is no way of relating to God without the church. The Gospel-hearing person (such as the Apostle Paul) "knows that a non-ecclesiastical relation between men [human beings] and God is no more a reality in this world than is the innocence of paradise."[14] There is no license for Christians to forsake the church on the grounds that it is flawed. Barth calls people to become engaged in it—just with a chastened perspective about its role. Barth writes,

> We must not . . . hold ourselves aloof from the Church or break up its solidarity; but rather participating in its responsibility and sharing the guilt of its inevitable failure, we should accept it and cling to it.[15]

The subsection is entitled "Solidarity." The Christian should be in "solidarity" with the church. They are part of this body that is trying to witness to God but yet is imperfect at doing so.[16] "The church's embarrassment is the Christian's, as is the church's tribulation."[17] Barth returns much later in his September 25, 1956 lecture on "The Humanity of God" to "solidarity": that the church is judged by God "must in no case result in neglect or renunciation of our solidarity with the Church."[18]

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[13] Ibid. Original: "Trauernd, bedenklich, fragend, erschrocken steht er also in der Kirche, je mehr sie Kirche ist. Aber in der Kirche steht er, nicht als Zuschauer daneben."Barth, *Der Römerbrief: (Zweite Fassung), 1922 (GA II.47)*, 319. Eberhard Busch mentions this "the church must really be the church" phrase from Barth. Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 246-247.

[14] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 335. Original: "Er weiß, daß ein unkirchliches Verhältnis des Menschen zu Gott jetzt und hier so wenig stattfindet wie paradiesische Unschuld überhaupt." Barth, *Der Römerbrief: (Zweite Fassung), 1922 (GA II.47)*, 319.

[15] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 334. Cf. Barth, *Der Römerbrief: (Zweite Fassung), 1922 (GA II.47)*, 318.

[16] "He [The Christian] belongs personally within the Church. But He [the Christian] knows also that the Church means suffering and not triumph." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 334.

[17] Ibid., 335. Original: "its embarrassment is his and so too its tribulation."

[18] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 53.

In the next subsection of the *Römerbrief* to which O'Grady refers, still in chapter 9, Barth may again appear hyper-wary of ecclesiology matters—validating O'Grady's complaint that for Barth "any talk of relative distinctions within humanity itself, such as between one Church and another, or concerning Church order and structural improvement, is pointless."[19] In this section Barth calls the physical visible appearance of the church "the Church of Esau" and contrasts this to the church in its perfect invisible real church which he calls "the Church of Jacob." The difference between the two is a "miracle."[20] O'Grady thinks the following is a problematic statement by Barth.

> all problems concerned with the purification of the Church of Esau from its many corruptions are altogether secondary; and it is not worth wasting time in discussing them,[21]

Barth seems to say that the issues of the Church of Esau are a waste of time. But O'Grady does not note that Barth qualifies this comment as he continues the sentence. The Church of Esau is not worth talking about

> except in relation to the veritable tribulation of the Church, the tribulation of its virtues, not of its vices. The disease from which the Church suffers is that God is God, and that He is the God of Jacob.[22]

Barth, reflecting on Romans 9:13-16, says that everything else is secondary in comparison to the Church of Esau recognizing that it needs the blessing of God. This is the "veritable tribulation," and without this recognition, it cannot become the Church of

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[19] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 35. Here O'Grady cites Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 333-334, 341-342.
[20] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 341.
[21] Ibid., 342.
[22] Ibid.

Jacob. Barth is here saying the first priority of the Church of Esau must be to recognize that God is God and that their fate depends entirely on God's mercy.[23] Its corruptions and scandals are mere symptoms and "not worth wasting time in discussion" in comparison to this fundamental recognition.

But Barth clarifies that he does not mean that corruption and scandals should be allowed free reign. "Must we merely leave this problem as a problem—and 'await a miracle,' as they say who have no hope? . . . Assuredly not: our duty is to take seriously to heart the known tribulation of the Church, and to wrestle with God, the God of Jacob."[24] Barth's primary aim in the *Römerbrief* is to confront the rather complacent church with the unpredictable God of Jacob.[25] The physical visible church must not try to fix everything apart from God—by struggling "to preserve its life by turning its back on its veritable tribulation, by engaging in a tenacious defense into life or by setting out to erect new religious societies. This unwillingness-to-die is the real tragedy of the Church."[26]

Recall O'Grady's comments about the *Römerbrief:*

> Since Christianity is completely unhistorical and eschatological and the crisis of everything historical, it follows that a visible, historical Church can have no 'part'

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[23] Barth is doing exegesis here. Rom 9:13, 16. "Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' . . . It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."
[24] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 342.
[25] Barth is trying rightly attempting to convey the apostle Paul's intention here. Rom 9:11 "But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?"
[26] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 344.

> in it. A visible Church is for him nothing but man's greatest 'titanic' achievement, the ultimate manifestation of his opposition to the Gospel . . . Barth's whole 'ecclesiology' is nothing but a denial of the Church, an out-and-out attack on the existing historical church.[27]
>
> Any talk of relative distinctions within humanity itself, such as between one Church and another, or concerning Church order and structural improvement, is pointless.[28]

But this reading misses the mark. As we have seen, Barth is instead seeking to remind the church that it has not attained the status of no longer needing God—nor have individual Christians. But this "tribulation" (the need to wrestle/struggle with God à la Jacob in Gen 32:24, 28[29]) is not a reason to desert the church—the world is even more confused. The Christian's role is to be in the church—seeking to help make it more faithful even though it will always be a "struggle."

O'Grady finally resorts to an attack on Barth's style—declaring tedious Barth's stress on the "mystery" of God's relationship with human beings.

> The situation between man and God, seen from the point of the view of the Church, is 'mystery,' or 'paradox.' This mystery is the mystery of God alone. His continued hammering home of this one theme renders his thought monotonous and restricted or over-simplified.[30]

O'Grady attributes this flaw to Barth's filtering of his exegesis through the lens of Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative distinction." But O'Grady misses that the "mystery"

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[27] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 34-35.
[28] Ibid., 35. Here O'Grady cites Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 333-334, 341-342.
[29] "The Church of Jacob . . . must finally and inevitably wrestle with God *until the day breaketh* (Gen 32:24). Such is the great tribulation of the Church, a tribulation which we cannot prize too highly: and compared with it, all other troubles are mere child's-play." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 348.
[30] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 35.

that "is the mystery of God alone" has to do with God's freedom—something certainly present in Romans 9.[31]

O'Grady admits that "Barth's insight is beautiful and profound."[32] But Barth's point is far too exaggerated. One need not utterly negate human agency to stress God's sovereignty and grace. "However, his profound insight of God's sovereignty and gracious activity seems to imply, more or less as a safeguard or consequence, the negation of man—even man with grace."[33] Barth will not even admit that human beings exercise agency in salvation even if one has posited God's initiating actions, says O'Grady. O'Grady concludes with the rhetorical flourish (also cited above) that Barth in the *Epistle to the Romans* has no "real ecclesiology." O'Grady suggests that Barth has to move beyond this *diastasis* for there to be any ecclesiology.

> Any progress in Barth's ecclesiology—indeed, the very possibility of any real ecclesiology—will depend on Barth's reduction of this paradox. It will depend on his reduction of the absolute diastasis (or equivocity) between God and man in Jesus Christ, between grace and nature in the justified man, between God's Word and man's word in revelation, between Christianity and history, between the 'now' and the 'eschaton,' which are all so characteristic of his crisis theology.[34]

Later Sacramental critics and his Actualist interpreters will continue to note Barth's sharp distinction between divine and human agency in his ecclesiology. Barth himself

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[31] Rom 9:18: "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden."
[32] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 36.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 37.

remarks later that there are some things he would say differently than he did in his *Römerbrief* but he had little regret.[35]

O'Grady's most sweeping criticisms miss their mark even if only the *Römerbrief* is in view. Barth repudiates the idea that Christians should leave the church. Instead, they should be in solidarity with it. He was himself a pastor at the time and had no thought of doing anything else. Bruce McCormack concurs that the second edition of the *Epistle to the Romans* does not reveal Barth to be "the sworn enemy of religious experience and the organized Church."[36] Furthermore, the statements about human agency that seem so pessimistic to O'Grady are expositions of the apostle Paul's dark brooding about the sovereignty of God in Romans 9, e.g., "But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?" (Rom 9:20).

The criticism regarding actualism

O'Grady continues his analysis along the same lines arguing that Barth is more fastidious than the Bible itself about giving glory to God and keeping human beings humble. O'Grady argues that the incarnation dignifies humanity but Barth "insists so

[35] "Were we right or wrong? We were certainly right! . . . Therefore there never could be a question of denying or reversing that change . . . All this, however well it may have been meant and however much it may have mattered, was nevertheless said somewhat severely and brutally." Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 41, 43.

[36] "True radicalism exists only in participation in the life of the Church which remains constantly aware of the guilt which accrues to such participation." McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 282, 286 Cf. 282-287.

repeatedly on the divine activity that he leaves no room for a cooperating activity of Christ's human nature."[37] With regard to the church, O'Grady also finds Barth too reticent about God being active in the church. Barth is wary about uncritically saying where God is active but O'Grady finds him more wary than the Scriptures merit. O'Grady writes that for Barth, "The community is completely dependent on the repeated occurrence of this direct divine action. It is not continuously the Church, but becomes so from time to time."[38] The "church as event" will continue to be troubling to many of Barth's Sacramental interpreters. On the one hand, Barth has a rather exalted view of the church in emphasizing that the church is the body of Christ—Barth is awed by this idea. On the other hand, Barth does not want groups of people to in practice ignore God and do their own thing while absent-mindedly referring to themselves as "church" as if that is not an awesome thing. Barth wants every Christian to recognize that the Holy Spirit is free to go as the Spirit pleases. If the Holy Spirit makes a church the body of Christ, it is because the Spirit wills it, not because the Spirit is obligated to do the bidding of any group of people who put out a shingle that says "church." This respect for the dynamic freedom of the Spirit to move (i.e. "act") as the Spirit wills is called Barth's "actualism."

[37] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 139.
[38] Ibid., 252.

O'Grady does not understand why existing self-identified churches are viewed under such a cloud of skepticism. O'Grady believes that groups of people that call themselves "churches" should receive the benefit of the doubt, they should generally be assumed to be "the body of Christ" unless there is evidence to the contrary. But Barth for his part is concerned with the presumption; it is better for the group of people to habitually plead for God's presence instead of taking it for granted.[39] Some might say Barth is here setting up a straw man: a church that tries to do without God. There is no such thing, someone might say. But Barth thinks this is a constant subtle temptation. Barth does not want the institution taking credit for what God is doing. Nor does he want the church taking God for granted—that God will always act how they want him to, when they want him to, where they want him to.[40]

O'Grady seizes on Barth's "in spite of" (*zum Trotz*) phrases[41] (which again later interpreters will also pick up) to suggest that Barth pits human agency and God's working against one another. O'Grady describes Barth's position this way,

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[39] Eberhard Busch reports that during a conversation with clergy in the Rhineland in 1963 Barth said, "We are still steeped in that understanding of 'office.' What we need is an energetic desacramentalizing of the church." Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 92.

[40] Still, Barth's carefulness is not meant to imply that we live in paranoia. "we are required to accept as a working hypothesis that other members as well as ourselves . . . are . . . real Christians." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 699. This quote will be explored later in the dissertation in our analysis of Reinhard Hütter.

[41] "Nor is it something self-evident, but always the omnipotent act of a special divine mercy, if the Church is not merely the semblance of a Church, but in spite of [*zum Trotz*] the sinfulness of the human action of Christians a real Church, and expressed and revealed as such. In its own strength this is quite impossible. . . . If the divine occasioning and fashioning of this human action take place in spite of it [*zum Trotz*], i.e., of its sinful tendency, this is not a quality of the Church in which it actualises its reality but the triumph of the

> If the Church really takes place, if the divine determination of human action really occurs in spite of it, i.e. in spite of its sinful tendency, and is expressed and revealed as such, it is due to an omnipotent act of the special divine mercy, to the triumph of the power of Jesus Christ, and not to any institution or tradition or even reformation of the Church itself (for these too are human and therefore sinful) through which it actualizes its own reality.[42]

The contention is that Barth's "in spite of" phrases[43] indicate that the best efforts by human beings do more harm than good. This, according to O'Grady, is the Protestant overemphasis on the doctrine of justification ideologically condemning sincere attempts to be obedient. It seems to imply that since God does it all, human beings should do nothing. Barth however denies that a strong understanding of God's agency leads to the seemingly logical deduction that humans need do nothing.[44] Instead, for Barth, both divine and human agency are necessary but the divine agency is primary. It takes the

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power of Jesus Christ upbuilding it; an omnipotent act of the special divine mercy addressed to it, which makes use of the human and sinful action of the community but does not proceed from it and cannot be understood in terms of it." Ibid., IV/2, 618. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 699. Translation slightly altered: "true Church" is better rendered here in IV/2 as "real church" as will be explained below. O'Grady's concerns about this quote is cited in Reinhard Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, Evangelium und Ethik (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993), 50.

[42] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 253.

[43] There is one more "in spite of" (a translation of a different word *zuwider*). Barth says that God is at work when the Church despite its own frailty successfully points beyond itself to God. Barth writes, "This emergence and shining illustrate the freedom of grace; the mighty act of the particular divine mercy which takes place when in spite of [*zuwider*] its sinful tendency the human action of Christians does not attest itself but its basis and meaning, depicting and expressing the divine sanctifying and upbuilding." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 619. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 700. In other words, when the church has successfully witnessed—so that someone has seen God—this too is only possible by the Spirit.

[44] The apostle Paul too recognizes the logical move that God agency means no human agency is necessary. But Paul contests it as a false choice. "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!"(Rom 6:1-2).

work of God's Spirit for Christians to transcend their human sinful tendencies to be a real church, and Christians respond to God's enabling.[45]

The criticism regarding *apokatastasis*

In O'Grady's second volume, he continues his analysis of Barth's ecclesiology. He continues to claim that Barth has thoroughly excised the need for human agency. When this happens, God is the only real actor. God either saves everyone (*apokatastasis* or universalism or "universal reconciliation"[46]) or capriciously (from the human point of view) damns some and saves others (double predestination). O'Grady admits that Barth does not subscribe to universalism but says that his logic implies it. "Barth himself does not explicitly teach the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. In fact, he rejects it. Everything must be left to God. Yet it follows logically from his teaching."[47] The problem, O'Grady says, is Barth's emphasis on God as the sole subject—and this "election" by God making human agency of no consequence. Here's how O'Grady understands it.

> For Barth, there is nothing man can do to alter this decree of election . . . His doctrine of election says that everything has been decided beforehand, and that

[45] John Webster emphasizes Barth's concept of "correspondence." "It is important to underline the stress with Barth places on the proper 'correspondence' between God's activity and human acts . . . the term 'correspondence' bears a good deal of weight. It furnishes a way of affirming both the unique, incommunicable nature of God's action or which there can never be any human continuation or supplementation or adornment), and the reality of the human 'venture of action.'" John B. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79-80.
[46] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 478.
[47] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 31.

> what has been decided upon is election and salvation for all . . . Nothing human or historical can determine or nullify it.[48]

O'Grady concludes that for Barth "Everything is decided in Jesus Christ. This is at once the merit and demerit of Karl Barth's doctrine of election . . . It is its demerit because it detracts from the significance (both positive and negative) of man and history in the economy of salvation, and thus inevitably results in the doctrine of *apokatastasis.*"[49] In other words, Barth's emphasis on God's choosing of human beings in electing Jesus Christ and his denial of double predestination can lead to universalism where human response is unnecessary.

Barth does indeed say that reflection on the grace of God ("the unexpected work of grace . . . undeserved and inconceivable overflowing")[50] may make us wonder if perhaps all human foolishness and rebellion will finally be overcome by grace. "To be more explicit, there is no good reason why we should not be open to this possibility."[51] But Barth says we cannot assure ourselves or others that this is the case.

The Old and New Testament writers do not extrapolate from the omnipotence of God as a solitary concept—that God is powerful and therefore what logically follows is

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 42.
[50] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 477.
[51] Ibid., IV/3.2, 478.

that humans do nothing. Barth says the Scripture writers do not espouse this line of reasoning.

> Again, however, this reference to the omnipotence of God in Paul, as in the other witnesses of the Old and New Testaments, is not to be understood as an appeal to or a reliance on the infinite potentiality of the divine being in general. He does not build vaguely and arbitrarily on the postulate that with God everything and all things must finally be possible.[52]

Barth says the problem is that some theologians insist on this non-Scriptural logic which they then supplement with an assumption that humans are basically good and conclude that surely God will save everyone: universalism. Barth says that syllogism obscures too many other strains in Scripture.

> It is from an optimistic estimate of man in conjunction with this postulate of the infinite potentiality of the divine being that the assertion of a final redemption of each and all, known as the doctrine of the *apokatastasis* usually draws its inspiration and power.[53]

Instead, the Bible teaches that there is human sin and God will in fact judge.[54] "To the man who persistently tries to change the truth into untruth, God does not owe eternal patience and therefore deliverance any more than He does those provisional manifestations."[55] Christians cannot go around trumpeting an *apokatastasis*—assuring

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[52] Ibid., II/2, 295.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Bromiley wishes Barth would have dealt with the understandable concern that his doctrine of election leads to universalism both earlier in his account and with more Scriptural arguments. "He [Barth] is no doubt on biblical grounds in making the appeal [to divine freedom], but why not bring this out much earlier instead of leaving the initial impression that the relating of election to Christ removes all obscurity? . . . particularly in view of the what seems to be the solid and consistent witness of scripture to eternal predication as well as eternal salvation." Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, 97-98.
[55] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 477.

people that God will finally ignore all sin and rebellion. The person who does this denies the reality of sin.

> We should be denying or disarming that evil attempt and our own participation in it if, in relation to ourselves or others or all men, we were to permit ourselves to postulate a withdrawal of that threat and in this sense to expect or maintain an *apokatastasis* or universal reconciliation as the goal and end of all things.[56]

Christians cannot presume on God that God is obligated to people despite their obstinate rebellion. It may be that God includes in God's circle of the saved many or few.

> It is His concern what is to be the final extent of the circle. If we are to respect the freedom of divine grace, we cannot venture the statement that it must and will finally be coincident with the world of man as such (as in the doctrine of the so-called *apokatastasis*). No such right or necessity can legitimately be deduced. Just as the gracious God does not need to elect or call any single man, so He does not need to elect or call all mankind.[57]

Barth calls this speculating about what God must do or cannot do "historical metaphysics."[58] Barth says it is better to avoid saying that God saves everyone or that God cannot save everyone based on extrapolations about God's omnipotence or love or holiness. "We avoid both these statements, for they are both abstract and therefore cannot be any part of the message of Christ, but only formal conclusions without any actual substance."[59] Logical consistency is not a great theological virtue if it comes at the expense of distance from Scriptural teaching. One might think that grace leads to

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., II/2, 417.
[58] Ibid., II/2, 417, 418.
[59] Ibid., II/2, 418.

universalism but such "reasonable deductions" leave out too much. Though grace may suggest all sin will be overcome, to extrapolate on grace in isolation—ignoring obedience and gratitude—is to rip grace out of context of Scripture and of theology. Barth writes, "Even though theological consistency might seem to lead our thoughts and utterances most clearly in this direction, we must not arrogate to ourselves that which can be given and received only as a free gift . . . we are certainly forbidden to count on this as though we had a claim to it."[60] Instead of general speculation, Barth explores the example of Judas Iscariot. Scripture does not "make use of the tempting possibility of making Judas a plain and specific example of hopeless rejection and perdition, an embodiment of the temporal and eternal rejection of certain men . . . [Nor does it] . . . use even a single word to suggest that Judas is an example of *apokatastasis*."[61] Instead, the emphasis of Scripture is "On the one side, Jesus *for* Judas . . . and on the other side Judas *against* Jesus."[62]

> The Church will not then preach an *apokatastasis*, nor will it preach a powerless grace of Jesus Christ or a wickedness of men which is too powerful for it. But without any weakening of the contrast, and also without any arbitrary dualism, it will preach the overwhelming power of grace and the weakness of human wickedness in face of it.[63]

[60] Ibid., IV/3.2, 477, 478.
[61] Ibid., II/2, 476.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., II/2, 477.

Still, Barth says we should hope and pray for it, knowing that despite the troubled appearance of the world, we can cling to God's "compassions never fail . . . no one is cast off by the Lord forever" (Lam 3:22, 31)[64]

Again, O'Grady's reading of Barth is overly wooden and mechanical—making accusations of flaws without acknowledging the nuances of Barth's response and the difficulty of the issue.

The reason this topic of the *apokatastasis* is important for ecclesiology is that if Barth did believe fully in *apokatastasis* this would undermine the significance of human agency in general and the task of the church which Barth says is "witness"—making it superfluous. However, if Barth is instead attempting to exegete the Scriptures and note the pervasive mercy of God, this fuels human motivation to point others to this merciful God.

The criticism regarding christomonism

O'Grady says Barth's understanding of the body of Christ is unbiblical and renders ecclesiology superfluous. Barth's

[64] "If we are certainly forbidden to count on this as though we had a claim to it, as though it were not supremely the work of God to which man can have no possible claim, we are surely commanded the more definitely to hope and pray for it as we may do already on this side of this final possibility, i.e., to hope and pray cautiously and yet distinctly that, in spite of everything which may seem quite conclusively to proclaim the opposite, His compassion should not fail, and that in accordance with His mercy which is 'new every morning' He 'will not cast off for ever'" (La. 3:22f., 31)." Ibid., IV/3.2, 478.

> view represents an ecclesiological christocentrism which is certainly not Pauline. For at bottom it is a denial of ecclesiology, or, in other words, it is a christological constriction. That is, it is a Christology which swallows up ecclesiology, a doctrine of Jesus Christ which denies the reality of salvation and of salvific activity to the Church.[65]

Barth addresses this concern many times. For example, in IV/4 Barth denies that he subscribes to the "christomonist solution" in which human agency "is simply an appendage, a mere reflection . . . superfluous . .. pointless . . . completely useless . . . irrelevant."[66] He says he rejects the position that says, "Jesus Christ, then, is fundamentally alone as the only subject truly at work."[67] Barth says that God's work does not make human response inconsequential. He rejects the christomonism that says "It is simply a passive participation of man in that which God alone did in Jesus Christ."[68]

O'Grady writes that for Barth, reconciliation is exclusively a divine work. "The work of reconciliation is caused exclusively by the divine nature."[69] But Barth too criticizes the christomonist view that does not account for the imperative You (plural) "be reconciled to God" in 2 Corinthians 5:20. In the "christomonist" view "The request or summons: "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) is rendered superfluous from the very first by the reconciliation of man with God which has been omnipotently effected in

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[65] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 277.
[66] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 17.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 66.

Jesus Christ."[70] Humans are to "be reconciled with God"—note the implied human agency in reconciliation, says Barth.

The criticism regarding church as merely knowledge-bearer

O'Grady charges that for Barth everyone is saved but not everyone realizes it. "For Barth it is that *all* may *know* of their salvation in Jesus Christ. Otherwise people would go on . . . 'unaware' of it. This communication of knowledge is the motive and problem of the Church's mission."[71] O'Grady thinks that for Barth nothing really happens in human beings through the church or human agency whatsoever. People merely gain intellectual insight and appreciation for what God has done for them. O'Grady says there is in Barth an "*apokatastasis* [universalist] inclination and the absence of all urgency of faith or danger of unbelief."[72] There really is very little at stake. O'Grady asks, "What then is the urgency of faith or the danger of unbelief?"[73]

O'Grady writes that for Barth the church "does not *become* identical with the body of Christ, but through the direct action of the Spirit it *learns* that it is already the body of Christ, and must create a purely human reflection . . . What is event is its

[70] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 17.
[71] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 33.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

knowledge."[74] Nothing really happens in the church. Everything has already been done. Human action is just frosting on the cake or even less than that. It is just the realization and acknowledgement that everything has been done by God.

O'Grady cites Reformed theologians (G.C. Berkouwer and Emil Brunner) as well as Balthasar for his critique that Barth eviscerates meaningful human agency. O'Grady quotes Berkouwer that Barth's "conception leaves the impression that everything has already been done, all the decisions have been taken."[75] O'Grady then writes, "This severe judgment by G. C. Berkouwer is supported by another eminent Reformed theologian, E. Brunner. Fr. von Balthasar says much the same."[76]

O'Grady quotes Barth in *Church Dogmatics* III/2, "This contrast between the Church's awareness and the world's terrible ignorance is the motive, and the bridging of the gap between them the problem, of the early Christian mission."[77] Isolated, this might indicate that human beings simply do not know the secret of the Gospel—that all of the substantial work has already been done.[78] But Barth grounds his statement in Scripture and insists that communicating the Gospel to others is a necessity not a formality.

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[74] Ibid., 271.
[75] Ibid., 42. quoting Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 250.
[76] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 42.
[77] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 607. quoted in O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 33.
[78] Rowan Williams also says Barth's emphasis on knowledge is a problem which is perhaps related to other flaws in pneumatology and ecclesiology but then Williams qualifies his criticism by admitting that his analysis focuses only on Barth's earlier theology and is questioned further by Barth's stands on ethical issues. Williams writes, "The long essay on Barth's trinitarian theology ["Barth on the triune God"] looks at

> The apostle of Jesus Christ not only can but must be a missionary. To him this is . . . an ἀνάγκη [necessity]: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).[79]

Christians will want to tell of Jesus Christ who resolves the problem of death (which Barth addresses for the rest of this section).[80] Barth's emphasis is not on how little this "knowledge" of Jesus Christ matters but how significant it is.

O'Grady thinks that the church delivers the benefits of God through the Eucharist and thus more than mere knowledge. He thinks Barth denigrates the role of the church—pointing to this quote by Barth from *Church Dogmatics* III/4: "The true impulse to go out into the world and address it can derive only from the fact that the community [the church] knows something which the world does not know."[81] But this is in the context of Barth urging the church not to condemn the world for not measuring up to the church's own righteousness but instead to share the gospel with the world. The whole quotation reads this way, "The only thing which never dates is the Gospel. The true impulse to go out into the world and address it can derive only from the fact

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how this theme is developed in the early sections of the *Church Dogmatics*, and identifies some of the problems that arise when the emphasis is so heavily on the knowledge of God rather than the transforming relation with God that a fuller doctrine of the Holy Spirit might suggest. Although this discussion makes too little use of some of the ways in which Barth himself corrects some of the imbalance in later parts of the *Dogmatics*, it does pinpoint a difficulty felt by many in reading Barth: that the doctrine of the Spirit and the Church are less than completely developed. Yet Barth's view of the Church emerges powerfully when we look at his own actual witness in relation to the Confessing Church in the thirties and in his postwar writing about Church and state." Rowan Williams, *Wrestling With Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), xv-xvi.

[79] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 607.

[80] Ibid. III/2, 607-640

[81] Ibid., III/4, 509. quoted in O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 33.

that the community knows something which the world does not know."[82] What does not get outdated is the Gospel. Again, this is not a statement as it might appear out of context stating that what the church is doing is merely information dispersal.

However, there is a difference here between O'Grady and Barth. For O'Grady, the Christian proclaims that in the church reside the blessings of God. Whereas Barth thinks Christians should point to Jesus Christ. One can also point to Jesus Christ in the church but the church does not invariably, reliably point to Jesus Christ. No doubt this statement from IV/4 by Barth would draw O'Grady's ire.

> The Church is neither author, dispenser, nor mediator of grace and its revelation. It is the subject neither of the work of salvation nor the Word of salvation. It cannot act as such. It cannot strut about as such, as though this were its calling. Its work and action in all forms, even in the best possibilities, stands or falls with the self-attestation and self-impartation of Jesus Christ Himself, in which it can only participate as assistant and minister.[83]

In other words, the Christian should make clear that the church is merely the servant of Jesus Christ and can be distinguished from Him.

Later in the unfinished portion of IV/4 published in *The Christian Life,* Barth writes more on this topic saying there is a tendency of the church to develop an excessive preoccupation with its own inner workings, what he calls, "the church in

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[82] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 509.

[83] Ibid., IV/4, 32. Surely Barth is right that Jesus Christ has a unique status over the church: "there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5); "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2).

excess."[84] If it communicates with outsiders at all, "the church in excess" offers itself along with the gospel. The outsider is given the impression that the person who accepts the gospel must also embrace the peripheral ecclesiastical accouterments (hierarchy, secrecy, violence, scandal, incompetence), when instead the gospel exposes those for what they are. Jesus Christ may be seen in the church—hopefully He is. But the church is to make clear that they are those who attest to, assist, and serve their Master rather than being the Master.[85] When one considers the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 to "make disciples," it is conceivable that both making the knowledge of Christ known (Barth) and distributing the benefits of the church (O'Grady) are approximations of this. Therefore, to say that the church's greatest gift is "knowledge of Jesus Christ" is hardly an insult to the church.

The criticism regarding Monophysitism and Nestorianism

O'Grady delves into the adequacy of Barth's Christology—arguing that Barth's ecclesiological problems are rooted there. O'Grady thinks that Barth downplays the human volition of Jesus Christ—leading to Barth also inappropriately downgrading the importance of the visible church.

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[84] Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 136-141, 190, 193.
[85] Christians would do well to repeat what Barnabas and Paul said. "Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news!" (Acts 14:15).

> Human nature, he [Barth] says, is the instrument in act of divine power. It does not *acquire* or *exercise* divine power . . . It is hard to see how Barth avoids saying that the instrumentality of Christ's human nature is something inanimate . . . The divine act takes place through the human, but in such a way that the human never participates in the power and life of the divine . . . The effect is attributable solely to God . . . Barth is led to profess an 'economic' monophysitism as regards the work of salvation.[86]

And a few pages later, O'Grady writes,

> Barth's doctrine of the being and work of Christ would seem to stand very close to Luther's concept of 'exchange,' and to his assertion of the sole operation of God in salvation. This would reveal a certain monophysite tendency as regards the work of salvation.[87]

Barth had much to say on the subject explicitly distancing himself from a Lutheran understanding of Christology, which he explicitly agrees has a Monophysite tendency.[88] Barth thinks the Reformed dogmaticians were right to distance themselves from the Monophysite idea.[89]

O'Grady says that Barth commits both the errors of being: "Nestorian" (there being two persons in Jesus Christ) and "monophysite" (where Jesus has merely a passive human nature). Barth

> shows a certain Calvinistic-Nestorian tendency . . . he speaks of *two* acts, of a divine and then a human act, of an eternal and temporal act, of the *separated*

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[86] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 66.
[87] Ibid., 69.
[88] "The consequence is that in the Lutheran conception it is not at all clear how far the spatial limitation and even the creatureliness of the body of Christ and His human nature in general can be taken seriously. It is not at all clear whether the true manhood of Christ has not disappeared in His divinity, thus annulling the incarnation and compromising God's revealing and reconciling work in Christ. The Lutherans, of course, did not intend this. But at no stage in the controversy could they make clear how far they could escape ending in Monophysitism and perhaps in Docetism." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 488.
[89] Barth says the Reformed rightly say, "He [God], this One, is Jesus Christ, and not a neutral thing, a human essence illuminated and impregnated by divinity." Ibid., IV/2, 68.

> activity of the two natures, with the result that he does not seem to do full justice to the profundity of the hypostatic union. Logically, he would have to assert either two persons or one impersonal nature. Both the tendency to Nestorianism and the tendency to Monophysitism agree in this that they deny any cooperation of the man Jesus or of his human nature in salvation.[90]

Then O'Grady writes that Barth falls into both errors.

> It is not surprising that Barth differs from us [Roman Catholics] in Christology, and by a tendency to *both* Nestorianism and monophysitism. It may be observed that this Lutheran-monophysite, Calvinistic-Nestorian tension in Barth's Christology would appear to be the logical christological application of his original adherence to the Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria* in the light of the Lutheran *sola gratia,* or of his doctrine of the *sola fide* in justification.[91]

O'Grady is not particularly surprised by Barth's mistakes on these issues because Barth is a Protestant. Yves Congar writes something similar about Luther. "Luther was in fact something of a Nestorian in his Christology, and at the same time something of a Monophysite."[92]

Barth is not unaware of these theological errors—noting the dueling critiques from the Reformed that Lutheran theology is Monophysite and the Lutheran criticism of Calvinist theology as Nestorian.[93] Barth defends himself and older Reformed theologians

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[90] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 70.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Yves Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church; A Study in Eirenic Theology* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), 29-31. Translation of: Yves Congar, *Le Christ, Marie et l'Église* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952), 37-39.

[93] "It is clear that, although it [older Lutheran theology] did not side in this with the Monophysite heresy of Eutyches rejected at Chalcedon, it opposed that of Nestorius with particular sharpness, or, more positively, appropriated the concern of Alexandrian theology as purified at Chalcedon. And obviously, in spite of every safeguard and precaution, in the heat of the conflict it could sometimes be accused of Monophysitism by the opposing faction, as it was not slack—for its own part—to level against the Calvinists the charge of Nestorianism." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 67. Recall that Nestorius stressed delineating the two natures of Jesus Christ ("christological dualism") over against Cyril ("christological

saying they were aware of the danger of Nestorianism and explicitly worked with the Chalcedonian definition in order to avoid it.

> They naturally came under the suspicion of a Nestorian tendency . . . But to understand this, we must see and emphasise that they did try to think it out in the light of Chalcedon. They had no desire to divide up Jesus Christ into a Son of God and Son of Man.[94]

O'Grady suspects Barth's flawed Christology is the source of his ecclesiological errors.

> Barth, I am convinced, speaks of a divine *and* a human Church as two distinct realities, and attributes salvific mediation solely to the divine Church, that is, to the Holy Spirit. Thus just as he is Nestorian and monophysite in his explanation of this mystery of the being and work of Jesus Christ so also he is Nestorian and monophysite in his explanation of the being and work of the Church of Jesus Christ.[95]

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monism") the latter of which won the argument that Jesus is also "one hypostasis." Richard A. Norris, ed. *The Christological Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 28. The criticism that Barth is "Nestorian" means he stresses the duality or difference between the human and divine, rather than their unity. Barth himself criticizes John Calvin for this. "The Lutherans rejected it [the *Extra Calvinisticum*] because they thought they could see in it a 'Nestorian' separation of the divine and human natures . . . We may concede that there is something unsatisfactory about the theory, in that right up to our own day it has led to fatal speculation about the being and work of . . . a God whom we think we can know elsewhere, and whose divine being we can define from elsewhere than in and from the contemplation of His presence and activity as the Word made flesh. And it cannot be denied that Calvin himself (and with particularly serious consequences in his doctrine of predestination) does go a good way towards trying to reckon with this 'other' god." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 181.

[94] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 67. Admittedly this is a difficult center to hit which the young Barth once admitted. "In reality, he [Zwingli] has hit that which the fathers of Chalcedon envisioned as the correct middle point (a middle point which probably not even a single theologian has ever really stopped over), a distance from the Nestorian side and a distance from the Lutheran proximity to Monophysitism." Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Zwinglis, 1922/1923: Vorlesung Göttingen Wintersemester 1922/1923 (GA II.40)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004), 440. McCormack acknowledges in rare instances Barth veers there. "In spite of his explicit rejection of Nestorianism, Barth drifts unintentionally in that direction." McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 212.

[95] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 127.

As we have seen, Barth was cognizant of the danger of falling into the Christological errors O'Grady accuses him of succumbing to. A convincing critique of his Christology would need to take into account Barth's defense more fully.

Furthermore, there is reason to doubt whether an error in Christology would necessarily entail an error in ecclesiology—a point we have noted before and will return to again; fidelity to Chalcedonian Christology does not necessarily mean faithful ecclesiology because the human nature of Jesus Christ cannot be mapped onto human agency in the church without remainder. O'Grady however uses the Christological heresy labels frequently in his characterization of Barth's ecclesiology. He says Barth's stark division between the divine and human church betrays "a certain ecclesiological Nestorianism" while his downplaying of the importance of the physical church betrays "a certain ecclesiological Apollinarism or monophysitism or at least an economic monophysitism."[96] O'Grady sees these traditional Christological heresies in Barth's ecclesiology because Barth denies "the cooperation of a divine and human element" in the economy of salvation.[97] Instead Barth sees "a divine and solely causal action and a corresponding witness of human action."[98]

[96] Ibid., 74.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

The criticism regarding the prolongation of the incarnation and *Totus Christus*

O'Grady badly misreads Barth's restating of the Pauline phrase "the body of Christ" as the church being the "earthly-historical form of Jesus Christ."[99] O'Grady rightly says that for Barth "He [Jesus] exists here and now in the community, his body." But then O'Grady writes that for Barth,

> The community is the second form of his own physical body. . . His existence here and now is not a prolongation or continuation of the incarnation. It *is* the incarnation . . . It [the church] is both divine and human in exactly the same way as Jesus Christ is divine and human. For he himself directly is its invisible being, and the community fulfills the same function as his individual human nature.[100]

As we will see, Barth clearly says that the church is not the incarnation (nor the prolongation of the incarnation) and the divine and the human do not function in "exactly the same way" in the church as they do in Jesus Christ. O'Grady's expository analysis in his previous book is more careful on this point and there he qualifies this claim. "It *is* the incarnation—in a second form."[101]

Though O'Grady does not say so, he seems to be drawing here especially on a two-page aside by Barth in a Christology section of IV/2, not an ecclesiology section.[102] Barth has been speaking about the "uniqueness" of the exaltation of the Son of Man in

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[99] "The community is the earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ Himself. The time has now come to adopt the New Testament term used to describe this matter. The Church is His body, created and continually renewed by the awakening power of the Holy Spirit." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 661.
[100] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 75.
[101] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 143.
[102] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 59-60.

that section. He then steps back for a two-page excursus to stress that "exaltation of the Son of Man" is not finally for the benefit of Christ himself but results in benefits for all those "in Him."[103] Barth is referring verses such as Romans 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Barth puts it this way, "the community of those who, as they look to Him, are united with Him by the Holy Spirit in faith and love and hope, finding their own humanity caught up in His, and therefore exalted as such into existence in and with God."[104] Even with this "indirect identity"[105] in "exaltation" however Barth says there are only certain things that we can say Christ and Christians share. "We cannot speak, then, of a repetition or extension of the incarnation taking place in it [the church]."[106] But, in so far as Christ and those in Christ share a common destiny we can speak of the *totus Christus*. Only in this respect can Christ and Christians be referred to as one entity—together sharing the benefits of Christ.[107] In other words, O'Grady takes Barth's reveling in the benefits of Christ which are received by those in Christ to mean that the church is (the prolongation of the) incarnation.

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[103] Ibid., IV/2, 59.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., IV/2, 60.
[107] Ibid.

O'Grady relates this misreading to O'Grady's consistent charge: that Barth's emphasis on Christ utterly eclipses every vestige of church. This is "the basic deficiency of Barth's whole theology . . . Jesus Christ existed once and for all, that is, not just past but also present and future, in his human nature . . . By denying the Catholic position Barth is led to deny any reality, salvific reality that is, to a human Church."[108] Because the Christology has this major flaw—denigrating the human nature of Jesus Christ, the Church has a very low status since its head is Jesus Christ. The human nature of Jesus Christ is not given its due weight—seen as secondary—so of course the church (human too) will be seen as even more derivative. "The thoroughly unsatisfactory thing about his view is that we cannot even term this an *ecclesiological* mono-actualism. It is simply the same christological mono-actualism in a second form. This is practically a denial of all ecclesiology."[109] In other words, the church has been demoted to a tertiary level: (1) the divine nature of Jesus, (2) the human nature of Jesus, then (3) the very human church. There is nothing left for this third level because the first level has done it all. "This is practically a denial of all ecclesiology."[110] Again, it is quotations like the one that lead to Barth having the reputation of "having no ecclesiology" but the reading of Barth behind that conclusion is faulty.

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[108] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 75.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

The criticism regarding *sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria*

O'Grady thinks Barth's Christological flaw is a result of Protestant hypersensitivity in soteriology; because of the emphasis on justification, there can be no affirming of human agency.

> And for the very same reason, namely, that any union or co-operation between God and man in the work of salvation would be a denial of God's sole subjectivity as affirmed basically in the doctrine of justification. It is precisely because he denies the possibility of intimate union and co-operation between the Holy Spirit and this particular people that Barth is led to absorb all salvific activity and reality into the divine: Jesus Christ (or the Spirit of Jesus Christ) is the Church. It is precisely because Catholic ecclesiology affirms this union and co-operation of the Holy Spirit and this people in one salvific reality that it is neither Nestorian nor monophysite in ecclesiology.[111]

O'Grady thinks it is characteristic of Protestants to be so paranoid about "works" with their doctrine of justification that not just soteriology but Christology and ecclesiology also become skewed. Protestants downplay human obedience and divine-human cooperation in soteriology; downplay Christ's humanity and unity of the divine-human natures in Christology; and downplay the humanity of the church and divine-human sacramental practice in ecclesiology.

O'Grady thinks there is a power vacuum in Barth's ecclesiology: no one has been lent God's power; not the priesthood of all believers, nor the hierarchy. "Barth's doctrine

[111] Ibid., 127-128.

appears to be no less opposed to the general Protestant affirmation of the priesthood of all believers . . . than Catholic doctrine . . . for . . . *no one* has a sacred power."[112] In other words, Barth does not just deny the exercise of hierarchical power but all human power. O'Grady argues that this rooted in Barth ultra-Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria*.

> The ecclesiological formulation of Luther's concept of justification is the common priesthood of all believers. Barth radicalizes Luther's doctrine of justification according to an ultra-Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria.* As a result he also radicalizes Luther's concept of the priesthood of all. Barth's doctrine of justification expresses itself ecclesiologically in a denial of all true human participation in Christ's one ministry of priesthood, kingship, and prophecy.[113]

For O'Grady, it is better to affirm the "co-operation of the Holy Spirit and . . . people" in a Roman Catholic way so as to avoid these errors.

O'Grady summarizes this imbalanced Protestant ideological rigidity in some of the Protestant slogans.

> From the beginning Karl Barth accepted the basic concern of Luther's theology, namely, justification by faith alone, but he radicalized it according to an ultra-Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria.* For him God *alone* is salvifically active in the relationship between God and man. This is the basis of his theology. It is the principle which determines his theological thought-form. Actualism is the sole thought-form which results from, and safeguards, God's sole subjectivity. God's sovereignty and freedom means *sola fide, sola gratia, solo Verbo, solo Spiritu, solo Christo, solo Deo.*[114]

Or again:

> From the beginning of his 'crisis' theology, Barth was principally concerned with the problem of man's justification by God . . . It is solely a *divine* action, he says. What is the source of Barth's thought? St. Paul, he says himself. Undoubtedly it

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[112] Ibid., 150.
[113] Ibid., 171.
[114] Ibid., 19.

> was. But it was St. Paul interpreted according to a preconceived principle. This principle Barth obtained from Luther (*sola gratia, sola fide*) and Calvin (*soli Deo gloria, diastasis*). In Barth *soli Deo gloria* becomes however ultra-Calvinistic. Besides the fact that such may be the *logical* conclusion from Calvinism, Barth was probably influenced in his interpretation by the theological and political circumstances of his time, by Kierkegaard, by Overbeck, by the Blumhardts. Barth *then* interprets St. Paul. Barth always remained faithful to this fundamental insight . . . It may be observed that this Lutheran-monophysite, Calvinistic-Nestorian tension in Barth's Christology would appear to be the logical christological application of his original adherence to the Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria* in the light of the Lutheran *sola gratia,* or of his doctrine of the *sola fide* in justification.[115]

Or again: Barth's theology amounts to "a re-presentation of Luther's *solo gratia* interpreted according to an *ultra*-Calvinistic *soli Deo gloria*" says O'Grady.[116]

This may be useful heuristic for describing Barth's inclinations compared with Roman Catholic ones but it is important to note that Barth never embraces any of these slogans without significant qualification despite O'Grady's charges here.[117]

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[115] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 43. Emphasis in the original.

[116] Ibid., 39.

[117] For example Daniel Migliore gives a description of how Barth qualified the phrases in his early theology in Göttingen. "For Barth, the Lutheran *sola fide* is sound and good theology, but it is best understood in the light of the 'stubborn and exclusive' Calvinist *Deus solus* (18.III.464) and *soli Deo gloria* (7.IV.195). Yet the familiar rule of Reformed theology, 'the finite is not capable of the infinite,' would be misunderstood if it were not qualified at once by the affirmation, 'the infinite is capable of the finite' (20.II). Both statements aim simply to uphold the *soli Deo gloria*, which does not exclude but includes us ('God would not be God if we were not also there, if his Word were not put in our hearts and on our lips' [11.I.270])." Daniel L. Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures in Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion," in *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. Karl Barth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 27.

Sola gratia only occurs once in the *Church Dogmatics* in a quotation from Augustine no less.[118] Emil Brunner uses it in his correspondence with Barth but Barth does not.[119]

It is true that Barth suggests that *sola fide, soli Deo gloria, and sola Scriptura* are to be understood as a constellation of useful emphases in that they each point to the one God[120] but Barth never uses the phrases without significant explanation about what he means.[121]

Barth makes clear that *sola fide* should not be understood to preclude human obedience.

> But the justification of sinful man, the restoration of his peace with God, is only one of the problems of the Christian life. And so faith has other dimensions than that of its relation to man's justification . . . Faith is the humility of obedience . . . We must bear all this in mind if we are to understand the great negation in the Pauline and Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, and especially Luther's *sola fide*.[122]

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[118] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 328.

[119] Barth and Brunner, *Karl Barth - Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel 1911-1966*, 247, 270, 433, 474.

[120] "This *sola fide* [`by faith alone'] is simply the reflection of the *soli Deo gloria* [to the glory of God alone] with which the fathers of the Protestant Church were equally accustomed to sum up their profession of faith, just as conversely this *soli Deo gloria* is simply the reflection of the *sola fide*. Rightly understood these two *sola* (and the third one, *sola scriptura* [Scripture alone] too) mean one and the same thing. *Unicus Deus* [the one God], because *unicus summus pontifex, patronus et pacificator* [the one most high priest, patron and peacemaker] (Conf. Scot. Art. XI), is the archetype, reflected by both, indeed by all three *sola*." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 457.

[121] Barth writes in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* that "I believe it will be worth our while to give to Luther's *sola fide* this extended interpretation. The concern that lies behind it could not be better brought out than by setting it in the light of Calvin's *soli Deo gloria*." Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, 195.

[122] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 618, 620, 621.

Barth admits that Calvin intended *sola fide* as a polemical challenge ("not a kiss of peace") to Roman Catholic teaching but that Calvin of course also did not intend to imply that justification said everything. "In the context in which it was set by him [Calvin] the *sola fide* obviously could not become a comfortable kiss of peace. On the other hand, of course, there is no sanctification without justification."[123]

Barth also only uses the phrase *soli Deo gloria* sparingly. He does not use the phrase as a lever on which to lift theological freight. Like *sola fide* and *sola gratia* and the *extra Calvinisticum*, *soli Deo gloria* only appears a handful of times in all of the *Church Dogmatics.* And even when it is used, it is in a circumscribed and limited way—describing historically how the phrase has been used in the theological literature; rather than as a slogan on which he depends. Barth writes that if this slogan is used to deny human agency from human beings, it is being misused. It instead fuels and guides human agency.

> He alone! *Soli Deo gloria*! Detailed proof of this is unnecessary. Yet we miss the wood [forest] for the trees if we try to deny that, according to the whole of both the Old and the New Testament, the glory of God is not placed under a bushel but on a candlestick, streaming out into the varied reality of His creation and illuminating it, and in it decisively and representatively man.[124]

The glory of God is not merely for God himself but rather spills over for human beings.

[123] Ibid., IV/2, 506.
[124] Ibid., III/4, 653.

The same is true with regard to the "*Extra Calvinisticum*" which implies for O'Grady a denigration of everything human. "The work of reconciliation is caused exclusively by the divine nature. Such an *Extra Calvinisticum* is in danger of denying the *reality* of the incarnation and work of reconciliation."[125] O'Grady's accusation is that Barth believes God operates from heaven with Jesus and the church as puppets without agency of their own. Barth mentions the *extra Calvinisticum* briefly in only two parts of the *Church Dogmatics*.[126] Barth says this was the view not just of John Calvin but also many of the Church Fathers.[127] However, Barth is quite sympathetic with the Lutherans (and O'Grady here) that the doctrine can lead to Nestorianism.[128] Those who affirm the

[125] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 66.

[126] The *extra Calvinisticum* has to do with to what extent Jesus remained God in heaven during the incarnation. To what extent was Jesus in two places at once? This is not particularly clear in Scripture. Those who subscribe to the *extra Calvinisticum* believe Jesus was to some extent still God in heaven. "From this concern there resulted a protest on the part of Reformed theology in the 16th and 17th centuries against the crowning assertion of Luther and the Lutherans about the existence of the Word solely in the human existence of Christ. The "solely" was contested, and it was asserted in reply that since the Word is flesh, He also is and continues to be what He is in Himself, He also exists outwith (extra) the flesh." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 168.

[127] *Extra Calvinisticum* is instead merely a reaction to a Lutheran divergence from the great tradition of Christology. Ibid. Barth goes on to burnish his argument by citing examples of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, and even Luther himself concurring with the supposed "*Extra Calvinisticum*." Ibid., I/2, 169. "It may also be noted, however, that the theory was not an innovation on the part of Calvin, nor was it a revival of the teaching condemned under the name of Nestorius. For in this matter Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria and Hilary of Poitiers had all thought and taught as he did, as had indeed the whole early and mediæval Church, so that it was the abstract Lutheran denial of a being of the *Logos extra carnem* which was the real innovation." Ibid., IV/1, 181.

[128] "The Lutherans rejected it [*the extra Calvinisticum*] because they thought they could see in it a 'Nestorian' separation of the divine and human natures . . . We may concede that there is something unsatisfactory about the theory, in that right up to our own day it has led to fatal speculation about the being and work of the λόγος ἄσαρκος, or a God whom we think we can know elsewhere, and whose divine being we can define from elsewhere than in and from the contemplation of His presence and activity as the Word made flesh." Ibid. Bruce McCormack can only speak about Barth's affirmation of the *extra Calvinisticum* with

extra Calvinisticum are trying to emphasize Jesus was still God. Those who question it are trying to affirm that Jesus' humanity was real. O'Grady's blow misses here because Barth himself seems quite aware of the difficulty of this Christological mystery, does not subscribe uncritically to the *extra Calvinisticum*, does not apply it to ecclesiology, and certainly does not think that all human agency is illusory.

In another section Barth says that no bullying by Protestant or Reformed purists should keep Christians from affirming that in response to God's initiative that meaningful human agency exists. Barth lists numerous Protestant slogans and epithets that intend to warn people from transgressing the sovereignty of God but in isolation do as much harm as good. Barth gives a litany of these phrases that can be misused: "*finitum non capax infiniti* [the finite cannot contain the infinite] . . . the infinitely qualitative distinction between God and man . . . Christocentrism"[129]—all these can become mistakes. Faithfulness does not come from attempting to distance oneself as far as possible from being called a "Mystic" or "Pietist" or "communitarian.[130] He goes on to list a few more Reformed shibboleth that are designed to screen out creeping

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regard to Christology with significant qualification. "The *Logos incarnandus* is both *asarkos* (because not yet embodied) and *ensarkos* (by way of anticipation, on the basis of God's Self-determination in the act of election); the *Logos incarnatus* is both *asarkos* (the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*) and *ensarkos* (having become embodied)." McCormack, "Seek God Where He May Be Found: A Response to Edwin Chr. van Driel," 266. The *extra Calvinistium* is also addressed below in the chapter on Kimlyn Bender.

[129] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3, 498-499.

[130] Ibid. Cf. Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 42.

Pelagianism. It is appropriate to describe human agency as secondary, but it is not correct to ignore what is properly secondary altogether. In other words, the B of human response should follow the A of God's action.

> We inevitably misunderstand the transcendence of God, the eternal election of man in Jesus Christ, the work of reconciliation accomplished without man yet also for him and to him in Jesus Christ, and therefore the great and decisive prior history of the vocation of man, and the *sola fide*, if we refuse to let B follow A, and therefore, cost what it may, to understand and describe the vocation of man as a genuine, concrete, historical event in time.[131]

This is counterevidence to O'Grady's assertion that Barth's flawed ecclesiology is the result of his rather one-dimensional Protestant inclination to denigrate the human side of theology. The reader should at least doubt that Barth is a strident sloganeering Protestant—merely appropriating these Protestant slogans to his ecclesiology.

Furthermore, it is O'Grady's solution to the difficult conundrums in soteriology and ecclesiology that is vulnerable to the critique of superficial sloganeering. O'Grady coaches fellow Roman Catholics to be sure to frame soteriology in terms of *sola gratia* and the work of the church in terms of the Holy Spirit to parlay Protestant criticism.

> The presence and action of the divine Spirit in and through the Church must be emphasized by Catholic theologians and preachers in their presentation of the mystery of the Church and of Christian life. Paradoxical though it may seem, this is the basic answer of the Roman Catholic Church to the usual Protestant accusation of triumphalism, pride, arrogance, Pelagianism. It corresponds to the emphasis required in the doctrine of justification on the divine origin of all grace

[131] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3, 498-499.

> and salvation. The *solo Spiritu* is the ecclesiological correspondence to *sola gratia.*[132]

If only Roman Catholics would couch their claims about the church in terms of the Holy Spirit, they could avoid "accusation of triumphalism, pride, arrogance, Pelagianism." While partly true, this is surely a rather cheap appropriation of the relentless prioritization of God's action in Barth's ecclesiology—seen for example in his ecclesiological sections which begin with "The Holy Spirit and the: gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the church." Hans Küng too began framing things in a way similar to Barth's. Barth wrote asked if he had really independently come to these views or if he had been influenced by Barth's work. "May I just whisper a question . . . Did you yourself discover all this before you so carefully read my *Church Dogmatics* or was it . . . afterward?"[133]

The criticism regarding Barth's subverting *koinonia* to *diakonia*

O'Grady adjudges the greatest strength of Barth's ecclesiology to be its focus on mission. "In Karl Barth's understanding, the Church is essentially apostolic or missionary. This can be said to be *the* great merit of his ecclesiology."[134] Barth likely had an influence on Vatican II in this regard, O'Grady thinks. "I am convinced that the

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[132] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 128.
[133] Küng, *Justification: the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, lxix.
[134] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 143. Comma added. Italics original.

presence of this conception in modern Catholic ecclesiology and in the documents of Vatican II is not entirely without his influence."[135]

The problem, says O'Grady, is that Barth overemphasized the function of the church (i.e. what it does—service) and downplayed or reduced that it has inherent value in itself—what O'Grady calls "fellowship." O'Grady argues that "The Church is not *pure function.* It is also a fellowship."[136] O'Grady argues that the church is primarily about fellowship (*koinonia*). Service (*diakonia*) flows from this fellowship. O'Grady thinks service is not vital to the very existence of the church as Barth suggests; the church would still exist, even if it were just fellowship. Service is a bonus. For O'Grady, "It is a 'diakonia' *and* 'koinonia,' a 'diakonia' *in* 'koinonia.'"[137] This is a variation on the critique that others will pick up later that Barth's treats the church as instrumental (something good for what it does not what it is in itself). But Barth rejects O'Grady's hard distinction here between the inherent value of the church's internal life together of fellowship and

[135] Ibid., 146. Thomas F. Torrance expresses it much more emphatically. "Pope Paul used to say that he [Barth] was the greatest theologian since Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, which ranks him above John Duns Scotus. That was a surprising tribute from a Roman Pontiff, for Barth's critical analysis of Roman dogma was as sharp as it was profound, although he also found much to appreciate in Roman Catholic theology. Yet perhaps it was not so surprising, for Karl Barth, one man, had a greater impact upon the Roman Catholic Church than four hundred years of Protestantism!" Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 1. Or perhaps it was an earlier pope: "Pope Pius XII . . . supposedly called Barth 'the greatest theologian since Thomas Aquinas and the most influential in the twentieth century.' . . . Although this statement is widely reported, tracking down a direct citation from Pius XII where he said this has so far not been forthcoming." Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 267.
[136] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 147. Italics original.
[137] Ibid. Italics original.

the other task of service to the world. As we will see later, Yoder highlights Barth's use of the phrase "exemplary" in Barth's §67 of IV/2—a section that focuses on "the upbuilding of the Christian community" (its inner life) but how that life proclaims.[138]

O'Grady writes that this "more balanced view" of the church being both fellowship and "also" (i.e. secondarily) service is the view of Vatican II. He quotes *Lumen Gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. "Established by Christ as a *fellowship (communio)* of life, charity and truth, it is *also used* by him as an instrument by him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth."[139] O'Grady's emphasis is that the church is primarily fellowship, it is *also* used by God to witness to the world. The implication

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[138] Yoder puts it nicely here, "fellowship and witness, are not two desiderata, each capable of existing or being missed independently of one another; each is the condition of the genuineness of the other." John Howard Yoder, "A People in the World," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint, Herald Press), 78. As Stanley Hauerwas, puts it regarding "worship and evangelism," the problem is the conjunction "and." Stanley Hauerwas, "Beyond the Boundaries: The Church is Mission," in *Walk Humbly With the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, ed. Viggo Mortensen and Andreas Østerlund Nielsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Stanley Hauerwas, "Worship, Evangelism, Ethics: On Eliminating the "And"," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, ed. Paul Wesley Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

[139] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 147. citing Second Vatican Council, "Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)," chapter 2, article 9. Italics by O'Grady. Hauerwas cites George Lindbeck's view that the church and mission were inextricably linked in the Vatican II documents. Lindbeck says that for Vatican II, the church "is to be a sacramental sign or witness to God's saving work in all that it is and does. It exercises this witnessing or missionary function in its *diakonia* or secular service of the world, its *leitourgia* or worship of God, and its *koinonia* or communal unity expressed both interpersonally and in institutional structures and in common faith and dogma."George A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology; Vatican II - Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 5. quoted in Hauerwas, "Beyond the Boundaries: The Church is Mission," 55. The problem is that people like O'Grady did not see a coherent view coming out of Vatican II. They saw mission as less important than fellowship and argued Barth denigrated fellowship with his overemphasis on mission.

seems to be that the church may or may not serve, that it may or may not witness but it will most definitely fellowship. The contrasts with Barth's emphasizing that *the* task of the church is witness.[140] O'Grady writes that "while one of the primary tasks of the Church's mission is witness to the world, this is only one of its tasks."[141] O'Grady writes that Barth exaggerates the importance of witness as a corrective—to overcompensate for a loss of emphasis in this area historically. "Undoubtedly Barth exaggerated the aspect of witness in order to restore the sense of mission to the Church."[142] For O'Grady this emphasis is finally reductive of what happens in the church (i.e. the distribution of the benefits of Christ in the Eucharist); that for Barth the church is only useful or worthwhile if someone "in the world" is witnessed to. The church is for Barth "pure function"[143] or functional, instrumental.

Since O'Grady cites here *Lumen Gentium*, it is useful to mention that Barth criticizes the document at the very point where O'Grady praised it—for relegating witness to something secondary and peripheral. Probably referring to this phrase in *Lumen Gentium* "the faithful" [i.e. lay people] "are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ,"[144] Barth asks,

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[140] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 795f.
[141] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 147.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid. Italics original.
[144] Second Vatican Council, "Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)," chapter 2, article 11.

"Are only the laity his [Christ's] witnesses in the world? Are the hierarchy more than that? Is not the whole church a witnessing people?"[145] Certainly someone could defend *Lumen Gentium* by citing passages such as "all the disciples of Christ . . . must bear witness to Christ"[146] but Barth finds much that is muddled and unclear.[147] Furthermore Barth thinks the Vatican II documents vary widely from one another. For example, he heartily commends the missionary thrust of *Ad Gentes*[148] but wonders why the church's missionary nature is ignored in all of the other documents that deal with the church.

> How is this decree [*Ad Gentes*] related to the Constitution on the Church, to that on the Church in the Modern World, and to the Declaration on Religious Freedom? On the basis of these other documents the reader is not prepared for the magnificent basic thesis of this decree according to which "the Church is missionary by her very nature," and mission is the concern of the Church because it is the Church.[149]

Another quote from Vatican II from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* that O'Grady cites on the same page as the previous one is surprisingly more evangelistic—depicting the liturgy as secondary to proclamation.[150] Again, O'Grady seems to have overstated his criticism of Barth.

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[145] Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 23.
[146] Second Vatican Council, "Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)," chapter 2, article 10.
[147] He writes, "Are only the pope, bishops, priests, and deacons 'partakers of the function of Christ?' (28)? If so, then the laity (30-42) are not a part of the hierarchy, are they? But why not, since they share in all the three offices of Christ, and in the apostolate of the church?" Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 23. Barth does not understand the differentiation between the office-holders "functioning as Christ," while lay people supposedly do not. Barth thinks they are all supposed to function as Christ did.
[148] Second Vatican Council, "Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," (December 7, 1965).
[149] Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 33.
[150] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 147.

The criticism regarding Barth's stubborn lack of ecumenical charity

O'Grady criticizes Barth for not learning from Catholics as Catholics have learned from him. The Second Vatican Council has responded to his emphases but Barth has refused to compromise because he is in the grip of Protestant slogans that rule out the participation of human beings "in God's life and activity."

> Karl Barth has not listened to the legitimate counter-demands made by the Catholic Church. He has refused and refuses to allow any real human participation in, and consequent salvific cooperation with and mediation of, divine life and justification, God's presence and activity remain for him so transcendent that they never really become immanent as human life and action. This is due to a 'Christological constriction' or 'a divine economic mono-actualism,' that is, the restriction or reduction of all salvific life and activity in the economy of salvation to Jesus Christ alone and as God. This in turn Barth considers to be the only logical, consistent and consequent position for a Protestant to adopt in the light of the original basic Lutheran principle of *solo fide* in conjunction with the original basic Calvinist principle of *soli Deo gloria*.[151]

But it is hard to see how the aged, ailing Barth does not show good faith in carefully studying the Vatican II documents, accepting the Pope's invitation to Rome visiting, and then only later with permission publishing his "questions of clarification" as *Ad limina apostolorum*. Barth also notes that some of the ambiguity in the Vatican II documents has to do with them being written by committee.

> This obscuring was undoubtedly the price the Council had to pay for those changes and innovations, for the achievement of such overwhelming agreement to the decisions of the Council, and for their confirmation by Pope Paul VI.

[151] Ibid., 339.

> Complete clarity of formulation was thus not attained, nor could it be expected.[152]

Barth also tries to see the positive side of the ambiguity in the Vatican II documents, that they might give cover and space for those pursuing renewal.

> As to those dogmas, however, it may be noted that there is a flexibility, highly developed in recent Roman Christianity and ecclesiasticism and especially in recent Roman theology, with regard to the stress or lack of stress laid on the different decisions that were made in earlier times. There is also a remarkable proficiency in interpreting these subsequently *in meliorem* [in a better sense] or even *in optimam partem* [in the best light], that is to say, as "evangelical" (within the limits of their special ecclesiastical character). Let us wait and see whether these attempts succeed, whether those biggest roadblocks which have not yet been noticeably touched by the movement that manifested itself in the Council will be subsequently presented to us in a clear and understandable form, in which they would appear somewhat more harmless and less worthy of our wrath than they now appear to us, even though we might still be unable to pass them unhindered.[153]

In other words, Barth was optimistic that the lack of precision and coherence might allow room for the Roman Catholic church to move in an evangelical direction. In all these ways, this hardly seems to be the posture of someone uninterested in learning from Roman Catholics.

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[152] Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum; An Appraisal of Vatican II*, 54.
[153] Ibid., 71-72.

Chapter 4: 1957-1997: John Howard Yoder's argument that Karl Barth's ecclesiology drew nearer to Mennonite ecclesiology

The need for an analysis of Yoder's reading of Barth's ecclesiology

Why study Yoder's interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology?

From 1950 to 1957, John Howard Yoder (1927-1997) took five courses and five colloquia with Barth at the University of Basel while doing his doctorate there.[1] During Yoder's time in Basel, Barth was working on volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* where his three ecclesiology sections are found. Those sections were published in 1953 (§62), 1955 (§67) and 1959 (§72). Yoder heard parts of what would become *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 orally delivered by Barth.[2] Yoder spoke both German and English and wrote books in both. Mark Nation writes that Yoder did not have Barth as his supervisor but took many courses with Barth.

> John Yoder, when asked, wanted to make sure people knew two things about his studies with Karl Barth. First, Barth was not his doctoral supervisor. Barth taught dogmatics (i.e. systematic theology); Yoder wrote his doctoral thesis in historical theology. But second, Yoder claimed that he studied with Barth more than many of Barth's own doctoral students, taking five course and five colloquia (French and English language colloquia) with this important theologian.[3]

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[1] Mark Thiessen Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 18.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Mark Nation, "Editor's Foreword," in *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, ed. Karl Barth and Mark Nation (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2003). More on Yoder's doctoral thesis

Yoder not only sat in on his classes but interacted with Barth one-on-one as a student. Yoder recalls in 1970 that Barth read his original version of *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* in the summer of 1957 and then had a conversation with Yoder about it. After that conversation, Yoder clarified a number of points.

> The earlier drafts of this text were prepared at Basel in the course of my doctoral studies in the faculty of theology. A text substantially similar to the present one was read by Professor Barth in the summer of 1957. After a conversation following that reading, a number of points in the original text were changed to guard against misunderstanding.[4]

Having read Yoder's "attack" on his teacher's inconsistency regarding just war and pacifism, Barth is said to have joked to Yoder, "You Mennonites are bellicose."[5] While this may be legend, there are two pieces of written evidence that suggest Barth likely said such a thing. In the transcriptions of conversations reconstructed by John Godsey from his notes and assented to by Barth that are included in *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, the reader can get a glimpse into Barth's interactions with his English-speaking students. Yoder was likely present in at least some of these conversations because his time in Basel overlapped with that of fellow American student Godsey. Yoder in his own writings[6]

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below: John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2004).

[4] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 9. The original version was published as John Howard Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Studies in Christian Ethics Series (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970). Stanley Hauerwas recalls that Yoder delivered his pamphlet to Barth on the eve of his dissertation defense.

[5] Hauerwas also recalled Wendell Dietrich saying, "Barth said Yoder was his brightest American student." Dietrich's 1960 dissertation on Barth's ecclesiology is referred to earlier in the dissertation.

[6] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142; Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 183; Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 172.

often refers to Barth's 1946 essay, "Christian Community and Civil Community."[7] In the discussion of this essay with Barth in his English-speaking Colloquium between 1953-1956[8] recorded in *Table Talk*, Barth comments, "Even a Mennonite must be glad to have a policeman for protection."[9] It seems possible Yoder was the student who asked the question. Yoder also reports other "personal conversations" with Barth.

> My own understanding of Barth's way of looking at Christian ethics thought is based, in part, on personal conversations. I wish here to express my deep gratitude for the privilege of having discussed with Professor Barth, both before

[7] The essay "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" (German: "Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde") appears in two different collections of essays: *Against the Grain;* and *Community, State, and Church.* Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community."; Karl Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," in *Community, State and Church: Three Essays*, ed. Will Herberg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960).
In Table Talk, there is also reference to a different essay, with a similar title in English. The second essay is entitled: "Church and State" (German: "Rechtfertigung und Recht") and also appears in two places in English: Karl Barth, *Community, State and Church: Three Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 101-148. and Karl Barth, *Church and State (Translation of: Rechtfertigung und Recht "Justification and Justice")* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939). and Karl Barth, *Church and State (Translation of: Rechtfertigung und Recht "Justification and Justice") With a New Introduction by David L. Mueller* (Greenville, SC: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 1991). A more literal English title for this latter essay "Church and State" might be "Justification and Justice," since the original German title is "*Rechtfertigung und Recht*", which Bender points out. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 258. John Howard Yoder gets mixed up at one point differentiating between these two essays—mystifying Mark Nation, the editor of *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: and other essays on Barth.* Yoder writes, "The next basic document is his pamphlet on the two communities: *Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde*, improperly translated under the title *Church and State*." Mark Nation writes in a footnote: "It is not clear to me what Yoder is referring to when he speaks about 'improper translation.' Yoder knew German well. But the two German words he mentions are the basis for the essay which in English, in both books herein listed, has the title 'The Christian Community and the Civil Community.'" Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142. The mystery is resolved by seeing from the context about "analogies" that Yoder was intending to refer to the essay, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" (*Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde*). As noted above, it was a different essay by Barth "*Rechtfertigung und Recht*" that was not translated literally into English. Instead of "Justification and Justice," it was translated "Church and State."
[8] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, viii, 77-85.
[9] Ibid., 81.

> and after drafting this study, certain questions not fully dealt with in his written works.[10]

Yoder dedicates *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, to Barth: "to the memory of one who faithfully filled the office of teacher in the church."[11] The preface is warm and appreciative toward Barth. Yoder writes,

> American Protestants . . . can hardly sense how simply fitting and how widely true is the statement that a generation of pastors were compelled by his work to rethink their faith, and to preach it, in the light of the overwhelming difference it makes if God has really spoken. Only my sharing in this kind of esteem can explain the sustained attention to Barth's thought which underlies this attempt at rigorous yet respectful critique. A few other theologians have written about the issues of war and pacifism in such a way as to merit serious reading and response; there is hardly another whose thought has such rootedness and texture as to demand that the response be to his entire work.[12]

Then Yoder hopes his work even though critical at points will be received with good humor by Barth:

> This study is then most properly understood if it is seen as a grateful tribute to the stature of a teacher who was above the need to want those who learned from him to become his disciples.[13]

After leaving Switzerland, Yoder kept in contact with Barth. For example, there is a citation of a letter he received from Barth's assistant, Charlotte von Kirschbaum, in 1961: "With best greetings, also from Prof Barth."[14]

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[10] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 8.
[11] Ibid., 2.
[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Ibid.
[14] John Howard Yoder, "Addendum: Karl Barth and 'Biblical Realism'," in *To Hear the Word* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2010), 194.

None of this personal familiarity means that Yoder's appropriation of Barth's ecclesiology will necessarily be more insightful or faithful to Barth's intentions.[15] But it does demonstrate Yoder was interacting with Barth during the years Barth wrote his mature ecclesiology and that therefore Yoder's interpretation is worth treating among the major interpretations of Barth's ecclesiology.

Not only did Yoder know Barth personally and study with him, but Yoder, as a Mennonite, interprets Barth from a different part of the Christian tradition than any of the other interpreters discussed. Not only that, but Yoder is also the most prominent spokesperson for "Anabaptist" theology, or more accurately, "Mennonite" theology in the twentieth century.[16] Mark Nation, Yoder's biographer, writes, "John Howard Yoder

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[15] In much of the "new Yoder" scholarship, Yoder is put in conversation with "a range of dialogue partners with whom he was not himself explicitly engaged . . . [such as] Foucault, Derrida, Certeau, Said, Stout, and Rowan Williams." Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner, "Introduction," in *The New Yoder*, ed. Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2010), xv. There is a richness in nuance and historical context that can be gained in studying the interaction between two figures like Yoder and Barth who knew each other and explicitly interacted; though there are also surprising and satisfying insights regarding the enduring transcending power of truth when the thought of thinkers of different places and times intersect and overlap.

[16] As we will see below, "Anabaptist" is a problematic term because, first, it was originally intended as a derogatory label—meaning literally, "Rebaptizer" which no one thinks should be done. The people who baptized adults who had been baptized as infants did not recognize their first baptism as "baptism" so this adult baptism was their "first baptism." Second, "Anabaptist" is often used like "baptistic" to refer to anyone who rejects the practice of infant baptism. But this rejection of infant baptism has happened throughout church history in different times and places and these groups may differ widely in their theology from one another though they hold this one tenet of rejecting infant baptism in common. Third, Yoder's use of it is usually to refer to the heritage of Mennonites—tracing their descent back to Menno Simons's relationship to Conrad Grebel's group who were expelled from Zwingli's church in Zurich, Switzerland. But, as Yoder argues, infant baptism was not necessarily the key issue in the separation of the "Anabaptists." Therefore, when some make comments about Yoder as an "Anabaptist" theologian, it is more accurate to say "Mennonite."

is largely responsible for the fact that Mennonites are now on the theological map."[17] J. Denny Weaver writes, "Yoder is considered one of the most influential theologians of any stripe for the twentieth century and is arguably the most important Mennonite writer since Menno Simons."[18] Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp write that, "Almost single-handedly, Yoder has caused the theological world to take seriously the Anabaptist ecclesiology and social ethic."[19] Richard Mouw, former president of Fuller Theological Seminary, writes that Yoder has helped the wider theological world see that the "Anabaptist" perspective is a coherent theological tradition—not just a needed corrective to other Christian traditions that have too easily allied themselves with secular authorities. Instead, Mouw, writes the "Anabaptist position" deserves to be reckoned with as a viable coherent theological alternative.

> When we attempt to tame the Anabaptist perspective by viewing it as a 'necessary corrective': this means that we do not have to deal with the Anabaptist perspective as a systematic challenge to our dogmatic designs. John Howard Yoder has made it difficult for us to take refuge in this posture of condescending affection. He has led the way in setting forth the systematic challenge . . . Yoder not only presents the Anabaptist position as a consistent alternative to other ecclesiologies, we can no longer work with long-standing classificatory schemes for mapping out ecclesiological positions. This [*The Royal Priesthood* by Yoder*]* is a book that rightly calls for a rewriting of the ecumenical agenda.[20]

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[17] Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*, xix.
[18] J. Denny Weaver, "Series Editor's Foreword," in *Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics*, ed. Earl Zimmerman (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007), 16.
[19] Rodney Clapp and Robert E. Webber, *People of the Truth: The Power of the Worshipping Community in the Modern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988; reprint, Wipf & Stock), 141.
[20] Richard J. Mouw, "Foreword," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. John Howard Yoder and Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint, Herald Press), viii.

John Paul Lederach concurs, "Yoder's contribution through *Politics [of Jesus]* provided . . . a less reactive and more ecumenically serious view of Anabaptism for the outside world."[21] Yoder's work has also been recognized for its influence in American evangelical circles. Joining books by Barth and Bonhoeffer, Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* was named by *Christianity Today* as one of the most important books of the twentieth century: #5 on the list.[22]

The point is that Yoder's relationship with Barth as well as his prominence, make him an interpreter who should not be ignored.

If there is any doubt whether he was truly a representative of the Mennonite tradition, his status within the Mennonite world can be demonstrated by his serving as the president of Goshen Biblical Seminary—starting in 1970—as it was being merged with Mennonite Biblical Seminary to form Associated Biblical Seminaries.[23] And if there was any doubt about his prominence as a scholar and the breadth of his ecumenical connections, one should note his position as a professor of Christian ethics in the Department of Theology at Notre Dame University. "From 1967 until 1977 Yoder taught at Notre Dame part-time; he taught there full-time from 1977 until he died in 1997."[24]

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[21] John Paul Lederach, "foreword," in *Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics*, ed. Earl Zimmerman (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007), 12.
[22] "Christianity Today Book Awards 2000: Books of the Century," *Christianity Today* 44, no. 5 (2000): 93.
[23] Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*, 22.
[24] Ibid., xxi.

There are therefore a number of reasons to look at Yoder's reading of Barth's ecclesiology: he was a student of Barth, represents a different tradition (Mennonite) than many of Barth's other readers, his is a well-known voice from that tradition, and yet Yoder's work was influential outside of Mennonite circles.

The history of Yoder's interpretation of Barth

From 1957 to 1978, Yoder's work related to Barth was provoked by three questions that were only tangentially related to ecclesiology. The first question was: How does Barth treat the question of war?[25] Yoder, as a Mennonite, pacifist and student of Barth's, tries to persuade Barth in 1957 to remedy the flaws in his 1951 treatment of war in *Church Dogmatics* III/4 but notes positive developments in Barth's ecclesiology. The second question was raised by Will Herberg in 1960: Why is Barth so reticent to support anti-communism efforts by Western governments?[26] Yoder argues Barth's emphasis on the church's political potential as opposed to secular government policy does not indicate Barth was naïve about communist regimes. The third question that draws Yoder's attention is: Is Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt's 1972 thesis (brought to the English speaking world in 1978) correct that Barth's theology can be largely explained

[25] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*; Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth."
[26] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 90-100. responding to Will Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," in *Community, State and Church: Three Essays*, ed. Will Herberg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960).

by his socialist sympathies?[27] Yoder argues that Marquardt correctly recognizes Barth's radicalism but misidentifies its source—thinking it is socialism rather than obeying Jesus in the church. In all three cases, Yoder explores the presenting issue but then argues that Barth's position on the issue is best explained by Barth's increasingly espousing positions that are similar to that of Mennonites. From 1978 onwards, almost every time Yoder discusses Barth, Yoder emphasizes that the exemplarity of the church is a surprising and crucial development in Barth's theology.

Besides his early book on Barth's pacifism, here are Yoder's main treatments of Barth's theology and they all deal mainly with his ecclesiology:

- **"Title of essay" (year presented):**
- "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics" (1978)[28]
- "Why Ecclesiology Is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom" (1980)[29]
- "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper" (1980)[30]
- "Response to Moltmann's 'Barth's Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ and the Experience of the Confessing Church'" (1984)[31]
- "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing" (1986)[32]

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[27] John Howard Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," *Journal of Church and State* 20, no. 2 (1978); Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics." responding to Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: das Beispiel Karl Barths* (München: Kaiser, 1972); George Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).

[28] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics."

[29] Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom."

[30] Yoder, "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper."

[31] John Howard Yoder, "Response to Moltmann's 'Barth's Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ and the Experience of the Confessing Church'," in *The Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jürgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars.*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2006).

[32] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing."

- "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People" (1992).[33]
- "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian" (1995)[34]

The most distinctive interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology is Yoder's repeated claim that Barth is rightly understood as a "free church" theologian. This will be analyzed in depth below.

Many scholars have remarked about Yoder's characterization of Barth's ecclesiology but none have treated the subject with depth.

A number of scholars have made remarks of appreciation about what Yoder has noticed about Barth's ecclesiology but a few others have vehemently disagreed with Yoder's characterization of Barth as a "free church" theologian.

Scholars who have studied John Howard Yoder often mention that they do not know Barth's work well enough to evaluate Yoder's interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology.[35] Scholars of Barth's work have tended to ignore Yoder's reading of Barth's ecclesiology—not least because some of these pieces were unpublished prior to Mark Nation's collecting and publishing of *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*.[36]

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[33] John Howard Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," in *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).
[34] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian."
[35] Craig A. Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001); Earl Zimmerman, *Practicing the Politics of Jesus: the Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007).
[36] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*.

There are two exceptions to that dearth of Barth scholars grappling with Yoder's interpretation. The first is renowned Barth scholar George Hunsinger's 1980 article republished in 2000.[37] The second is the three-page treatment by Tracey Stout of Yoder's interpretation in a book on Barth's theology of baptism.[38]

But still there are a number of scholars who over the years have noted that more work is needed here. Sheldon Sorge writes in his 1987 dissertation,

> John Howard Yoder has for some time been contending that it is crucially significant to recognize that Barth's work indicates a trajectory of movement towards a view of church which corresponds to the 'free church' understanding . . .[but] a sustained defense of this view has yet to be offered.[39]

In 2005, Arne Rasmusson writes, "The only major discussion of Yoder's thesis on Barth's free church trajectory that I am aware of is a 1980 article by George Hunsinger."[40] In 2012, Paul Martens also writes,

> Whether or to what extent Yoder is accurate in attributing the semantic logic of *Politics* [*The Politics of Jesus]* to Barth is, surprisingly, a question that has received little serious attention or evaluation. Nation's claim that "few have yet to come to

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[37] George Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 116-118.

[38] Tracey Stout's three-page sub-section is entitled "John Howard Yoder's Reading of Barth" Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*. which is in chapter five entitled "Baptism and the Free Community." That chapter and even the whole book could be seen as a reflection on Yoder's reading. In the six-page conclusion, Yoder is the only interpreter cited by name. Referring to chapter five, Stout writes, "John Howard Yoder's interpretation of Barth as free church theologian opened up a way to think of the interconnectedness of baptism and church in Barth." Ibid., 185. Though there is no index, Google Books tells us Yoder appears on 22 different pages. Stout also deserves praise for tracking down many of Yoder's writings on Barth before the volume Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*. was available. Stout's thesis is that Barth's theology of baptism is closely connected to his ecclesiology.

[39] Sorge, "Karl Barth's Reception in North America: Ecclesiology as a Case Study", 38.

[40] Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder," 89. referring of course to Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism."

> grips with Yoder's profound discussion and critique of Barth's views on war" could be stretched to address the entire relationship between Yoder and Barth.[41]

Others go further and indicate their suspicion that Yoder may have valuable insights to contribute to the understanding of Barth. In 2000, James McClendon notes both how Yoder's view has been ignored and states his opinion that Yoder's reading is accurate.

> If the developing free-church ecclesiology of the latest volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is a guide (as I am convinced it is) . . . To raise these "Constantinian" issues, though, is to invoke John Howard Yoder's reading of Karl Barth, an approach that [Carl E.] Brattan and [Robert W.] Jenson pass by in silence.[42]

Joseph Mangina too suggests that further exploration of this intersection of Yoder's interpretation of Barth's ecclesioology may be valuable because from Mangina's perspective Yoder deploys and corrects some excesses in Barth's opposition to the sacraments because Yoder does not dispense with the language of "sacrament"

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[41] Paul Martens, *The Heterodox Yoder* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2012), 79. quoting Nation, "Editor's Foreword," xi. and referring to John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: vicit Agnus noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). Martens also suggests by way of Barth-Yoder bibliography: Chris K. Huebner, "Can a Gift Be Commanded? Theological Ethics Without Theory by Way of Barth, Milbank and Yoder," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53, no. 4 (2000); Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder*; Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder."; Alain Epp Weaver, "Parables of the Kingdom and Religious Plurality: With Barth and Yoder Toward a Nonresistant Public Theology," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 72, no. 3 (1998).
[42] James William McClendon, Jr. and Nancey C. Murphy, *Witness*, 3 vols., Systematic Theology, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000; reprint, Baylor University Presss, 2012), 322.

altogether.[43] Mangina also refers to Yoder's essay as the source of inspiration for the title for one of Mangina's essays on Barth.[44] Furthermore, Mangina muses that

> If we were to picture him [Barth] at work today on the Ethics of Reconciliation, the crowning section of *Church Dogmatics* V, we could easily imagine an appreciative small-print excursus devoted to Hauerwas and Yoder, whose own writings on ethics and church owe so much to Barth's inspirtation.[45]

Similarly, in his *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* article, James Buckley too wonders if Barth might find Yoder's "sacraments as social processes" compatible with his own sacramental-wary approach. "Is Barth's a-theology of sacraments inconsistent with the rest of his theology, or is it pointing the way to a more radically reformed dogmatics of worship? . . . For an argument to inconsistency, see Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation;* for a more radically reformed theology of worship, see J. H. Yoder, *Body Politics*."[46]

But others are skeptical that Yoder has read Barth correctly. As noted above, the most well-known evaluation of Yoder's reading of Barth by a Barth scholar was written by George Hunsinger. In response to Yoder's 1978 presentation, George Hunsinger in 1980 disagrees with Yoder's characterization of Barth as a "free churchman." Hunsinger

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[43] Mangina refers to Yoder's essay "Sacrament as Social Process." Mangina writes with regard to the term "sacrament — and in his most recent writings, Yoder has shown more openness to this idea than one might expect." Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of the *Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*," *Pro Ecclesia* 6, no. 4 (1997): 506. Cf. Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture."
[44] Joseph L. Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1, no. 3 (1999): 338.
[45] Ibid., 323.
[46] Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 208, 210.

admits "It is obviously true that Barth's later doctrine of the church shows some strong affinities with the free church tradition."[47] But Hunsinger strongly rejects what he perceives to be Yoder attributing to Barth a "sectarian" or "nonconformist social ethic" which ignores "secular society."[48] Hunsinger thinks Barth is instead a "reformed Protestant."[49] "Yoder was correct about the antimilitarist direction taken by Barth's later thought. He was not correct, however, to recast Barth as a 'sectarian' Protestant."[50] Hunsinger's disagreement with Yoder raises the issue of what the "free church tradition" or "free church vision" is, which will be explored below.

Another Barth scholar, Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, drawing on Hunsinger, is also skeptical of Yoder's characterization of Barth as very nearly a "free-church" theologian: "I think it is unhelpful to say, as Yoder did, that 'Barth's incomplete pilgrimage can best be understood as being on the way to what Anglo-Saxon ecclesiological thinking calls the Free Church.' . . . George Hunsinger has strongly challenged this claim."[51]

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[47] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism," 120.
[48] Ibid., 122.
[49] Ibid., 115.
[50] Hunsinger, "Introduction," 7-8. quoting H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951; reprint, 2001), 206.
[51] Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, "The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Anabaptism," in *Church Made Strange for the Nations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Pickwick Publications, 2011), 77. citing Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 171. and Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism."

Yoder's characterization of Barth's ecclesiology as almost "free church"

Starting in 1978, Yoder claims that later in life Karl Barth developed into "a free churchman, whether he recognizes it or not."[52] Here are some other versions of the claim:

- "Karl Barth's social stance was in theory and practice that of a free churchman or one whom Marquardt and Hunsinger call 'radical,' i.e., a critic of all authoritarianism"[53]
- "Barth's incomplete pilgrimage can best be understood as being on the way to what Anglo-Saxon ecclesiological thinking calls the Free Church."[54]
- "Since IV/2 there is no refuting his commitment to the free church vision."[55]
- "To say that the order of the gathered community must be derived from Christology is itself a free church move."[56]
- "Barth's use of the Bible is that of the free churchman."[57]
- "Should any have failed to note this free church tendency as general teaching in Barth's ecclesiology, none can miss his evident movement with regard to baptism."[58]

Yoder's dissertation on the Swiss Brethren

But before we analyse these claims beginning in 1978 that Barth was becoming a "free church" theologian, let us return to the 1950's when Yoder was becoming

[52] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142.
[53] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 339.
[54] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 171.
[55] Ibid., 174.
[56] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143.
[57] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 171.
[58] Ibid., 173.

acquainted with Barth and the "free church" and began to sense a resemblance between the two. At the time Yoder was in Basel, Switzerland listening to Barth delivering in lecture form volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics.* At the same time, Yoder was writing his dissertation on the debate between Conrad Grebel and Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland.[59] Twenty years later, Yoder would begin arguing that Barth resembled the "free church."

John Howard Yoder's dissertation *The Dialogue Between the Anabaptists and Reformers from 1523 to 1538* was published in 1962 and its companion volume *A Dogmatic-Historical Analysis of the Early Dialogues Between Swiss Anabaptists and Reformers* was published in 1968.[60] Yoder studies how the separation between Ulrich Zwingli and Conrad Grebel developed. In the title of the book, Zwingli is the leader of "the Reformers" and Grebel the leader of "the Anabaptists." Scholars more precisely call Grebel's group the "Swiss Brethren." Yoder sees the Swiss Brethren or "Radical Zwinglianism" as part of "Ecclesial Anabaptism" the most commendable stream to come from the Radical Reformation. Arnold Snyder writes that "Yoder also tended to call it ['Ecclesial Anabaptism'] 'Anabaptism proper,' 'mainstream Anabaptism' or 'true

[59] Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*.
[60] Ibid.

Anabaptism' (subdivided into Mennonites, Swiss Brethren, and the Hutterian Brethren)."[61]

Yoder details how Zwingli had in 1520 viewed his community as a persecuted minority but by the end of 1523 had given over responsibility of the church to the civil authorities.[62] Yoder argues that Zwingli may have naively thought that the civil authorities would voluntarily be persuaded by him.[63] But the city council procrastinated and delayed on the reforms Zwingli and Grebel were considering including issues of veneration of images, the Mass, singing, clerical vestments, and prayers.

Yoder recounts the debates between Ulrich Zwingli and Conrad Grebel about issues such as "'the rule of love,' philosophical idealism, the recognition of the authorities' jurisdiction over the churches, and the reluctance of the Reformers to respond to Anabaptist requests to enter the dialogue."[64] But Yoder argues that these were not the primary causes of the separation in 1523. "But these things are the fruits, and not the roots of the separation."[65] Even infant baptism was merely a "symptom."[66] Nor "Even the persecution of dissidents. . . cruel as it may have been, was really not the

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[61] C. Arnold Snyder, "Editor's Preface: John Howard Yoder as Historian," in *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2004), xxxiv, 304, 305, xxxiii, xxx.
[62] Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, 124-125.
[63] Ibid., 126.
[64] Ibid., 217.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 218.

worst of it"[67]—nor "the splintering or the making of the church into an arm of the state. All of these were secondary events."[68]

> For fifteen months, they [the Anabaptists] were to wrestle with Zwingli and with each other in order to reverse this step [of giving authority to the city council], or else rescue the situation by electing a new city council. Only when it became public that Zwingli was not only ready to allow the implementation of his reforms to be unconditionally postponed by the city council, but also that the new city council did not want to have any kind of dialogue, did the Anabaptists take the step of actually forming an exclusive community, which from the beginning had its own organization.[69]

In other words, Yoder argues that for Grebel's group, it is not the particular issues which lead to separation but rather the silencing of dialogue and discussion.[70] If Christians are not permitted within Zwingli's church (now dominated by the city council to which Zwingli has ceded ultimate authority) to dialogue about how "Holy Scripture alone was sufficient to clearly decide *all* emerging questions of Christian teaching and Christian life,"[71] Grebel's group thinks they must form an alternative community. So what is most important for Grebel and his group is ecclesiology: not baptism, not the state, not even discipleship.

> It was neither the Reformation practice of baptism, nor their view of the state, nor even the ethical shortcomings of the Reformed church people, but rather the [Zwinglian] preachers' inability to dialogue that finally made the Reformation

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 128.
[70] Grebel emphasizes "'The rule of Christ' . . . (this came in fact from Galatians 6:2) . . . indicates precisely the brotherly admonition and reconciliation that Jesus describes in Matthew 18:15ff." Ibid., 226.
[71] Ibid., 218.

> churches questionable for the Anabaptists and led them, both theologically and concretely-historically, to form communities.[72]

So was Barth in the 20th century separating from the Swiss Reformed Churches as Grebel separated from Zwingli's Swiss reformed church in the 16th century? As a result of his doctoral work on Zwinglian and Grebel's ecclesiology in Switzerland, Yoder develops an ideal vision of Grebel's example as the "Anabaptist" approach. The church resists interference by the state so as to preserve dialogue within the congregation about what the Bible says. Twenty years later, Yoder is using different terminology: so it is not the "Anabaptist" but the "free church" approach. The suggestion is that Barth is on a parallel journey to that of Grebel—diverging from typical Zwinglian Swiss Reformed positions.

Barth's Swiss Reformed Churches heritage

However, the Swiss Reformed Churches that Barth already had many of the characteristics that Yoder attributes to Barth's innovation. They were to some extent "free church." Karl Barth followed his father Fritz and both his grandfathers as a pastor in the the Swiss Reformed Churches.[73] Barth pastored Swiss Reformed Churches from 1911 to 1921. Some of the Swiss Reformed churches are German-speaking and others French-speaking. The German-speaking churches trace their roots to Zwingli and the

[72] Ibid., 224.
[73] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 1.

French-speaking ones to Calvin. Much of what Yoder suggests is "free church" or others view as idiosyncratic are typical of the German-speaking Zwinglian Swiss Reformed Church heritage that Barth inherited.

Barth is sometimes mistakenly thought of as German and Lutheran because he spoke German and taught in Germany for a number of years and is famous for his resistance to Hitler. But Barth was born and lived most of his life in Switzerland. He was Reformed not Lutheran.

Ulrich Zwingli was attempting to reform the Roman Catholic church in Switzerland at the same time as Luther in Germany. The two German-speaking Reformers, Luther and Zwingli, failed to come to agreement about the Lord's Supper at Marburg in 1529. "Luther and Zwingli essentially regarded one another as heretical on this point."[74] Like Luther, John Calvin disdained Zwingli's views on the Lord's Supper.

> Huldrych Zwingli was one of Calvin's least favourite topics . . . For Calvin, Zwingli's name was for ever linked with the sacramentarian quarrel with the Lutherans, the great stumbling block to theological agreement . . . for a unified Protestant doctrine . . . Calvin remained adamant that Zwingli delivered an empty doctrine of the sacraments while stripped them of all divine presence.[75]

[74] Bruce Gordon, "Switzerland," in *Early Reformation in Europe*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 84.
[75] Bruce Gordon, "Calvin and the Swiss Reformed Churches," in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis (Cambridge, Eng: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65-66.

The Swiss Reformed churches retained this resistance to Lutheran sacramental theology. In keeping with his heritage, Barth too criticized the concept of sacrament—arguing that he was trying to restate Zwingli's position in a way better than Zwingli himself did.

Zwingli was killed in a botched Protestant defense of Zurich from an attack by Catholics on October 10, 1531. In Switzerland, war between Protestants and Catholics ended in such a way that the peace agreement allowed Protestant and Catholic cities to co-exist.

> The defeated Protestants were now forced to sue for peace. The Second Kappel Treaty, signed on November 24, 1531, had far-reaching importance for the shaping of the Reformation and modern Switzerland. The most significant provision was the declaration that each state was to decide upon its confession and was forbidden from attempting to force it on another.[76]

Unlike its neighbors, France and Germany, which ended up predominantly Roman Catholic and Protestant respectively, in Switzerland, since the sixteenth century, the major religious groups in Switzerland have been the Reformed churches and the Roman Catholic Church—each with at least 30% of the population with no other religious affiliation claiming more than 5%.[77] Recall Barth's significant interaction with Roman

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[76] Gordon, "Switzerland," 85.

[77] Rolf Weibel, "Switzerland," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden: Eerdmans; Brill, 2008). Even in 1557 Heinrich Bullinger could see that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism would remain side by side in Switzerland despite his hopes of a full Protestant Swiss Confederation (Switzerland). "The despair of the aging reformer at his desk in Zurich accurately reflects the general disappointment among Swiss reformers that the soaring hopes of the first generation had not been fulfilled. The Reformation had not, as Zwingli had originally anticipated, culminated in a unified alliance of evangelical states under the leadership of Zurich. Instead half the Confederation remained loyal to Catholicism." Gordon, "Switzerland," 70.

Catholics: from denouncing Roman Catholic theology, but also dialoguing with fellow Swiss Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, and late in life visiting the Vatican.

It is also often mistakenly inferred that since Barth is "Reformed," then he is a "Calvinist" when in fact the German-speaking Swiss Reformed Churches that Barth pastored trace their lineage to Zwingli rather than Calvin.

> Major centers of Reformed influence were established in Zurich, where Zwingli preached, and later in Geneva, where Calvin was active. Zwingli's ideas were very influential in Germany and in German-speaking Switzerland, while Calvin's work took root in French-speaking Switzerland and in France.[78]

Calvin arrived in Geneva (where he would write, pastor, and govern) five years after the death of the Zwingli in 1531. Though Geneva is today in Switzerland, it was not part of the Swiss confederation when Calvin was part of it but was rather independent.[79] While serving in French-speaking Geneva, Calvin was the leading advocate for Protestants in France. From this time to the end of his life, Calvin spent enormous time and effort trying to win the support of the German-speaking Swiss Reformed who had been influenced by Zwingli. He wanted their help in France to fight for Protestantism against

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[78] Robert Benedetto and Donald K. McKim, *Historical Dictionary of the Reformed Churches* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), xlvii. "About 60% of the population of Switzerland for the last fifty years has spoken German as their first language, with only about 20% speaking French."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Switzerland

[79] In 1535, the four full members of the Swiss Confederation" were Berne, Basle, Schaffhausen, and Zürich. Gordon, "Calvin and the Swiss Reformed Churches," 64.

the Roman Catholics.[80] However, the Swiss resisted the Frenchman's call for formal theological agreement because of their wariness of having thereby to involve themselves on the Protestant side of political wars in Germany and France.

> The whole movement of the Swiss Reformation after 1531 was a coming to terms with Zwingli's ambiguous legacy. In each of the Reformed cities the consequences of the Zwinglian Reformation were everywhere apparent. For the Swiss, the power of the Zwinglian Reformation lay in its unshackling of the bounds of foreign domination.[81]

Barth inherits this sense of preserving Swiss sovereignty and demonstrates it by serving in the Swiss army—guarding the border against the concern about German attack in World War II. His only break from Swiss character was his publicly calling for countries to ally themselves against Nazi Germany—a move seen as an inappropriate meddling in the politics of other nations by many Swiss. But later Barth's Swiss even-handedness returns as he tries to remain neutral between the Communists in the East and the capitalists in the West in Europe. Moreover, his wariness of war is very much in keeping with his Swiss heritage.

In 1549, a compromise was arrived at by the followers of Calvin and Zwingli regarding the sacraments. The agreement

> known as the *Consenus Tigurinus* . . . did much to seal the bond between French- and German-speaking Protestantism in Switzerland . . . It also paved the way for the more comprehensive Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, which was written

[80] "Calvin's foreign French ministry continued to depend on the stability of Swiss relations; thus he devoted immense time to them." Ibid., 81.
[81] Ibid., 65.

> by Bullinger to provide a basis for a wider confessional unity among the evangelical churches of Europe.[82]

The Swiss Reformed Church Barth grew up in therefore had come to a compromise among the Calvin-influenced French-speaking and the Zwingli-influenced German-speaking factions. Barth himself drew heavily from Calvin though diverged from Calvin at points consistent with Zwingli. Perhaps too the importance of theology for finding compromise and peace among Protestants were also therefore part of Barth's heritage.

Yoder argues that Barth late in life becomes almost a "free church" theologian. But as we will see, Barth was arguably part of a "free church" as opposed to a "state church" for much of his life because the national government of Switzerland did not have one nationally-recognized official church. Instead, the "cantons" (that is states or provinces) of Switzerland sponsor churches. Some of those cantons exert more authority over the official churches. Others have little influence. When he was born, Barth's father was a teacher in the Evangelical School of Preachers at Basel"[83] which involved him training preachers "mostly for the free churches."[84]

The point here is that the Swiss Reformed Churches that Barth grew up in had many of the characteristics that Yoder suggests Barth later gravitated towards. Barth theologically defends many of these characteristics but someone who does not know

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[82] Gordon, "Switzerland," 90.
[83] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 1.
[84] Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966*, 151.

much about the Swiss Reformed Churches might think Barth made radical breaks on a number of fronts when instead many of his positions are similar to what he inherited.

A critical analysis of Yoder's use of the concept of "free church"

In the 2014 posthumous volume of Yoder's 1973 and 1976 lectures entitled *Theology of Mission,* Yoder writes that he uses "free church" as the opposite of a Christendom church. "On the other side of the polarity, there are several alternative terms. I use the term *free church* as the most widely used and the least precise."[85] Unfortunately, "free church" is the term he most often uses to characterize Karl Barth's ecclesiology and by the time of these lectures in 1973-1976, he realized how imprecise the term was and yet kept using it. Moreover, his use of the term is not just imprecise but inaccurate. The problem, as we will see, is that Yoder uses the term "free church" to characterize denominational families when instead the characteristics he describes apply to some extent to all Christian denominations as they transition in post-Christendom environments and no denominational families fit all of his descriptions except his own Mennonites.

[85] John Howard Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, ed. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 147.

Many times, though rarely in the context of his writing on Barth, Yoder reflects on the term "free church." Yoder understands the technical use of the term "free church" and he admits he is not using the term that way. A "free church" is technically any church that is not a "state church." Yoder explains:

> In British usage, for example, it [a "free church"] refers to any church not administered by a link with the state. Thus in Scotland the Anglican church is a free church, and in England the Presbyterian church is a free church. If one crosses the border the reverse is true, because each is the established church of the other nation.[86]

In Europe, often there is a dominant state church (or two or three), which is granted privileges as an authorized religion. Other smaller unauthorized denominations are referred to as "free churches."

People in the United States do not typically refer to church traditions as "free" or "state" churches because the United States as a whole has never had a national state Church.[87] Some of the original colonies had official churches but there was never one dominant church tradition throughout the nation and the First Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1789, made that official: "Congress shall make no law

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[86] John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 161. Yoder says virtually the same thing at: Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264. and Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 147.

[87] An exception is the "Evangelical Free Church of America" denomination. http://www.efca.org A student asked if the denominational label "evangelical free" was to make sure people knew that the EFCA are not evangelical like "caffeine free." No, the statement "The Evangelical Free Church of America is evangelical" is the second of its "distinctives." http://go.efca.org/resources/document/efca-distinctives?_ga=1.1181937.1787085710.1433867857 June 9, 2015. The "free church" label comes from its roots in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_Free_Church_of_America June 9, 2015.

respecting an establishment of religion." Yoder writes that "One can argue that in America all churches are 'free.'"[88] In American church life, different denominations of churches are grouped in sociological analysis into different church traditions with names like mainline, evangelical, fundamentalist, Roman Catholic, Black Protestant, or with theological labels like Baptist, Anglican, Reformed, Pentecostal. The point is that this language of "free church" vs. "state church" is neither clear nor commonly used in reference to American church life. And though the terms have European origin, Yoder does not use them in the European technical sense either.

Yoder commends the "free church" but it is important to note this is a rehabilitative project because in Europe the "free" in "free churches" does not have a broadly positive connotation as it does in the United States (as in "free from governmental interference"). Rather, in Europe those who are associated with the state church, which is the majority of the population, think of the free churches as the unlicensed, unaccredited, eccentric, strange, withdrawn, sectarian churches. "Indeed, the stereotypical view of the free churches is of a group divided and divisive."[89] Unlike the state church traditions that have demonstrated value over time, the free churches are considered what in the United States people would call "cults." Instead of being able to

[88] Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," 279.
[89] James William McClendon, Jr. and John Howard Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 27, no. 3 (1990): 576.

point to the history of the Roman Catholic Church or a well-known Reformer like Martin Luther, John Calvin, or Ulrich Zwingli, the free churches are seen as questionable provincial sects. Yoder, sensing this attitude from his time in European theology circles, is endeavoring to explain the strengths of the free churches and demonstrate that a reputable theologian like Karl Barth comes to many of the same conclusions as those of the free churches.

Yoder's argument is that even in the United States, where there is no state church, many church traditions have not shed their "state church" habits. They have been slow to adapt to the fact that the church today must be ready "to live in a hostile world."[90] Yoder writes, "It may seem anachronistic to identify the issue of church/state relations in an age (and in a country) where all the churches are (politically) free and none 'established.'"[91] But "we have not finished our own spiritual disestablishment as it faces the challenges of nationalism, ethnocentrism, and militarism."[92] Yoder defends his bringing over the European term "free church" to the American church scene by saying that the denominations with "state church" roots in their original country continue to carry with them unhealthy vestiges of those habits. He says there are still differences and they are important.[93] The "free church" characteristics have not been appreciated

[90] Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 265.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] "the normative claim that those differentiae not only are meaningful . . . but also important." Ibid., 264.

adequately by formerly state churches and are too often taken for granted by the free churches themselves.[94] This is a modest and valuable proposal—looking to see to what extent contemporary denominations unconsciously carry with them "state church" baggage that they may want to leave behind. Yoder's "claim is that 'free church' identity . . . represents a specific, coherent focusing of the call to Christian faithfulness, which merits its own authentic voice in the ecumenical arena."[95] The point that denominations that were birthed in the United States or as free churches in Europe like the Mennonites should be acknowledged in ecumenical discussions is another worthy point. However, as we will see, the idea that there is a coherent "free church" identity is incorrect. These various church traditions founded as free churches have no characteristic in common (though Yoder tries repeatedly to find something). Here Yoder is projecting his own Mennonite tradition onto the concept of "free church" identity (whereas in reality some free churches and some churches with roots as state churches have these Mennonite characteristics and some do not).

[94] These free church traits are "biblically warranted testimonies worthy of the attention of other Christian bodies."Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 265.

Yoder uses "free churches," "believers' churches,' and "small 'b' baptist churches" interchangeably as sociological categories

While making the argument that the churches founded as "free churches" have underappreciated significant insights, Yoder speaks interchangeably of "free churches," "believers' churches" and "small 'b' baptist churches." These have different shades of meaning but for Yoder's purposes they can often be used interchangeably. His aim is to "identify a certain set of religious movements"[96] or "a doctrinal stance that certain denominations may represent in the ecumenical free-for-all of American pluralism."[97] Yoder writes, "Here [in this article] I take the term [free church] to mean roughly the same as the more operational 'believers' church.'"[98] And again, "the position of the believers' church or the free church."[99] In another article, Yoder and James McClendon use all three terms interchangeably: "believers church tradition," "baptist," and "free church."[100]

In total, Yoder identifies eleven specific denominational families or church traditions as believers' churches or free churches: Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians, (with the following three mentioned less often)

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[96] Ibid., 264.
[97] Yoder, "The Free Church Ecumenical Style," 232.
[98] Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264.
[99] Yoder, "The Free Church Ecumenical Style," 232.
[100] McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 562. Yoder also relates "free church" positions with "Baptist positions." Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264.

Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren, (and the last two regularly mentioned but then qualified as not a "pure type") Congregationalists, and Methodists.[101]

[101] "For our purposes, the vision is represented best by the Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, and Mennonite families. Later groups (Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren) represent it as well but with a less-defined historical sense." Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264. A similar list substituting Plymouth Brethren for Church of the Brethren (perhaps inadvertently) in the top five is: "Baptists, Mennonites, Plymouth Brethren, Quakers, and some Disciples." Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," 280. In addition to the eight listed above are added two more: Moravians and Congregationalists: "Brethren, Friends, Moravians, Disciples, Congregationalists, and Baptists," Yoder, "The Free Church Ecumenical Style," 235. Then finally, the eleventh member is the Methodists—mentioned twice: "The tiny free churches in Europe are either recent foreign implantations like the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren and Methodists, planted by recent British missions, or they are statistically irrelevant enclaves like the Mennonites." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142.. But then in another place he writes that free churches "included the Congregationalists and the Methodists who baptized babies and thereby were not a pure type in terms of the alternatives we will." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 147. Because they are here described not a "pure type," we moved "Congregationalists" and "Methodists" to the back of the list despite Yoder mentions them in various places as free church without qualification. However, just pages later Yoder describes "Congregationalists" again as a free church. Ibid., 155. Yoder and McClendon also mention Pentecostal ("Assemblies of God") and Methodists below even while they say that one must move beyond just listing denominational families. "One way to locate the sharers of this distinctive viewpoint might be to attempt to list the denominations or church bodies (Baptist? Disciples of Christ? Assemblies of God? Methodist?) that compose it, and a hasty reading could leave the impression that McClendon had, in fact, proposed such a list. However, that would not have been a theological way to proceed . . . In other words, the mere listing of church bodies or denominations does not settle, but only raises, the question of a distinctive Christian style or viewpoint shared by some or all of these denominations or by some persons within them." McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 567. This composite list of eleven "free churches" is used repeatedly below. McClendon names almost these same groups as Yoder and calls them "(small-b) baptists." "There were, as mentioned above, European Christians who rejected the Constantinian way. Such (small-b) baptist colonists in America as Quakers (from 1656), various groups of Mennonites (from 1683), and Brethren (from 1719) recognized that obedience to Christ demanded nonviolence; in particular it demanded the rejection of the old Constantinian warfare ethos. To these believers, Christ was the founder and sovereign of a new peaceable kingdom to which all owed first allegiance." McClendon and Murphy, *Witness*, 79.

Yoder admits that none of the labels for grouping these denominations works very well

The limited value of the term "free church" to characterize a group of church traditions

As mentioned above, the language of "free church" could mean any church that did not enjoy prominence somewhere in Europe as an official state church. It is all of the church traditions which are not Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, or Reformed. However, there are a lot of other church traditions and most have some unique distinguishing characteristic. To say it pejoratively, many have an odd distinguishing characteristic which other traditions would reject. That is, a number of these none-state-sanctioned churches would be seen by one another as cults or at least badly misguided. Together it is not self-evident that they have an "identity" or are a "tradition." Drawing on the "free church" tradition is like drawing on the "splinter" or "new denominations" tradition. It tells you they are not one of the more well-known European denominations and have substantially developed since Martin Luther but that is about it. In a history lecture, Yoder says "the term *free church* has too many meanings . . . it includes so many variations that it is not precise . . . So free church is a usable term but not precise enough."[102]

[102] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 161. Cf. "least precise." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 147.

The limited value of the terms "believers' church" and "disciples' church" and "pure church" to characterize a group of church traditions

Similarly, the "believers' church" label is broad and flawed. Yoder writes that the "believers' church" term is misleading in that it uncharitably implies other churches are "churches of unbelievers."[103]

He also mentions "disciples' church" and "pure church"[104] but this too seems to denigrate all other churches as "not disciples" or "impure." Regardless, it is utterly imprecise. Yoder admits the latter can be "confusing and inaccurate."[105]

Yoder eventually realizes that the "free churches" do not have a common source

Despite having grouped various traditions together as having a certain similarity, Yoder admits that there is no common historical trajectory that they share. In other words, they do not all stem from for example Conrad Grebel's Swiss Brethren (which Yoder did his dissertation on). There is no revered founder or common source for all of these church traditions.

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[103] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 162. See also Yoder's description of the believers' church tradition in Yoder, "A People in the World.". As we will see below, Barth chastises some Mennonites for their use of the term "Believers' church" saying that the church is not the possession of believers but is rather the church of Jesus Christ. Karl Barth, "Gespräch mit den Mennoniten (13.12.1967)," in *Gespräche 1964-1968 (GA IV.28)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1997), 430.
[104] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 148.
[105] Ibid.

"Anabaptist" includes too many and excludes some of the church traditions Yoder is trying to group together

Theologians often use Anabaptism and Radical Reformation interchangeably to loosely refer to those related to Mennonites. But as we will see, some groups that began at the same time as the Anabaptists and are grouped under the Radical Reformation title practiced infant baptism. These groups were part of the Radical Reformation but were not Anabaptists.

"Anabaptist" was a pejorative term used by Paedobaptists (infant baptizers) to describe those who insisted conscious voluntary baptism was to be preferred to infant baptism. Those who reject infant baptism find the label "Anabaptist" to be theologically inaccurate because they do not consider a person's infant baptism to be a valid first baptism so do not consider it re-baptizing. Also, some of the Baptist groups that did not themselves practice infant baptism took a more moderate stance and did not rebaptize people who were baptized as infants so they were not technically "Anabaptists" that is, "Rebaptizers."

Despite the pejorative origin and theological inexactitude of the "Anabaptist" label, Yoder accepted it without complaint as part of the Mennonite persecuted past. Moreover, he long considered it a useful term for referring to a group of people who traced back their heritage to Conrad Grebel's separation from Ulrich Zwingli's state

church in Zurich.[106] But as Arnold Snyder points out, in the early 1980's Yoder became increasingly hesitant to talk in sweeping ways about "Anabaptists."[107] Yoder acknowledged that in more recent scholarship "Anabaptist" has come to mean something technically broader than those descended from Conrad Grebel. Anabaptist is more accurately used in "the formal descriptive sense as referring to people who administered baptism to adults."[108] Yoder writes,

> So Anabaptism was a wide set of phenomena, too wide to be called a movement . . . Those who have been characterized as Anabaptists did not come from the same place, and they were not going to the same place.[109]

In other words, groups rejected infant baptism in many locations and at many different times for many reasons. They did not all descend from or draw inspiration from Conrad Grebel's Swiss Brethren. And even those who rejected infant baptism at about the same time and place as Conrad Grebel's group developed in quite different ways—some for example embraced violence. Therefore, Yoder did not want to say that all Anabaptist groups share a common Anabaptist heritage.

> The Anabaptist movement of the early 1520s was not a unity. The historian cannot talk about a unified Anabaptist position until after 1540, and then only on certain questions, and only because people representing the other options were

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[106] For example, he wrote in his dissertation, "the Zwinglian Reformation, which can be considered the only possible birthplace of Anabaptism." Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, 2.
[107] "In light of Yoder's earlier historical writings these were significant concessions and modifications, demonstrating a real evolution in his conception of sixteenth-century Anabaptism." Snyder, "Editor's Preface: John Howard Yoder as Historian," xxxvii.
[108] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 185.
[109] Ibid.

> persecuted out of existence. The free church vision does not give normative authority to any ancestors.[110]

He strongly distances himself from the term "Anabaptist" in the 2014 posthumous volume:

> Some people talk about the *Anabaptist* or *Radical Reformation* type, taking one particular historical stream as representative of the movement's whole approach and applying it in other centuries as well . . . In fact the assumption in recent years that Mennonites are 'Anabaptists' probably has made for more confusion than clarification.[111]

"small 'b' baptist" similarly is a poor descriptor of a group of denominations which includes those who practice infant baptism

If Anabaptist is not a good title to describe a coherent group, this also casts doubt on whether McClendon and Yoder's "small 'b' baptist" term is the right term. Yoder stresses that adult baptism is a key characteristic of the "pure type" of free church that he is referring to. "More often *free church* is used for those groups where membership is voluntary and infants are not baptized."[112] But Yoder and McClendon want to include the Moravians who practice infant baptism and the Quakers who do not practice any baptism but exclude a group like the Mormons who practice believer's baptism. Yoder and McClendon say "small 'b' baptist" is meant to indicate all those who read the

[110] Ibid., 164.
[111] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 148.
[112] Ibid.

Scriptures in a certain way[113] but the obvious meaning of "baptist" has to do with baptism. If they wanted to draw attention to a certain way of reading Scripture, they could have said that these churches share a biblicist congregationalist hermeneutic though as we will see, this too is not a clear way of characterizing a group of denominations.

The label "radical reformation" includes some churches Yoder wants to distance himself from and excludes others that arose in a different context

If perhaps the Anabaptist label does not fit all the groups Yoder is interested in referring to, perhaps they can all be called products of the "radical reformation" but this too is inaccurate. Yoder suggests that possibly it can be said that today's free churches / believers' churches / small b Baptists (Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians, Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren, Congregationalists, and Methodists) can all be traced back to the sixteenth century "radical reformation." "The term 'radical reformation' . . . is most apt in describing genetic origins."[114] Yoder explains that Roman Catholics and Lutheran and Reformed Protestants today look back to the sixteenth century as a formative period and that these

[113] McClendon argues "that 'biblicism,' construed afresh as a hermeneutical principle locating the Bible's authority, can provide . . . a theological way to interpret the baptist movement: 'the [baptist] vision can be expressed as a hermeneutical motto, which is shared awareness of *the present Christian community as the primitive community and the eschatological community*." Italics in original. McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 569.
[114] Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264.

other "free churches" could do the same.[115] But Yoder does not want to include in his category all of the groups produced by the radical reformation so this is hardly an apt title category either.

Yoder identifies six groups that made up the radical reformation:

> (1) From Luther to the Peasants' War (including the non-baptizing radicals Strauss, Karlstadt and Müntzer);
>
> (2) Radical Zwinglianism;
>
> (3) the Spiritualists (subdivided into evangelical, rationalist, and speculative types);
>
> (4) the enthusiasts or fanatics (including Hut, Bader, Hoffman, Joris) subdivided into patient or suffering, and violent or revolutionary;
>
> (5) Ecclesial Anabaptism (which Yoder also tended to call "Anabaptism proper," "mainstream Anabaptism" or "true Anabaptism" (subdivided into Mennonites, Swiss Brethren, and the Hutterian Brethren);
>
> (6) Evangelical Humanism.[116]

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[115] "The radical reformation of the sixteenth century is more important than some previous expressions of reform partly because it happened over against other things that have come to be normative. If we ask Lutherans, Anglicans, or Roman Catholics where to find their normative definition of what it means to be Christian, they go to the sixteenth century. Roman Catholicism, of course, goes back far behind the sixteenth century, but the Catholic self-definition—as not Protestant—was focused in the sixteenth century at the Council of Trent. In fact, to use the word *Catholic* as we now use it--is a sixteenth-century phenomenon. Because all major Western Christian bodies define themselves from the sixteenth century, if we are interested in historical phenomena of radical character that are able to converse with other forms of Christianity, the most relevant and logical place to find them is also in the sixteenth century, rather than in the fifteenth or the nineteenth." Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 163.

[116] C. Arnold Snyder concludes this is Yoder's most comprehensive, nuanced categorization (which he breaks down further into nine subcategories). It is from his 1976 *Textos escogidos de la Reforma Radical*. Snyder, "Editor's Preface: John Howard Yoder as Historian," xxxiv, 304, 305, xxxiii, xxx; John Howard Yoder, *Textos Escogidos de la Reforma Radical* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Editoral La Aurora, 1976). In an earlier categorization by Yoder lecture in 1964, Snyder counts 13 different types but my count is 11. Cf. John Howard Yoder, "The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," *Concern* 18, no. July (1971).

Yoder commends all six branches for choosing radical commitment to the Bible over allegiance to the state but he is troubled by how five out of the six developed. They were all "radical" in that "They 'went farther' because they became convinced that to leave the Church under the control of the state, and to keep membership obligatory, would prevent the fundamental renewal which the return to Scripture as sole authority offered."[117] But Yoder only wants to recommend the fifth group. The other five developed in ways he views as unfortunate.

> There were some, whom the historians call "Spiritualists," who rejected not only civil control but all visible social forms and rituals. A few others became far more notorious by seizing and reversing the former view of the state rather than abandoning it; they blessed violent revolution as an instrument of reform. A few others centered their "radicality" upon dogmatic questions, challenging (on biblical grounds) the inherited formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity or of the "two natures" of Christ. More important numerically though less visible, more important for the future, were those whom we might call "Free churchmen" or "ecclesial Anabaptists."[118]

In this last sentence Yoder refers to the "Free churchmen," just the fifth category which would include the Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterian Brethren. But in no other context does Yoder emphasize the Amish or Hutterian Brethren as embodying the "free church" characteristics he is trying to stress. Of the free churches / believers' churches / small b Baptists (Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians,

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[117] John Howard Yoder, "The Restitution of the Church: An Alternative Perspective on Christian History," in *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 133.
[118] Ibid., 134.

Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren, Congregationalists, and Methodists), only the Mennonites trace their roots back to this fifth group of the radical reformation (the "Free churchmen" or "ecclesial Anabaptists"). Similarly, the seven emphases of the Schleitheim Confession that Conrad Grebel's group developed are not practiced by any of these groups except the Mennonites.[119] Not only is the Radical Reformation much broader than the groups Yoders wants to commend, Yoder also resents that the Mennonites are thought to be a development solely from this explosion of protests—

> many people assume that modern Mennonites representant the Radical Reformation. Current Mennonites are heirs of a movement that is the result of many kinds of experiences and input, of which the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century has been only a small portion.[120]

Again, the Radical Reformation includes some five out of six groups Yoder does not support and does not include ten of the eleven denominational groups that he wants to commend.

Not having found a label that accurately describes the eleven denominational groups he is trying to say have something in common; free church, Anabaptist, believers' church, disciples' church, pure church, small 'b' baptist, and radical

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[119] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 174-175. The Schleitheim Confession of February 1527 includes a set of "seven articles": Baptism; The Ban (Excommunication); Breaking of Bread; Separation from the Abomination; Pastors in the Church; The Sword; The Oath. John Howard Yoder, *The Schleitheim Confession* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977). Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation*, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 172-181. Barth mentions the Schleitheim Confession in Barth, *Die Theologie Zwinglis, 1922/1923: Vorlesung Göttingen Wintersemester 1922/1923 (GA II.40)*, 248.

[120] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 148.

reformation all being flawed; Yoder tries to identify traits that these eleven denomational traditions might have in common.

Historian C. Arnold Snyder writes that Yoder tends to launch from history but his passion is to ask normative questions.

> In spite of Yoder's careful work with the sources of Anabaptist beginnings in Switzerland, his methodology of choice for describing Anabaptism was historical theology in search of the 'essence' of the movement . . . As a church historian committed to church renewal, Yoder was pressing the historical sources with theological, biblical and ethical questions in mind: What does the Bible demand of us as Christians? How should the faithful church be ordered and constituted? How should the faithful church relate to the state?[121]

Yoder admits he has more "systematic-ethical than narrative-historical" concerns.[122]

Yoder searches for common characteristics that "free churches" have in common

Yoder suggests that though they do not have similar roots they are evolving in a similar direction

After concluding later in the 1980's that the free church groups he is trying to characterize under one term do not have historical roots in common, Yoder takes a different tact. He think all these different traditions (Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians, Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren, Congregationalists, and Methodists) are simulateously and independently coming to similar conclusions—that a

[121] Snyder, "Editor's Preface: John Howard Yoder as Historian," xxxvii-xxxviii.
[122] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 184.

> narrowing process takes place in church history, in times of change and reform. We are interested in the movement toward the center of that circle, recognizing that in different time and places, and for different groups, this movement is represented somewhat differently. Yet there is a degree of parallelism in their agenda.[123]

He believes that people from all over by their common study of the Scripture are coming to something of a consensus.

> A narrowing process takes place, in which the focus is on the same agenda, with its own intrinsic logic, whether the time we are reading about is the thirteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century, or the Third World today.[124]

But what are these common features? "Now that we have sketchily before us the outlines of this other stream of reformations, from clandestine Waldensians to the Pentecostal explosion, what do these people stand for?"[125]

Congregationalism is not a common feature of "free churches"

Yoder tries to name these common features various times. In 1976, Yoder lists the four "common features of the Believers' Church" as 1. Congregationalism; 2. Voluntary Membership; 3. Religious Liberty; 4. Non-violence.[126]

But upon scrutiny, these features do not apply to all the groups. Not all espouse Congregationalism: the Moravians submit to their synods[127] and the United Church of

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[123] Ibid., 162.
[124] Ibid., 165.
[125] Yoder, "The Restitution of the Church: An Alternative Perspective on Christian History," 135.
[126] Ibid., 135-137.
[127] "As members of the Moravian Church we will abide by the decisions made by the official boards of our congregations, and agree to be governed, both as individuals and as a congregation, by the enactments of

Christ have a congregational structure combined with a presbyterian one that they call "covenantal polity,"[128] Methodists have Episcopal polity.

And to some extent, his second and third traits, Voluntary Membership and Religious Liberty, would be espoused by any church across the ecumenical spectrum. (This is addressed below where Yoder resorts to these traits as the key ones).

Pacifism is not a common feature of free churches

The fourth feature is most obviously not in common among the "free churches." Yoder himself acknowledges that the church traditions he has categorized as free churches / believers' churches / small b Baptists are not all pacifist. "Free church" is broader than "historic peace churches"—Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Society of Friends (Quakers).[129] Yoder thinks however that eventually all the free churches will realize that "non-violence" is the stance to take.

Yoder approaches this topic in another way when he later likens "free church" existence to the phenomenon of the Jewish "diaspora" (or Galuth, scattering, dispersal, or exilic).[130] Both free church and diaspora Jewish communities do their work without

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the Unity Synod of the Moravian Church and of the Synods of the Province to which our congregation belongs."

[128] General Synod of the United Church of Christ, "UCC History and Polity Resources", General Synod of the United Church of Christ http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/ (accessed 4/15/2013).

[129] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 162.

[130] Yoder, "See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun."; Yoder, "See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun." Neufeldt-Fast goes on to say, ". . . George Hunsinger has strongly challenged this claim. Arne Rasmusson's notion of 'diaspora politics' and 'diaspora theology,' however, may prove much more helpful." Neufeldt-Fast, "The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Anabaptism," 77. citing Yoder, "Karl Barth,

governmental support. Yoder has faced significant criticism however when he has emphasized that "not being in charge" is the only faithful Christian approach to power.[131] As we will see, Barth argues that state churches (that are "in charge") and free churches ("not in charge") can go awry.

How His Mind Kept Changing," 171. and Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism." and Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder," 110. Indeed, Hunsinger disputes the characterization of Barth's theology as on pilgrimage toward the Free Church but Rasmusson does not. Rasmusson writes instead that the entire "catholic" tradition has begun to see the wisdom of the free church tradition in so far as treating the state as relative. "It is mainly in some of the so-called free churches—especially Mennonites and Quakers, but also others—that a diaspora-like theology and practice has existed in modern times. Yoder stands in this tradition. He sought to insert much of Barth's theology into a diaspora theology and thereby develop it in a fruitful way. He could not least because Barth's theology itself increasingly moved in this direction. For Yoder, as for Barth, the resulting theology is not specifically free church theology. It is catholic. Indeed, leading Catholic theologians have started to think in this direction. Karl Rahner could talk about the future of the church in terms of diaspora, and Hans Urs von Balthasar has said that diaspora, not Christendom, is the normal condition of the church." Ibid., 110-111. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Institution* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 67. "The phenomenon of the synagogue; a decentralized, self-sustaining, non-sacerdotal community life form capable of operating on its own wherever there are ten households. The phenomenon of Torah; a text around the reading and exposition of which the community is defined. This text is both narrative and legal. The phenomenon of the rabbinate; a non-sacerdotal, non-hierarchical, non-violent leadership elite whose power is not civil but intellectual, validated by their identification with the Torah." Yoder, "On Not Being in Charge," 171.

[131] Yoder sometimes hints at a more stringent definition—the free churches must not only be founded as free churches but must affirm this as the only possible correct posture—that "free churches" are those who do not just make the best of not being a majority or having dominant political influence, but also think that the position of "not being in charge" is normatively correct. Yoder, "On Not Being in Charge." Cf. "It would be impossible to debate in an abstract way whether in principle the effort to make the vision of a Christianized civilization operate is desirable or not. Christians of the 'mainstream' traditions would tend to respond in the affirmative; those of the free church traditions would have their doubts."Yoder, "The Racial Revolution in Theological Perspective," 106. This reticence to serve in the civil state is characteristic only of the historic peace churches (Church of the Brethren; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); and Mennonites) and is explicitly repudiated by the Moravians. "Considering it a special privilege to live in a democratic society, we will faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of our citizenship, among which are intelligent and well-informed voting, a willingness to assume public office, guiding the decisions of government by the expression of our opinions, and supporting good government by our personal efforts." Moravian Church in North America, "Moravian Covenant for Christian Living", Moravian Church in North America http://www.moravian.org/the-moravian-church/what-moravians-believe/moravian-covenant-for-christian-living.html (accessed 4/15/2013). What is most controversial about Yoder's comments about "diaspora" is his downplaying of God's promise to restore his people to the land and their involvement as rulers of

Though the historic peace churches (Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Society of Friends (Quakers)) would affirm being the minority is the only proper posture for the Christian community and involvement in civil political power should be avoided, many other free churches do not affirm this. Most, even if they were founded as free churches, do not bar their members from serving in civil office. In other words, one cannot say that historically the "free churches" (Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians, Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren, Congregationalists, and Methodists) are characterized by "non-violence;" whereas Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed condone violence. All one can say is that the previous list have never been state churches whereas the latter at some point in their history have been.

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society. Yoder emphasizes Jeremiah 29:7 which urges the people in exile to get used to that status but in the later half of chapter 29, God promises to restore his people to the land. Peter Ochs writes, "Yoder has made a beautiful monument of one chapter of Jeremiah's ministry. But there are many chapters." Peter Ochs, "Commentary on 'See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun'," in *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 204. According to Old Testament scholar Paul Kissling, Yoder's so called "Jeremianic line, insofar as it is based on the text of Jeremiah, is a fiction of Yoder's imagination." Paul J. Kissling, "John Howard Yoder's Reading of the Old Testament and the Stone-Campbell Tradition," in *Radical Ecumenicity* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2010), 136. What has also drawn the fire of many are a few statements by Yoder about Ezra and Nehemiah. Yoder writes, "To take Jeremiah seriously, it would seem to me as a lay reader not versed in de- and reconstruction that both of them [Ezra and Nehemiah] need to be seen as inappropriate deviations from the Jeremiah line, since each reconstituted a cult and polity as a branch of the pagan imperial government."Yoder, "See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun," 74. Michael Cartwright responds, "Here, Yoder's typology is not only over-determined but also fails to take into account the significant linkages that existed between the prophetic orientation of Jeremiah and the priestly vocation of Israel, but also the canonical shaping of the Hebrew Bible which ends with 2 Chronicles, 'Let him go up.' [2 Chron 36:23]." Michael G. Cartwright, "Afterword: 'If Abraham is Our Father . . .' The Problem of Christian Supersessionism after Yoder," in *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 219.

Rejection of infant baptism, state control, and liturgy are not unique common features of "free churches"

In 1984, Yoder describes his use of "free church" without the use of the congregationalism and non-violence traits. He says the "free church" are those who hold to three positions: "(a) voluntary adult membership, (b) the rejection of establishment whether in the sense of state control or of provincialism, and (c) the relativizing of prescribed forms of either ritual or dogma."[132] This is implicitly designed to preclude (a) infant baptism, (b) state churches, and (c) hierarchically prescribed liturgy.

But Moravians, some Congregationalists, and Methodists permit or support the baptism of infants. And Quakers do not practice baptism except as an "inward, spiritual experience."[133] Moreover, as written, these criteria are so vague that any contemporary church could affirm these tenets—even Roman Catholic churches and churches with

[132] Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," 279. Yoder uses these same three criteria in an aside in another context—admitting that any of the three criteria may connote "free church." "It may mean free in the sense of voluntary personal membership, or in the sense of not being governed by the state, or in the sense of not having a fixed doctrinal stance or liturgy. It excludes certain high church traditions, but it includes so many variations that it is not precise."Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 161. Earlier he had just named the first two as criteria: "a formal description (voluntary adult membership, institutional independence of civil authorities)." Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 264. Cf. McClendon's description of the "distinctives" of the "baptist vision." James William McClendon, Jr. and Nancey C. Murphy, *Ethics*, 3 vols., Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002; reprint, Baylor University Press, 2012), 32-34. or "baptist type" or "prophetic (or baptist) vision" James William McClendon, Jr. and Nancey C. Murphy, *Doctrine*, 3 vols., Systematic Theology, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994; reprint, Baylor University Press, 2012), 450, 92.

[133] http://www.fgcquaker.org/explore/faqs-about-quakers#Sacraments

state church roots. They too would deny that they support forceful involuntary church membership, state control of the church, and rigid calcified ritual.[134] Under this criteria, little clarity emerges: all denominations in the United States are arguably "free churches."

Reading Scripture as a community is ecumenical not a unique common feature of "free churches"

More positively, in a 1990 article with James McClendon, what it meant to be free church / believers' church / small 'b' baptist was whittled down to one thing: these churches read the Bible "with the shared awareness of *the present Christian community as the primitive community and the eschatological community*."[135] Again, however, Christians across the ecumenical spectrum from Orthodox to Quaker could affirm this and this might be better described in terms of biblicist or congregationalist hermeneutic.[136] As a

[134] It is indisputable that Barth can be called a "free church" theologian according to Yoder's rather innocuous vague criteria here: "(a) voluntary adult membership, (b) the rejection of establishment whether in the sense of state control or of provincialism, and (c) the relativizing of prescribed forms of either ritual or dogma." Virtually every 20th century theologian could loosely be categorized in this way—certainly all of the interpreters of Barth dealt with in this dissertation recognize the importance of voluntary membership in the church as opposed to state control, freedom from the interference of the state being ideal, and the need to work carefully with Scripture and tradition. It is however another matter to say that these criteria are the animating vision of a certain theologian. Here, one could say this is the case more for Yoder than for Barth and more for Barth than some other theologians. But none of them would say this is their guiding motivation. All who rather point to: faithfulness to God which the church discerns as it reads the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The freedom of the church is rather derivative or secondary to the more positive aim of faithfulness.

[135] McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 569. quoting McClendon and Murphy, *Ethics*, 30.

[136] Yoder increasingly began to argue for normative biblical practices—as he does in *Body Politics*—and thought they might be undertaken across the ecumenical spectrum. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992).

demonstration of the breadth of this characterization, Yoder began to call these "free church" practices "catholic"[137]—that is accepted by all churches everywhere.[138]

Being excluded from ecumenical discussions, lacking central episcopacy, and lacking confessional documents are not common features of "free churches"

Another description of what the "free churches" have in common suggested by Yoder is that these churches were ignored in ecumenical discussions. A number of Yoder's writings that include "free church" in the title[139] argue that the "free church" style churches are being ignored by the "mainstream ecumenical bodies."[140] In these pieces, rather than just saying the Mennonite churches are being ignored in ecumenical discussions, Yoder is pointing out that a wide swath of denominations have been ignored. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is

[137] McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman."; Yoder, "Catholicity in Search of Location."

[138] Others called Yoder "radically catholic" to highlight Yoder's understanding of "catholic" in comparison to the two other definitions of "catholic": namely "ecumenical" (often associated with the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order) and "Roman Catholic"—the three definitions McClendon and Yoder describe in: McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman." McClendon wrote of Yoder, "Without renouncing his roots so firm in baptist soil, he increasingly understood himself to be 'radically catholic' in outlook." McClendon and Murphy, *Witness*, 44-45. Cf. Michael G. Cartwright, "Radical Reform, Radical Catholicity," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. John Howard Yoder and Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint, Herald Press).

[139] Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry."; Yoder, "The Free Church Ecumenical Style."; Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism."; Yoder, "A Nature of the Unity We Seek: A Historic Free Church View."

[140] Yoder, "Another 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism," 269. Earlier, Yoder had used the phrase "magisterial." Yoder, "A People in the World," 67, 89.

> predisposed by its history and its procedures toward the 'high' or 'mainline' perspectives and against those of the 'free churches' . . . The family of communions who by conviction are without central episcopacy and confessional documents are at a disadvantage in conversational processes [that are] based on [precisely] those components of ecclesiological and ecclesiastical identity.[141]

However, this too would only apply to some of the group of church traditions Yoder calls "free church." The website of the Moravian Church in North America reads: "Always ecumenically minded, the Moravians were among the first members of the National and World Council of Churches."[142] The Moravian Church is in "full communion" with each of the following: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church USA. Some "Congregationalists" are also very involved in ecumenical circles. "The United Church of Christ" is in "full communion" with each of the following: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church USA, and the Reformed Church in America. The United Church of Christ were also invited to formally respond to the 1982 "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" (BEM) statement of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC).[143] The Methodists have also been active in ecumenical activities including the World Council of Churches and have a central

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[141] Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," 279.
[142] Moravian Church in North America, "A Brief History of the Moravian Church", Moravian Church in North America http://www.moravian.org/the-moravian-church/the-moravian-church/history.html (accessed 4/15/2013).
[143] General Synod of the United Church of Christ, "A United Church of Christ Response to Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry", General Synod of the United Church of Christ http://www.ucc.org/ecumenical/baptism-eucharist-and.html (accessed 4/15/2013).

episcopacy.[144] Furthermore, having a hierarchy and official statements did not help the Roman Catholic Church participate in the World Council of Churches. Presbyterians lack central episcopacy but still participate in ecumenical discussions.

Yoder is likely thinking primarily of denominations with "congregational polity" but by definition these churches will have less interest in affairs outside of their local churches. But "free churches" cannot be defined as those churches who were excluded from the World Council of Churches because of their lack of hierarchy or formal theological statements.

Churches founded as free churches are not becoming more like Mennonites than churches founded as state churches

In *Theology of Mission,* Yoder names these differences between Christendom and the free church: belonging, membership, ethnicity, persecution, organization and leadership, education and discipleship, church/state relationship, empire and mission, war, place of mission, and the role of doctrine. But like the supposed features we analyzed above, none of these characteristics clearly apply to the denominations founded as "free churches" and definitely do not apply to the denominations founded as "state churches." The supposed "free churches" (Disciples, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Baptist, Mennonite, Moravians, Pentecostal, Bible churches, Plymouth Brethren,

[144] http://www.umc.org/directory/ecumenical-organizations (accessed 6/19/2015).

Congregationalists, and Methodists) do not all take the same positions on these issues and the "Christendom" churches (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed), even at the height of Christendom, would have disputed that they took the "Christendom" positions on all these issues.

What is clear is that all churches have adjusted to the breakdown of the church-state alliance. But again, it is not necessarily the churches that began as "free churches" that have supported the positions most strongly that Yoder here sketches. For example, Yoder is incorrect in depicting his own Mennonite conviction about pacifism as a "free church" conviction.

> For the free church, war is fundamentally to be questioned. The concept of the believers church or the free church as defined by historians is wider than the peace churches, but there is a sense in which the circles are concentric.[145]

Besides the peace churches, the church families he has identified as "free churches" are not more pacifist than churches with Christendom roots.[146] Consider Pentecostal Efraín Ríos Montt who ran Guatemala's regime from 1982-1983 and persecuted the ethnically different.[147] Or, Pope John Paul II opposing the war perpetuated by United Methodist

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[145] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 152.

[146] White Baptists evangelicals tend to support war whereas Black Baptists do not. "Solid majorities of white evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and Catholics favored the U.S. taking military action to end Saddam Hussein's rule. Support was strongest among evangelicals, 77% of whom supported war, compared with 62% of Catholics and mainline Protestants. But only 36% of African-American Protestants supported military action." http://www.people-press.org/2003/03/19/different-faiths-different-messages/ MARCH 19, 2003 Pew Research Center "Different Faiths, Different Messages."

[147] "Drawing on his Pentecostal beliefs, Ríos Montt invoked a modern apocalyptic vision comparing the four riders of the Book of Revelation to the four modern evils of hunger, misery, ignorance and subversion, as

United States president George W. Bush.[148] In the United States, it is the churches with roots as "state churches" (like the Episcopalians) who issue statements asking for peace whereas Baptists tend to be the hawks.

The free church vs. state church comparison fails

In summary, Yoder uses the term "free church" to describe a cluster of characteristics that he thinks a number of church traditions founded as "free churches" share. But the only thing they appear to have in common is that none were founded as state churches and these distinctives seem hardly significant today as compared to churches that were founded as state churches but have had to adapt to post-1789 America. Yoder implies there are more common traits but it is difficult to identify what else they might have in common that other churches (with roots as a state churches) would not.

The one thing "free churches" have in common is that they were never state churches. Though Yoder does not do it, one could probe whether churches that were not founded as state churches have lasting structural advantages in that they were designed

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well as fighting corruption and what he described as the depredations of the rich. He said that the true Christian had the Bible in one hand and a machine gun in the other."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efra%C3%ADn_R%C3%ADos_Montt Accessed: Aug 22, 2015.

[148] Pope Voices Opposition, His Strongest, to Iraq War By FRANK BRUNI, Published: January 14, 2003 http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/14/international/europe/14POPE.html

for survival in a hostile or an indifferent world. They were never dependent on government support like other Christian traditions (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed) that were originally founded as state churches. Perhaps it can be argued that because the free churches were small, they often emphasized vibrant local congregational or parish life. But it is not as though state churches universally neglected congregations.

Perhaps because they did not have state regulations or an authoritative clerical tradition, churches that began as free churches emphasized afresh looking to the Scriptures for guidance. But again this was be a difference in degree not in kind since certainly Luther and Calvin tried to look afresh at the Scriptures.

Moreover, as we will see Barth points out, the "free church" approach in both these respects has a downside: congregational independence can devolve into fracturing division, and flouting tradition in the name of getting back to the Bible can result in bizarre belief and practice.

Yoder is really arguing that many church traditions are in some respect moving toward a Mennonite view and Barth is an example of this

In summary, it is only the Mennonite church tradition that fully embodies the "free church" characteristics Yoder touts. Consciously and probably unconsciously, Yoder uses the broader terms ("free churches," believers' churches, small 'b' baptists, radical Reformation churches, and Anabaptists) as a way of arguing that Mennonite's

theological emphases are not so unusual; other church traditions have come to similar conclusions. Yoder wants to emphasize that Mennonites are not alone in their believer's baptism, congregationalism, and pacifism stances. But upon investigation of the details, none of the church traditions have come to the same conclusions with the Mennonites on any one issue. The Quakers agree about peace but reject the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Moravians agree with Mennonites about discipleship but differ in lacking congregationalism and practicing infant baptism. The Brethren in Christ agree about peace and baptism but they would add as crucial feetwashing and anointing which Mennonites do not. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Plymouth Brethren and Baptists agree with Mennonites about believer's baptism but are not pacifist. Unfortunately, "free church" is used by Yoder as a gloss for "similar to Mennonite church."

Therefore, understandably, the "free church" terminology used by Yoder has mystified Barth scholars such as George Hunsinger.[149] Yoder is understandably intrigued that some of Barth's views were becoming more like Mennonite positions. Probably as well Yoder was citing Barth to buttress this working theory that many traditions were beginning to see the wisdom of Mennonite positions. However, in retrospect, saying Barth was becoming a "free church" theologian was at best imprecise.

[149] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism," 124.

("Imprecise" is the word Yoder repeatedly used about the term "free church.") Not only is "free church" not defined in detail by Yoder in his writings on Barth, having scoured many of Yoder's others writings to ascertain what he means by the phrase, the conclusion seems to be that he himself hoped that many denominations were coming toward Mennonite positions but this is the case only in a erratic, inconsistent way. With regard to Barth, it would have been more accurate for Yoder to say that Barth partially moved closer to a Mennonite positions on some issues: separation from the state, adult baptism, discipleship, pacifism, biblicism, congregationalism, and being an example as politics. As we will see below, Barth did not embrace any of these positions in a way that a Mennonite would.

The most crucial change post-Christendom is the need to reach outsiders.

In the posthumously published volume, *Theology of Mission,* as we have mentioned above, Yoder says "free church" is the opposite of "Christendom church."[150] It is the argument of this dissertation that this is what Yoder should have focused on. In one of his last descriptions of Barth's ecclesiology, Yoder moves away from calling Barth's ecclesiology "free church" but instead "post-Christendom" ecclesiology.[151] "Post-Christendom" churches is a far more clear and accurate description of the phenomenon

[150] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 147.
[151] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 176. He also calls it "post-Constantinian" but this is less helpful as it focuses on the "not being in charge" theme more than the problematic nature of the entire society being nominally Christian.

than "free churches." This terminology is clear about asking how churches function differently when they are the only game in town as opposed to an organization which must win people to its cause. Churches that were founded outside of Christendom had ecclesiologies with mechanisms to reach outsiders. In other words, they did not assume that they would continue to exist based on society funneling people to them. They realized that unless they reached adult outsiders, their numbers would dwindle. This also stimulates a productive discussion about the ways that churches whose ecclesiologies developed under Christendom have had renewal and missionary movements that have tried to adjust to the new reality such as the Jesuits in Roman Catholicism. This also explains why there is no common founder nor growing consensus about doctrine or practices. Thriving in post-Christendom situations does not necessarily include being pacifist, baptist, congregational in polity, non-liturgical, or reading the Bible in a literal way. Yoder was trying to find what the common source or common goal existed among a certain group of churches—the focus on winning adult outsiders is that common thread. It is not that Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian churches have not or do not have this goal but this was certainly not a major part of their ecclesiology under Christendom and "evangelism" has had to be bolted on afterward when decline in numbers and a visible population of outsiders became apparent.

Unfortunately, Yoder does not quite see this. Instead, he uses "free churches" as a way of saying "similar to Mennonites." All of these churches have similarities to Mennonites but (it is argued in this dissertation) only in the sense of a "post-Christendom" focus on reaching outsiders.

Yoder's 9 theses that explain Barth's "inexplicable" ecclesiology by arguing Barth was unconsciously moving toward more Mennonite-like positions

Now that we have demonstrated that it is unhelpful to try to discern to what extent Barth is a "free church" theologian since there really is no such thing, we can move on to seeing to what extent Barth moves toward Mennonite positions (which are held by many different churches). Indeed, Yoder is correct that compared with some Roman Catholics and Protestants, Barth is indeed almost Mennonite. This is a helpful perspective given how mystified some of the Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran interpreters of Barth's work have been about his criticism of infant baptism and other inexplicable (to them) aspects of his ecclesiology. But before Mennonites claim him as a convert to their cause, it is also useful to point out that Barth qualifies his support for the Mennonite positions on: Constantinianism, party polities, the state church, the Believers' Church, biblicism, baptism, pacifism, and congregationalism.

Despite being occasioned by different events such as questions about pacifism, questions about Barth's reluctance to be anti-communist, and the contention that Barth was motivated by socialism, there is significant overlap and consistency in Yoder's reading of Barth's from 1957 until Yoder's death in 1997. It has been difficult for readers of Yoder and Barth to understand Yoder's view of Barth because Yoder's comments about Barth have typically been ad hoc—in response to conversation partners like Herberg and Marquardt. And as we have said, Yoder's idiosyncratic characterization of Barth's ecclesiology as "free church" has also clouded over his valid insights. Yoder's claims about Barth's ecclesiology can be appreciated and critiqued when all of the essays in which Yoder dealt substantively with Barth are analyzed. One could move through these essays one by one chronologically but because there is significant overlap in content, little would be gained. Instead, what is needed is a compiling and sorting of what Yoder said in each essay. These observations by Yoder could be organized in any number of ways but it seems best to organize them in the way Yoder did in his last presentation on Barth. In June 1995, Yoder presented a lecture entitled "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian" at the Karl Barth Society meeting in Elmhurst, IL. This was Yoder's last specific presentation or article on Karl Barth. (Yoder died in December 1997). In this presentation, Yoder made nine observations about Barth's theology. Yoder

names four ways in which Barth was approaching a "post-Christendom theology"[152] and then five ways that he was definitively "post-Constantinian."[153] Almost all of these observations repeat points he makes in previous articles. It therefore seems best to construct and analyze Yoder's observations about Barth's ecclesiology under these nine headings.[154]

(1) Critique of Constantinianism: Yoder is right that Barth insists the church distinguish itself from the state

Yoder notes how Barth in various ways demonstrates his wariness of the church blindly allying itself with the state—praising Barth's early theology of the Word from the 1910's and 1920's, Barth's 1946 essay "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," and his 1955 §67 in volume IV/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*.

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[152] Ibid., 177. Cf. "post-Christendom reconstruction" ibid., 176.

[153] Ibid., 185, Cf. 176.

[154] A very similar alternative loose organization of nine can be cobbled together from a piece twenty-five years earlier in 1970 "On Trying to Understanding Barth: A Critique of Herberg's Interpretation." Barth's [1] "concern for the character of Christian theology . . . every . . . claim must be critically explained in the light of Christ." [2] "Barth's participation . . . in the late 1950's . . . on the issues of rearmament and nuclear weapons." [3] The "innovative step is the distinction between 'the Christian Community and the Civil Community.'" [4] The coming to prominence of the concept of *Gemeinde* in Barth's thought is a post-1932 development which Herberg misses by leaping from 1932 to 1946 and back. Barth's increasing seriousness about this centering of ethical thought in the really gathered church derives [5] partly from his experiences in the German church struggle, where such a church-against-the-world actually came into being; [6] partly from spelling out the implications of his theology of preaching; [7] partly from continuing concern with what the preaching of the Word of God means to the hearer (cf. his simultaneous movement toward the rejection of infant baptism); [8] partly from his ecumenically appreciative assimilation of some of those strands of pietism which had sowed into European Protestantism the seeds of ecumenical, missionary, and social concern (Zinzendorf, Blumhardt); and [9] partly from continued working with the concept of peoplehood in covenant theology." Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 93, 95, 96.

Barth emphasizes how different God is from from European assumptions

Yoder rightly says that Barth's early writing attacked the Protestant liberal church's comfortable accommodation to European culture and government—clearing space for a fresh understanding of church to emerge. Barth's "'Theology of the Word' . . . was already the beginning of a post-Christendom reconstruction."[155] Barth's 1916 "The Strange New World within the Bible" stresses the need for a renewed appreciation of the untamed God of the Bible.[156] And Barth's commentaries on *Romans* represent the need "to go back to the basic job, beginning with the notion of God's Word, then expanding that retrieval to include the careful reading of scriptural texts."[157] Because the church had not restrained the nationalism that led to the war, Barth called for a renewed humility before the God of the Bible rather than the assumption that Europe was already Christian. Yoder says that Barth did not explicitly denounce Christendom or the state church but it did denounce what Christendom had wrought. Barth's early work "was not *explicitly* anti-establishment but it did presuppose . . . the inadequacy of . . . the basic Christendom epistemology" which had led to the first World War.[158] This disillusionment with the church caving to nationalist cultural was a disturbing

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[155] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 176.
[156] "we have only to seek honestly and we shall make the plain discovery that there is something greater in the Bible than religion and 'worship.' Here again we have only a kind of crust which must be broken through." Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans., Douglas Horton, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper, 1957), 41.
[157] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 176.
[158] Ibid., 177.

experience for Barth.[159] However, as we will see, this did not lead him to separate from the state church (as a Mennonite would think crucial) but instead to warn against the church being deceived by a cozy alliance with nationalism.

In 1946, Barth describes how church membership is different from citizenship in the state

Yoder praises Barth's essay, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" for Barth's differentiation between the people of God and the national state.[160] Yoder notices in Barth's essay a "profound novelty, namely the questioning of the Constantinian synthesis. In fact, all 'official' theology of the European churches since St. Augustine has presupposed the 'Constantinian' framework, the fusion of the church with all of society."[161] Yoder calls this "the disentangling of the communities."[162]

Because "religion" is so often in modern pluralist societies dismissed as "private" rather than "public,"[163] and Thomas Jefferson's phrase the "separation of church and state"[164] is so widely accepted as self-evident, Barth's distinction between the Christian community and the civil community may seem to contemporary Westerners

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[159] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 81.
[160] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community."; Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community."
[161] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 130.
[162] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 187.
[163] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).
[164] "Separation of church and state" is used informally to refer to the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States but the constitution does not use the phrase. It can be traced back to a letter by Thomas Jefferson in 1802.

unremarkable. But Yoder calls it "a new understanding" because he realizes Barth is making a subtle point.

Barth defines his terms in the first sentence of the essay, which Yoder comments upon.

> [Barth writes:] By the 'Christian Community' we mean what is usually called 'the church' and by the 'civil community' we mean what is usually called 'the State.'
>
> [Yoder comments:] It makes more difference than the reader in the 1990's recognizes, that he goes on to correct for that narrowed institutional accent:
>
> [Barth writes:] we are concerned . . . not primarily with institutions and offices but with human beings gathered together . . . in the service of common tasks.
>
> [Yoder comments:] This personalization or humanization is a significant corrective, after a millennium during which as the problem was classically defined, 'Church' meant bishops and what they do, and 'State' meant princes and what they do.[165]

In other words, in the common parlance of Barth's day, "church" and "state" were large bureaucratic institutions in European life, which provided different services. But Barth emphasizes instead that these are communities of people (lay people and citizens respectively). It is especially important that the "church" is conceived as a community, as in the New Testament; rather than being reduced to the services that clergy provide.

Yoder says Barth was led to this understanding of the church "partly from continued working with the concept of peoplehood in covenant theology."[166] Yoder notes Barth's description of Israel and the church not so much as nations or institutions

[165] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 183.
[166] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 96.

but rather as groups of people who participate in the covenant. Indeed, Barth titles the opening subsection of §72 in IV/3.2 "The People of God in World-occurrence."[167] He points out that in the Old Testament, persons from other nations became part of the "people of God" and the people of God lasted after the fall of the nation of Israel.[168] In other words, the Constantinian error of associating God's people with heredity or geographic boundaries is misguided. In the New Testament, the "people of God" is even more obviously not a "nation." Barth says,

> The people of the new covenant, however, is not a nation. It is a people freely and newly called and assembled out of Israel and all nations. It is not made up of succeeding generations. It is not recruited through procreation and birth.[169]

The reason Yoder and Barth feel the need to emphasize the people of God over against the physical boundaries of a nation state is the heritage of Constantine. Since Constantine, Christians in Europe assumed close cooperation between church and state authorities. Theologians argued that church authorities used special revelation in administering their affairs; while also arguing that state authorities were guided by

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[167] Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 780; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 681. He uses the phrase "Volk Gottes" occurs 20 times in §72 in IV/3.2. (The English translation "people of God" occurs 67 times in the English translation). The next most frequent occurrence of "Volk Gottes" in a section of the *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* is 7 occurrences (and the English "people of God" occurs 18 times in English).

[168] "Yet only apparently, for in fact no nation in world history, when it has come to the end of its independent existence, has been so little assimilated, or has been able so mysteriously and yet so genuinely and distinctly and continuously to maintain its identity in the sea of surrounding, overflowing and absorbing alien peoples, of goyim [gentiles] old and new with their own histories and languages and cultures, as has the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 690.

[169] Ibid., IV/4, 178. This is in the context of an explanation of why circumcision and infant baptism are different.

general revelation as to what was necessary to carry out their duties. By positing that state authorities were guided by God through natural law, at times the church effectively endorsed and enabled whatever the state rationalized. Barth rejects the notion that enough is revealed by God via general revelation (by discerning "what is realistic") to form a "natural theology" that a state can rule properly. He also rejects the implication that the church's special revelation leads it to act in a way that is naïve and idealistic and therefore the church should be restricted to dealing with spiritual and private issues. It is better, says Barth, to insist that that the church be guided by special revelation (specifically Jesus Christ)[170] and not the state. For Barth, the church should operate under the assumption that the state (operating without special revelation) is "confused," that is, it sometimes gets things right and sometimes wrong.[171] Yoder is

[170] "the community of Jesus Christ does not perceive the voice of any lord but the voice of the Lord of all lords." Ibid., IV/3.2, 685. "it is simply that the reality and truth of the grace of God addressed to the world in Jesus Christ is the third word which the Christian community is both required and authorised to consider and attest." Ibid., IV/3.2, 706.

[171] "*confusio* [confusion] is theologically appropriate because it says neither too little nor too much. *Confusio* [confusion] undoubtedly denotes something very questionable and indeed wholly evil. It opens up a vista of folly and wickedness, of deception and injustice, of blood and tears. But it does not pronounce any absolute sentence of rejection. It does not describe world history as a night in which everything is black, as an utter mad-house or den of criminals, as a graveyard, let alone an inferno. It simply says—and this is serious and severe enough—that men make and shape and achieve confusion." Ibid., IV/3.2, 695. "the cutting off of human confusion at its root, the restoration of order in world-occurrence, is thus the event in question, the work and Word of Jesus Christ. The Christian community hears this Word, sees this work and knows this person as it hears and sees and knows the One whose call is the basis and meaning of its own existence." Ibid., IV/3.2, 712. "The resulting restriction is that the reconciliation of the world to God, the fulfilment of the covenant, the reconstituted order between God and man and therefore the new reality of world history, is known even to the community only in Jesus Christ and cannot therefore be known to the world which does not participate in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It cannot be known." Ibid., IV/3.2, 714. The following quote from Barth's essay will be analyzed further below. The civil community is relatively blind because "No appeal can be made to the Word or Spirit of God in the running of its affairs. The civil community as such is

correct that Barth's roaring in the teens and twenties of the 20th century was a call to question the Christendom synthesis.

In 1955, Barth emphasizes that the church cannot internalize the state's assumptions about it.

Yoder praises Barth for seeing that the church cannot avoid being influenced by the state but that the state's authority is relative. The state will invariably attempt to regulate, pressure, categorize, and reduce the church for its own purposes. Yoder is impressed with Barth's nuanced reflection on the church's relationship to the state in §67 in *Church Dogmatics* IV.2.. The church is often forced to conform to the state's wishes but the church should not accept those strictures as the church's true identity. Yoder notes the subversive attitude of such thinking. "One could hardly imagine a more fundamental undercutting of the moral legitimacy of the state church structure."[172]

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spiritually blind and ignorant." Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 17. The civil community's limited mandate is "to achieve an external, relative and provisional humanizing of man's life and the political order . . . which guarantees that the worst is prevented from happening." Ibid., 20. Yoder writes, "Once the distinction has been posited between two definitions of community, both defined in political terms, both under the same Lord, one defined by faith's response to the Word and the other without it, the next question is how the substantial norms governing the life of those communities are to be related." Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 183. Yoder and Barth deny that the church should encourage the quest for "natural theology." For natural theology—unmoored from the epistemological lens of Christian revelation—will be invariably overwhelmed by human confusion. "The old standard answer has been 'natural law' i.e. that since the wider community does not have the Word the alternative source of moral insight, which is accessible to them without faith, is 'nature.' This would be to stand the relation of the two communities on its head, ignoring human fallenness and confusion." Ibid. The Christian community must not blithely follow the whims of the state construed as "God revealing himself naturally."

[172] "Barth goes on (p. 686) to say that the order that befits the gospel will for structural reasons be misunderstood by the world. The state will have to dictate some kind of order: i.e. some framework within which the state from its side will understand the form of the Christian community. The church will not

Yoder's comment can be further understood by citing part of the text by Barth that Yoder is commenting on. Barth says that it is not realistic that the state will truly comprehend the church but however the state ends up designating the church should not be incorporated into the theology of the church. The church may be forced to cooperate but the church must never forget that the church's true identity transcends this. The state will have "an understanding of the Church which the Church itself cannot adopt. The Church can only allow this legislation to come into being, and acquiesce in it."[173] In other words, for Barth and Yoder, it is not surprising that the state will give the church some designation. It will be called "a registered group" or "charity" or a "non-profit organization" or even an "illegal cult." The church has little choice but to operate under such regulations. But the church must not be lulled into thinking it truly is what the state says it is. Barth warns that even the friendliest government ("the most loyal state") with the best of intentions will tend to try to influence the church.[174] Instead the

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accept that order as being proper, or normative, but in the best hypothesis the church will acquiesce in letting certain outward forms be dictated from without. One could hardly imagine a more fundamental undercutting of the moral legitimacy of the state church structure." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143.

[173] "Even at best, there can never be any question of the state adopting the Church's understanding of itself. This understanding will not, therefore, find expression in the legal status laid down by the state or arranged in conjunction with it. But this means that the law of Church and state can never be, or try to be, the law of the Church, nor can it be accepted and recognised as such. There can thus be no place for the provisions of this law in the constitution or order of the Church. For they presuppose, and directly or indirectly express, an understanding of the Church which the Church itself cannot adopt. The Church can only allow this legislation to come into being, and acquiesce in it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 688.

[174] "It will be vigilant to see that the state's *ius circa sacra* [law around sacred matters] does not openly or surreptitiously—and there is always a tendency in this direction, even (and perhaps especially) in the most loyal state—develop into a *ius in sacra* [law for sacred matters]; the interference of the state in its own order,

church will need to remain clear about what it stands for and there are certain lines where it will need take a stand. "A frontier will always be perceived which it [the church] has to guard in virtue of its own self-understanding and beyond which it cannot accept either the commands or the prohibitions of the state."[175] Most of all, it will continue to rehearse and remind itself and the world what it constructively stands for.

> Above all, it [the church] will tirelessly give positive expression to its own understanding of itself. It will do this decisively in the contours of its life and activity within the sphere of the state. Ignoring the distorted picture presented in the law of Church and state, it will be present and speak and act in its own character, and the discharge of its commission, as a human society which does not belong to itself or govern itself, as the sphere which is ruled by Jesus Christ.[176]

Barth's comments here are noteworthy for their insight into post-Christendom realities but are not controversial. This is mainstream or orthodox Christian theology based in the New Testament which has been restated and rediscovered strongly across Christian traditions in the mid twentieth century as the flawed nature of Constantinian state-church enmeshment has become apparent to all. Still, it is fair for Yoder to claim that many "free church" groups have been making this point since the 17th century when Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and the Reformed were still trying to make it

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and ultimately an attempt to control its preaching, doctrine and theology, i.e., the practical fulfilment of its confession, if not the confession itself." Ibid., IV/2, 689.

[175] "It [the church] cannot allow itself to be secularised by the law of Church and state and its definitions. If necessary, it will not hesitate actively to withstand those responsible for its application (whether it is a matter of officials or political majorities." Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

work. It is only in the mid 20th century (made abundantly clear by two World Wars) that all of these groups have also come around to seeing the necessity of fostering potent faithful churches that differentiate themselves, rather than departments of religion of a nominally "Christian" government.

Barth sees the flaws in the "state church" but as we will see he does not say all "state churches" should be disbanded as a precursor to faithful ministry so he is hardly a "free church" advocate. Again, it is more accurate to describe him as a "post-Christendom" theologian. But, again, seeing the flaws in state-church synthesis is the standard Christian position rather than something unique.

(2) Involvement in party politics: Yoder acknowledges Barth's involvement with socialist politics but he is right that Barth is primarily animated by Jesus not socialism

In 1978, Yoder is prodded into expositing Barth's ecclesiology by his disagreement with Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt's claim that Barth was highly influenced by socialist philosophy. In a 1978 review, Yoder responds to the 1976 book *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* edited and translated by George Hunsinger which excerpts and translates, summarizes, and reviews the discussion surrounding Friedrich-Wilhelm

Marquardt's 1972 book *Theologie Und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barths.*[177] Also in 1978, in a lecture at the Karl Barth Society with Hunsinger in attendance, Yoder expands on his review comments.[178]

Published in 1972, four years after Barth's death in 1968, Marquardt's book began as a doctoral dissertation which was rejected upon submission.[179] "After examination of the Marquardt manuscript, the faculty of the Kirchliche Hochschule graded the work as unscientific and refused to 'habilitate' its author as a professor."[180] Karl Barth's son Markus Barth did not think highly of the work's results or methodology, saying, "The substance of Marquardt's findings is dependent upon, and as astonishing as, the hermeneutics used in his study of and description of Karl Barth's work."[181] Critics and defenders of Marquardt's argument clashed in print and in public.[182] In one incident at a colloquium on the book, "Eberhard Jüngel silently packed his briefcase, stood up and left the room" because he felt insulted by defenders of Marquardt.[183]

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[177] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338-339. reviews Hunsinger's English translation Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*. of Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: das Beispiel Karl Barths*..
[178] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics." In this lecture, Yoder weighs the socialist, pacifist, and ecclesiological ("free church") emphases in Barth's work.
[179] Timothy Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.
[180] Markus Barth, "Current Discussions on the Political Character of Karl Barth's Theology," in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Waterloo, ON: The Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies in Religion in Canada, 1974), 90.
[181] Ibid., 84.
[182] "I have learned greatly from the work of F. W. Marquardt . . . as will be obvious." Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*, iv.
[183] Barth, "Current Discussions on the Political Character of Karl Barth's Theology," 92.

Yoder agrees with Marquardt on a couple of issues. He agrees with Marquardt that American appropriation of Barth as "neo-orthodox" is incorrect because it ignores the context of European politics and theology. Yoder also agrees with Marquardt that Barth never withdrew from the political arena. "Barth never disavowed political relevance as some critics claimed, especially some Americans in the Cold War era."[184] Will Herberg and Reinhold Niebuhr, who will be discussed later in this chapter, criticized Barth for not speaking up more forcefully against communism after World War II.

However, Yoder finds the characterization of Barth by Marquardt as "socialist" to be vague and overblown. "The book's major weakness . . . is that it interprets 'radical politics' so narrowly in terms of 'being socialist,' i.e., using Marxian categories of social analysis, supporting parties named 'Socialist,' or not being anticommunist during the 1950s."[185] Barth was (a) critical of capitalist greed, (b) a member of the Socialist Democrat party, and (c) was not vehemently anticommunist in the 1950's; but Yoder right points out these do not mean Barth was primarily influenced by socialist philosophy. Yoder argues that Marquardt's characterizes Barth as "socialist" because Barth is not demonizing communism and cheering capitalism.

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[184] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338. Cf. On Barth's theology in the context of his times, see: Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*, 5-11.
[185] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338.

> Sometimes, anything left of the political center will count. Sometimes it is party membership. Sometimes it is criticizing capitalist society. Sometimes it is not being actively anti-communist in the 1950's, or not joining the noisy protests of Swiss society in 1956-1957 at the time of the Russian retaking of Hungary.[186]

Barth himself explained his early connections to socialism on a number of occasions. As a young pastor, Barth was concerned with the plight of people in his congregation who he felt were being treated unfairly in the factories where they worked. Eberhard Busch writes in his biographical work on Barth,

> According to statistics from the year 1920, at this time 587 of the 780 wage-earners in Safenwil were employed in industrial work . . . the workers were paid extremely low wages, and as they were not organized into a trade union they could do hardly anything to protect themselves . . . Barth began to give lectures to the 'Workers' Association' in the old school at Safenwil as early as October 1911.[187]

In 1950 Barth explains his actions,

> Any young Swiss pastor of the time who wasn't asleep, or didn't live somewhere on the other side of the moon, or hadn't been corrupted in some way, was a Religious Socialist in the narrower or the wider sense. We were vehemently anti-bourgeois (we were better at knowing what we were against than what we were for).[188]

In other words, Barth claims that his socialist advocacy at the time was not particularly unusual given that the treatment of the workers at the time was so egregious that everyone who was aware of it and had a conscience supported the cause of reform. He also admits that at the time he knew more clearly that these injustices were wrong and

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[186] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 134.
[187] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 69.
[188] Ibid., 77.

only had a faint idea of solutions—that is, he had not bought into the entire Marxist program. Instead, as he explained in 1912, he was only socialist insofar as it was in keeping with the gospel. "I regard socialist demands as an important part of the application of the gospel, though I also believe that they cannot be realized without the gospel."[189]

In 1915, Barth becomes a member of the "Social Democrats" political party. What drew him to join the party was the conviction that detachment from it effectively meant an endorsement of the status quo. The opposite of aloofness from the cares of everyday people is for Barth the concept of "solidarity."[190] In 1915 he wrote, "I could no longer remain suspended in the clouds above the present evil world. I had to demonstrate that faith in the Greatest does not exclude work and suffering in the realm of the imperfect."[191] Barth does not want to merely advise his parishioners from above but to communicate that he wants to be among them so he joins the Social Democrats. In 1969, he recalls that because he now was a member of a left-wing political party,

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[189] Ibid., 70.

[190] Ibid., 82. Barth writes later in the *Church Dogmatics* that a crucial aspect of the church's task of witness is to be in "solidarity" with the world. "We continue our description of the basis and origin of the obedience of the community to its task by stating that the true community of Jesus Christ is the society in which it is given to men to know and practise their solidarity with the world." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 773. But then Barth hastens to add: But "Not their conformity to it!"

[191] Busch, Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts, 82; Barth and Thurneysen, Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925, 28.

> they called me 'the red pastor of Safenwil.' But that didn't bother me. Today, of course, there would be nothing remarkable about it. But at that time it was a 'bad' thing to be a Social Democrat.[192]

In other words, Barth explains that at the time it appeared unusual to be a Social Democrat but decades later it can be seen that he was merely an early adherent of what would become not a radical but a mainstream political party. From 1959 through 2015, there has always been a member of the party in the Swiss Federal Council which governs the country. In 2015, the Social Democrats were the second largest party in Switzerland.[193]

Yoder writes that Barth's radical politics manifest themselves most in "persistent critique focused at home"[194] (that is, interest in local social issues) rather than issues of foreign policy, which were dominated by the Cold War after World War II. Barth did occasionally write letters to Christians in other countries[195] but he was reticent to offer political advice except to urge them to follow Christ. Barth thought it was important for Christians in the NATO nations to dialogue with Christians in Soviet-dominated countries. What is needed is "birds flying between East and West, and not partisan

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[192] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 83; Karl Barth, *Final Testimonies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 38.

[193] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_of_Switzerland (Jan 18, 2015) The Social Democratic Party of Switzerland are socialist but do not support Marxist armed revolt but instead support "a national security policy based on pacifism."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_of_Switzerland, accessed Jan 23, 2015.

[194] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 339.

[195] Karl Barth, *Against the Stream* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954).

involvement."[196] Barth did voice his opposition to West German rearmament—a controversial position in Swiss politics at the time.[197] But Yoder is correct that Barth was primarily concerned with "home." One other aspect besides concern about the quality of life of the poor was critiquing fellow theologians who considered uncritically relaying conventional public opinion to be "theology."[198] Yoder writes, "Throughout the period of his full-time dedication to dogmatic theology, there was no letting up on his criticism of middle class social thought as an ally of liberal theology."[199] Barth criticizes capitalism, militarism, classism, and nationalism not because he supported socialism but because these are caricatures of good theology.

Yoder sees Barth's sympathy with disadvantaged factory workers not as a sign of his nascent socialism but rather as an indication that Barth thinks the church should follow in the steps of Jesus. Yoder writes that Barth took other unpopular stances that had nothing to do with socialism. He cites Barth's: opposition to nuclear war, insistence that the church's ethic be different from that of the state, rejection of civil religion perpetuated by routine infant baptism in a society, and "practical pacifism."[200] Yoder

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[196] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 384. Busch summarizes Barth's stance toward foreign polity as: "before being interested in the splinters in other people's eyes, people should take the beams out of their own." Ibid., 427.
[197] Ibid., 382-386.
[198] For example, "With this argument Barth was implicitly challenging the mediating standpoint of his pupil Gollwitzer, who at that time had in fact described 'political decision' as a matter of discretion.'" ibid., 386.
[199] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 134.
[200] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 550.

writes, "The work [by Marquardt] would have gained seriously from attention to Barth's pacifism (with its own similar but not parallel off-and-on story [to that of socialism]), to the disestablishmentarianism explicit in some of his writings on the church and implicit in those on baptism, and to the ethics of sanctification."[201] In other words, there are other unusual aspects of Barth's theology that might have led Marquardt to question whether socialism was what set Barth apart. Yoder is correct to observe that: "The socialism of the young Barth . . . [was] the precursor of a radical ecclesiology"[202] if "radical ecclesiology" has to do with the church taking stands against the societal status quo. However, it is more confusing than helpful to say that this is the position of a "free churchman"[203] since as we have seen above, none of these stances (pacifist, baptist, etc.) are held in common by all non-State Churches. Only Barth's rejection of infant baptism is truly a theological break from his Swiss Reformed Church heritage and not all "free churches" reject infant baptism (e.g. Moravians). Still, Yoder is correct to say over against Marquardt that Barth's stances with regard to the poor are driven by biblical insights rather than Marxist ones.

Yoder argues that some of the counter-establishment moves that Barth made developed later in his career and so might possibly be missed. The argument that Barth

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[201] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338. I have added the parentheses here to clarify Yoder's meaning.
[202] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 177.
[203] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 339.

made major shifts in his theology is usually dubious in that he himself did not admit much development. However, it is true that Barth became by his own admission more sympathetic towards pacifism and more critical of infant baptism. Yoder argues that this development in Barth's theology is from Christ as a formal symbol of God to an emphasis on the human Jesus as depicted in the Gospels. Yoder argues that Marquardt misunderstands Barth because he places too much emphasis on the formal Chalcedonian claim that God has become human in Jesus. The concern by Yoder is that Marquardt may conclude falsely from the Chalcedonian definition that humanness is generally affirmed by God[204] rather than looking at the details of how Barth reflects on the specificity of Jesus' way of becoming human.[205] Yoder elsewhere calls this "Logological" reasoning rather than the more appropriate "Jesulogical" reasoning.[206] The "Logological" leads to blanket affirmation of the human. It jumps from the premise that God became human to the conclusion that God endorses everything human. The

[204] "when Jesus was just a symbol under which most of what was said was about nature and human nature, things that other theologies could say without Jesus." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 141.
[205] "Marquardt's effort to do this with the classic Christological notions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* (pp. 127ff and 137-38) . . . . can end the story where the *Church Dogmatics* begins." Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338-339. See also: "Marquardt reads into abstruse debates about systematic theology implications for the total system of social ethics which certainly seem to be over-interpreted. This is the case of *anhypostasia/enhypostasia* . . . So it is that Marquardt . . . can stop reading when Karl Barth just begins writing the *Church Dogmatics*, as if everything was decided when a few axioms were enunciated." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 134. These are cited below in our treatment of Reinhardt Hütter.
[206] Yoder, "The Christological Presuppositions of Discipleship," 144-145.

"Jesulogical" looks at Jesus' life to see what in human existence receives God's endorsement.

Yoder says that Barth did not do a sufficiently adequate job of clarifying this distinction early in his work. Yoder argues that in Barth's early work he rarely spoke of Jesus as an ethical example to emulate but instead emphasized his divinity. Jesus Christ is treated as just a " —'cipher'—for revelation."[207] Barth is right to revel that the divine has revealed himself in a human being[208] but Jesus Christ's lifestyle and decisions as depicted in the Gospels are not emphasized. This formal Christology lacked ethical urgency (that Christians should behave like Jesus).

Yoder had criticized Barth's early idea in *Church Dogmatics* I/2 that "ethics must be derived from the Word of God in the situation" as vague. Yoder thought this "existentialist and intuitionist" approach was highly susceptible to rationalizing away

[207] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 141.

[208] Yoder writes, "The function of Christology in volume I and volume II [of the *Church* Dogmatics] had been programmatic. There "Jesus Christ" is a *Chiffre*—a German use of a French term meaning not quite the same as 'cipher'—for revelation. In *Church Dogmatics* III, the Christology is still programmatic. Now Jesus Christ is *Chiffre* for the denial of the autonomy of creation, in the form of the claim that even the creation is part of the covenant." Ibid. As we will see later, these Christological formulae from volumes I and II of the *Church Dogmatics* continue to be for some interpreters of Barth—particularly Reformed ones—the most important aspects of Barth's ecclesiology. Schooled in Barth' s reflection in volumes I-III of the *Church Dogmatics,* they suspect any emphasis on church ministry is counterproductive because it invariably blunts or occludes the stark uniqueness or "singularity" of Jesus Christ's overcoming of the God-human conflict. They are correct that Barth's ecclesiology is still disciplined by this concern but these "Barthians" are more suspicious of the church than Barth himself. The chief problem with the formal theologizing about the church from the unity of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ is that this ignores the breadth of what the Scriptures say about the church.

specific obedience of Jesus.[209] Yoder also criticizes Barth's later ethics in III/4 for reducing Christ's command "Love thy neighbor as thyself" to the vague "respect for life" and then later also the generic concept of "justice."[210] Yoder calls this "importing . . . timeless truths which can be abstracted from the concrete work of Christ."[211] In other words, Jesus demonstrated a more specific understanding of "respect for life" (such as protecting the poor's life and being willing to give up one's life) and "justice" (such as sometimes giving up justice for forgiveness) than these concepts alone communicate. Barth himself is appalled that German politicians were able to with "outright mischief" use the ambiguity of his comments in III/4 to justify the development of military weapons.[212]

But Yoder praises Barth's writing on ethics in IV/2 (1958). Yoder repeats in 1978 the argument of his 1957/1970 book *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* that "the story of Karl Barth's pacifism [is that of] growing from 'no' [to pacifism] in 1930 to 'almost yes' in 1958."[213] Yoder theorizes that this change in 1958 can be traced to Barth getting to the doctrine of sanctification in IV/2 which explores human response to God's initiating grace. In volume IV, Barth finally

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[209] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 87.
[210] Ibid., 84, 85.
[211] Ibid., 84.
[212] Ibid., 89.
[213] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 140.

> describes the Jesus of the gospels in his full humanity and lifestyle . . . quite differently in form and content from volume III when Jesus was just a symbol under which most of what was said was about nature and human nature, things that other theologies could say without Jesus.[214]

Here Barth explicitly says the ethical behavior of the Christian should imitate that of Jesus.[215] In other words, Barth's "radical politics" become more clear as Barth takes his own deliberate path through the breadth of dogmatic topics. When the biblical issue of sanctification, saints, and holiness is raised, Barth affirms that Christians are to emulate Jesus.[216]

Another problem with the "Logological" is that Christians have little significance over against other human beings. God has become human and so truth is found by studying humanity via psychology, anthropology, and sociology. What the social science studies find is damaging to people, we should not do. The Marxist argues that studies show the poor are oppressed, therefore the oppressed should unite and resist. There is a naiveté about the assumptions of the research. But for Barth, truth is not primarily found through study of human beings. Instead, human beings learn about

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[214] Ibid., 141.

[215] "In volume IV, however, we come to sanctification. Here the place of Jesus will have to be different. The meaning of the label Jesus Christ is now filled in a different way by the need to provide content which will be accessible for appropriation by the believer (the Holy One being followed by the Saint)." Ibid.

[216] "'The Holy One and the Holy Ones' marked the maturing of a shift from a Christology where the Jesus of the chapters of Nicea and Chalcedon was little more than a cipher for the concept of revelation, to the human figure of the evangelical [gospel] accounts. If discipleship is to be ethical rather than only pietistic, the One we follow must be known in his humanness. Therefore it is no surprise that the *prima facie* [self-evident] pacifist import of sanctification goes beyond Bonhoeffer both formally and substantively." Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 174. Yoder explains further his criticism of Bonhoeffer's understanding of disciplehip in Yoder, "The Christological Presuppositions of Discipleship."

humanity by looking at God's revelation in Jesus Christ and the church has received significant wisdom about humanity via revelation. This is what Yoder is talking about when he says Barth came to a "radical ecclesiology." As Barth argues in §67 of IV/2, the Christian community exists to live out Jesus' way as an example to the world. Barth argues that the structure and workings of a church should intentionally attempt to reflect the way of Jesus. Rather than deriving church governance practice by considerations derived from psychological and sociological studies of what works, Yoder praises Barth for teaching that church governance should be oriented by how Jesus interacted with his followers: "To say that the order of the gathered community must be derived from Christology is itself a free church move."[217] All of what the church does including its gatherings and leadership structure should be "a reliable way of remembering Jesus."[218] And all of the church's internal policies and procedures should be seasoned by the unique way of Jesus, not just good management practices: "True Church *Recht* (Law) is exemplary law."[219] According to Yoder, the difference between the early and later Barth

> is precisely the difference between an establishment social ethic which projects first of all a vision for what the shape of society should be, and deals with individual and small group ethics only as derived from that overarching vision;

[217] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143. But see Yoder scholar Mark Nation's defense of Bonhoeffer in Mark Nation, Anthony G. Siegrist, and Daniel P. Umbel, *Bonhoeffer the Assassin? : Challenging the Myth, Recovering His Call to Peacemaking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).
[218] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 144.
[219] Ibid.

> and the non-conformist ethic of the confessing community derived not from the given patterns of the unbelieving community within which it lives but rather by the humanity of the Lord whom it freely confesses.[220]

Yoder argues that early on Barth accepted too many conventions about what the church should be. (His advocacy on behalf of the poor workers was a happy exception). Later, Barth began to articulate a radical ecclesiology (which included things like resisting war and concern about the conflating of national citizenship with church membership often reinforced in infant baptism).

In summary, Yoder is certainly correct that Barth's belonging to a radical party and advocating for counter-cultural peace policies like resistance to rearmament are better explained by his reading of Scripture than a socialist ideology. However, all of this is well within his Swiss Reformed Church heritage. A Mennonite would probably not pursue political change through involvement in a political party and would become a full pacifist. Barth's only break from his Reformed heritage was his rejection of infant baptism—a position shared by many church traditions that have little else in common. Yoder theorizes that Barth's advocacy of the poor factory worker, sympathy with partial pacifism, and rejection of infant baptism are an indication of his seeing the wisdom of Mennonite or "free church" approaches. But upon investigation, this is just an assembling of the confirming evidence without acknowledgement that joining a political

[220] Ibid., 145-146. Semi-colon substituted for comma.

party is more consistent with a Reformed approach, being wary of the nuclear arms race is a widespread ecumenical position, and rejecting infant baptism is a stance arrived at by churches across the state-free church spectrum.

(3) Disillusionment with State Church: Yoder is right that Barth considered separating from the State Church in the German church struggle but Barth is more interested in the church being free than being a Free Church

Barth is not as interested in separation of church and state as a Mennonite would be

Yoder writes that "Barmen and the *Bekennende Kirche* [the Confessing Church] were potentially the beginnings of what could have become a free church in institutional terms."[221] Barth had drafted what became the Barmen Declaration (May 29-31, 1934) to protest Nazi co-opting of the state church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was dialoguing with Barth as early as September 1933 about whether it was time for Christians in Germany to declare cooperation with the Nazi-dominated church impossible. Bonhoeffer wrote Barth, "Several of us are now very drawn to the idea of the Free Church." Barth wrote back that he too saw in the Aryan clause (which declared only men of Aryan descent to be eligible for pastoral ministry) to be of "*status confessionis*" (confessional status), that is an issue of significant seriousness that it would be worth formally denouncing the state church as heretical and separating from it. "I, too, am of the opinion that there is a *status*

[221] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 177.

confessionis here."[222] But Barth suggested the correct tactic was to make their disapproval well known and to be dismissed from the state-church by the state church. Barth was in fact later fired from his position as a university professor. His approach to protest from within the national church (rather than to voluntarily withdraw) was the approach favored by the vast majority of Barth and Bonhoeffer's friends. And as it turned out, they did have their rights to teach, preach, and write gradually curtailed by the government—they were essentially dismissed from the state church rather than withdrawing from it.[223] With the benefit of hindsight (that the Nazis would eventually utterly dismantle the church in Germany), it is easy to say that Christians like Barth should have protested and separated earlier from the German national church (as Bonhoeffer and a very few others had pushed for). (The "Confessing Church" was more of a movement that protested within the national church and only after their abilities to maneuver were overwhelmed by Nazi power did they organize as a separate entity).

Yoder argues that Barth came close to separating from a state church and thus was sympathetic to the idea of a Free Church: "partly from his experiences in the German church struggle, where such a church-against-the-world actually came into being."[224] But though World War I and World War II are surely the most definitive

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[222] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 308-309.
[223] Cf. Ibid., 320, 325, 367, 378, 404.
[224] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 96.

events in Barth's life and shaped his theology, in both cases the lesson for Barth was that the church must resist the popular theology of the day rather than that the church should sever relations with the state.[225] It may seem self-evident to a Mennonite that the lesson from the Nazi coopting of the State Church is that churches should cut ties to the state, most Confessing Church participants after World War II rejoined the government-sponsored church. They did not consider government involvement in churches to be a fatal flaw; the Nazi cooption of the church was thought to be an unfortunate aberration. Eberhard Bethge thinks that Bonhoeffer would have been surprised by this as Bonhoeffer

> had a fairly clear idea that the church should get rid of many things after the catastrophe of 1945 and find new constructions . . . He hardly assumed that the *Volkskirche* [People's Church] that had become so discredited during the Nazi era could simply survive . . . He did not imagine that the financial and organizational structures would emerge little changed.[226]

If Barth would have returned to Germany after World War II, it is possible that he would have advocated for new structures separate from the government but he issued no statements along those lines. Barth did acknowledge that the rebuilding of the German church and society would be a "vast" task. He decided his best contribution

[225] Acts 5:29.
[226] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times; a Biography*, 887.

would be to focus on the *Church Dogmatics* and to do so he thought it best to stay in Switzerland.[227]

Yoder's suggestion that Barth would like American free churches if he was familiar with them

Recall that Yoder repeatedly states that Barth's theology resembles that of the free church.

> "Karl Barth's social stance was in theory and practice that of a free churchman or one whom Marquardt and Hunsinger call 'radical,' i.e., a critic of all authoritarianism"[228]
>
> "Barth's incomplete pilgrimage can best be understood as being on the way to what Anglo-Saxon ecclesiological thinking calls the Free Church."[229]
>
> "Since IV/2 there is no refuting his commitment to the free church vision."[230]
>
> "To say that the order of the gathered community must be derived from Christology is itself a free church move."[231]
>
> "Barth's use of the Bible is that of the free churchman."[232]
>
> "Should any have failed to note this free church tendency as general teaching in Barth's ecclesiology, none can miss his evident movement with regard to baptism."[233]

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[227] "The problem of German reconstruction seemed to me personally to be so vast . . . I felt I ought to decide . . . to keep on with my real work—namely, the continuation and possibly the completion of my *Church Dogmatics*." Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), 56; Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 332.
[228] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 339.
[229] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 171.
[230] Ibid., 174.
[231] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143.
[232] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 171.
[233] Ibid., 173.

Yoder says that Barth developed into "a free churchman, whether he recognizes it or not."[234]

Yoder argues that Barth had not seen many free churches in action so did not know how similar his theology was to theirs.

> the concept of the free church, which is operative in an Anglo-Saxon society as a style of churchmanship since Roger Williams, and in American religions sociology since Troeltsch, is not present in the European scene either sociologically or intellectually. The tiny free churches in Europe are either recent foreign implantations like the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren and Methodists, planted by recent British missions, or they are statistically irrelevant enclaves like the Mennonites.[235]

Yoder suggests that Barth is unfamiliar with the thriving "free churches" in North America and Great Britain. Yoder says that in Barth's lifetime the "free churches" started by British missionaries (Baptist, Plymouth Brethern, and Methodist) in Germany, Switzerland, and France had not been properly contextualized and therefore still reflected British sensibilities and thus stuck out as "foreign." Or, if homegrown in Europe like the Mennonites, the free churches were too small and withdrawn from society for their strengths to be perceived. To read him charitably, Yoder is merely

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[234] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142.

[235] Ibid. Yoder mentions "Methodists" as "free churches" in Germany and Switzerland. It is interesting however that churches do not just move from state churches to free churches but also sometimes move from from being free churches to seek recognition from the state. For example, the Methodist church in Germany has sought to gain legal status as a state church. Having gained some recognition as a valid state church, the Theological University of Reutlingen describes itself as the "State-recognized professional school of the United Methodist Church." [*Theologische Hochschule Reutlingen - Staatlich anerkannte Fachhochschule der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche* http://www.th-reutlingen.de/top-menue/home] However, once there are a number of "state churches" (plural) instead of just "the state church" surely the state support for a specific church is lessened so that the concept of "state church" is less significant.

making the point that people in Europe are generally unfamiliar with Free Churches and that there are more Free Churches in the United States. If we read more into Yoder's comment, it seems odd as a Mennonite that he would be dismissive of the European expressions of the Free Church because they are small. Yoder is perhaps remarking that these free churches do not thrive in a land where there is another state church—implying that a nation should have a wide open religious marketplace like the United States. But, as we will see, Barth does mention some "free church" people (Zinzendorf, Carey, and Wesley) and he is not put off by their minority status but rather praises their missionary passion in a foreign land.

Barth's praise for American free churches

There is some merit to Yoder's thesis that Barth was unfamiliar with "free churches" in that when Barth visited the United States for the first time in 1962, he was impressed with the enthusiasm of the attenders who were not required to attend church services. Barth muses about the sociological benefits of the American "Free Churches" [*Freikirchen*] (in the sense of being free from government interference) as compared with churches in Switzerland where there is a tradition of government involvement. He muses (surely correctly) about whether voluntary participation in church (rather than external pressure by the state) leads to warm fellowship among church attenders and a sense of ownership among them for the church's wellbeing.

> As for Christian America and Christian Switzerland, one thing struck me most of all, and that was that in American Christianity the congregation [*die Gemeinde*] is still a real thing. People do not just attend divine service [a worship service] and then go home again, as they do with us; they do not go just to listen to the minister, but also to be with one another. They 'gather together' for worship. Even in the big cities I visited, such as Chicago, Washington, and Richmond, they knew, greeted, talked to one another. Going to church is not a mere private matter; it is a 'social gathering,' as the Americans call it. This may have its dangers, but basically it is a good and gratifying thing; the Gospel binds people together.[236]

Barth wonders further (and this is more debatable) whether voluntary attendance may mean Christians have *more* influence on the outside secular world.

> My impression is that the fact that American Christianity is more socially oriented gives it greater practical significance in public life. Though there are no State Churches [*Landeskirchen*], and in spite of what is to us the confusingly large number of larger and smaller Free Churches [*Freikirchen*], generally speaking their churches have more influence on secular fields of life than our State Churches [*Landeskirchen*] do—perhaps just because they are Free Churches [*Freikirchen*] and thus dependent on themselves and their members.[237]

And finally, Barth wonders whether Christians' having to choose a church to attend leads to both energetic congregations *and* interest in ecumenical dialogue and cooperation among church denominations.

> This influence may sometimes be dubious and give rise to a certain tendency to self-righteousness. But, speaking generally, the impressive feature is the vitality of church life, not least in the dialogue of the churches with each other and with other denominations.[238]

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[236] Karl Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*, trans., Eric Mosbacher (London: Collins, 1971), 49-50. Translation slightly altered. Cf. Barth, "1 Interview von Alexander J. Seiler (28.11.1962/23.1.1963)," 4-5.
[237] Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*, 49-50. Translation slightly altered. Cf. Barth, "1 Interview von Alexander J. Seiler (28.11.1962/23.1.1963)," 4-5. Barth lived in Basel which was part of the Basel-Stadt canton.
[238] Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*, 49-50. Translation slightly altered. Cf. Barth, "1 Interview von Alexander J. Seiler (28.11.1962/23.1.1963)," 4-5.

Contrast this positive experience with American churches to his experience as a pastor.[239] In mid-August 1909, Barth became an Assistant Pastor in the German-speaking Reformed Church in Geneva, Switzerland.[240] But two months later he was left alone for five months without a senior pastor to oversee him. In October, the senior pastor took a position at a congregation in Zurich and his successor did not arrive until February. Later Barth recalled, "I had to minister alone for half a year because the chief [senior pastor] position was vacant."[241] Moreover, few people attended church in Geneva: of the eight hundred men in Geneva on the electoral roll, "hardly one has appeared in the church . . . And I have seldom seen even the women's seats all occupied."[242] What most energized the city was the threat from the federal government that gambling might be outlawed.[243]

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[239] After completing the theological education necessary to become a pastor in the late summer of 1908, Karl Barth worked for one year in Marburg, Germany as an editorial assistant for the theological journal *Die Christlich Welt*. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 37, 38, 68; Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 46. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 1.

[240] McCormack, Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936, 73; Mangina, Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness, 1.

[241] Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966*, 153-154. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 53.

[242] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 55.

[243] Ibid., 58.

However, Barth was quite familiar with free churches in Switzerland

Against the hypothesis that Barth was unfamiliar with "free churches" is that Barth's father Fritz trained "free church" pastors and that the Swiss Reformed Church in Basel was relatively free from government involvement. Though Barth followed his father Fritz and both his grandfathers as a pastor in the the Swiss Reformed Church, Barth writes that for a time Fritz worked with "free church pastors." Barth writes of himself: "My father, previously pastor of the Aargau community of Reitnau for seven years, was at the time [of my birth] a teacher in the Evangelical School of Preachers at Basel"[244] which involved him training preachers "mostly for the free churches."[245]Later, in 1889 Fritz Barth began to teach on the Faculty of Theology at the state-sponsored University of Bern.[246]

Moreover, Barth was familiar with differing degrees of state control among the canton churches in Switzerland. As is still the case, each geographical area in Switzerland is called a "canton" (like a "state" in the United States or a "province" in Canada) and has its own self-governing canton-specific Swiss Reformed Church. "Just as the political system retained the form of a loose federation of states, the Reformed

[244] Ibid., 1.
[245] Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966*, 151.
[246] Fritz later became Professor of Church History and New Testament there and served for twenty-three years. So Fritz Barth's appointments before Basel in Aargau, and after Basel in Bern were associated with Swiss Reformed state churches. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 9.

churches never formed a united church. Although they maintained regular and manifold contacts, they remained autonomous regional churches."[247] As Eberhard Busch explained in the 1976, "The relationship between state and church differs from canton to canton in Switzerland. Usually the Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church are 'established,' and have certain civil responsibilities; as in England, the other churches can be referred to as 'free churches.'"[248] As explained in a Reformed encyclopedia in 1999, traditionally, the state government of the "canton" was the head of each of the church's organization. "Until well into the 19th century the Reformed churches generally remained state churches, i.e., ultimately dependent on the political authorities of the canton. Relationships with the state began to be revised in the 20th century. Today relationships are regulated separately in each canton, which results in major variations among the cantons."[249]

In the city of Basel which is in the canton of Basel-Stadt, where Barth was born and later taught, there was and is a significant separation between church and state in the Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche des Kantons Basel-Stadt. The same is true for the city

[247] Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). Updated second edition online: http://www.reformiert-online.net/weltweit/131_eng.php
[248] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 52.
[249] Bauswein and Vischer, *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations*. Updated second edition online: http://www.reformiert-online.net/weltweit/131_eng.php

of Geneva in the canton of Geneva, where Barth was an associate pastor. The cities Reitnau (where Barth's father Fritz had pastored) and Safenwil (where Barth would pastor) are in the canton of Aargau where changes in the Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau were made from 1905-1907 to further separate church and state.[250]

However, in the city of Bern in the canton of Bern, where Barth grew up; and in the canton of Zurich, where Emil Brunner grew up and was a professor; the relationship between church and state as of 1999 remained "very close" as compared to other cantons where formal separations had occurred.

> Whereas in Basel (since 1905), in Geneva (since 1907), and in Neuchâtel (since 1943) church and state are entirely or partially separated from one another, relationships in Berne, Zurich, Vaud, and also Basel-Land are still very close. The Reformed churches continue, however, to regard themselves as the church of their canton.[251]

This report from 1999 about the churches in Bern and Zurich continuing to have a close relationship to the state affirms Barth's assertion in 1961 that the churches in Bern and Zurich were closely tied to the state in his experience.

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[250] Though there was formal separation, still in 2016 the Reformed Church in Aargau, touts itself as one of the three legally-recognized state churches. "The Reformed Church of Aargau is one of the three public legally-recognized state churches." Original: "Die Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau ist eine der drei öffentlich-rechtlich anerkannten Landeskirchen." Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau website. http://www.ref-ag.ch/organisation-personen/ [Accessed: Feb 23, 2016]

[251] Bauswein and Vischer, *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations*. Updated second edition online: http://www.reformiert-online.net/weltweit/131_eng.php

> The State Church is always nasty. Consider the church in the cantons of Bern and Zurich, where the church is an organ and a department of the state. This has had a catastrophic impact in earlier times.[252]

We will treat the whole paragraph from which this quote is taken more fully below.

The point at this part in the argument is that Barth was familiar with church structures that were formally connected to the state and others that were more independent of the state. Therefore, Yoder's suggestion that Barth would have seen the importance of churches being separated from the state if he had been familiar with the American and British free churches is not particularly persuasive.[253] Yoder is correct that Barth did not have a lot of experience with the free churches, though he had students from all of them and had been exposed to church structures that were more independent of the state even in Switzerland. Though Barth saw the dangers of churches being linked to states, he also did not think separation from the state was a crucial flaw.

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[252] My translation of "Staatskirche ist doch immer etwas Schlimmes, so wie die Kirche in den Kantonen Bern und Zürich dran ist, wo sie ein Organ, ein Departement des Staates ist, was sich in früherer Zeit verhängnisvoll ausgewirkt hat." Barth, "16 Gespräch mit Methodistenpredigern (16.5.1961)," 201-202.

[253] "makes Karl Barth a free churchman, whether he recognizes it or not. He does not recognize it because the concept of the free church, which is operateive in an Anglo-Saxon society as a style of churchmanship since Roger Williams, and in American sociology since Troeltsch, is not present on the European scene either sociologically or intellectually. The tiny free churches of Europe are either recent foreign implantations like the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren and Methodists, planted by recent British missions, or they are statistically irrelevant enclaves like the Mennonites. Barth is a free churchman because of his doctrine of revelation, which demands that he recognize that belief can united in community only those who respond to the Word. He has not been in discussions about faith and order, or ministries or sacraments. This study ["The Christian Community and the Civil Community"] is also, despite its very brief compass, the closest Barth comes to thinking about the nature of the state." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142.

If one were to only look at Barth's positive impressions of American church life or his involvement in the Basel canton church that had less state involvement than some other canton churches, one might conclude that Yoder is correct that Barth was moving toward a "free church" perspective. But Barth directly addresses his thoughts about free churches a number of times so that a better understanding of his perspective is attainable.

Barth's explicit thoughts on the merits of the free church over against the state church

Not only was Barth familiar with free churches in Switzerland, and the United States, Barth also met with Methodists personally besides Yoder. In 1961, when meeting with some Methodistsonites, they asked Barth, "Which is closest to the position of the New Testament: 'State Church' or 'Free Church'?"

Barth answered:

> I would formulate the options differently. Instead of either 'State Church' or 'Free Church;' I would say either 'State Church', 'People's Church', 'Mass Church,' or 'a-church-of-confession.'
>
> Parenthetically, personally, I prefer the Free Church [*Freikirche*]. The State Church is always nasty. Consider the church in the cantons of Bern and Zurich, where the church is an organ and a department of the state. This has had a catastrophic impact in earlier times. I do not prefer that! But ultimately, it is not an issue of: 'the National Church' or 'the Free Church' [*Freikirche*].
>
> A State Church may be a confessing church. I prefer to say 'confessing church' rather than 'Confessional Church' [Church-of-a-Confession] because 'a Confession' is on paper, but 'confessing' is an ongoing action! Confessing can be done in the context of a State Church, and it can also *not* happen in a Free Church

> [*Freikirche*]! It ultimately depends not on the form of the church, but rather where the gospel is preached, believed, and witnessed.[254]

It is crucial to notice that Barth prefers the label "confessing church" to "Free Church." He emphasizes that a church could be "confessing" while still officially a "State Church"—even though he notes parenthetically that he knows firsthand how troublesome it is to be part of a State Church, which is treated as a government entity. Though he prefers the church to be freed from government interference, the more important issue is whether the church is confessing—that is proclaiming, believing, and witnessing to the gospel. This echoes what Barth had said more formally in the *Church Dogmatics* about Free Churches and State Churches, which we will treat next.

[254] My translation of: "Frage: Staatskirche und Freikirche: was ist dem neutestamentlichen Status am ehesten adäquat? Barth: Ich würde das lieber auf eine andere Formel bringen. Statt «Staatskirche und Freikirche» [möchte ich sagen:] Staats-, Volks-, Massenkirche und Bekenntniskirche. Ich neige für mich zur Freikirche. Staatskirche ist doch immer etwas Schlimmes, so wie die Kirche in den Kantonen Bern und Zürich dran ist, wo sie ein Organ, ein Departement des Staates ist, was sich in früherer Zeit verhängnisvoll ausgewirkt hat. Nein, das lieber nicht! Letztlich hängt es aber nicht an dem: Landeskirche oder Freikirche. Auch eine Staatskirche kann bekennende Kirche sein (ich sage lieber «bekennende Kirche» als Bekenntniskirche, denn das Bekenntnis steht auf dem Papier, das Bekennen aber ist eine Tat!). Das Bekennen kann geschehen im Rahmen einer Staatskirche, und es kann in einer Freikirche nicht geschehen! Es hängt letztlich nicht an der Kirchenform, sondern [daran], daß hier und dort das Evangelium verkündigt, geglaubt und bezeugt wird." Barth, "16 Gespräch mit Methodistenpredigern (16.5.1961)," 201-202. Note that Barth (like his preference for *freie Kirche* "church that is free" rather than *Freikirche* "Free Church") prefers the two word adjectival phrase: *bekennende Kirche* (A confessing church) to the compound noun: *Bekenntniskirche* (Confessional Church or A-Church-of-a-Confession) "because a 'Confession' is on paper, but 'confessing' is an [ongoing] action!." See below for more about how "confessing" should be translated from German or Greek into English because in English it has the connotation of "confessing" one's sins and this is not the primary connotation in Greek and German.

Barth has two different concepts and spellings for "free church" and "Free Church" in the *Church Dogmatics*

Barth has two different concepts and spellings for "free church" and "Free Church" in the *Church Dogmatics.* He uses the compound noun *Freikirche* (Free Church) to denote churches that are not the official church of a state. So *Freikirche* (Free Church) is the antonym of words like *Staatskirche* ("State Church"), *Volkskirche* (an ethnic People's Church), and *Landeskirche* (National Church).[255] In English translation of the German, it seems best to capitalize these more objective designations.[256]

The second concept and spelling is the separated adjective and noun in German: *freie Kirche* (free church). Barth is describing the church's most important reality subjectively: that it is free in Christ, as in: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed [indeed = "really" ὄντως]" (John 8:36 NIV). Whether a church is a Free Church or a State Church, it must be a "free" church. The church's true identity is free even if it be a State Church. This is similar to the New Testament concept of about being really free

[255] Karl Barth, *Credo: Die Hauptprobleme de Dogmatik dargestellt im Anschluss an das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis ; 16 Vorlusungen, gehalten an der Universität Utrecht im Februar und März 1935* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), 121; Karl Barth, *Credo* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 121. Cf. Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 80, 193.

[256] In the quotes below, English translations of the German are altered for clarity and consistency: *Freikirche* (Free Church) and *freie Kirche* (free church). This is not standard practice but there should be something in the English translation to alert English readers that a different spelling is obvious in German. The rationale for this choice is that in English the adjectives in names of denominations and specific churches are capitalized (e.g. Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Evangelical Free Church, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., Southern Baptist Convention, African Episcopal Methodist Church). Adjectives that are describing a specific church may be used without capitalizing: evangelical, free, united, presbyterian, southern, baptist, episcopal. Analagously, in German, a church has an official titular designation as State or Free but then one can also reflect on in what respects a church is subjectively "free."

in Christ even if one is still physically enslaved. "For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person" (1 Cor 7:22 NIV). The objective identity—that of a slave (1 Cor 7:22) or a State Church—may remain but it is not fundamental. In §67 of *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 (1955), Barth affirms that a church can be faithful regardless of whether the government regards it as a State Church or a Free Church. Whether the state regards it as Free or State, the church should regard its primary master and Lord as Jesus Christ.

> Ignoring the distorted picture presented in the law of church and state, it [the church-community] will be present and speak and act in its own character, and the discharge of its commission, as a human society which does not belong to itself or govern itself, as the sphere which is ruled by Jesus Christ.[257]

Whether the church is a Free Church or State Church, the church must listen to Jesus Christ. If the church merely conforms to governmental expectations, the church not only becomes distorted itself but the state loses the benefit of receiving feedback from a differentiated identity. "What the state needs, within the framework of a particular law of church and state, is a free church [*freie Kirche*], which as such can remind it of its own limits and calling."[258] God's people are to be salt and light (Matt 5:13-16). Barth writes that if the church is clear on this need to be independent—to be a "free church" in reality, it can submit to the technical designation "State Church." "As a

[257] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 689.
[258] Bold in German in original. Ibid.; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 781.

free church [*freie Kirche*], and only as such, the Christian community will always allow itself to be integrated, and willingly and gladly integrate itself, into the order instituted by the state."[259] For example, Barth was conscious of the pressures on churches in Eastern Europe under Soviet domination to adhere formally to the regulations the state demanded.[260] Like the slave referred to by the apostle Paul, it was unrealistic for churches under totalitarian regimes to defy their status as a state church but they could regard themselves still as really "free churches."

For Barth it is not Free Church but confessing or missionary church that is the preferred descriptor

Barth later in §72 of Church Dogmatics IV/3.2 (1959) repeats this point that a faithful church can be a Free Church or a State Church while adding his preferred appellation.

> Their Church may thus be a National Church, a State Church or a Free Church, but its invisible essence must always be made visible in the fact that it is a confessing and missionary church which leaves those around in no doubt as to whom or what it has to represent among them.[261]

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[259] Bold in German in original. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 689; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 781.
[260] See many pieces in Barth, *Against the Stream*. And see Karl Barth, "Letter to a Pastor in the German Democratic Republic," in *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land*, ed. Karl Barth and Johannes Hamel (New York: Association Press, 1959).
[261] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 742. "So wird sie, sei es als Volkskirche und vielleicht Staatskirche, sei es als Freikirche, ihr unsichtbares Wesen unter allen Umständen darin sichtbar machen müssen, daß sie bekennende, daß sie Missionskirche ist, ihrer Umgebung keinen Zweifel darüber läßt, für wen und für was sie in ihrer Mitte einzustehen hat." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 849. Here as well as in his 1961 discussion with the Methodists, Barth prefers *bekennende Kirche* (A confessing church) to the compound noun: *Bekenntniskirche* (Confessional Church or A-Church-of-a-Confession) "because a 'Confession' is on paper, but 'confessing' is an [ongoing] action!" Barth, "16 Gespräch mit Methodistenpredigern (16.5.1961)," 201-202.

The most crucial adjectives for Barth is that the church be "confessing" and "missionary." Barth's emphasis on the adjectives confessing and missionary to describe the church is among the most important things to emphasize in this dissertation.

In 1959 in the *Church Dogmatics* and in his 1961 conversation with the Methodist preachers quoted above, Barth emphasized that the church should be a *bekennende Kirche* and this is typically translated "confessing church."

In English, the connotation of "confess" is usually someone "confessing to a crime" or "confessing their sins." Thus, someone might think of this understanding of a "confessing church" as a repentant, guilty, sorrowful church, a church that uses kneelers or hassock for attendees to kneel upon, or a church that has a confessional booth. But Barth does not primarily mean that he wants to see a church that is "confessing their sins." He is not necessarily against this but this is not what he is talking about when he constantly talks about confession.

The words traditionally translated "confess" in German (*bekennen)* and in New Testament Greek (ὁμολογέω; ὁμολογία, ἐξομολογέομαι, ἐξομολογέω) mean in general terms: "acknowledging" or "stating."[262] Perhaps an adverb such as: aloud / audibly / verbally / publicly—should be appended to reiterate that this "confessing" is *not* an

[262] The goal here is to try to find words used regularly in contemporary English rather than "confess." The method was looking up every instance of the words in Greek in the New Testament and every instance in Barth's three ecclesiology sections, which is hundreds of occurrences.

inner thought but rather part of a social interaction with others.[263] This "confessing" can be acknowledging something negative and so in English the connotation is more like: confess, admit.[264] Or this "confessing" can be acknowledging something positive and so in English the connotation is more like: affirm, declare.[265]

This acknowledging aloud ("confessing") is a social activity in that it occurs around other people not by one's self alone. So it is not just "recognition" that might happen by one's self but taking the next step to "acknowledge aloud" that recognition—whether it be that "Jesus is Lord" or that "I have sinned." Confess, admit, declare, affirm—these can be significant social actions—they are sometimes used in legal proceedings or press conferences and public debates. Usually they are the result of

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[263] "And they cannot make this response merely in private . . . But under the impulsion of the Word of God, the human response to this Word calls for something public." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 701.

[264] confessing, admitting, etc. ἐξομολογέω: Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; Jas 5:16. ὁμολογέω: John 1:20; 1 John 1:9. ὁμολογία: none.

[265] affirming, declaring, etc. ἐξομολογέω: Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21; Luke 22:6; Rom 14:11; Rom 15:9; Phil 2:11. ὁμολογέω: Matt 7:23; Matt 10:32; Matt 14:7; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; John 12:42; Acts 7:17; Acts 23:8; Acts 24:14; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Tim 6:12; Titus 1:16; Heb 11:13; Heb 13:15; 1 John 2:23; 1 John 4:2-3; 1 John 4:15; 2 John 7; Rev 3:5. ὁμολογία: 2 Cor 9:13; 1 Tim 6:12-13; Heb 3:1; Heb 4:14; 10:23. Older English translations of the Greek New Testament and German theology tended to use "confess" to signify both "confessing Jesus as Lord" and "confessing sins" but the positive connotation of "confess" has mostly fallen out of regular English usage. The classic semantic guide to helping people translate the New Testament concur. "It is often extremely difficult, if not impossible, to translate ὁμολογέω, ὁμολογία, and ἐξομολογέομαι by the usual expression for 'confess,' since this would usually imply that one has done something wrong. It is normally necessary, therefore, to employ quite a different type of relationship, usually involving a public utterance and an expression of confidence or allegiance. For example, in Mt 10:32 it may be necessary to translate 'whoever tells people publicly that he is loyal to me, I will tell my Father that I am loyal to that person.' Similarly, in He 10:23 one may translate 'let us hold on to the hope in which we have told people we have such confidence.' Likewise, in Ro 15:9 one may translate 'therefore I will tell the Gentiles how I have put my confidence in you.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, Electronic ed. of the 2nd. ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 417-419.

reflection and then the courage to say the conviction aloud. Acknowledge, confess, admit, affirm are usually used with an object that has to do with the truth or reality. When acknowledge, confess, admit, affirm occur in a sentence, the connotation is that the person is coming clean about what is true regardless of the consequences. If this is not the case, a significant modifier needs to be added like false confession. So, in terms of lexical usage: confession should be associated at a basic level with: a social interaction acknowledging aloud the truth. Understandably, Barth would want to have a church that does this. But, the content is absolutely crucial for Barth. That is to say, it is not so much a "confessing church" that Barth wants but a "confessing Jesus" church.

What is primary for Barth is "confessing Jesus" or "acknowledging who Jesus is." What sets the stage for the church to be a confessing church is that the church is first acknowledged (declared, affirmed) by Jesus Christ as his body.[266] Then, the church acknowledges (declares, affirms) that it is gathered by Jesus by listening to him together.

For Barth, the church's confession is shorthand for the church's center, priority, orientation, its guiding light, foundation, charter: Jesus. So whenever he refers to the church's confession, he is talking about its subservience to Jesus. A confessing church is

[266] Jesus Christ "confesses the community called by Him as His body." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 682. Again, note that this social /relational but also something of an official declaration / affirmation.

a church that acknowledges Jesus is its Lord. Barth stresses this is not just the church's ancient roots, its heritage, but its present reality.

Another way that "confessing church" has been misunderstood is to wholly associate it with reading aloud certain theological creeds such as the Westminister *Confession* or the Barmen *Declaration*. A non-Christian would probably get the impression that "confessing" a creed in a worship gathering is an exercise in wishful thinking, of denial, of brainwashing congregants through chanting a ritual, of repeating a pledge. Barth does want the church to declare its allegiance to Jesus but Barth's desire for a "confessing church" does not mean a ritualized, reciting, chanting, religious, theological, responsive reading, creedal, pledging church. When Barth says a church must be confessing, he is not saying that it is of utmost importance that a church recites a confession in its gatherings.

When explaining what he means by "confession," he begins with a very simple statement. For Barth, "a confession" is what happens when two or three gather in his name (Matt 18:20). We see his in I/2 and much later in IV/2. I/2: "Therefore two or three must be gathered together—with some order and willingly and publicly—if what is said is to be a confession."[267] IV/2: "First, where two or three are gathered in His name, they

[267] Ibid., I/2, 637.

speak with and to one another in human words."[268] Confession involves talking with one another! But of course it is much more than that. God speaks to them and then they speak back to him and to one another. "They hear Him together as the Word of God addressed to them, and they cannot do this without making their common human response. But they also owe this response to one another: for the mutual ratification and confirmation, consolation, correction and renewal of their knowledge and faith and love and hope."[269] Note the dynamism at the end of that sentence. This is not merely reciting a confession—this is figuratively writing a confession each time the gathering takes place. When Barth talks about "confessing" (acknowledging Jesus), he is primarily referring to what happens in the church's worship service gathering.[270] Yes, "confession" (acknowledging Jesus) occurs in informal conversations among Christians[271] and even with outsiders.[272] But this "confession" (acknowledging Jesus) crucially occurs when the

[268] Ibid., IV/2, 699.
[269] Ibid., IV/2, 700.
[270] *Gottesdienst* is translated literally and not particularly helpfully in the *Church Dogmatics* as "the divine service." In English, no one calls a church's worship or worship service or gathering: "the divine service." In English, "the divine service" sounds like "service" or "ministry" which would be the action that a servant does: *Dienst* = service = Greek διακονία – see 1 Cor 12:5 or Eph 4:12. Moderns translations in German and English translate the Greek λατρεία in Romans 9:4; Romans 12:1; Heb 9:1 as *Gottesdienst* (New Geneva translation (NGU-DE)) or "worship" (NIV).
[271] "in private, or in the accidental, local and optional encounters in which Christians may speak with and to one another. They can and may and should make it [confession] in this way too." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 700.
[272] "to confess Him before all men" ibid., IV/3.2, 681. "Woe to it [the church] if it abandons instead of actualising this relation, if it does not confess before men what it specifically may know among them, if for the many and good reasons which it may adduce it neglects the men of the world in the sense already described!" Ibid., IV/3.2, 826-827.

Christian community gathers. Barth says this confession (acknowledging Jesus)—interacting with Jesus—hearing from Jesus—occurs to some extent in the recital of a creed and the singing but most importanly in the interaction with Scripture (that is, the preaching portion) of the worship service.[273] To repeat, the "confession" does not occur so much in the Prayer of Confession or the reading of a Confession but in the preaching experience. So when Barth says most of all he thinks the church should be a confessing church, he is saying it needs to be a church that takes seriously the sermon time.[274] It may not be great quality ("and when is not the case? [that] it sets itself in the wrong with its human speaking and hearing"[275]] but the intentionality to "hear Him together"[276] is the most crucial aspect of being a church.[277] It is almost as if the carving out of time to

[273] "This common response in the common hearing of the Word of God, the confession commonly spoken and received in the renewal of the common knowledge, is the first element in the public worship of Christians. It may include the common recitation of a creed. It will certainly involve singing. But it will take place decisively in free witness, bound only to its object, as the Word of God is proclaimed and published and taught and preached and heard by the community according to the commission of its Lord." Ibid., IV/2, 700.

[274] Barth is not however saying this portion of the worship gathering might not have some interaction to it—thinking of small churches like house churches and 1 Cor 14:26 where "each of you has" something to contribute.

[275] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 700.

[276] Ibid.

[277] Barth is drawing on "confession" of Jesus as what constitutes a church based on Matt 18:20's description of Jesus being present when two or three are gathered in his name. "As the community gathers, and there is not merely speech but confession in this gathering, it is already constituted." Ibid., IV/2, 700-701. "'Where two or three συνηγμένοι (are gathered, or constituted a synagogue) εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα [in my name] (in the sphere of the revelation and knowledge and therefore the confession of His name, in the act of salvation which has taken place in His person and work, and in the revelation of salvation present in Him), there am I in the midst of them' (Mt. 18:20)." Ibid., IV/3.2, 791.

hear from Scripture is itself a public acknowledgement / affirmation / declaration / admission that Jesus is worth hearing.[278]

So, rather than the church being a "reciting church," Barth's desire for a "confessing church" is a church that listens to Jesus in the present. This is why Barth said that he prefers "confessing church" to "church-of-a-confession."[279] It must be done continually not only in the church but in the world. This has to do with Barth's strange language about the "event." Not past reciting of confessions but confessing (that is, speaking and hearing God in the present). This is the hermeneutics of interpreting who Jesus is in the here and now today.[280] This demands knowing who Jesus was and is as depicted in Scripture and then listening to God speak about how this relates to the present.

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[278] "their speaking in the community . . . is not a matter of the private and optional exchange of human convictions and opinions, but of the common utterance of the confession" ibid., IV/2, 703.

[279] Barth prefers *bekennende Kirche* (A confessing church) to the compound noun: *Bekenntniskirche* (Confessional Church or A-Church-of-a-Confession) "because a 'Confession' is on paper, but 'confessing' is an [ongoing] action!" Barth, "16 Gespräch mit Methodistenpredigern (16.5.1961)," 201-202.

[280] Barth is interested in God "here and now." Barth, *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger*. For Barth "confessing" (acknowledging Jesus) means listening for him in Scripture so that the walls separating Scripture from the present "become transparent." Barth writes about his hermeneutical method in his *Epistle to the Romans*. "By genuine understanding and interpretation I mean that creative energy which Luther exercised with intuitive certainty in his exegesis: which underlies the systematic interpretation of Calvin; and which is at least attempted by such modern writers as Hofmann. J. T. Beck, Godet, and Schlatter. For example, place the work of Jülicher side by side with that of Calvin: how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter, until a distinction between yesterday and to-day becomes impossible. If a man persuades himself that Calvin's method can be dismissed with the old-fashioned motto, "The Compulsion of Inspiration', he betrays himself as one who has never worked upon the interpretation of Scripture." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 7-8.

Barth was himself part of the what historians call "The Confessing Church" who spoke up notably in the Barmen Declaration that Barth drafted in 1934. The Nazi Party had begun to control the German national Lutheran Church led by the "German Christians" in the 1930's. The Confessing Church took a public stand that the church could not teach Nazi ideology. That is not who Jesus is. Barth does not mean that he thinks all churches need to be "confessing churches" in the sense of standing up to overreaching political regimes (though that may sometimes be the case) but rather that they need to hear God's voice through Scripture in whatever situation they are facing in the present. So does Barth want to see a Bible church, a Scriptural church, a preaching church, a sermon-heavy church? Perhaps but he is trying to emphasize in "confessing" the dynamism, that it is a church that applies Scripture and hears Jesus in the present via the Scripture. So is it an application-oriented church? In a sense, yes. Like the Confessing Church with Nazism, the "acknowledging Jesus" church hears Jesus in the midst of reality. It hears him despite the fantasy and confusion of its surroundings. In a world of deceit and evasion, its response to what Jesus is saying to them through the Scriptures is forthright and candid. By listening to Jesus, it can be a transparent church, a public church, a church that speaks up when the emperor has no clothes, a courageous church,

a faith-full church, a church that traffics in reality.[281] We say all of this to emphasize that Barth does not have in mind just teaching Bible stories or reciting confessions of the past but the church's listening to Jesus' voice in the present.

So Barth said that he wants to see a confessing church and a missionary church. There is overlap between the two terms as Barth explains that the church is to confess (acknowledge Jesus) not just to insiders but also to outsiders.[282] "To confess Him is its business . . . Hence the community called and built up by this One can confess Him only as it confesses to the world, to men, and to all men."[283]

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[281] There is a famous leadership saying by Max Depree that "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 11. Another is similar from Jim Collins: "Confront the brutal facts." Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (Boulder, CO: J. Collins, 2005), 65. This is what the church is to do. If Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, sin and death can be acknowledged aloud but also hope can be acknowledged aloud. "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead." Lesslie Newbigin, *Living Hope in a Changing World* (London: Alpha International, 2003), 46. The Confessing Church at its best did these things, though the Confessing Church often did not do these things.

[282] "Why does the community have to be the **confessing** community, confessing Jesus Christ, not only *intra muros* [inside its walls] but to all men without distinction (Mt. 10:32)? . . . [because] to be His community, it has no option but to reach out beyond its own circle and to confess Him to all men." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 789. "Warum muß die Gemeinde **bekennende**, zu Jesus Christus sich bekennende, und zwar nach Matth. 10, 32 nicht etwa bloß intra muros, sondern unterschiedslos vor allen Menschen zu ihm sich bekennende Gemeinde sein? . . . weil ihr also, um seine Gemeinde zu sein, gar nichts übrig bleibt, als sich über ihren eigenen Kreis hinaus eben allen anderen Menschen gegenüber zu ihm zu bekennen." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 903. Bold is in original German. Similarly, witness goes inside and outside the church walls. "Its witness must also be addressed to its own members and continually made perceptible to them. None of the Christians united in it so shares in its knowledge and confession that he does not need every day to be enlightened and awakened afresh to this participation, and therefore nourished, comforted and admonished as a living Christian. The same Word which the community has to attest to the world will and must be continually heard afresh by it to its own constant gathering, upbuilding and sending." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 832.

[283] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 788-789.

Hence, Barth does not praise Free Church figures Moravian communities founder Count Zinzendorf, Baptist missionary William Carey, and Methodism founder John Wesley for their resistance to the state but instead for their missionary passion.[284] To summarize, in 1962 Barth expresses his appreciation for the social congregational warmth in Free Churches but he has not altered his stance from the mature ecclesiology in the *Church Dogmatics* (the last of which IV/3.2 was composed in 1959) that what is most important is that the church is a confessing and missionary church—not whether it is a State Church or Free Church (*Freikirche*).[285]

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[284] "Yet the true genius of this Evangelical awakening was not that of Francke and Pietism in the narrower sense, but of Count Zinzendorf and his community. By the time of his death, their missionary achievement surpassed everything previously done by Protestantism for the proclamation of the Gospel among the heathen, and in proportion to its membership his community is still unrivalled in this field . . . And as he was able to implant it in others, his community . . . became in some sense radically and essentially a missionary Church to a degree not yet reached or excelled by any other in the Evangelical sphere . . . the last decade saw the foundation in England of three missionary societies in the true modern sense. Again the first and decisive impulse came from a non-theologian, the cobbler and later Baptist preacher, William Carey (1761-1834) . . . What we wish to emphasise at the moment is simply that it was not in the "good old days" of classical Protestantism, but in the time of its regrettable, or not so regrettable, dissolution, i.e., in the 19th century, which was also the time when modern secularism reached its supreme and most conscious maturity, that Evangelical Christianity of all streams could not and would not stop at the position of the Reformers, but saw and accepted with remarkable unanimity its task as a Church of the living and even geographically outreaching Word, awakening and bestirring itself, even if only in the words and actions and prayers of free associations of innumerable individual Christians, to the serious realisation and fulfilment of its mission to the heathen . . . then in the 18th century to John Wesley, whose violent onslaught on a Christianity which was baptised yet in no way converted, but rather in need of conversion, so deeply influenced the moral life of his country that we may not unjustly speak of 'England before and after Wesley.'" ibid., IV/3.1, 25-27.

[285] Quoted earlier above at the beginning of this sub-section. Ibid., IV/3.2, 742. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 849.

(4) The Believers' Church: Barth criticizes nominal Christians but rejects Mennonite separating the wheat from the tares

As early as *Church Dogmatics* I/2, written in 1938, one can see Barth's recognition of the problems that resulted "after Constantine" from the "*Corpus Christianum* [Christian society] . . . unity of church and state."[286] Under Christendom, Barth says the church largely failed to show itself different from the world.[287] There were Christians who were faithful but they had to resist some aspects of what "the Church" meant. "revelation shone out . . . in the Church only against the Church (i.e., against the tendency which dominated the Church, against the proud but treacherous idea of the *corpus christianum* [Christian society])."[288] But Barth does not generally support separation for the sake of purity. He acknowledges that there are certainly baptized "Christians" who are "nominal" (in name only) Christians. But Barth does not support a church trying to sort through and determine the real from the superficial.

> As we see from the parable in Mt. 13:24f., there may be tares among the wheat, or from that in Mt. 13:47f there may be bad fish amongst those which come into the net. Who knows how many tares? Who knows how many bad fish?[289]

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[286] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 334. Cf. Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 178-179.
[287] "To what extent could heathen and Jews find in the mediæval Church a power which was genuinely different, a novel and unfamiliar power, not the power which men can always demonstrate, but the power of God which humbles and therefore blesses all men, the power of the Gospel? To what extent could the Church confront the Islam which oppressed it in South and East as something which was really original?" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 334.
[288] Ibid., I/2, 335, Cf. 334.
[289] Ibid., IV/1, 697.

Both Barth and Yoder point out that Martin Luther considered the idea that one can only reasonably expect a small number of a "church" to be devout—that the best hope is to have a "small group" who will be intentionally pursuing discipleship. But Luther did not follow through with implementing this *ecclesiola in ekklesia* (church within a church) approach.[290]

Yoder and Barth both reject the *ecclesiola in ekklesia* concept but they do so for different reasons. Barth does not think a church should make a major effort to try to determine who are the real Christians and who are not—only God knows. Barth's concern is that the effect of such sorting is division when instead Christians should be gathered as one around the Lord's Supper in a demonstration of unity (1 Cor 11:18-20).[291] In contrast, Yoder rejects the *ecclesiola in ekklesia* for a different reason—because Mennonites think the nominal Christians are not within the church at all. A Mennonite thinks a Christian who is not a disciple should not be mixed in with the rest of the Christian community for a little yeast spoils the whole batch of unleavened bread (1 Cor 5:6-8). Barth rejects the search for the inner circle of truly committed Christians—the

[290] "We are obviously thrown back entirely on faith even if in a supposed awareness of the mixed character of the Church union we try to seek out an 'inner circle' of true believers or to make common cause with certain others as *sancta ecclesiola in ekklesia* [holy church-within-the-Church]. It is evident that Luther did occasionally toy with this idea. But fortunately he neither developed it systematically nor attempted to apply it in practice. For who is to decide and who is able to decide who belongs or does not belong to this *ecclesiola*? [church-within-the-Church]" ibid., IV/1, 698. Cf. John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint, Herald Press), 24, 25, 78, 82.
[291] "the idea of an *ecclesiola in ekklesia*, of a special *communio* within the one [church], always involves either openly or tacitly an abandonment or relativisation of the one [church]." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 708.

ecclesiola; whereas Yoder is rejecting the idea that many nominal Christians should be permitted in the *ekklesia*.

Whereas Yoder regularly says that "voluntary membership"[292] or "voluntary adult membership"[293] is a key characteristic of the "free church," Barth wants to emphasize that God initiates and people receive (John 1:12). "This history begins with a voluntary decision of God and continues in a corresponding voluntary decision of man."[294] The church are those who have received God, not those who have chosen God. For Rudolph Sohm and Emil Brunner "the community is the spiritual and voluntary Church" but Barth says the problem with that is Christ becomes secondary to human choice. "Christ is a predicate of the Christian community, and not vice versa."[295]

Barth criticizes the Mennonite use of the term Believers' Church or *Gemeinde der Gläubigen* ("community or congregation of believers"). The Mennonites use the phrase to emphasize that everyone who attends is a voluntary believer, not just someone who is a nominal Christian because they were baptized as an infant. But Barth is put off that the phrase implies that the church is the possession of or originates from believers. Barth

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[292] Yoder, "The Restitution of the Church: An Alternative Perspective on Christian History," 135-137.
[293] Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," 279.
[294] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 28-29.
[295] Ibid., IV/2, 679.

says, “That is nowhere in the New Testament . . . No, it is the church of Jesus Christ” and he cites Rom. 16:16 “All the churches of Christ send greetings.”[296]

The point is that though Barth is aware of the dangers of Christendom, he does not support the solution Yoder is inclined towards—the separating out of real Christians from nominal Christians.

(5) Biblicism: Barth does not espouse biblicist congregational hermeneutic to the extent that Yoder wishes

Yoder makes the case that Barth interprets the Bible similarly to how a Mennonite would. The local congregation reads the Scriptures together—interpreting them in a mostly literal way without an authoritative magisterium or founder—with the intent to obey them. Yoder is correct to point out that in comparison to a Roman Catholic, Barth is quite congregationalist and biblicist. We have seen how Erik Peterson was appalled by what he perceived to be Barth’s biblicist dismissal of tradition. But it is not just “free churches” or Mennonites that are more congregational and biblicist than a Roman Catholic, it is all Protestants. For a Protestant, Barth has significant reservations about congregationalist and biblicist approaches—wanting to strengthen them with systematic theology and tradition.

[296] My translation of: “Gemeinde der Gläubigen. . . Das steht nirgends im Neuen Testament . . . Nein, Gemeinde *Jesu Christi*.” Barth, "Gespräch mit den Mennoniten (13.12.1967)," 430.

Yoder writes correctly that Barth neither defended the Bible to secular critics nor critiqued its historicity but instead wanted to see it utilized well by Christians. He rejected both a "high scholastic vision of the reading of Scripture which dominated the Protestant universities from the late sixteenth century to the late nineteenth, which is still with us in fundamentalism" and the "dominant university system approach."[297] Instead he embraced a "postmodern" or "free-church approach to the Scriptures."[298] This involved a "straightforward reading of canonical texts" in which "the congregation created by the message they read together" is the interpreter.[299]

In another essay Yoder writes that Barth was moving in the right direction in two ways. "I choose to take as the most reliable key the *movement* in Barth's thought."[300] First, Barth was beginning to embrace "careful theologizing"—applying the Bible to contemporary life.[301] Yoder is hopeful because "what Barth does everywhere else in his theology, and what he is doing most of the time in his ethics" is approaching God's speaking "by understanding Christ more profoundly, reading the Bible more adequately, putting casuistic questions more precisely, and sifting Christian traditions more critically."[302] Second, Barth was beginning to emphasize "committed

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[297] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 180.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 88.
[301] Ibid., 87.
[302] Ibid. More is said under below about Yoder's opinion that casuistry is inevitable.

churchmanship" (the assumption that there is no substitute for vigorous discernment processes within the church for learning the will of God). When writing on the church, Yoder says Barth comes close to embracing the "Free Church thesis that the will of God becomes known in the gathered congregation, when proclamation and the present challenge meet in concrete processes of communication, mutual correction, conviction, and commitment."[303] Yoder says this "free church" appreciation for churchly communal discernment was partly a result of Barth "spelling out the implications of his theology of preaching."[304]

Yoder is largely correct in characterizing Barth's use of the Bible this way. Barth's theology of preaching has to do with the "explicit proclamation [*Verkündigung*] of the Gospel in the assembly of the community [*Gemeinde*], in the midst of divine service [*Gottesdienste*, i.e. worship], where it is also heard directly or indirectly by the world."[305] In other words, Barth affirms the practice of expounding the Scriptures in a congregational worship service.

Where Yoder is not correct is in thinking that this use of the Bible is "free church" or a "Mennonite" approach. Not only is this standard practice for Protestants, as Barth argued in responding to Erik Peterson, this is even what Roman Catholic theologians

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[303] Ibid., 87-88.
[304] Ibid., 96.
[305] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 867. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 994.

do.[306] Barth is critical of biblicist or congregationalist approaches which ignore the Christian tradition and careful thought. Though the teaching in the congregation's gathering is crucial, that does not mean it is to be spontaneous or only reflected upon in the congregational meeting. This churchly proclamation [*Kirchliche Verkündigung*] is also what the discipline of dogmatics tries to improve. "Inasmuch as it [churchly proclamation] is a human word . . . it is the material of dogmatics."[307] Barth's wariness of biblicist and congregationalist approaches can be seen in his harsh criticism of Mennonite forefather Conrad Grebel.

Barth is highly critical of Conrad Grebel despite superficial parallels between Grebel and Barth as fellow Swiss biblicist baptist rebels

Studying Conrad Grebel in his doctoral work, it is easy to see how Yoder might have thought that Barth was following a similar path. As Grebel and his group were expelled from Zurich, they stressed that the congregation obediently listen to the Spirit through the Scriptures regardless of the pressures of the state and in so doing they came to reject infant baptism.[308] Similarly, Barth was expelled from Germany by the Nazi

[306] For both Catholics and Protestants, "*Theology* is the continuing service to God's revelation, performed by specific men, in the form of conceptual thinking in a specific here and now." Barth, "Church and Theology," 289.
[307] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 47. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 994.
[308] "The self-confidence of the Grebel group arose out of their Bible studies." Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, 221.

authorities. He too urged his students to "exegesis, exegesis, and yet more exegesis."[309] Barth too rejected infant baptism. So it is tempting to see in Barth's banishment from Germany in 1934 by the Nazis for his theological conviction as an echo of Grebel's exile from Zurich by Ulrich Zwingli's state church.

But Barth grew up in the Swiss Reformed Church founded by Zwingli and though he had little positive to say about Zwingli, he had even less positive to say about Grebel. In 1922 in his second year as a professor, Barth lectured on the life of Zwingli and rehearsed the events surrounding Grebel being expelled from Zurich.[310] Barth was

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[309] Karl Barth, *Das Evangelium in der Gegenwart*, Theologische Existenz heute vol. 25 (München: C. Kaiser, 1935), 16-17. Busch translation: "The day before [10 February 1935], he had said his formal farewell to his Bonn pupils at a Bible study group for students at Bad Godesberg. He gave an interpretation of Psalm 119.67 and James 4.6 and ended with the words: 'We have been studying cheerfully and seriously. As far as I was concerned it could have continued that way, and I had already resigned myself to having my grave here by the Rhine! I had plans for the future with other colleagues who are either no longer here or have been away for a long time--but there has been a frost on our spring night! And now the end has come. So listen to my last piece of advice: exegesis, exegesis and yet more exegesis! Keep to the Word, to the scripture that has been given us.'" Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 259. Burnett translation:
"Dear friends, who have listened to me, the main thing you have heard from me is dogmatics. Dogmatics is a high and steep art. I do not want to deny that, humanly as well, I strive after it with a certain love and desire. And I dare say that I have noticed that many of you have been excited about this subject matter as well. If this now for the moment has come to an end, accept this as a signal for you to temporarily begin anew your studies at a different place. Take now my last piece of advice: Exegesis, Exegesis, and once more, Exegesis! If I have become a dogmatician, it is because I long before have endeavored to carry on exegesis. Let the systematic art, which can also make one mad, rest a little and hold on to the Word, to the Scriptures, which is given to us and become perhaps less systematic and more biblical theologians. For then the systematic and dogmatic tasks will certainly be taken care of as well. That is what I wanted to say to you and in this way I wish to bid you farewell.
I was glad to be among you. I enjoyed working with you, and will fondly remember the time. In view of this, but much more in view of the Word which called us and held us together and which we once again have heard in this hour I would now like to conclude very encouragingly with the word Jonathan said to David: 'And as for the matter about which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me for ever.'" Burnett, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period*, 30.
[310] Barth, *Die Theologie Zwinglis, 1922/1923: Vorlesung Göttingen Wintersemester 1922/1923 (GA II.40)*, 235-250.

generally sympathetic with Zwingli's handling of the situation. He writes, "When one considers what happened that year in other places, it is something quite extraordinary that all in all the Council of Zurich got by with a single execution."[311]

Barth concludes that there are good reasons why Grebel's Anabaptists did not flourish.

> If the trees of the Anabaptists did not grow near as tall as other trees, the reason lay (1) in their own confusion and arrogance, (2) in the spiritual superiority of what they were up against in the new Protestant church and theology—for the Anabaptists have never produced a superb leader—and (3) last but not least, the healthy moderateness of the average person, who now after the experience of thousands of enthusiasts of all kinds that have cracked after a short distance, probably instinctively senses that it is safer to fall like a cat on all four feet.[312]

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[311] Original German: "Wenn man bedenkt, wie es in jenem Jahr an anderen Orten zugegangen ist, so ist es doch etwas ganz Außerordentliches, daß der Rat von Zürich damals Alles in Allem mit einer einzigen Hinrichtung ausgekommen ist." Ibid., 242. And Barth expands on his thinking a few pages later. "It has to be noted that what in Zurich precipitated the four death sentences was more police than actually religious in nature. It [George Blaurock's secret return after banishment] was a threat to the very foundations of government and given that difficult position, the government defended its own existence. Given the many Anabaptist proceedings, which occurred before the Zurich courts, and especially in view of the approach that was taken in the Empire and in Switzerland in the Catholic locations, four death sentences are not much." Original German: "Man hat zu beachten, daß die in Zürich gefällten vier Todesurteile mehr polizeilicher als eigentlich religiöser Natur waren; es war ein in seinen Grundlagen bedrohtes Staatswesen, das sich, auch sonst in schwieriger Lage befindlich, um seine Existenz wehrte. Angesichts der vielen Täuferprozesse, zu denen es vor den Zürcher Gerichten kam, und erst recht angesichts des Vorgehens, das im Reich und in der Schweiz von den katholischen Orten eingeschlagen wurde, sind vier Todesurteile nicht viel." Ibid., 246.

[312] Original German: "Wenn die Bäume der Täufer so wenig in den Himmel wuchsen wie andere Bäume, so lag der Grund in ihrer eigenen Verworrenheit und Überheblichkeit, in der geistigen Überlegenheit dessen, was ihnen in der neuen evangelischen Kirche und Theologie schließlich doch gegenüberstand -- denn einen wirklich überlegenen Kopf haben die Täufer ihrerseits nicht hervorgebracht --, und nicht zuletzt in der gesunden Mittelmäßigkeit des Durchschnittsmenschen, der sich nun einmal nach der Erfahrung von Jahrtausenden von Enthusiasten jeder Art wohl beunruhigen und eine Strecke weit emporreißen läßt, um dann umso sicherer wieder auf seine vier Füße zurückzufallen." Ibid., 247.

In other words, the majority of the people were right to reject Grebel's confused theology and arrogant leadership.

> Conrad Grebel and Balthasar Hubmayer put forward a whole program for the reform of the Last Supper against Zwingli. Zwingli struggled to defend himself because it was a barriage of legal trifles—leavened or unleavened bread, water in the wine, self-communication, the time of evening—which already heralded the whole narrow sectarian spirit with which these people afterwards caused so much unnecessary anxiety.[313]

Barth dismisses Grebel for his excesses.

> Only now, the first re-baptisms, or what their followers called "faith baptisms," of adults were administered, first by Grebel of George Blaurock, and then by Blaurock of fifteen others, believing that the person who confesses their sin has already entered by the promised grace the new life of regeneration and is incapable of sinning henceforth.[314]

As radical as Barth's second edition of his commentary on Romans published in 1921, Barth here in 1922 is strikingly unsympathetic with Grebel's theological experiments, which Barth finds confused and arrogant rather than prescient. By 1943, Barth had come to publicly question infant baptism, but does not mention Grebel.[315]

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[313] Original German: "Konrad Grebel und Balthasar Hubmayer ein ganzes Programm zur Reform des Abendmahls vorbrachten, dem gegenüber Zwingli Mühe hatte, das, worum es ihm ging, zu verteidigen; denn es war ein Schwall von gesetzlichen Kleinigkeiten -- gesäuertes oder ungesäuertes Brot, Wasser im Wein, Selbstkommunikation, Abendzeit --, in dem sich bereits der ganze enge Sektierergeist ankündigte, mit dem diese Leute nachher so viel unnütze Unruhe verursachten." Ibid., 182.

[314] Original German: "Nun erst wurden die ersten Wiedertaufen oder, wie ihre Anhänger sagten: Glaubenstaufen Erwachsener vollzogen, zuerst von Grebel an jenem Georg Blaurock, dann von diesem an 15 Anderen, in der Meinung, daß die Betreffenden kraft des dabei abgelegten Sündenbekenntnisses und der ihnen zugesagten Gnade nun eingetreten seien in das neue Leben der Wiedergeburt und unfähig, fernerhin zu sündigen." Ibid., 238, Cf. 235.

[315] Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans., Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948), 40-41. In this work, Barth criticizes the positions of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Schleiermacher but does not cite any historic examples of those who rejected infant baptism.

Again, Yoder is correct to praise Barth for emphasizing that Scripture is to be read and obeyed by the congregation. But this is standard ecumenical practice—not just a "free church" one. And when Barth is presented with Grebel's biblicism and congregationalism, he rejects it for its "confusion and arrogance"—its flouting of the reflection on Christian tradition that is done in historical and systematic theology.

(6) Baptistic: Barth rejects infant baptism but that does not make him Baptist, Anabaptist, or free church.

Yoder rightly points out that Barth's rejection of infant baptism in IV/4 in 1967 is not bizarre or unprecedented. Rather, many Christian traditions have arrived at this conclusion. Yoder writes, "Should any have failed to note this free church tendency as general teaching in Barth's ecclesiology, none can miss his evident movement with regard to baptism."[316] "When Karl Barth challenged infant baptism and the church's compact with western nationalism, he was moving toward a free-church vision."[317] But Yoder is wrong to suggest that there is a coherent "free-church vision" when not all free churches such as the Moravians reject infant baptism. It is most accurate to say Barth rejects "infant baptism" and affirms conscious or intentional or believer's baptism. Nor is it accurate based on this one position to call Barth "Baptist" since "Baptist"

[316] Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 173.
[317] John Howard Yoder, "Three Unfinished Pilgrimages," in *Faith and Freedom: Christian Ethics in a Pluralist Culture*, ed. David Neville and Philip Matthews (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2003), 135. Cf. Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 166-171.

denominations have some sort of common history related to the Church of England rather than merely sharing this one tenet. Nor are all people who reject infant baptism "Anabaptists" since that describes numerous groups of radicals from the 1520's to the 1540's who rejected infant baptism.[318] Barth is more like the Wesleyan Church which inherited infant baptism from its Methodist forebearers but has since rejected it—they are not particularly "Baptist," "Anabaptist," or explicitly "free church."

Yoder is also correct that Barth's theological rationale for rejecting infant baptism has to do with the importance of Christian communities listening to and responding to Scripture. Yoder writes that Barth rejected "the normativeness of infant baptism" because of the importance of the "baptizand's capacity to be a receiver of the Word."[319] Yoder connects Barth's theology of preaching with his rejection of infant baptism. Barth's vision of the church listening involves a "continuing concern with what the preaching of the Word of God means to the hearer (cf. his simultaneous movement toward the rejection of infant baptism)."[320] Barth's concern is that church proclamation be not only delivered by a preacher but also appropriated by those hearing.

> From a human standpoint the preservation of the Church depends, therefore, on the fact that Scripture is read, assimilated, expounded and applied in the Church,

[318] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 164.
[319] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 181.
[320] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 96.

> that this happens tirelessly and repeatedly, that the whole way of the Church consists in its striving to hear this concrete witness.[321]

There is a saying about teaching: a teacher has not taught unless students have learned. Recall the Apostle Paul's criticism of the Corinthians church for speaking in tongues but no one being able to understand what they are saying. "But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor 14:19—see all of chapter 14). Barth's major problem with infant baptism is that it depicts the wrong message: that God's action does not call for a response.

> God's action among and on them awakens and demands their own action, including baptism, as the human response thereto . . . Our objection to the sacramental interpretation of baptism is directed against this conjuring away of the free man whom God liberates and summons to his own free and responsible action.[322]

Barth emphasizes that baptism (following the pattern of Jesus' baptism) is an obedient response to God.

Of course defenders of infant baptism would say that there are indeed respondents: the parents and church respond in the short term and the child will eventually confirm the baptism. The emphasis in infant baptism is God's grace rather than merit since an infant can do little to earn this grace. But Barth worries that the result of infant baptism is nations of nominal Christians who feel little need to respond. This emphasis on human agency is hard for some people to reconcile with the "dialectical"

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[321] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 106.
[322] Ibid.

author of the *Epistle to the Romans* who stressed that God is God, and humans are not.[323] But recall again the World Wars and Europe's many nominal Christians who felt little need to respond to God. For many, their infant baptisms had not led to a sense of gratitude but rather to taking God for granted. As in Jesus' case, Barth thought baptism should launch people into action.

D. Stephen Long argues that Barth is not moving consciously toward identifying with the Mennonites, Baptists, or "free churches" but was instead goaded to change his view of the sacraments by Roman Catholic Hans urs Von Balthasar.

> John Howard Yoder argued Barth moved toward a free church ecclesiology in his later *Dogmatics*, but this judgment is incorrect. Barth made a similar argument decades earlier; it was not something he came to late in life. What is intriguing about this later argument was the influence Balthasar had on it, which was most likely not Balthasar's intended result.[324]

Long explains that in 1941 Balthasar pointed out that Reformed Protestants were inconsistent for criticizing the Roman Catholic church regarding the sacraments when they did not require conscious reception of the sacrament in their practice of infant baptism. "His argument highlighted how inconsistent Reformed practice and theology were. It allowed infant baptism but denied implicit faith. This inconsistency was not lost

[323] "The disease from which the Church suffers is that God is God." Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 342 Cf. 11, 63, 83, 88, 346, 362, 364, 403, 411.
[324] Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 262.

on Barth."[325] Two years later in 1943, Barth declares that infant baptism is flawed.[326] Note again Barth is not admiring Mennonites or Baptists or "free churches" but rather sees a theological logical contradiction in infant baptism that he struggles with and eventually clarifies.

Yoder calls Barth's rejection of infant baptism a retrieval of "the indispensable voluntariness of membership in the confessing community."[327] "Believer's baptism acts out the fact that the faith community is surrounded by a wider world whose faith cannot be presupposed."[328] But Yoder is wrong to depict the importance of the individual owning their faith as a uniquely "free church" characteristic. Individuals listening to and obeying the Scriptures as part of a congregation is an accepted ecumenical practice across the spectrum of Christian traditions. All denominations would decry a magical understanding of baptism which makes further response by the individual superfluous and optional. Some church traditions might find the term "voluntary" to problematically downplay God's primary agency but all church traditions would want individuals to appropriate Jesus' way as their own.

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[325] Ibid., 254.
[326] Infant baptism "is not correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to the proper order, and therefore it is necessarily[:] clouded baptism. It must and ought not to be repeated." Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, 40-41.
[327] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 182.
[328] Ibid., 187.

Barth's distances himself from the "magical" concept of "sacrament" (explicitly in IV/2 and more subtly earlier).[329] In this way Barth is retrieving to some extent Zwingli's concerns about sacramentalism before the Reformed Church's "backward step . . . in the direction of Calvin's cognitive sacramentalism."[330] But Barth hastens to add that he is trying to articulate the non-sacramental position better than Zwingli ever did: "to understand Zwingli better than he understood himself or could make himself understood."[331] Recall Barth praises Zwingli for opposing Grebel. And even when Barth comes to reject infant baptism, Barth praises Zwingli's non-sacramental view and not Grebel's rejection of infant baptism.

Furthermore, Barth does not take what a Mennonite might think would be the next logical steps of gathering only those who have been baptized as adults as the real

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[329] Barth writes, "it will perhaps have been noted in [*Church Dogmatics]* Volumes II and III that I made less and less use—and finally none at all—of the general term 'sacrament,' which was so confidently bandied about in Volume I." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, xi. Yoder does not share the aspect of Barth's ecclesiology which concerns Reinhardt Hütter and Stanley Hauerwas most—Barth's insistence on strictly separating the assumption of the Spirit working and church practices. Yoder does not follow Barth's actualism which may suggest that God's acting is scarce and incomprehensible. But Yoder does not think this fatally flaws Barth's ecclesiology. In some ways, he and Barth are cobelligerents against the rigid understanding of the Spirit's work in the church and the sacraments. Barth is wary of identifying definitively God's action with any place or time—knowing the human proclivity to attribute one's own actions to God. Yoder, on the other hand, maintains that where two or more are gathered in Christ's name, the Spirit of Christ will be there with. Both Barth and Yoder, therefore, come together in agreeing that God is not confined to working in traditional catholic sacraments. They think Catholics have imagined how the Spirit moves too narrowly as if there are only seven sacraments where the Spirit will likely move. And these seven sacraments are connected to hierarchical priestly authority. Whereas Barth declines to use the phrase "sacrament," Yoder redefines the traditional catholic concept to apply it more broadly to many things Christians are commanded to do in the Scriptures; the idea being if they are obedient to Jesus, they may be confident that God's Spirit is working in them and through them—because He promised to be.

[330] Ibid., IV/4, 130.

[331] Ibid.

church. As mentioned above, Barth thinks that the Christians are not called to sift the wheat from the tares. Barth thinks many like himself who have been baptized as infants do indeed respond to God in gratitude. They need not have to prove this to the satisfaction of other Christians by being re-baptized in order to be able to be part of the Christian community.

As mentioned above, apart from his theological arguments, Barth is consistently angered by what he perceives to be the effects of infant baptism. In 1943 Barth writes "how long is she [the Church] prepared to be guilty of the occasioning of this wounding and weakening through a baptismal practice which is, from this standpoint, arbitrary and despotic?"[332] Barth is especially appalled by the effects in "Christian" nations where virtually everyone baptizes their infants. In 1951, Barth is frustrated with "the absurd result that in this way (*via* infant baptism) whole populations of whole countries have automatically been made and can automatically be made the holy community."[333] As Long says, "Like Balthasar, Barth associates infant baptism with Constantine."[334] "In *Sponsa Verbi*, Balthasar argued that the early church had not given adequate reflection on ecclesiology, and this is what accounted for both infant baptism and Constantinianism."[335] Barth quotes Balthasar in calling "infant baptism" "The most

[332] Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, 40-41.
[333] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 696.
[334] Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 258.
[335] Ibid., 257.

momentous of all decisions in Church history" (H. U. von Balthasar, *Sponsa Verbi*, 1961, p. 16)."[336]

However, one can think of situations where Christians are in the minority of a population so infant baptism is less likely to lead to complacency such as Coptic Christians in Egypt. And, on the other side, we can think of situations where the majority of a population experience baptism as adults, such as in the American South in the 1980's, where complacency is a problem. How connected is Barth's argument about infant baptism to Christendom? Would he criticize the persecuted Coptic parents for baptizing their baby? Barth surely would not want the Baptist teen getting baptized just because everyone else is doing it. In other words, the obvious bad effects of "infant baptism" could at least be alleviated by substantive agency. And adult baptism can also be perverted.

In summary, Barth's rejection of infant baptism is a carefully argued biblical and logical argument. The argument however was motivated by Barth's (and Balthasar's) disgust with the church's complacency when everyone in a society is considered already Christian. Barth wants to see a missionary and witnessing church. That is the best characterization of his position—not Baptist, Anabaptist, or free church.

[336] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 164; Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 257.

(7) Exemplary: Barth affirms the church should be exemplary though this is not exclusively a Mennonite approach to the state

It was noted above that in Germany prior to World War I and II, Barth saw the terrible consequences of the "Constantinian" mentality of Christian ethics being nothing more than being a good citizen of a nominally Christian nation.

Barth does not think that the church and the state should operate in the same way. The church has a higher standard. The church should not expect the unbelieving world to have the same standards. There will be aspects of the Christian faith which the state may embrace but a nation's laws will only approximate those of the church.[337] To what extent a "nation" can (even if it wanted to) adopt the church's practices as its own will vary. But Barth's comments here are not as unusual as Yoder makes them out to be.[338]

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[337] Yoder praises Barth for affirming that "the faith community is epistemologically prior to the wider world." Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 185.

[338] Yoder writes that "Barth potentially frees himself from all of these distortions and deformations [of the 'Constantinian' framework] when in 'Christian Community and Civil Community' he lifts out for consideration the question, 'How can I speak to the community which does not live from faith?'" Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 131. Cf. "how the believing community can find a language the wider one can follow is a structurally necessary challenge." Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 187. Yoder says something similar in a later essay: "Far more important, however, in the document was a new understanding of the meaning of the Christian community. The Christian community is those people who confess their faith. Then there must be the recognition of the fact that in the world today there is another community—the civil community—of people who do not confess faith in Jesus and who must be dealt with and spoken to and about in terms of that not confessing." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142. "What matters, however, is the *prior* axiom, unprecedented in the thought of his teachers and contemporaries, whether orthodox or liberal, that there are two quite distinct principles of community, *so that* there must be different structures of community, *so that* there must be different moral and legal languages." Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 172. But even John Calvin strongly emphasizes the differences so the distinguishing itself is not Mennonite. "we do not (as commonly happens)

There is something of a basic ecumenical consensus that the church is to differentiate itself from the state but also be a conscience for the state. There is a much greater difference among Christian traditions about how the church should be a conscience for the state. On the one hand, the basic Mennonite perspective is Christians should restrict themselves to modeling how to behave—perhaps the civil community will notice and be affected and perhaps not. On the other hand, the basic Reformed perspective is Christians should explicitly advocate for the implementation of Christian practices by the civil authorities—believing that it is in the best interest of the population to implement Christian practices. This discussion is not new with Protestantism. A range of options about political approaches were fiercely debated among different Jewish groups in the time of Jesus: Zealots, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc. Even further back, there were different positions among the exiles as depicted in Jeremiah. This particular discussion between Mennonites and the Reformed goes back at least to the (minority population) Swiss Brethren in the Schleitheim Confession (1527) declaring "it does not befit a Christian to be a magistrate;"[339] whereas John Calvin (as part of the majority of the population) in his last chapter of *The Institutes* (1559) characterizes the "Anabaptists" of advocating for the elimination of all civil government because of the

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unwisely mingle these two, which have a completely different nature . . . Christ's spiritual Kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans., Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Book IV, Chapter XX, Section 8, page 1486.

[339] Yoder, *The Schleitheim Confession*, 41.

Swiss Brethren reticence to participate in it.[340] Again, these are emphases but not rigid clear positions: both Mennonites and the Reformed have always thought that the church should be a model to the civil community and give input to government authorities.

It is worth sketching this history and this range of perspectives to see why Yoder as a Mennonite would be delighted to see Barth, of the Swiss Reformed Church, affirming that the church should be a model community before a watching world. Yoder worries that the Reformed approach tends to drift toward the Constantinian error—the church gets drunk on its access to state power and then compromises its own ethics. Instead, Yoder stresses, the church should boldly obey Jesus and let the state be convicted of the church's good example. The church should "let ourselves be led out of the inferiority complex that the theologies of the Reformation imposed."[341] Yoder thinks the church need not feel that its role as an example is insignificant. As we will see however, though Barth stresses the church's role is primarily to be the church (which is the consensus ecumenical theological position), he has no qualms about the church speaking up about societal issues such as the treatment of factory workers and the

[340] "They therefore think that nothing will be safe unless the whole world is reshaped to a new form, where there are neither courts, nor laws, nor magistrates, nor anything which in their opinion restricts their freedom." The footnote reads: "These sentences (1559) evidently refer to the Anabaptists." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter XX, Section 8, page 1486.

[341] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 188. quoting Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church," 64.

nuclear arms race. Barth's position on the church and state do not at all indicate he is becoming Free Church or Anabaptist or Mennonite.

Will Herberg's criticism of Barth's reticence to engage in national politics

Yoder frequently cites "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" which was a lecture given by Barth in German in 1946 and had been published for the first time in English in 1954 in *Against the Stream* and discussed during the *Table Talk* conversations in 1954 with Barth.[342] Yoder was almost surely present for the discussions depicted in *Table Talk*. In 1960, the essay was packaged in another collection of essays entitled *Community, State and Church: Three Essays*, with Will Herberg writing a critical introductory essay.[343] In 1970, in an appendix to *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* entitled "On Trying to Understand Barth: A Critique of Herberg's Interpretation," Yoder responds to criticism of Barth by Herberg.

Herberg was a Jewish social philosopher who was highly influenced by the Reformed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr,[344] and as we will see, Herberg also quotes

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[342] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community." discussed in Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 77-85.

[343] Barth, *Community, State and Church: Three Essays*.

[344] Thomas Oden, a student and friend of Herberg's, describes Herberg extensively. In the 1950's, "The premier teacher in the Drew Graduate School was without doubt social philosopher Will Herberg (1901-1977), the brilliant, diminutive, forceful bearded Russian Jew who had come to teach at Drew in 1955." Thomas C. Oden, *A Change of Heart: a Personal and Theological Memoir* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 133. "Herberg had weighty conversations with Reinhold Niebuhr on theology and seemed to be on the verge of converting to Christianity. Niebuhr urged him to rediscover his Jewish roots by studying Judaica at the Jewish Theological Seminary." Herberg personally had a huge influence on Oden by challenging him. Herberg told Oden, "You will remain theologically uneducated until you study carefully

Reformed theologians Emil Brunner and Charles C. West extensively in his criticism of Barth so it is not surprising that Herberg voices the stereotypical Reformed view that the church should be vocal regarding government policies. Yoder refers to Herberg's critique of Barth in almost every one of his subsequent writings about Barth. This appendix of Yoder's *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* is quite different from the body of the book. In the main body of the book, Yoder was analyzing and criticizing Barth's approach to war and pacifism. For Yoder, it is Barth's hawkish comments during World War II which are a deviation from Barth's normally reliable theological reflection. "Some of the concepts of the wartime period do constitute a deviation from the line which is clear before and after . . . It is then the wartime writings, with their unqualified support of one military cause, which represent a detour from the major growth direction of Barth's social thought."[345] What Yoder means is that during the war, Barth sounds less like a Mennonite—emphasizing the church as example. Barth urged the church in Switzerland to resist Hitler and he himself from 1940-1947 served in the Swiss military service including performing armed guard duty.[346]

In this appendix, Yoder defends Barth against the criticism of Herberg who claims Barth is not militant enough against communism. While Yoder is troubled by

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Athanasius, Augustine, and Aquinas." Ibid., 136. Oden was on Edward E. Blain's dissertation committee. Blain, "Karl Barth and His Critics: A Study in Ecclesiology".

[345] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 99, 100.

[346] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 305-307, 315, 342.

Barth's reticence to consistently embrace pacifism, Herberg is disturbed about Barth's reticence to call the West to arms against the Soviet threat.

By 1960 when this essay by him appeared,[347] Herberg, a former Communist had become an anti-communist traveling speaker.[348] Herberg thinks Barth is at his best in his letters during World War II when he encourages Czech, British, American, and Swiss armed resistance to Hitler but that Barth has lost his social conscience, judgment, and courage after 1945 in refusing to support military force against the Soviet threat as he had against Hitler. Herberg writes that though Barth was courageous during World War II, "Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about Barth's encounter with Communism in the postwar years. It seems an altogether different Barth who is speaking, a Barth who has forgotten everything he had learned and taught the previous fifteen years."[349] Herberg praises Reinhold Niebuhr as someone who rightly summons Christians to militarily resist communism. "Barth's failure to integrate his theology of politics, despite

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[347] Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth."

[348] In the 1920's, Herberg had joined the Communist Party in the United States but in the 1930's American "Communists began to have serious rifts with the rigid Soviet party leadership" and he renounced his communist affiliation in 1939. When Oden met him in the 1950's, Herberg had become "a powerful anticommunist critic, writer, and conservative college circuit lecturer . . . Disillusioned with utopianism drew Herberg toward the classic teaching of Judaism . . . I found him to be intensely loyal to his Jewish tradition while being deeply empathic with his Christian students." Oden, *A Change of Heart: a Personal and Theological Memoir*, 134. "Herberg was constantly out there on the American university lecture trail challenging the Marxist view of history and the fantasies of utopians . . . He loved the role of out-front controversialist interlocuter, and his university audiences loved to see him play it to the hilt. Herberg was the master teacher on the university faculty, influencing generations of graduate students in interreligious dialogue, philosophy, and theology. He passionately communicated the sacred tradition of Scripture that Jews and Christians share together." Ibid., 135.

[349] Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," 55.

the profundity of his insights, makes the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr particularly relevant."[350] In other words, Herberg thinks that Barth as a Christian should lobby the government on what it should do—the typical Reformed approach. Instead, Barth is more interested in urging churches in both the East under Soviet domination and in the West to be great churches, rather than strategizing about how weapons proliferation by the West might lead to deterring communist states.

Yoder is correct that Herberg's "inattentiveness to the inner structure of Barth's thought, and his own high valuation of democratic anticommunism keep Herberg from seeing which is 'the real Karl Barth.'"[351] Barth has not "forgotten" or failed to apply his theology to real politics, as Herberg complains.

Barth embraces the church's "political" responsibility but this political duty is more than a denominational headquarters issuing press releases about the issues of the day. The Christian community indeed has the "duty" to be "the political salt" "in the civil community."[352] But this is first accomplished by studying the Bible together as a church.[353] The vision of God as King and Kingdom is inherently challenging to other

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[350] Ibid., 66. Herberg relies heavily on Charles C. West, *Communism and the Theologians: Study of an Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958).
[351] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 100.
[352] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 46-47.
[353] Barth says preaching (and the corresponding moral formation) is inherently political. "The opportunity that it is offered to fulfill this duty is simply the one that lies nearest to hand: the preaching of the whole gospel of God's grace, which as such is the whole justification of the whole man—including political man." Ibid. Yoder gives this a pacifist spin—contrasting being an example vs. dominating. "The Church will henceforth see herself, not as identical with all society, or as the religious institutions thereof, but as a

power structures.[354] In this way, Barth insists that expounding the Scriptures cannot "be anything but political."[355]

This does not mean that hearing sermons is the totality of a Christian's political duty. Barth's rejects quietism that downplays human agency. Listening to the Word of God should not lead merely to dreamy mysticism but action ("a fire and a hammer") in the "real world."[356]

The church is also "political" in the sense that it is, like any business or non-profit, an organization and thus will have similar characteristics to other "political organizations."[357] As every government agency and business seeks to organize its people to exert influence on people in the society for a purpose, so will the church.

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human community, as a social reality besides others, whose function is to be an example rather than to dominate." Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 131.

[354] "This gospel which proclaims the King and the Kingdom that is now hidden but will one day be revealed, is political from the very outset, and if it is preached to real (Christian and non-Christian) men on the basis of a right interpretation of the Scriptures it will necessarily be prophetically political." Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 46-47.

[355] Ibid., 47.

[356] "It involves the relapse into a comfortable quietism if we see things otherwise, if in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we act as though the dominion of the Word of God is opposed by no other dominions, and therefore by no trials, obstacles, adversaries or perils." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 676. "The Word of God (or rather what is in this case called the "Word of God") can be understood in a quietistic sense only if it derives from an absolute which is not identical with Jesus Christ, which is not therefore realised in and by Him alone, but surreptitiously introduced along mystical lines. It is only in this way that there can be a relapse into the view that the Word of God is a transcendent authority above and beyond the dialectic of actual reality and therefore not a fire and a hammer, as in the saying of the prophet, but the telling of a dream." Ibid. "Again, the secrecy in which the Word of God is free and transcendent must not be interpreted quietistically . . not the telling of a dream which at the end necessarily leaves everything in the real world exactly as it was before." Ibid., I/2, 679.

[357] "The Christian community exists at all times and places as a *politeia* [political entity] with definite authorities and offices, with patterns of community life and divisions of labor . . . To serve all the people within range of the place, region or country where it is established, is the purpose of its existence no less

In other words, to say the church should primarily focus on being the church—sitting under the Scriptures and acting on them and administering itself—focusing on its internal life so that it may be a better example—does not mean the church has withdrawn from political influence.[358] All of this Yoder, as a Mennonite, heartily affirms.

Yoder also appreciates Barth's wariness about the church making statements about government policy.[359] Barth and Yoder agree that the state is supposed to restrain evil but also that from a Christian standpoint, the state fulfills this function rather imprecisely.[360] Because the state's purpose do not often overlap precisely with those of the church, Barth thinks the church needs to be careful about what it endorses, lobbies for, and promotes lest it misunderstand itself as or be thought of as a political party.[361] It is for this reason that Barth would not endorse patriotic anti-communist sentiment so

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than it is that of the civil community . . . In this sense, therefore, the existence of the Christian community is political . . . Bearing all this in mind, we are entitled and compelled to regard the existence of the Christian community as of ultimate and supremely political significance." Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 19.

[358] "Let the church concentrate first, however, on seeing that the whole gospel is really preached within its own area. Then there will be no danger of the wider sphere beyond the church not being wholesomely disturbed by it." Ibid., 46-47.

[359] "The Christian community acts within the meaning and limits of its own mission and competence when it speaks, through the mouth of its presbyterial and synodal organs, in important situations in political life, by making representations to the authorities or by public proclamations. It will be careful to select, as wisely as possible, the particular situations in which it deems it right to speak, and it will have to choose its word very prudently and very definitely if it is to be heard." Ibid., 47.

[360] The civil community is relatively blind because "No appeal can be made to the Word or Spirit of God in the running of its affairs. The civil community as such is spiritually blind and ignorant." Ibid., 17. The civil community's limited mandate is "to achieve an external, relative and provisional humanizing of man's life and the political order . . . which guarantees that the worst is prevented from happening." Ibid., 20.

[361] "When it is represented by a Christian party, the Christian community cannot be the political salt which it is its duty to be in the civil community." Ibid., 46-47.

prominently stressed by Western governments in the 1950's. He too had a distaste for communism but he did not want to endorse the buildup of military armaments that accompanied anti-communism. When he is criticized for not speaking up against communism more forcefully, Barth retorts that the United States president Harry Truman does not need his help with this. "I do not agree that it is the duty of Christians or of the Church to give theological backing for what every citizen can, with much nodding of head, already read in his daily newspaper, expressed so well by Mr. Truman and by the Pope."[362] Being "anti-communist" is far too crude. Barth thinks the church and its theologians can be more precise in their speech and actions.

Herberg wants Barth to be more explicit in making pronouncements on national political issues, which is the stereotypically Reformed position. Yoder is correct to detect that Barth sees the church primarily as a model or example for the state.

George Hunsinger ignores Yoder's characterization of "free church" as broader than Mennonite (which Yoder probably deserves) and Hunsinger is correct that Barth is

[362] The English translation slightly altered. Particularly *kopfnickend* has been changed from "shaking" to "nodding." Barth, "Karl Barth's Reply (6 June 1948) to Emil Brunner's An Open Letter to Karl Barth," 114. Original: "Ich kann nämlich nicht zugeben, daß es eine christliche, eine kirchliche Aufgabe wäre, mit theologischer Begründung auch noch einmal zu sagen, was jeder Bürger ohnehin täglich kopfnickend auch in seiner Zeitung lesen kann, was von Herrn Truman und vom Papst [Harry S. Truman, Präsident der USA 1945-1953; Pius XII., Papst 1939-1958] ohnehin so trefflich vertreten wird." Karl Barth, *Offene Briefe 1945-1968 (GA V.15)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984), 164. Cf. "The Church must not concern itself eternally with various 'isms' and systems, but with historical realities as seen in the light of the Word of God and of the Faith . . . Therefore, the Church never thinks, speaks or acts 'on principle.' Rather it judges spiritually and by individual cases." Barth, "Karl Barth's Reply (6 June 1948) to Emil Brunner's An Open Letter to Karl Barth," 114.

not a Mennonite. But Hunsinger caricatures Mennonites as sectarian and against culture.

George Hunsinger rejects Yoder's characterization of Barth's ecclesiology as increasingly that of the "free church." Hunsinger responds to Yoder's claim as if Yoder had said "Mennonite" instead of "free church." Yoder certainly intends "free church" to mean something broader than "Mennonite." But as has been argued above, Yoder in effect means "similar to Mennonite" so Hunsinger is not far off.

The problem, however, with Hunsinger's analysis is that he caricatures the Mennonite approach. After setting up this straw man, of course Hunsinger does not think Barth fits it. Hunsinger says that Barth does not take a "sectarian" "against culture" approach but rather a "Reformed" one. Hunsinger writes,

> Yoder was correct about the antimilitarist direction taken by Barth's later thought. He was not correct, however, to recast Barth as a 'sectarian' Protestant. The stance Barth assumed was always closer to H. Richard Niebuhr's 'Christ transforming culture' than to his [Yoder's] 'Christ against culture.' Niebuhr recognized that a countercultural element is indispensable to the church's validity . . . Nevertheless, cultural transformers need to contend on two fronts, not just one: 'against the anti-culturalism of exclusive Christianity, and against the accommodationism of culture-Christians.'[363]

Yoder however never says that Barth is "sectarian" but only says that Barth exhibits "free church" tendencies. (As we have noted "free church" is an imprecise term by Yoder's own admission in that it denotates only that a church is a not a "state church."

[363] Hunsinger, "Introduction," 7-8. quoting Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 206.

Beyond this, it has been argued above that it is difficult to find something the church traditions that Yoder calls "free church" have in common that distinguish them from other denominations). As noted above, for Yoder "similar to free church" does mean something like "similar to Mennonite" so Hunsinger is correct to sense that Yoder is claiming Barth as "almost Mennonite." But it is unfortunate even when the 1980 essay was published in a collected volume in the year 2000 with a new accompanying introduction, that Hunsinger does not correct his characterization of the Mennonite approach supported by Yoder as "sectarian" and "against culture."[364]

Hunsinger writes that Yoder is "an unimpeachable representative of the sectarian Protestant view"[365] and that sectarian is "church against culture"—citing H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* framework. Hunsinger uses the framework uncritically even though he indicates in a footnote that he is aware of Yoder's criticism of it.[366] The quote above is particularly patronizing in that the "sectarian" approach is

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[364] Kimlyn Bender, a Princeton Theological Seminary Ph.D. grad, recognizes the flaws in Hunsinger's essay on Yoder. "It is the recognition of the difference between absolute and relative distinctions that is largely missing in George Hunsinger's" article." Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 265-266. Bender points to a better article by Hunsinger in James Y. Holloway, *Barth, Barmen, and the Confessing Church Today: Katallagete*, Symposium Series (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 289-293.

[365] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism," 123. Hunsinger's piece here responds to Yoder's criticism of Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: das Beispiel Karl Barths*. and Hunsinger's English translation of it. Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*. Cf. Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 110; Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*."; Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics."

[366] "Yoder's incisive appreciation and critique of this influential work can be found in Glen Harold Stassen, Diane M. Yeager, and John Howard Yoder *Authentic Transformation*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996)." Hunsinger, "Introduction," 8. John Howard Yoder, "How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned: A Critique of

depicted as rather ignorant. "Nevertheless, cultural transformers need to contend on two fronts, not just one: 'against the anti-culturalism of exclusive Christianity, and against the accommodationism of culture-Christians.'"[367] Hunsinger characterizes the "sectarian" as somehow unable to see both the healthy and harmful aspects of culture (as more savvy church traditions like the Reformed tradition of Niebuhr and Hunsinger do). Because Mennonites only see the harmful aspects of culture, they withdraw instead of engaging with that culture. Hunsinger here assumes the old church-sect stereotypes, where the church is a responsible realistic player in European society; whereas the sect is a band of wild-eyed idealistic hermits.[368] One can see what Hunsinger has in mind in terms of the Reformed approach to "transforming culture" in Hunsinger's own explicit lobbying governments to change their practices regarding torture.[369] In doing so,

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Christ and Culture," in *Authentic Transformation*, ed. Glen Harold Stassen, Diane M. Yeager, and John Howard Yoder (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

[367] Hunsinger, "Introduction," 7-8. quoting Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 206.

[368] James McClendon and Yoder do not find Troeltsch's original description of the sect perjorative but note that it has certainly become pejorative by those following H. Richard Niebuhr. "Since 'sect' so quickly becomes a term of abuse, we do well to quote in part Troeltsch's own nonpejorative explanation of its meaning: 'The sect is a voluntary society, composed of strict and definite Christian believers bound to each other by the fact that all have experienced 'the new birth.'' The alternative use of 'sect' to mean a community that regards itself alone as the church is not Troeltsch's." McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 568. quoting Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans., Olive Wyon, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 993. "Yet the Troeltschian attempt to make the language nonjudgmental will not ultimately hold. Troeltsch's American admirer H. Richard Niebuhr used the posture of above-the-melee, generous, descriptive objectivity to clothe his below-the-table advocacy of the establishment position. Niebuhr's heir James Gustafson returned to making the adjective simply pejorative." John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 4.

[369] George Hunsinger, *Torture Is a Moral Issue: Christians, Jews, Muslims, and People of Conscience Speak Out* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

Hunsinger is correct that he is treading the path of Barth who publicly denounced the nuclear arms race.

But Yoder is correct in arguing that more significant for Barth is the church acting as an example to the civil community. Instead, of aiming to "transform culture," the church obeys Jesus Christ and is agnostic about whether the civil community is or is not transformed. Hunsinger agrees that Yoder is indeed correct that Barth affirms the church as a model community for the world but Hunsinger finds this rather novel when it is instead the most basic orthodox way the church interacts with outsiders. Hunsinger writes, "It is this latter point about the exemplary character of communal order which I find most fascinating. Here Yoder has indeed discerned something that others have neglected."[370]

Peter Dula and Chris Huebner note that Mennonites (and "religion" generally) used to be dismissed for being "sectarian"—for practicing activities on a small scale in local communities. "Faithfulness and effectiveness were assumed to name alternatives in a zero-sum game. The more faithful, and therefore sectarian, a community was said to be, the less relevant, responsible, and comprehensible to the world."[371] But that kind of

[370] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and the Politics of Sectarian Protestantism," 121.
[371] Dula and Huebner, "Introduction," x.

criticism is far less common today because there is more awareness that change must start somewhere. More recent readers of Yoder

> simply start with the assumption that Yoder is right . . . that one did not have to jettison particularity in order to communicate with the wider world . . . and build from there . . . New Yoder essays take that claim for granted, and it rarely occurs to them to think of it as 'sectarian' when it is already common knowledge to those reading Foucault or Deleuze.[372]

In summary, Hunsinger is correct that Barth never ceases to be "Reformed" insofar as voicing opinions to national governments about policies. But Yoder is correct that Barth's primary response to politics is the one insisted on by "Mennonites"—that the church must be a model for outsiders.

Barth's intentional reticence to stipulate what the civil community should do is criticized by Herberg, Brunner, and Yoder

In a rare point of agreement, Yoder thinks Herberg is correct to criticize Barth's approach to state political issues as "arbitrary" in Barth's essay "The Christian Community and the Civil Community."[373] Herberg is himself drawing upon Emil Brunner who says that there is no clear check on the analogical method Barth uses in giving twelve examples of what the state might learn from the church in "The Christian

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[372] Ibid., xiv. "Whereas twenty years ago, religious was generally on the defensive throughout the academy, now intellectual luminaries such as Derrida and Certeau, Agamben, and Žižek, Chakrabarty and Asad, Stout and Coles, all find in religion a helpful antidote to some outworn modern orthodoxies. In such a climate, the theologian who hoped to save Christianity by rendering it intelligible to its cultured despisers (Gordon Kaufman and James Gustafson, for example) can be of little help, while Yoder and Barth become important resources." Ibid., xviii. Stout refers to Jeffrey Stout. We have also referred to Tracey Mark Stout in this dissertation.

[373] Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," 35.

Community and the Civil Community."[374] For example, Brunner complains, if one is working "analogically," one could argue that the state must be "a monarchy"[375] because the Christian community has a King—Jesus Christ. Later Herberg quotes Charles C. West who writes that Barth's "movement from theology to political decision is forever beset by oversimplification of the political issues, and by blindness to some of the facts

[374] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 34-42. Here is a loose simple paraphrase of the twelve "examples of Christian choices, decisions, and activities in the political sphere: analogies and corollaries of that Kingdom of God" (p. 42) Barth makes so the reader can see the type of general comments he makes. If someone were very interested in critiquing these points, they should read Barth's exposition. (1) God's compassion leads Christians to respect human rights (p. 34-35). (2) God's justice means Christians support the rule of law (p. 35-36). (3) Jesus cares for the poor so Christians support social justice (p. 36). (4) God gives people liberty so Christians want liberty to make their own decisions rather than totalitarian control (p. 36-37). (5) God dislikes idolatry so Christians support religious freedom (p. 37). (6) God wants equality in the church and so Christians support equality in the state regarding race and gender (p. 38). (7) God dispenses different gifts in the church and so Christians support separation of powers or checks and balances (p. 38-39). (8) God wants truth so Christians support transparency not secrecy in politics (p. 39). (9) God approves of human words so Christians support freedom of expression and freedom of the press (p. 39-40). (10) God approves of a service attitude and so Christians support leaders who serve—not coerce and use violence (p. 40). (11) God loves the world not just one people so Christians support regional, national, and global cooperation, not just parochial lobbying (p. 41). (12) God is patient, merciful, and just so Christians will only support violence as a last resort (41-42). Yoder also does summaries of the twelve items. Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 26. Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 183-184.
It is worth noting that Barth has a list of six similar items in *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 regarding "the exemplary quality of Church law, and therefore the contribution . . . to the improvement of worldly law." Here are the six very loosely paraphrased: (a) An attitude of service would change legal wrangling. (b) Jesus gives law a basis beyond relativism. (c) Mutual trust rather than violence would grease the wheels of human society. (d) Attitude of everyone caring for everyone would lead law based on love. (e) All human beings should all be seen as our family might lead to chastened law that facilitates human liberty. (f) Laws need to be fluid and open. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 723-724. Yoder also summaries these six items. Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 26. It is too bad that people focus on the earlier essay and not this mature account in the *Church Dogmatics.* Luke Bretherton, "Coming to Judgment: Methodological Reflections on the Relationship Between Ecclesiology, Ethnography and Political Theory," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 2 (2012): 172, 192.
[375] Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. Dogmatics: Vol. II* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 310.

involved."[376] Yoder complains of the generality of the points Barth makes with his twelve analogies. Yoder writes, "By choosing a set of examples which are almost universally acceptable (since they agree with natural theology), Barth avoided truly putting to the test the proof value of the logic of analogy which he proposes."[377] What is most troubling for Yoder is that Barth does not go beyond pointing out similarities (i.e. "analogy") to a more rigorous analysis of the parallels where one can say there is either a strong resemblance or a weak one. Yoder criticizes one analogy, "because of its lack of rigor in its parallelism."[378] Instead, Yoder would like to see a more disciplined or "casuistic" use of the Bible.[379]

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[376] West, *Communism and the Theologians: Study of an Encounter*, 314. quoted in Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," 35. West's book grew out of a Yale dissertation. West was later a missionary in China, Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, and Emeritus Professor of Christian Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary. Charles C. West, *Power, Truth, and Community in Modern Culture* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999). West was also a student of Reinhold Niebuhr's at Union Theological Seminary in 1942. Ronald H. Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 60.

[377] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 117. Yoder's parenthetical comments should be understood as construing Yoder's skepticism about natural theology.

[378] Ibid. Cf. "Barth's especially weak third analogy." Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 98.

[379] Yoder uses the word "casuistry" as a description of careful analysis of the application of biblical texts. He contrasts that here with analogy which is unfettered in its subjectivity, vague to the point of absurdity, since there are no inherent checks in seeing similarities between two things. "Barth does not mean, in any case, that analogy is a reliable, casuistically foolproof process of ethical deliberation. As to *method* in ethical deliberation, Barth stands right where he did before. Partly he will play by ear (what the technicians would call situation or intuition ethics); partly he will center on warding off of idolatry, not taking the social order too seriously unless it takes itself too seriously." Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 97. "Any rhetorician can explain that the logical analogy is extremely useful to elucidate an idea which has been already accepted, but extremely weak when it comes to prove a contested truth . . . Analogy is a method which, lending itself to demonstrate almost anything, cannot clearly prove anything." Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 117. Yoder says "careful theologizing" involves weighing conflicting values carefully when reflecting on difficult cases, which Yoder commends as "careful casuistry." Yoder, *Karl Barth*

> I suggest that the way to proceed might well be to begin with an outline on the theological side which would have about it a coherence of its own. It would be fitting to try to stay on one level of discourse; not to skip from the person of the father to the intellectual content of Christian anthropology to some other aspect of Christian faith or life, but to solidify the notion of analogy by relating community to community. The theological side of the scale of analogous quantities will then be recognizable as an ecclesiology rather than a miscellaneous collection of theological slogans.[380]

Yoder is correct that the parallel between how the church is to conduct itself as compared to how a state government is to conduct itself is much closer than how God the Father acts as compared to how a state government is to conduct itself. Yoder thinks it is odd that Barth makes both kinds of comparisons.

But Brunner, Herberg, and Yoder all misunderstand Barth here.

First, Barth is not naively using the "analogical" method in a formal way. Yoder wonders whether analogies by Barth are "playful self-spoofing whimsicality."[381] Later Yoder writes, "after having tried to take the twelve analogies seriously, it seems to me increasingly likely that in lining them up in apparent formal parallelism, in making

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and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth, 87. Yoder thinks Barth's explicit rejection is overstated—that casuistry is unavoidable. "*Cas*-uistics is nothing but the study of *cases* and even the vocabulary of Barth ("limiting *case*") demonstrates that it is not possible to speak of ethics without cases . . . This entire description of the war which would be admissible [as a just war], drawn from Barth's definition of the limiting case, demonstrates beyond contest how casuistic is his procedure of demonstration. This is not a weakness; it is rather the mark of his seriousness." Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 123. Biggar, Nimmo, Haddorff, and McKenny investigate Yoder's criticism of Barth's ethics and casuistry in their books on Barth's ethics. Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1993), 40; Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision*, 60; David W. Haddorff, *Christian Ethics as Witness: Barth's Ethics for a World at Risk* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 248, 388; Gerald P. McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace: Karl Barth's Moral Theology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 241-242.

[380] Yoder, "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper," 150-151.

[381] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 97.

them come out with the sacred round number of twelve, Barth was writing with his tongue in his cheek and a try-this-on-for-size twinkle in his eye."[382] Barth does indeed set out his twelve "criteria"[383] quite modestly but Yoder misunderstands what Barth is trying to do here. Barth says they are examples or illustrations of what the state might learn from the church. Barth writes,

> They are *merely* intended to illustrate how the Church can make decisions on a Christian basis in the political sphere. We *might have taken twice or three times as many or only half as many examples or just one example* to make the vital point clear. We used *examples* because we were concerned *to illuminate* the analogical but extremely concrete relationship between the Christian gospel and certain political decisions and modes of behavior.[384]

Yoder describes these as "twelve analogies"[385] but Barth views them as twelve "criteria"[386] or examples or illustrations.[387] Barth is not committed to an "analogical" method, nor is that the focus here. Rather Barth's point is that Christian political theology should work from special revelation (not merely natural revelation—the

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[382] Ibid.
[383] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 82.
[384] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 42. Emphasis added to show Barth's many disclaimers.
[385] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 97.
[386] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 82. Barth is adamant that these are not "principles" but rather "criteria." To Barth, "principles" are iron-clad rules which one merely follows whereas Barth does not want decision-making to be so formulaic, automatic, calcified. Instead, "criteria" are to be ingredients in the decision-making process. For example, Barth writes, "Let me propose three *relative* criteria (not *absolute;* that is only the living God in His commandment!)."Ibid., 76. "We do not decide on principles . . . On the basis of the criteria (the twelve I outlined, for instance) we ask . . . A criterion is not a point of a program . . . All criteria are *approximations*. Principles are fixed. You cannot live by principles. Life is not a field of the application of certain *a priori*, but a realm where *a priori* must be found out. Criteria can only give directions. The Christian must be awake and work to discover the spirits, and then make his decision in faith." Ibid., 82.
[387] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 42.

observation of what seems to work). Once Yoder stops analyzing whether Barth's method of "analogy" is coherent, he grants that Barth's work is successful on the level of illustration—which was Barth's point all along. Yoder writes, "Even if only half of the parallels are really parallel, and only a few of the pieces of counsel to society can be tested out, the stance which they illustrate may still be theologically right, and the illustration may still be counted as successful."[388]

Second, Barth is criticized for his vagueness. However, Barth would say that he is doing "dogmatics" not "special ethics" because special ethics should be done at the local level. His rather general comments about the relation of the church to the state are intended to be guidance at the dogmatic level. Barth purposefully uses a variety of examples to emphasize that Christians should focus first on faithfulness and only secondarily about whether there might be implications for practicing good government. Yoder may be right that Barth should have been more disciplined with regard to Scriptural usage in the examples he chooses but he was not applying the Scriptures to specific situations or governments. At least in that essay, "casuistry" was not necessary. Barth would likely agree that with regard to "practical theology" or "special ethics" that a more casuistic (applying specific Bible verses to specific situations) use of the Bible is appropriate. But Barth's point for the first twenty pages of the essay is that the Christian

[388] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 97.

community should respond to God independent of the civil community.[389] In other words, Barth is not attempting to be precise and practical regarding what civil governments should do. Barth does not think it is his responsibility as a theologian to specify how the civil community responds to the church's example.[390]

However, Herberg and Brunner are thinking about what Barth calls "special ethics so they denounce Barth for logic that could be used to justify a monarchy over a democracy. Again, Barth does not think it is the responsibility of the theologian to describe the best form of civil government. This is not a question the Scriptures address in detail nor emphasize as central. Barth says that given the basics that can be gleaned from Scripture about civil government, it is possible that a state could fulfill its rather limited "external, relative, and provisional"[391] task given by God to it in a number of forms. Barth says a state may possibly fulfill this governing task and yet differ from the style of "Swiss, American, French, etc." governments. "Such a State may equally well assume the form of a monarchy or aristocracy, and occasionally even that of a dictatorship."[392] In other words, Christians need not rule out theoretically as unchristian

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[389] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 15-34.
[390] "Dogmatics" should be done "as if nothing had happened." "I endeavor to carry on theology, and only theology, now as previously, and as if nothing had happened."Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom*, 9. This is a statement Yoder approves of. Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian."
[391] Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," 16-17.
[392] Ibid., 44. Barth echoes Calvin here. "the best kind of government in that place where they live . . . since the nature of the discussion depends largely upon the circumstances." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter XX, Section 8, page 1493.

everything that is not Western-style democracy.[393] God used a king like David despite some notes of ambivalence about monarchy (Judges 8:22; Deut 17:14). The dogmatic theologian should not prescribe government structures for every time and place. The form of government is a question of "special ethics" to be worked out in specific situations. Instead, Barth gives several general "dogmatic" criteria that a Christian should communicate to the state. The church can encourage these biblical criteria in a state but Barth does not intend to detail the exact form of government that a state should use. It is those who spout "democracy" or "anti-communism" slogans as world-saving who are the naïve ones, not Barth who articulates some twelve criteria that Christians should embody and urge their governments to approximate in some way.

The exemplary practices of the church

In 1986, in a lecture at Duke Divinity School, Yoder, set forth for the first time a set of five practices of the early church that the contemporary church should recover.[394] These same five practices are described in the book *Body Politics* (1992), and in essays in *The Royal Priesthood* (1994), and *For the Nations* (1997).[395] As can be seen in the table

[393] As Yoder summarizes, "It is not the business of the church to rule on the legitimacy of a state (i.e., by asking how democratic it is)." Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 98. Barth is not under the illusion that the word "democracy" somehow automatically leads to good government. As Barth says, "democratic forms are no guarantee of democratic reality (Latin America!)." Ibid.
[394] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture."
[395] Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, iii. Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture." Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 29-33. Yoder, "The New Humanity as Pulpit and Paradigm," 43-46.

below, Yoder slightly changes the title of the practices and the order in which he lists them.

Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World[396]	**"Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture" in *The Royal Priesthood***[397]	**"The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People" in *For the Nations*.**[398]
(1) Binding and Loosing "The law of Christ"[399] "the *Regel Christi*—the Rule of Christ," "loving dialogue" "reconciling dialogue"[400]	(1) Fraternal Admonition	(2) Forgiveness
(2) Disciples Break Bread Together / Eucharist	(4) Breaking Bread	(3) socialism as implied in the Eucharist
(3) Baptism and the New Humanity / Baptism	(5) Induction into the New Humanity	(1) egalitarianism as implied by baptism into one body
(4) The Fullness of Christ / Multiplicity of gifts	(2) The Universality of Charisma	(5) the universality of giftedness
(5) The Rule of Paul / Open meeting	(3) The Spirit's Freedom in the Meeting	(4) the open meeting

On the one hand, Yoder credits Barth for inspiring him along these lines—regularly citing Barth's 1946 essay (originally published in English in 1954), "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" and its twelve examples.[401] However, as we have seen, he also criticizes Barth's execution of this line of thinking and these five practices are his attempt to more adequately develop Barth's initial effort.

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[396] Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, iii. The slash in the *Body Politics* column of the table adds the words on the back cover of *Body Politics* because they use different wording than the table of contents. Yoder uses both wordings.

[397] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," 368.

[398] Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 33.

[399] Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, 4.

[400] Ibid., 7.

[401] Recall that Yoder likely attended Barth's seminar in 1954 where this essay was dicussed. Barth, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community." discussed in Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 77-85.

> Between H. Richard Niebuhr's list of four marks and Karl Barth's of six, let me close with my list of five. This list differs from the others in that it is derived straightforwardly, inductively, from the experience of the first Christians, and in that it makes still more evident the unity between message and medium.[402]

As we will see in later chapters, Yoder is not alone in generally appreciating Barth but suggesting that Barth's description of church practices is inadequate. Reinhardt Hütter, Joseph Mangina, and Stanley Hauerwas all appreciate Barth in other respects but criticize Barth's lack of attention to practices. However, it is particularly glaring that Yoder never mentions that in §67 in his 1955 volume IV/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*[403] Barth describes carefully four orienting practices of church life: (1) confession—gathering to hear the Word of God and responding to it with human words, (2) baptism, (3) Lord's supper, (4) prayer. Barth then describes them one by one again reflecting on the ethical implications of each practice for Christians.[404] Moreover, the four practices in §67 of the *Church Dogmatics* have significant overlap with Yoder's five practices (open meeting, baptism, Lord's supper, binding and loosing, multiplicity of gifts). Yoder in particular should have mentioned this section if he was going to criticize Barth's earlier 1946 list because Yoder repeatedly refers to §67 of the *Church Dogmatics*.[405]

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[402] Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 29. Barth's list of six items at at Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 723-724.
[403] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 614-726.
[404] Ibid., IV/2, 699-701, 701-702, 702-704, 704-706. The four practices are described. Ibid., IV/2, 706-709. The four practices are extrapolated upon. "We have to consider all questions of that which is lawful and right in the Church in the light of its assembling for public worship and therefore of this fourfold occurrence."Ibid., IV/2, 706.
[405] Ibid., IV/2, 614-726.

Yoder first refers to §67 in the last few pages of his 1978 response to Marquardt.[406] Yoder then returns to the section in six different essays over the years:

"Title of essay" (year presented):

- "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics" (1978)
- "Why Ecclesiology Is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom" (1980)
- "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper" (1980)
- "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing" (1986)
- "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People" (1992).
- "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian" (1995)[407]

Mark Nation writes that "Yoder heard Barth present what become Volumes III/4 (dealing with war) and IV/2 (dealing with sanctification, discipleship, and peace) of *Church Dogmatics.*"[408] This fits well with other evidence that Yoder was especially familiar with §67 of IV/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*. Yoder was a student in Basel from 1950 to 1957,[409] Barth composed the section in 1955, and as suggested above, there is evidence Yoder was present for some of the conversations sketched in John Godsey's *Karl Barth's Table Talk* which describes English seminar sessions with Barth between 1953

[406] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142-145.
[407] Yoder, "Firstfruits: The Paradigmatic Public Role of God's People," 23, 27-29; Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 104-106, 110, 125; Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142-145; Yoder, "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper," 149; Yoder, "Karl Barth, How His Mind Kept Changing," 172-174; Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 186. Four of the six essays are the last four essays collected in the posthumously published volume, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War and Other Essays on Barth*.
[408] Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*, 18.
[409] Ibid.

and 1956.[410] Some of the English seminar sessions included discussion of previous writings by Barth on ecclesiology, presumably because that related to the topics he was currently working on for the *Church Dogmatics*.[411] After his 1970 publication of *Karl Barth and the Problem of War,* Yoder rarely cites any other section from the *Church Dogmatics* besides §67.

There are however three aspects of Barth's account of the church's practices in §67 that are superior to Yoder's.

Yoder's random practices vs. Barth's central ones

First, Barth's four practices have more biblical validity. Barth addresses the question: Which practices are most important? The five practices selected by Yoder are seemingly an arbitrary collection of underappreciated biblical practices as opposed to being classic central foundational practices.[412] Occasionally, Yoder admits that "The five

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[410] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, viii. Four years later in 1960 right, "there were more than eighty at the English-speaking colloquium." Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 453.

[411] Barth wrote the *Church Dogmatics* by producing eight new pages for each of his four fifty-minute lectures per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday afternoons). So he produced about thirty-two pages per week of the *Church Dogmatics.* He spent thirty to forty hours per week preparing for his dogmatics lectures. In addition to the dogmatics lecture, Barth did six additional hours of seminars and discussion groups per week. So, he did 30-40 hours of preparation plus four hours lecturing plus six hours in seminars, which equals about 40-50 hours per week of theological work. Barth had significant help from teaching assistants and crucial full-time help from Charlotte von Kirschbaum. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 352, 373-374. Selinger, *Charlotte von Kirschbaum and Karl Barth: A Study in Biography and the History of Theology*, 60.

[412] Andrew D. Rowell, *The Ecclesiology of John Howard Yoder* (Durham, NC: Andy Rowell Blog: http://www.andyrowell.net/andy_rowell/2008/11/the-ecclesiology-of-john-howard-yoder-paper.html, 2008), 13-16, 68-69.

parallel phenomenon which are all part of our common apostolic heritage . . . could be listed in any order, and there could very well be a sixth or seventh."[413] A more deliberately chosen list was arrived upon by the faculty of which he was apart of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana, from 1967-1970: (a) Bind and Loose, (b) Love the Brothers and Sisters, (c) Teach, (d) Follow Christ, (e) Serve, (f) Praise God, (g) Make Disciples, and (h) Greet the Brothers and Sisters.[414] But Yoder does not return to this faculty-derived list in his own writing. Yoder says that the five practices he has chosen "are described [in the Bible] as involving both divine and human action and as mandatory."[415] But this could apply to many additional underappreciated biblical practices: (a) Foot-washing, (b) devotion to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), (c) baptism for the dead (1 Cor 15:29), (d) laying on of hands,[416] (e) collecting offerings for poor churches (2 Cor 8), (f) singing of hymns, (g) not eating meat sacrificed to idols, and (h) limiting or including women in the community.[417] Yoder does not identify why the five practices he identifies are more important than the others. Prior to his 1986 lecture, he had written about the five practices separately before putting them together as a list

[413] Yoder, "The New Humanity as Pulpit and Paradigm," 43.
[414] Cartwright, "Radical Reform, Radical Catholicity," 12-13. Cartwright cites Ross Thomas Bender, *The People of God: A Mennonite Interpretation of the Free Church Tradition* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 142-145.
[415] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," 364. Italics in original.
[416] John Howard Yoder, *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Revolutionary Vision of Universal Ministry* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1987), 28.
[417] Ibid., 50-54.

of five, which further indicates that this list was not chosen in a rigorous way. In his earlier book *The Priestly Kingdom* (1984), all five appear—sometimes in groups of three[418] and sometime treated individually.[419] Yoder is correct to think that the outside world may find the church's practices stimulating and admirable but the five practices he selects seem arbitrary.

Yoder's wariness of leaders and zeal for independence vs. Barth's emphasis on well-trained leaders and connectionalism

Another weakness is Yoder's suggestion that the five practices function well in a flat structure without a person being formally trained in theology or Bible. Though many different roles are needed in the gathered community, Yoder does not recommend that at least one person be trained to draw upon the Christian tradition.[420] Instead, Yoder

[418] Recall the five: (1) Binding and Loosing, (2) Disciples Break Bread Together, (3) Baptism and the New Humanity (4) The Fullness of Christ, (5) The Rule of Paul. Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, iii. The first three are mentioned in John Howard Yoder, "The Kingdom as Social Ethic," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 93-94. "Binding and Loosing" and the last two are mentioned in the following two essays. John Howard Yoder, "Radical Reformation Ethics in Ecumenical Perspective," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 116-118. Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood," 22-34.

[419] He addresses "The Rule of Paul" in John Howard Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of the Anabaptists," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984). He addresses "The Fullness of Christ" in Yoder, *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Revolutionary Vision of Universal Ministry*. He addresses "Binding and Loosing" in Yoder, "Binding and Loosing."

[420] In his essay "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood," in *The Priestly Kingdom* (1984), Yoder identifies four functions that four agents in the community carry out: Agents of Direction, Agents of Memory, Agents of Linguistic Self-Consciousness, and Agents of Order and Due Process." But none of these "agents" necessarily know and bring the broader Christian tradition. Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood," 29-33. See Rowell, *The Ecclesiology of John Howard Yoder*, 64-67.

seems to assume that all of the people will be formed in theology and Bible. While Barth stresses the importance of "dogmatics" guiding the preacher;[421] Yoder stresses the cumulative wisdom of all those in attendance at the "open meeting." Though ideally the entire congregation is formed deeply by the Scriptures and participates in the open meeting, there is no mechanism to form people in this way. Absent that, the people sharing during the open meeting might each be sharing from their ignorance. Again, Yoder probably assumes that some people in the congregation will be trained (either through formal or informal education) in the Christian tradition (as he was), but in no place does Yoder emphasize this as crucial. Because of this lacuna, the five practices he sketches have the power to be renewing, reforming practices for the traditional church (where training is assumed) but the five practices also have the potential for mischief if the people practicing them are improvising without formation. In other words, to: (1) confront sin, (2) to share possessions in common, (3) treat one another like family, (4) encourage people's gifts, and (5) have something to say in the open meeting (Yoder's five practices), it helps to: (a) to sit under good teaching, (b) understand baptism, (c) understand the Lord's Supper, and (d) participate in prayer for years (Barth's four

[421] "The fact from which dogmatics starts and to which it returns is the human word of Church proclamation. This fact is equivocal and therefore dogmatics is necessary." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 798.

practices). Without connection to the wisdom of other churches,[422] independent congregation can improvise their way into becoming a cult. In other words, Yoder's vision of "exemplary" community life "before a watching world" might end up repelling those watchers rather than interesting them if the church wobbles idiosyncratically toward odd ideas. Barth insists that the church must obey what the church has taught in the past until definitively God speaks today anew.[423] The church is to attend to precedent in not only the Scriptures but also the church that has come before it.[424] The local church should do all it can to conform to teaching that has been honed by historical and systematic theology ("dogmatics").[425] It is not that Yoder does not approve of systematic theology but that it is absent in his descriptions of the practices of the church and that mostly independent congregations are the most in need of seeking

[422] The apostle Paul directs the innovating congregation to check themselves against "all the congregations of the Lord's people . . . Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?" (1 Cor 14:33; 36).

[423] "It will thus adhere to-day to the conclusions and determinations of yesterday, to the canonical statements which were then formulated and wholly or partially committed to writing . . . It will declare and accept to-day the confessing law of yesterday, both following it in practice and giving it the necessary emphasis. It will live on to-day as the community which yesterday was ordered in this or that fashion. For it was not dreaming or playing yesterday, but genuinely praying and working." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.2, 714.

[424] "It will always and everywhere follow the language of the Old and New Testaments, and constantly return to it as the source and norm of its witness. But it must also formally adopt and appropriate the language of the early Church and the fathers." Ibid., IV/3.2 736.

[425] See the section thesis statements of §23 Dogmatics as a Function of the Hearing Church. and §24 Dogmatics as a Function of the Teaching Church. "Dogmatics invites the teaching Church to listen again to the Word of God in the revelation to which Scripture testifies . . . Dogmatics summons the listening Church to address itself anew to the task of teaching the Word of God in the revelation attested in Scripture." Ibid., I/2, 797, 844.

wisdom from other churches since this is not structured into their operations.[426] Without a hierarchy or extensive canon law, independent congregations need to be hungry for connections with others churches so as to learn best practices whether this be by informal associations or formal training such as that done by seminaries.[427] It is precisely those checks and balances which test innovative ideas (that should have checked Yoder's rationalization of his sexual abuse of women).[428]

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[426] Sovereign Grace Ministries and Westboro Baptist Church have each been led by leaders without formal theological training. The former did not deal well with sexual abuse accusations and the latter has used vicious tactics to protest homosexuality. Both argued for their approach with biblical rationale and saw their nonconformity with other Christian churches as a sign of faithfulness despite not being very aware of what has been practiced throughout Christian history. Both enforced these unorthodox approaches by authoritarian leadership structures. Tiffany Stanley, "The Sex-Abuse Scandal That Devastated a Suburban Megachurch: Inside the Rise and Fall of Sovereign Grace Ministries," *Washingtonian Magazine* 51, no. 5 (2016); Adrian Chen, "Unfollow: How a Prized Daughter of the Westboro Baptist Church Came to Question Its Beliefs," *New Yorker* 91, no. 37 (2015).

[427] A friend said that there are many Baptists in Texas because the liberty-loving Texans want to be in congregations where no one (outside the congregation) can tell them what to do. This is not a good reason for the independence of congregations and instead leads to cults, heresy, and abuse. The best reason for the autonomy of local churches is that they might be flexible for local mission with the mentality being 1 Cor 9:20-23 ("To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews . . .").

[428] He rationalized his sexual harassment and abuse by theorizing that the Christian tradition was sex-phobic and therefore "familial" forms of Christian community like the holy kiss and "brotherly and sisterly" warmth needed to be recovered. Mark Oppenheimer, "A Theologian's Influence, And Stained Past, Live On," *New York Times*, Oct 12 2013; Mark Thiessen Nation and Marva J. Dawn, "On Contexualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder," in *EMU Anabaptist Nation*, ed. Mark Thiessen Nation (2013); Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, *AMBS Statement on Teaching and Scholarship Related to John Howard Yoder* (Elkhart, IN: Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 2012); Rich Preheim, "Report Reveals Full History of Theologian's Abuse, Institutions' Response," *The Christian Century*, 2015 Mar 04 2015. Yoder's "nonconformist" low regard for the ecumenical theological tradition led him to be willing to experiment with practices that were out of step with orthopraxy. "in some of his more obscure writings about sexuality and marriage, Yoder hinted that his attempts at what he called friendly relations with women that included bodily intimacy but not sexual intercourse were based in his theological vision of a radically nonconformist church." Gerald J. Mast, "Teaching John Howard Yoder: Author, Disciple, and Sinner," *Mennonite Life* 68, no. May (2014). Mast points the reader also to his other piece: Gerald J. Mast, "Sin and Failure in Anabaptist Theology," in *John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian*, ed. John Denny Weaver (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014). In a context of primitivist ("let us get back to the way the early church did it") or Biblicist ("let us get back to the biblical way of doing this") emphases, evidence from church history or systematic theology that a

But Barth does not think that the answer to heteropraxy is setting up a rigid, hierarchical authority structures to enforce norms. He thinks that that this eventually calcifies and squelches productive creative witness. He argues that the church should be flexible and nimble in its structure rather than clumsily bureaucratic and traditional. Barth is critical of church polities which assume an "aristocratic" educated, enlightened elite clergy presiding over a peasant, ignorant, vulgar, common, lay people.[429] Rather than lording their authority over one another (Mark 10:42, Luke 22:25; Matt 20:25), church leaders should see their role as one of the congregation who is serving. "Even linguistically, it [the church] must avoid the fatal word 'office' and replace it by 'service,' which can be applied to all Christians."[430]

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practice is odd or irregular are not very persuasive. Moreover, a so-called flat structure with no one in charge often occludes the real power dynamics where indeed someone is in charge—whether that be the most vocal person or the person who has been there the longest, etc. Richard Hays sensed that there was too little attention given to the tradition in Yoder's work. "The Radical Reformers insisted that they were recalling the faithful to live strictly by what the Bible said, rather than by the body of tradition developed in the church over many centuries. But who is to decide how the Bible is to be interpreted, particularly on contested issues (such as current debates about sexuality)." Richard B. Hays, "Embodying the Gospel in Community," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 74, no. 4 (2000): 585.

[429] "Calvin's doctrine of the Church at the beginning of Book IV of the *Institutio* [*Institutes]* is in fact a very aristocratic doctrine of ecclesiastical office, or the ministry, or the administration of the word and sacrament, which was to be exercised by an exclusive and special class, and in which the community, represented by the elders and deacons ordained alongside the presbyters and deacons, could only incidentally play any active part." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 33. "But again there are no exoterics, 'laity' or 'congregation' who can interpret their allotted technical classification as hearers to mean that they have no share or only a passive share in the service of teaching. What a misuse it is of the idea of the congregation to understand by it a group of mere spectators privileged, or disqualified, as such!" Ibid., I/2, 798.

[430] Ibid., IV/2, 694.

Yoder and Barth both criticize the Augsburg Confession's description of the church as identifying the church solely by its internal work of "pure preaching and the pure administration of the sacraments."[431] Yoder howls that the Augsburg definition of the church defines the church solely with regard to whether the preaching and sacraments are done rightly, thus opening the floodgates of debate about theological minutiae.[432] Some standard of theological precision with regard to doctrine and sacramental practice determines whether a church exists or not. Furthermore, this definition of the church is entirely clergy oriented.[433] The lay people need not even be there for the preaching to done rightly and the sacraments rightly administered.[434]

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[431] Article VII of the Confessio Augustana [Augsburg Confession] "Est autem Ekklesia congregatio Sanctorum, in qua Evangelium recte docetur, et recte administrantur Sacramenta. [But the Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered]."

[432] "The classical instrument for the interpretation of the mission and nature of the church is the concept of a shorter or longer list of 'marks' that are the minimum standards that enable one to recognize the existence of a particular church. 'The church is wherever the Word of God is properly preached and the sacraments properly administered.' From this definition of classical Protestantism we may appropriately begin our analysis. The shortcoming of this two-point statement is not merely its petitionary character. Obviously, the entire meaning of these two criteria is utterly dependent upon what 'properly' is taken to mean. Conceivably one could pour all of any theology into these two phrases." Yoder, "A People in the World," 75-76.

[433] "But a more fundamental flaw in this statement of criteria is that the point of relevance in their application is not the church but its superstructure. The place you would go to ascertain whether the word of God is properly preached in a given church is the preacher or conceivably the doctrinal statement by which the ecclesiastical body is governed. The place you go to see whether the sacraments are being properly administered is again the officiant. The concentration of your attention might be upon his or her way of proceeding or it might focus upon his or her understanding of the meaning of the sacrament. But in either case it does not focus upon the congregation." Ibid., 76.

[434] Miroslav Volf notes that with a fixation on clergy actions being correct, there is very little need for a congregation to be present or responding. Volf criticizes the Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology of John Zizoulas along these lines. "Zizioulas's ecclesiology can get along quite well without... the majority... who belong to a given local church." Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 116. Rather, it matters not just what the clergy do but what also the congregation does.

But for Barth, the lack of a reference to the missionary purpose of the church is troubling.[435] As Barth says, "We have only to put the question for what purpose is all this [preaching and administration], to be aware at once of the yawning gap."[436] In other words, the classic Protestant definition of the church (taken from the Augsburg Confession article VII) seems to focus entirely on the actions taken by the clergy on Sunday mornings within a church building: "the right preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments." A church might be a church according to this definition and no lay people are present. And what is "rightly" preaching and administering? This might consume theologians for years before we can approve a church as preaching and administering rightly. And finally, this church has no obligation to reach out to outsiders who do know know Jesus Christ. As long as they are having "right" church services, that is enough. For Barth, the task of the church is witness so a church that does not witness to outsiders is missing what it is supposed to

"The members do not stand over against the church as an institution; their actions and relations are the institution." Ibid., 241. And for Volf, right preaching and administration of the sacraments are instrumental to the church's broader purpose. "I will join this long tradition by taking Matt 18:20 as the foundation...for determining what the church is." Ibid., 136.

[435] Consider John Calvin's sense that there is no more need for new churches because all of the world is Christian and church structures no longer need outreaching functions like those of the apostles, prophets, and evangelists. "According to this interpretation (which seems to me to be in agreement with both the words and opinion of Paul, those three functions [apostles, prophets, and evangelists in Eph 4:11] were not established in the church as permanent ones, but only for that time during which churches were to be erected where none existed before." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter III, Section 4, page 1057.

[436] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 766.

be doing. To be fair to the Augusburg Confession, in Latin, the phrase is preaching "the Gospel" (though usually this is translated in English as preaching "the Word.") This would be a more adequate definition of the church if it was taken to mean an organization that "communicates the Good News of Jesus Christ." The inward tilt would be partially corrected by this adjustment. The church exists to point those inside and those outside to Jesus Christ.

Barth argues that the New Testament does not stress the implementation of a correct church polity structure. "There has never been anywhere . . . an intrinsically sacred sociology."[437] Barth worries that leaders who are convinced that there is a divinely instituted structure and that God has appointed them to carry out His will will operate in a domineering way. Instead, the mentality of leadership should be of endeavoring to obey Jesus and help the church witness to outsiders. Leaders in the church are to be servants of this good purpose.

[437] Ibid., IV/3.2, 739. "If it is always and everywhere a matter of living Church law, there can and should be a tolerable and meaningful and fruitful relationship between differently constituted and ordered Churches in different historical situations and at different points on the way: a calm appraisal of the positions which they themselves have adopted and maintain; and an equally calm—and attentive and curious—appraisal of the positions which others are seen to adopt and maintain." Ibid., IV.2, 717. "The free God gives to this human people, which still cannot do anything more or different in this respect than what others can also do, the freedom to adopt its own form, i.e., the form corresponding to its calling and commission, in the sphere of general human possibilities." Ibid., IV.3.2, 741.

Though Barth is troubled by churches that will not "recognize and acknowledge one another"[438] and this is "division as such is a deep riddle, a scandal,"[439] despite Roman Catholic and ecumenical pleas, he does not think that all churches need to be part of one structure.[440] Church polities should be "loose" enough that they can be adapted to be obedient to Jesus Christ.[441] Church structure must be adapted for missionary reasons to its unique geographic context.

> if in essential accordance with its commission it has to take place in many localities, it is also essential to it that in its unity it should exist in this geographical separation and difference: a difference which corresponds to its environment and history and language and customs and ways of life and thought as conditioned by the different localities, and also to its personal composition. In this respect the same thing does not suit every Church or every place and time. This has never been taken seriously enough in our missionary thinking.[442]

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[438] Ibid., IV/1, 675.

[439] Ibid.

[440] "we can legitimately speak of historically existent Christian 'Churches' in the plural only with reference to the geographically separated and therefore different congregations . . . All human mediation of this unity, all the mutual understanding and agreement and co-ordination between the individual members, can only be a free human service. It cannot supply, let alone create, the guarantee of unity, the mutual recognition of the individual communities. This does not mean that the existence of a particular organ of mediation, an institution which demands and maintains the oneness of the locally separated communities, is completely impossible. What it does mean is that such an organ or institution is not an integral constituent of the essence of the Church. The one Church does not exist either in an ideal or in an organised or organising totality to which the individual communities stand in the relationship of participating Churches (like the digits in a figure or the notes in a chord). The one Church exists in its totality in each of the individual communities." Ibid., IV/1, 671-672.

[441] "The Church is apostolic and therefore the true Church where its external order—what is called Church government—is made so loose by respect for the direction of Scripture that all encroachment on the lordship of the One who is alone the Lord is either avoided or so suppressed and eliminated in practice that there is place for His rule." Ibid., IV/1, 723.

[442] Ibid., IV/1, 671-672.

Despite his wariness of clerical hubris, Barth is not against leadership. He is wary of idealizing lay people as if the wisdom of crowds is infallible, or the will of the people is sacrosanct, or the customer is always right. Barth notes that it was mass movements that have led to the worship of Mary and to the embrace within the church of Hitler.[443] There is a place for well-trained leaders to guide the people of the church. Though the church is free to be flexible, it is still limited by its responsibility to conform to Jesus.[444]

This is all to say that like Yoder, Barth thinks the church should be exemplary to the outside world. Like Yoder, Barth also believes that local church functioning is important and therefore should not be squelched by a heavy, bureaucratic oversight out of fear that a local church might become heretical. But Barth's understanding of the importance of local leaders being formed by the Christian theological tradition and leaders being in relationship with other local churches addresses the weaknesses of Yoder's proposal.

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[443] "When the laity has come to have a part in Church government, with its stronger contact with the spirit and practice and tendencies of the surrounding world, with its more limited knowledge and understanding of Church history, with its formally smaller obligations, with its greater freedom of judgment and imagination in face of tradition, with its cheerfully over-simplified desire for action, it has often proved to be a most important point of entry for the most diverse errors and confusions, which do not threaten only some orthodoxy old or new but the very understanding and progress of the Gospel itself, and in the development of which theology and the official ministry, as shown in Roman Catholicism quite openly by the riotous growth of Mariology and in Protestantism no less openly by certain Liberal outrages culminating in the events of 1933, have often proved to be only the mouth-piece of what is merely presumed to be a pious *vox populi* [voice of the people]." Ibid., IV/3.1, 35.

[444] "Again its freedom is limited only by its source. But its source really is its limit. It is born of the omnipotent Word of God's grace in Jesus Christ. It cannot, then, hear the voice of a stranger (Jn. 10:5). For all its dependence on the world and world-occurrence, it cannot be ruled and determined by these." Ibid., IV/3.2, 736.

Yoder's minimalist witness vs. Barth's explaining witness

Barth and Yoder also differ in how they discuss to what extent explanation is needed in addition to being exemplary. It is the word "exemplary" in particular that Yoder emphasizes from §67 of the *Church Dogmatics*. Beginning with the Stone lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in January - February 1980,[445] and presented a few weeks later as the Morgan Lectures at Fuller Theological Seminary,[446] Yoder highlights Barth's understanding of the church as "exemplary"—agreeing that the internal practices of the church have the potential to have an impact on outsiders.[447] As mentioned above, typically "being an example" is the way Mennonites have understood themselves as influencing the world.

Even in his dissertation, Yoder recognizes the significance of the outward-focused trajectory of the Swiss Brethren (who Yoder calls here "the Anabaptists"), which he contrasted with "the Reformers" (Zwingli and—Yoder is also probably here including—Luther and Calvin).

> For the Anabaptists, the evangelist is at the centre, while for the state church, the pastor is at the centre. For the Reformers, the evangelist was still theoretically

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[445] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," 359., Yoder, "Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper," 149; Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 102.

[446] Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 102.

[447] Church practices "are not 'religious' or 'ritual' activities, they are by nature 'lay' or 'public' phenomena." Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," 370. "in each case that way of interacting in the faith community is so concrete, so accessible, so 'lay,' that it is also a model of how any society, not excluding the surrounding 'public' society, can also form its common life more humanely." Yoder, "The New Humanity as Pulpit and Paradigm," 47.

> conceivable, but for all practical purposes was an impossibility, for all people have already been baptized, and they need only education within the Christendom that already is imposed on them. For the Anabaptists, by contrast, the local church community will always be the mission community, for individuals belong to it only through their own decision, even if their parents already were members of that same community. If the community does not evangelize, it cannot live.[448]

But in the dissertation and later Yoder sees mission as only one aspect of the "free church." In his *Theology of Mission,* Yoder mentions that one of the eleven differences between "free churches" and "Christendom churches" is the "place of mission."[449] However, for Barth, (and this is the argument of the dissertation), that this is not just one of the differences that he thinks is significant but the key difference.[450]

For Barth, there can be no consideration of church practices without consideration of the missionary ramifications.[451] Under Christendom, the state and society funneled all

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[448] Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, 280.

[449] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 152-153.

[450] "most paradoxically the modern period has also seen an original and spontaneous penetration of the world by the Christian community unparalleled in any of the vaunted or criticised periods which precede it . . . the very period when Christianity has been subject to the constriction, and its situation has often enough been very like that of a closely invested fortress, has also been the scene of an awakening which has not been dictated by its enemies, which has been highly original, in which it has shown a new awareness, hardly paralleled since the first centuries, of its commission to the world and mission within it, and in which it has stirred itself in the most different forms to do justice to it . . . In and with the beginning of the great renaissance of paganism, it took place (1) that, very definitely in certain places, although not universally, the Church again took on the form of a Church of the Word. . . . No less noteworthy is (2) the fact that, in movements which were isolated and slow at first but have since become more rapid and general, the new age of apparent Christian regression has become an age of Christian missions unparalleled since the days of the apostles and the time of the christianisation of Europe (which extended well into the Middle Ages in the North and East)." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 20, 21, 22.

[451] "True church law is exemplary law . . . The inward responsibility to itself involves an outward to the world. It orders itself—its own life which is distinct from that of the world . . . But it does not do it for the sake of itself . . . For its own affair, that with which it is concerned in its divine service and in its whole life understood as service, is the witness that it owes to those who are without . . . For its own affair, that with

people towards the church.[452] Therefore, denominations founded outside of Christendom do have the advantage of having this recruitment component as part of their ecclesiological structure from the beginning. Their structures are not merely maintenance structures but outreach ones. In his description of "free churches" Yoder says that "The free church not only can be but has to be missionary in its structure"[453]

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which it is concerned in its divine service and in its whole life understood as service, is the witness that it owes to those who are without. In relation to those who are without it cannot, therefore, be indifferent or silent or preoccupied with itself. It can be genuinely preoccupied with itself only when it is also concerned with them and is aware of its responsibility towards them. It has to converse with them, and one way in which it has to do so is by showing them the law valid within it." Ibid., IV/2, 719-720.

[452] "That Christianity has to say to the world around something strange, unknown and supremely necessary; that it has to pass on to it a message; that it is not there for itself alone but has the responsibility towards those without of confronting them with the Gospel in order that they may participate in the salvation which it thinks or is certain that it has itself; that it owes it to the Lord in whom it in some sense believes, and whom it well or badly confesses, to attest Him to the forces which rule this aeon, all this was a concept which did to some degree move the Christian Middle Ages but was for the most part marginal. There was little room for it in practice, for the mediaeval Church, confined to Western and Central Europe, lived with the surrounding world in the happy illusion that it constituted a *corpus christianum* [Christian society] or Christian world, and could have very little awareness of the existence of a non-Christian world, and therefore of a genuine encounter of the Gospel and man. Since all those in known proximity were supposedly within, there could not really be any who were without . . . The tardiness of the Reformation Churches in this sphere has often been asserted and deplored. Most surprisingly, these Churches of the Word did not at first, or for a long time afterwards, perceive the opportunity of mission offered by the new discoveries and conquests . . . The only trouble is that, even if the time for missionary activity had not yet come for these or similar reasons, there was not even the realisation of the duty of mission. A virtue was made of necessity, and it was explained that the missionary command was given only to the apostles, and had long since been fulfilled by them." Ibid., IV/3.1, 20, 23.

[453] The following quotation from Yoder is ostensibly a strong statement of support for a missionary approach. However, it is in the context of describing what "free churches" or "believers churches" stand for in general. In dealing with the biblical rationale for mission in the opening five chapters of *Theology of Mission* Yoder exhibits a much more ambivalent approach toward mission. In other words, he seems to be saying in this quotation that mission is very important to "free churches." But then on the other hand, he seems to be saying that his own position is that the church should basically be agnostic about this task—that it may happen but it is an effect is not something that is intended. This may be an argument about the coherence of the *Theology of Mission* volume published post-humously. Again, the following quote is the most supportive statement about mission in the *Theology of Mission* book and it is not in the context of what Yoder himself thinks as much as it is a description of the what "free churches" in general stand for.

but Yoder is far ambivalent about structuring for mission than Barth. For Barth, with regard to "sociological structure,"[454] there is no such thing as sacred or secular structure.[455] The church has "the freedom to adopt its own form, i.e. the form corresponding to its calling and commission, in the sphere of general human possibilities."[456] The church can appropriate any structure that is functional as long as it conforms to the way of Jesus Christ[457] and points to Jesus Christ.[458] Barth's conviction that the church's task is witness leads to structuring for mission to outsiders.[459]

"*Place of mission.* For Christendom the world mission is marginal or optional. It is not a bad thing to do, but it is certainly possible to be a true church without it. The traditional doctrine of the church in these Christendom traditions does not include the idea that the church must reach beyond herself with a message. By definition the center of Europe did not have any pagan neighbors during the time we are discussing, and there was not any strong awareness of how they might take a message to the rest of the world, especially if the message was the unity of church and society. So the place of mission in the Christendom church's self-understanding was marginal. It arose later; it was not built into the concept of the church. For the believers church some kind of ongoing missionary activity defines the church even at home. There is no place where the believers church does not have both the possibility and necessity of an ongoing missionary thrust. Since this group is not identical with the whole society, and usually at its beginning is a small minority, gaining members for this group is conceivable emotionally and sociologically, as it was not for a state church in Europe between 1000 and 1900 c.e. But more than this, because only individuals who have responded freely to Christ's invitation can be members, the church will die out if it does not win people. Of course, there is a shortcut at this point: if the church can hang on to its children without their making costly decisions for Christ, then sustainability is a little easier. But the point remains that the believers church will not exist fifty years from now unless new people choose to join it. The free church not only can be but has to be missionary in its structure." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 152-153.

[454] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.3.2, 739.

[455] Ibid., IV.3.2, 739, 742.

[456] Ibid., IV.3.2, 741.

[457] "Again, its freedom is limited only by its source. But its source really is its limit." Ibid.

[458] "Their Church may thus be a national Church, a state Church or a free Church, but its invisible essence must always be made visible in the fact that it is a confessing and missionary Church which leaves those around in no doubt as to whom or what it has to represent among them." Ibid., IV.3.2, 742.

[459] "true ministry of witness . . . will be addressed first and supremely to the men who do not share the knowledge of the community and are thus strangers to it, but then necessarily in this connexion to those who do share its knowledge and thus belong to it. It is thus a ministry both *ad extra* [outside of itself] and *ad*

Barth also makes the point that the world can learn about good management from the church (if the church practices Jesus' ways). "True Church law is exemplary law. For all its particularity, it is a pattern for the formation and administration of human law generally, and therefore of the law of other political, economic, cultural and other human societies."[460] This is what Yoder stresses.

> Yet in each case that way of interacting in the faith community is so concrete, so accessible, so 'lay,' that it is also a model of how any society, not excluding the surrounding 'public' society, can also form its common life more humanely.[461]

Yoder is confident that the practices will speak loudly because they have social payoff that can be discerned easily by the world. "Ethics is more than ethics. Actions proclaim."[462] The church's ethical practices are useful best practices for the world to learn from: "the very shape of the people of God in the world is a public witness, or is 'good news,' for the world."[463]

> What they [the five practices] have in common is that each of them concerns *both* the internal activities of the gathered Christian congregation *and* the ways the church interfaces with the world.[464]

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intra [within], and the two in a very definite order . . . This relationship is not to be reversed . . . it must accept the priority of its sending to the world, of its task in relation to those without." Ibid., IV.3.2, 832-833.

[460] Ibid., IV/2, 719.

[461] Yoder, "The New Humanity as Pulpit and Paradigm," 47.

[462] Ibid., 41.

[463] Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*, 8.

[464] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," 361. Italics original.

But for Barth this dynamic is instrumental. The world's admiring the church's wisdom hopefully leads to the world seeing Jesus Christ: "What the Christian community owes to the world is not a law or ideal, not an exactment or demand, but the Gospel."[465]

Yoder is very wary of the excesses of Pietism[466] and evangelicalism,[467] both of which downplayed the importance of the church's practices. He rightly thinks that church and mission should not be separated. "Thus peoplehood and mission, fellowship and witness, are not two desiderata, each capable of existing or being missed independently of one another; each is the condition of the genuineness of the other."[468]

But Yoder is wary of direct missionary intentionality. Instead, Yoder insists this mission work is a result, not something that is intended. Yoder argues that neither the Old Testament,[469] nor Jesus, nor Acts,[470] nor Paul place much emphasis on the

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[465] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 721. The church "is the point in the world where its [the world's] eyes are opened to itself and an end is put to its ignorance about itself. It is the point in the world where the world may know itself in truth and reality." Ibid., IV/3.2, 769.

[466] "Pietism has had two effects that contemporary theology criticizes . . . concentration on conversion as an individual phenomenon . . . [and] moralistic . . . conformity to the cultural patterns of the sending churches." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 38.

[467] "Lacking a robust ecclesiology, evangelicals were characterized by their preoccupation with personal piety, and they viewed mission as the work of a special society outside the church's purview." Wilbert R. Shenk, "Introduction: John Howard Yoder's Mission Theology: Context and Contribution," in *Theology of Mission: a Believers Church Perspective*, ed. John Howard Yoder, Gayle Gerber Koontz, and Andy Alexis-Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 20.

[468] Yoder, "A People in the World," 78.

[469] "Israel takes no action toward bringing in the nations . . . God's people are open to membership. But that is not a missionary witness to the nations . . . This Old Testament imagery shows no thought about the lostness of the nations beyond their lack of knowledge of Yahweh." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 52, 53, 54-55.

[470] "The mission of the church in Acts happened, but not by expositing or applying a mandate . . . a whole series of events, pushed by the Holy Spirit, led in a certain direction." Ibid., 78, 80.

missionary task. This was merely something occasional that the Holy Spirit caused to occur—outside of human intentionality. "Every step was unplanned . . . The Holy Spirit pushes the church beyond itself . . . . It is beyond human resources . . . In Acts the work of the Holy Spirit is outside the person."[471] Yoder sees the missionary expansion to be something of an accident—though he quickly says that the Holy Spirit guided it. And Yoder takes this description to be prescriptive. He does not understand the slowness of the apostles to understand the missionary task to be a lesson for later believers to be less slow. Their passivity and hesitancy is normative.

The apostle "Paul did not say it is our major duty to go and talk to our neighbors or go to the other side of the globe and talk to our neighbors there."[472] Instead, the practices of the church practiced rightly themselves speak to outsiders. Yoder writes that the church's inner life usually makes an impact on the outside world but this should be seen as an unintended outcome rather than an intentional goal. "The in-gathering had already begun to happen in the reality of the church, and the fundamental proclamation was to be that in-gathering. This proclamation was not primarily directed toward the outside world."[473]

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[471] Ibid., 86, 89.
[472] Ibid., 103.
[473] Ibid., 126.

Yoder teaches that a major aspect of the good news being proclaimed was that Jews and Gentiles could be together as one people. "This new humanity is not simply the *instrument* of the mission that carries the message . . . The new humanity *is* the salvation."[474] Yoder says, "The community of believers is the form of the mission."[475]

Of all of this, surely Barth's primary concern would be Yoder's saying "The new humanity *is* the salvation." Even in context this statement is at best hyperbole.[476] The church is not itself the salvation but is crucial for pointing to that salvation.[477] Barth will even affirm that it is in the church where salvation is tasted.[478] But church life is not itself

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[474] Ibid., 125-126.

[475] Yoder, "A People in the World," 89. "In the Acts story we see rather that the church is not simply a vehicle; the events in the church's life are themselves the fact of mission." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 89.

[476] "This new humanity is not simply the *instrument* of the mission that carries the message. It is not simply the *object lesson* of the mission: ' Look how they love each other.' It not just the *deposit* of the mission: all these people were saved and here they are in a pile. The new humanity is the salvation. It is already real. The being of the church is the salvation story as well as being the instrument, the object lesson and the deposit." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 125-126. Lesslie Newbigin says something similar in saying the church is more than just sign and instrument but Newbigin does not claim the congregation is the salvation. "local congregations . . . exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society." Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 233. The church has been described in the past as similar to Noah's ark—as a refuge and support. The apostle Paul advises the Corinthian church to remove the blatant sinner from their midst (1 Cor 5:2) that the sinner might no longer take for granted their protection (1 Cor 5:5).

[477] If Yoder wanted to make more compelling case for the church being salvation he might have made the argument from the New Testament references to the church being the body of Christ because these certainly dignify the church. As we have seen, Barth finds it troubling that some Roman Catholics refer to church as the continuation ("prolongation") of the incarnation. Barth grants the exalted role of the church but still thinks the distinction must be maintained that though the church is the body of Christ, it is not indistinguishable from Christ. "The true community of Jesus Christ is the community which God has sent out into the world in and with its foundation. As such it exists for the world . . . We can and must speak of it as strongly as this, but not more strongly. Its sending is not a repetition, extension or continuation. His own sending does not cease as He sends it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 768.

[478] "It is in the community first, and in the life of the men called to it and gathered in it, that salvation, reconciliation, the covenant, the justification of man before God and his sanctification for Him, can and

salvation![479] It is not itself the goal. There is indeed something instrumental about the church even if it has some value in itself. Barth writes that Christendom definitions of church often concluded that church life was the purpose of the church.[480] Along these lines, Yoder argues that in Scripture "proclamation was not primarily directed toward the outside world."[481] For Yoder, witness to the world is not intentional but something incidental—the church does its own thing and perhaps the world will notice. But Barth argues that the church does have a purpose. "It exists for the world."[482] This is not something that may happen but is the main purpose of the church. Barth's definition of the church includes it: "our presupposition that the Christian community really is the society which exists for the world as it is given to some of those united in it practically to fulfil this existence."[483]

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should be expressed *de facto* [in fact], that the peace of God which passeth understanding should be experienced, tasted and felt as an event." Ibid., IV/3.2, 763-764.

[479] "it is not outside adherence to the Church, but outside the adherence of all men to Him as known—and confessed and proclaimed by the Church, that there is no salvation." Ibid., IV/1, 688.

[480] "It is plain that in the depictions of the 16th and 17th centuries we do not find any goal of its existence which transcends the Church itself . . . Is the Church, then, an end in itself in its existence as the community and institution of salvation? We are led to this impossible hypothesis if the question [of the meaning and purpose of the church] is not taken into account." Ibid., IV/3.2, 766. "We recall the classical definition of the Church . . . Why does this definition need to be completed and corrected? . . . [because] to be His community, it has no option but to reach out beyond its own circle and to confess Him to all men." Ibid., IV/3.2, 789.

[481] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 126.

[482]This phrase occurs nine times in the English translation of §72. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 763, 764, 768, 773, 777, 785, 786, 794, 796.. The synonymous phrase: The Christian "community exists for the world" occurs four more times. Ibid., IV/3.2, 769, 785..

[483] Ibid., IV/3.2, 784.

It is Yoder's contention that the church is not to be intentional about reaching outsiders. It is to be an example. The church is not responsible to connect the dots for outsiders but rather to accept those the Lord brings. It is active in pursuing Christian practices but passive with regard to interacting with outsiders.

Yoder distinguishes between proclamation (reporting or telling) and persuasion (arguing and explaining). The church is to do the former but not the latter. Yoder writes, "The proper way to talk about an action of God is to report it. The proper way to talk about an idea is to argue it and explain why it makes sense, but the proper thing to do about an event is to tell about it."[484] Christians are merely responding to something God has done. They therefore point to God's work. But Yoder thinks Christians should not go further and make a case for Christianity. Yoder says that "Proclamation and persuasion are not the same things."[485] Yoder says missionary communication should be

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[484] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 59.

[485] Ibid., 109, Cf. 98. Yoder goes on to say: "Persuasion or *peithō* in Greek is a negative word for Paul." In his exegesis is from a few pages earlier.
Yoder writes:
First, Paul may have been criticized for being a people pleaser. Although almost all English translations put the first part of each verse in 2 Corinthians 5:11-13 into the indicative mood, there are grounds to put it into the interrogative, as James Moffat's translation does. Since there was no punctuation in the received Greek text, we cannot tell whether the original was a declarative or an interrogative sentence. I suggest that the beginning of these verses should be put as questions. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:11 instead of Paul stating, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others," Paul would be asking: "Do you think that I who fear the Lord am 'trying to please' others?" Most English versions translate the Greek word peithō in 2 Corinthians 5:11 as "persuade." But the Greek word has a negative connotation. It does not mean "I win people over" or "I convince people." It means "I sell out to people." To be a people pleaser is a reproach. If the first part of this verse is posed as a question, Paul was quoting his accusers and defending himself against reproach: "Do you think that I, who fear God, 'am trying to please people?' What I am is known to God, and I hope it is known to you." Second, in the following verse Paul would have been quoting his

like informing people about a train schedule. It is a take it or leave it proposition. It is not persuading people to ride the train. It is merely informing them when it is leaving and where it is going.[486] It is declaration or information. It is not persuasion.

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accusers to the effect that he was inappropriately recommending himself: "Do you think I am 'commending myself again' to you? No. I am just giving you something to explain. Giving you cause to be proud of us so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a person's position. Ibid., 97-98.

According to a standard Greek lexicon, Yoder is correct that perhaps Paul's use of πείθω in 2 Cor 5:11 has a negative connotation: "persuade, appeal to, also in a bad sense cajole, mislead." William F. Arndt and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), πείθω, 639-640. Also in Yoder's favor is a derivative of the verb used in 1 Cor 2:4 "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive (πειθοῖ[ς]) words." See another pejorative use of a symantically related term in Gal 5:8 "That kind of persuasion (πεισμονὴ) does not come from the one who calls you." Still, some strong rejoiners can be made to Yoder's argument here. First, as Yoder admits, none of the modern translations reflect his translation of 2 Cor 5:11: NRSV, NIV, ESV, CEV, RSV. Second, this is not the Scripture passage most proponents for missionary persuasion would draw upon as a rationale for what they do. It is hard to imagine that Paul's obviously complex polemical argument here that criticizes the rhetorical persuasion of his opponents would indicate Christians should not use persuasion given the entire Scriptures which arguably consist of persuasive words. Third, the entire section is Paul attempting verbally to convince the Corinthians to accept his ministry. In 2 Cor 5:11-6:2, the apostle Paul "seeks to persuade others of the legitimacy of his apostolic ministry." Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000). It is hard to see how Paul can be thought to be against persuasion in general. Fourth, Paul is not against persuasion in general but he is disputing his opponents' view of what is persuasive: fine words of rhetoric, fame, riches, connections, and spiritual fireworks. "Paul's reference to persuasion in 5:11 is most likely also a jab at his opponents' reliance on rhetoric to support their claims. The action of 'persuading men' (peitho) was virtually synonymous with the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition . . . Paul's opponents took pride in their professional rhetorical prowess, their letters of recommendation from other churches, the payment they received for their ministry, their ethnic and spiritual pedigree, and their ecstatic spiritual experiences." Ibid. Paul does indeed want to persuade the Corinthians but he is trying to convince them that these indications should not be persuasive for them. Instead, Paul is declaring his transparency, frugality, suffering, and love as marks of credibility. Fifth, though this is not Pauline literature, it should be said in the book of Acts, Paul is depicted positively "persuading" with this verb: Ac 18:4; 19:8; 28:23-24. See a positive and negative use of this word in: 19:8 and 19:26 respectively.

[486] "Where the train will go depends on a combination of the schedule and the tracks. There is objectivity and reliability, a fitting into a plan that does not depend on any given passenger. Whether somebody gets on the train is completely his or her decision . . . Think of that difference as it relates to evangelism . . . Kingdom of God proclamation says, 'This train is bound for glory. Get on or get left." Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 109-110.

Yoder is correct that efforts of persuasion can fall into two problems. First, some Christians who are most vocal about persuading people to become Christians, are themselves in the way they live, not particularly good examples of Christian faith. Rather than modestly pointing to God's work with their lives, they are like the hypocrites Jesus criticized. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are" (Matt 23:15 NIV). As the entirety of Jesus' comments in Matthew 23 indicate, it is crucial for one's walk to line up with one's talk. If the missionary's life does not line up with their message, it will likely make the person receiving the message even more resistant to the message than if the missionary would have said nothing at all.

Second, being intentional about communicating the good news to others sometimes leads to the gospel being compromised.[487] Yoder worries that the aim to reach outsiders is misguided because it is doomed to descend into accommodation, that is, syncretism. Yoder worries that congregations who intentionally intend to reach out to

[487] Yoder explores in some depth how missionaries in the past have fallen into either "accommodation and syncretism" or "radical foreignness and rejection" and that "we must look for something in between the two" but since Yoder does not think the church should be persuading outsiders, this is more of a reflection on what is to be done if people from a new culture want to embrace Christianity than a real dilemma for persuading missionaries. Ibid., 227.

outsiders end up diluting the potency of the gospel.[488] The turn toward "persuasion" may lead the missionary to dilute the truth to make it more palatable to the listener. Of course, the possibility of sliding into syncretism (that is, a mixture of the local existent culture and Christianity to the extent that Christianity is tainted) is a danger for all Christians, not just those involved in intentional missionary practice. Jesus wanted his followers to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:15-16) and the dynamic is difficult to navigate. Yoder's concern is that trying to communicate the good news to those in the world may hasten the slide into the world. Yoder reflects on the tradition of

[488] Yoder refers to this pejoratively as "translation" of the gospel. Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, 86, 88-89, 114, 116. Barth criticizes Rudolf Bultmann after Bultmann writes to Barth, "Another reason for your failure to understand seems to me to lie in the fact that you do not see the problem of 'translation,' or do not see it as I think it ought to be seen." Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Briefwechsel 1911-1966 (GA V.1)*, 88. Later Barth continues to complain about it but without naming Bultmann since Bultmann claims Barth misunderstands him. "Nowadays, of course, the "exegetical-theological" task is often said to consist in the translation of biblical assertions out of the speech of a past time into the language of modern man. The remarkable assumption behind this project, however, seems to be that the content, meaning, and point of biblical assertions are relatively easy to ascertain and may afterward be presupposed as self-evident. The main task would be then simply to render these assertions understandable and relevant to the modern world by means of some sort of linguistic key. The message is all very well, it is said, but "how do you tell it to the man on the street?" The truth of the matter, however, is that the central affirmations of the Bible are not self-evident; the Word of God itself, as witnessed to in the Bible, is not immediately obvious in any of its chapters or verses. On the contrary, the truth of the Word must be sought precisely, in order to be understood in its deep simplicity." Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 35. David Congdon thinks Barth makes too strong a distinction between the primary and secondary aspects of understanding the gospel and translating the gospel. "The problem of language is not a merely practical matter to be carried out only after the gospel's content has been settled. Instead, coming to an understanding of the gospel through exegesis and dogmatics is already to engage in the missionary enterprise of translation." David W. Congdon, "Theology as Theanthropology: Barth's Theology of Existence in Its Existentialist Context," in *Karl Barth and the Making of Evangelical Theology: A Fifty-Year Perspective*, ed. Clifford B. Anderson and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 62, Cf. 59-61; David W. Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 194-206.

"Mennonite silent presence" and notes that at times "silence can be false when there is an invitation to speak" but this is hardly a stirring call to missionary communication.[489]

Barth however has a more nuanced view of missionary communication. Similar to Yoder's distinction between proclamation and persuasion, Barth distinguishes between declaration, explanation, and application.[490] But Barth thinks the church should do all of three. The content of the Christian gospel is not infinitely malleable so in one sense the Christian simply "declares" (or as Yoder puts it, "proclaims") "the Gospel which has this divine historical fact as its content."[491] There is a sense in which all witness is just "simply proclaiming . . . 'Jesus Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.'" This is the "compass, backbone" of witness. But this "declaration" is not simply living winsomely hoping the world will notice. No, the church is to "to declare it [the Gospel] with the human means at its [church's] disposal."[492] That is to say, the church should "establish a sign . . . on the housetops" as best as it can. "Powerfully or weakly . . . skillfully or unskillfully . . . Its ministry is to make this indicatory movement as well or

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[489] Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, 335, 334-335. His conclusion is that presence is "presenting the alternative that Christian faith represents in that new place." Ibid., 337. That is, the church should be an example of service.

[490] "what is meant by witness as the sum of what the Christian community has to render? . . . declaration, exposition and address, or the proclamation, explication and application of the Gospel . . . We choose this sequence of the three elements for the sake of perspicuity. The emphasis can and must always fall equally definitely on all of them. They are all implicit and explicit in one another. The nature or essence of the ministry of the community as witness is one and the same in all three." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 843-844, Cf. 843-854.

[491] Ibid., IV/3.2, 844.

[492] Ibid.

badly as it can."[493] Barth says from a human standpoint, all human movements and groups try to get their message out—the church should do the same.[494] And this emphasis on the church's role is just Barth talking about "declaration;" the church must at same time do what he calls "explanation and application."[495] The church need not and should not alter the basic message of the Gospel. "It [The church] has not to shape it [the Gospel] according to its own needs or whims."[496] But the church should explain the Gospel—"making it intelligible."[497] It is not enough to have proclamation that is "loud and clear but is empty because it is undeveloped and unarticulated declaration or mere assertion."[498] Barth says that Christians should make the case to outsiders that Christianity does not entail giving up one's rational faculties.[499] Christianity does not

[493] Ibid. "Again, it [the church] need not grumble that it can fulfil the task laid upon it only with human instruments. No more is demanded than that it should actually make use of what is humanly possible with all its energies and in a way appropriate to the cause in hand." Ibid., IV/3.2, 845.
[494] This communication "a task which in itself, as a human movement, is no other, neither easier nor more difficult, than what other men and human groups are always doing in a different sense and for a different purpose." Ibid., IV/3.2, 844.
[495] "To be sure, the community cannot fulfil as such the task laid upon it without at once, as we shall see, indicating the meaning and scope of what is attested by it and to that extent necessarily striding on to explanation and address, to exposition and reference, to explication and application of the Gospel." Ibid., IV/3.2, 846.
[496] Ibid., IV/3.2, 847.
[497] Ibid., IV/3.2, 846.
[498] Ibid., IV/3.2, 847.
[499] "There can and should be taken from man [people] the illusion that knowledge is possible only in the form of a *sacrificium intellectus* [sacrifice of the intellect], and the excuse that he is neither capable of this nor willing to make it. While the [Christian] community will not presume to try to accomplish what is not its work, it can show him that even from the human standpoint this knowledge is quite as much in order as any other human knowledge." Ibid., IV/3.2, 848.

mean just trying to believe impossible things.[500] "The Gospel is not generally knowable. But it is generally intelligible and explicable. For its content is rational and not irrational."[501] People in the world may certainly reject the Gospel, but it is Christians' responsibility to help them understand its basic framework. Barth says that if this modest goal is not being achieved, it is not that the Gospel is not coherent, nor that human possibilities for communication are inadequate, nor that listeners are obstinant, but rather that the Christian community is not doing all it can.[502] This "explaining" work is be done in such a way that listeners can comprehend it—"in the constantly changing forms of human consideration, thought and expression."[503] This however does not mean that the Gospel can only be communicated if "alien principles" or common

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[500] "Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said. 'One can't believe impossible things.' 'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast. There goes the shawl again!" Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found There* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1872), 100.

[501] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 849.

[502] "If this proximate goal is not attained, the fault lies neither with the content of the Gospel, with its lack of the necessary clarity and therefore at bottom with its lack of rationality and perspicuity, nor with the human means at the disposal of the [Christian] community, which are adequate in themselves to reveal clearly in human terms that which is intrinsically clear. If it does not succeed in showing some at least that what it proclaims to the world is not an absurdity but a communication which, however it may be received, is self-consistent and to that extent meaningful, it is also at fault if it throws the responsibility for its failure on the men to whom it is sent. For it is surely possible for even the most obstinate of unbelievers, whether or not they can come to a knowledge of the truth, at least to appreciate the inner consistency and to that extent the meaning of the evangelical message. If they do not, the community is well advised to ask itself whether this is not because of a deficiency in its own attention to the inner clarity, rationality and perspicuity of the Gospel on the one side and neglect of the human means at its disposal on the other. It is thus advised to seek the fault in itself rather than the wicked world, and therefore with new zest and seriousness to make new and more energetic efforts in this direction." Ibid., IV/3.2, 848-849.

[503] Ibid., IV/3.2, 849.

"presuppositions" are established first.[504] Barth calls this the games of trying to find a connection point.[505] There is no other foundation upon which the Gospel rests—if there was, that would be what one would worship.[506] He is not saying Christians need to be blunt or unpleasant or crude. Rather, Barth argues strongly for flexibility and subtlety in how witness occurs.

> The one thing can be done in many different forms, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, in some kind of human speech or in eloquent silence, in specific acts and modes of conduct or in intentional and well-considered abstentions from action.[507]

So, how can the person witnessing relate to their listeners yet not compromise the content being delivered? Barth says it is similar to the task of teaching.[508] Teaching people "mere Christianity" or basic Christianity or Christianity 101 is witness.[509] Barth's

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[504] Ibid. Barth earlier in the section discusses this good attempt to witness going awry by accepting alien principles by describing it as a loss of constancy. "it will seriously attempt an understanding and confession of the Word of God relevant to the time and situation, but that there will be the fateful substitution of an autonomous for an obedient movement, the Gospel being made relevant to the age and situation in the sense that it is not just spoken to it but spoken in accordance with it, being fashioned by its concerns and needs and aspirations. It is thus made concrete and addressed to the existing situation by its interpretation according to the alien presuppositions of the situation and the resultant loss of its unity and constancy." Ibid., IV/3.2, 823.

[505] Recall Barth's adamant "Nein" [No!] to Emil Brunner's argument that the Christian must find a "point of connection" [*Anknüpfungspunkt*] on which to commence conversations with non-Christians. Missions is not to play games of finding the "points of contact [Spiel mit Anknüpfungspunkten]." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 1003. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 875.

[506] "If you need a theory to worship Jesus, worship that theory." Stanley Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy*, Radical Traditions (Boulder, CO: WestviewPress, 1997), 193.

[507] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 845.

[508] "in the measure that [to the extent which] it [the church] gathers all the means at his disposal and seeks patiently and zealously to 'teach,' i.e., to recount that history as such, it is a witness, performing its ministry and justifying its existence before God and man." Ibid., IV/3.2, 850.

[509] The globally used evangelistic tool the Alpha course has marketed itself as Christianity 101.

Dogmatics in Outline take this form in the "semi-ruins" of post World War II Bonn, Germany in 1946.[510]

Teaching can take many forms. It is certainly not just declaration. But it also has substantial content that cannot be utterly molded by students. Indeed, teaching is certainly part of the Great Commission: "go and make disciples [students] . . . teaching them to obey everything I commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). One might think one needs to be a theology professor or pastor to teach the faith. But almost every Christian can teach outsiders how Christians approach topics. Figuratively, Christians invite non-Christians to try on their glasses and see if they can then see any better.

However, Barth makes one more point about witness. Christians should not just declare the Gospel (though its content is solid), nor just explain it (though this is entirely appropriate to convey to people what it means), but also apply it to non-Christians. Barth is talking about "knowing" people well enough to "invite" them, challenge ("jolt") them, "win" them, "woo" them, and "encourage" them that the Gospel might really be good news for them.[511] Barth's emphasis on the importance of "application" or "appeal" as the third aspect of witness (in addition to declaration and explanation) indicates he is more open to verbal persuasion in Christian witness than Yoder.[512] Yoder likes Barth's

[510] Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 6-7.
[511] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 850-854.
[512] Indeed, it can become coercion. Elmer John Thiessen lists fifteen kinds of unethical proselytism. Elmer John Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism: a Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* (Downers Grove,

emphasis on the church being exemplary before a watching world. But Barth thinks that the church should go beyond being an example; the church should declare, explain, and apply the gospel to outsiders.[513]

To review, for Barth, it is not state support (signified by the words "Constantinian" or "state churches") that is so deleterious to faithfulness but rather the Christendom assumption that everyone in a given society is born into the church. State churches assumed that everyone in the society at large was already inside the church and therefore the task was merely a catechetical one. There is therefore no need to communicate the gospel to outsiders because established churches are purportedly already reaching them. Yoder comes close to naming what is unique and beneficial about Barth's ecclesiology when he recognizes Barth's emphasis on the church being exemplary but Yoder significantly understates Barth's prioritizion of the missionary task. For Barth, "mission . . . sending out to the nations to attest the Gospel is the very root of the existence and therefore of the whole ministry of the community . . . the

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IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 234-237. But, is there really a way to avoid "persuasion?" Though Stanley Hauerwas is not addressing Yoder's objection to persuasion, he writes in the 2013 foreword to *With the Grain of the Universe*, Eugene "Garver argues . . . we cannot avoid trying to persuade or being persuaded by one another . . . When it is all said and done, it is persuasion all the way down." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 248.

[513] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 851. Will Willimon is right that Barth himself uses rhetoric in his own writing despite Barth's worries about it in preaching. "It is as if his actual rhetorical practice is better than his anti-rhetorical theory." Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching*, 250. Declaration, explanation, and application as described here in the *Church Dogmatics* is a more comprehensive, mature understanding of what witness looks like for Christians. Willimon is right to correct Barth's exaggerated criticism of rhetoric in his 1932-1933 lectures recorded in *Homiletics.* Ibid.

community itself and as such is the acting subject in foreign missions too, or else it is not the Christian community."[514]

(8) Pacifism: Barth is a post-Constantinian practical pacifist but not a Mennonite pacifist.

Eighth, Yoder writes that Barth gradually moved toward being a "practical pacifist" – "a rejection of war rooted . . . in discipleship . . . a true-to-type radical reformation posture."[515] Yoder is a sophisticated interpreter of Barth's views on war and criticizes Barth in nuanced ways at many points. Yoder himself senses and chafes against the confinement of discussions that dismiss the sect and relegate his insights to Mennonite and pacifist squabbling.[516] One of the ways he climbed out of these confines was by relating his views to those of Barth.

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[514] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 874, 875.

[515] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 186.

[516] Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner, the editors of the volume *The New Yoder*, loosely divide the scholarly conversation surrounding Yoder's work into two "broad, occasionally clumsy, generalizations" —the new Yoder and the old Yoder. Dula and Huebner, "Introduction," x. During Yoder's early career most of the responses to Yoder's work consisted of (1) a few non-Mennonites drawing upon "the Troeltschian typology of church and sect" ibid. to dismiss Yoder's Mennonite theology as unrealistic. (2) In response to this were many more Mennonite writers defending Yoder's work. (3) Much of the conversation was about pacifism. Upon further examination, all of Dula and Huebner's three characteristics of the old Yoder conversation are related to pacifism. (1) There was a debate in ethics about whether pacifism is merely a hopeless ideal promulgated naively by sects. "Old Yoder essays tend to focus on his defense of pacifism against those who dismiss peace as an irresponsible sectarian ideal." Ibid. (2) There was the debate among Mennonites about whether they should do more politically than register their disapproval of war through withdrawal. "some Mennonites who had lived through the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements . . . were eager to flex their new-found political muscles. ["Old"] Interpretations of Yoder often became a battlefield upon which Mennonites worked out their anxieties." Ibid., xi. (3) Mennonite defenders of Yoder's pacifism tended to gloss over his eschatological, Christological, and biblical rationale for pacifism and instead

It is only Yoder's conclusion that Barth was moving toward a "free church" (almost Mennonite) approach that is an overstatement. Barth's "practical pacifism" is not what distinguishes Barth's ecclesiology.

Yoder says Barth moved to a "rejection of war rooted not in social optimism, or social engineering, or sermon-on-the-mount legalism, but in discipleship, in again a true-to-type radical reformation posture."[517] Earlier, Yoder had written something similar,

> But probably more important for our purposes is the thesis that the kind of pacifist Karl Barth was on the way to becoming had a link with his developing ecclesiology . . . the difference . . . between the pacifism of the early and of the late Barth is precisely the difference between an establishment social ethic . . . and the non-conformist ethic of the confessing community.[518]

Though he is sympathetic, George Hunsinger is correct to push back on this earlier statement from Yoder.

> I think Yoder is on to something here. In the course of reflecting on the meaning of sanctification, Barth did move very far in a pacifist direction . . . On the other

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mischaracterized pacifism as the foundation upon which the rest of his theology was built. In this writings, "peace tends to function as the tail that wags the theological dog." Ibid., xii. Dula and Huebner argue that Yoder's work is more than just debates with Mennonites about pacifism. "we do not mean to imply a negative judgment on this [old Yoder] sort of work. After all, the old Yoder—Mennonites focused on war and spending a great deal of energy sorting through the legacy of Troeltsch and the Niebuhrs—*is* Yoder himself . . . It is just that his work also involved more than this." Ibid., xix. Stanley Hauerwas has helped the scholarly community to see this. Dula and Huebner write that Stanley Hauerwas is a bridge figure between these two conversations—with much of the new Yoder scholarship inspired by Hauerwas to take Yoder's insights beyond pacifism to other areas of theology and ethics. "Hauerwas is responsible for introducing Yoder to a wider audience . . . As Hauerwas came to be increasingly engaged alongside the kinds of figures and conversations mentioned above . . . many began to approach Yoder with those same kind of dialogue partners in mind . . . we suspect that the relationship between Hauerwas and Yoder has played a significant role in the emergence of the new Yoder." Ibid., xviii-xix.

[517] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 186.

[518] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 139, 145-146.

> hand, I have my doubts that Barth would have carried to the point of developing a sectarian view of the state and of rejecting all Christian participation in the civil and political exercise of force.

After two World Wars, many other theologians also became much more reluctant to support war. Yoder argues that Barth's growing pacifism was a strong indication that Barth's ecclesiology was becoming more Mennonite-like. Traditionally, pacifism would not necessarily be connected to an ecclesiology but rather "ethics" but for a Mennonite it is. By challenging the traditional theological categories, Yoder was able to move beyond conversations about Mennonite and pacifism into wider conversations about Barth and ecclesiology.[519] Despite the connections between pacifism and ecclesiology, Yoder only argues that pacifism is an aspect of Barth's "free church" ecclesiology along with a number of other factors. When these factors are revealed to be different than a Mennonite approach, it becomes clear that Barth's pacifism is also not a significant aspect of his ecclesiology.

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[519] This sort of move of connecting traditional Mennonite concerns over war and peace with a widely influential theologian like Barth and a topic like ecclesiology provided a way for Yoder to move beyond Mennonite conversations about war. Dula and Huebner argue that "new Yoder" writers tend to see Yoder as helpfully reconfiguring previous discussions being conducted on binary poles: "they read him as challenging the categories themselves instead of just taking up a position within the given categories." Dula and Huebner, "Introduction," xiii. Yoder writes, "It is normal for the newcomer to a debate which is already in process to accept the prevailing definition of terms and choose one of the existing sides, whereas the wiser approach is to question the definitions." John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1964; reprint, Herald Press), 90. As Dula and Huebner put it, "old Yoder discussions often proceed as if peace and violence name fairly straightforward realities." In "old Yoder" essays, "the background of Troeltsch and the Niebuhrs . . . . the notion of 'the political' was defined as an autonomous realm." But in "new Yoder" essays "find Yoder useful in exposing the kinds of violence implicit in many of the old liberal orthodoxies." Dula and Huebner, "Introduction," xiv-xv.

Between 1957 and 1970, Yoder analyzes Barth's approach to war

Yoder analyzed Barth's reflections on war and pacifism in two publications: *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* and "The Pacifism of Karl Barth." *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* was originally presented to Barth in person in 1957 and then was later revised and published as a book in 1970.[520] "The Pacifism of Karl Barth" overlaps in time and content with *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*. The essay was published in French by Yoder in 1963 and translated by him into English and published in 1968.[521] In other words, these two pieces represent Yoder's thinking about Barth from 1957 to 1970 but the final form analyzed here were published between 1968 and 1970.

In these two works, Yoder argues that Barth's approach to war in *Church Dogmatics* III//4 has a number of subtle flaws though he praises Barth's wariness toward war. Here are the main flaws that Yoder notices. (1) Yoder criticizes Barth for using the abstraction "reverence for life"—a slippery phrase that could easily be used to justify almost any killing.[522] (2) Yoder thinks Barth does not do enough to disabuse people of the idea that they can avoid the clear teaching of the Scriptures with an "'intuitionist' conception of the command of God."[523] (3) And Yoder think Barth is overly suspicious of casuistry when casuistry (that is careful reflection in the church based on Scripture, the

[520] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*.
[521] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth."
[522] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 17, 84-85.
[523] Ibid., 32, 85.

situation, the Christian tradition) is indeed needed in complicated or borderline (*Grenzfall*) cases.[524] (4) Yoder writes that Barth omits to study pacifism and thus unknowingly caricatures it.[525] Barth "identifies the Hitler state as unqualifiedly evil . . . so that to fight against a particular Nazi operation is to fight for Christ and his church."[526] Against this, Yoder argues that pacifism does not equal quietism—that the pacifist, like the soldier, will mobilize to oppose, persuade, and thwart an evildoer or enemy by other creative, sacrificial, and effective means other than killing. (5) Yoder also thinks Barth proceeds with unexamined assumptions regarding the state[527], e.g. implying that the Swiss people have a special calling,[528] does "no questioning of the national unit" of government, and assumes that "subjection cannot be attached to any other unit of government."[529] Yoder thinks Barth should have more carefully examined some of these assumptions which to Yoder reek of Swiss popular opinion rather than God's revelation. Yoder complains that the points mentioned above are "not explained theologically."[530] Yoder thinks normally Barth is relentless in analyzing assumptions by biblical criteria but in III/4 there are some aspects that are unhappily left unexamined.

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[524] Ibid., 45, 87. Cf. David Clough, "Fighting at the Command of God: Reassessing the Borderline Case in Karl Barth's Account of War in the *Church Dogmatics*," in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton (Aldershot, Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).
[525] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 37, 63-64, 86.
[526] Ibid., 99.
[527] Ibid., 30-31, 34, 59, 70-71, 72-77, 85.
[528] Ibid., 99.
[529] Ibid., 100.
[530] Ibid.

Yoder writes, "We are forced to conclude that his position as regards war is unworthy of some of the insights which are his own specific contribution to the history of theology in the last century . . . The point at which Barth is most completely 'non-Barthian.'"[531]

Barth himself in 1963 regretted to some extent what he has written about war in 1951 in III/4—especially that it had been taken by some as a rationale for German and Swiss military spending and nuclear proliferation. "So I even now cannot completely discard it [my writing on war in III/4]. Nevertheless, I would say it is perhaps not one of the felicitious parts of the *Church Dogmatics*."[532] Barth goes on to reflect that in the context of the whole treatment of war ninety-nine percent of what he says is against war. "One percent is left, eh, just that! I am not vulnerable to the charge that what I presented was war theology. But it is also not simple, clear anti-war theology or principled pacifism."[533] Barth protests that his openness to war is only really a few lines—"it is only three and a half lines"[534] where he asserts Switzerland's theoretical right to protect itself.[535] Barth then goes on to reiterate how stringent he understands the criteria for a

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[531] Ibid., 84, 85.

[532] Barth, "12 Gespräch mit der Kirchlichen Bruderschaft in Württemberg (15.7.1963)," 65. My translation of: "Also -- ganz verwerfen kann ich es auch jetzt noch nicht. Immerhin würde ich sagen: es ist vielleicht nicht einer der allerglücklichsten Abschnitte in der Kirchlichen Dogmatik."

[533] Ibid., 66. My translation of: "ein Prozent bleibt übrig, gelt, nur das! Man wird mir also nicht den Vorwurf machen können, das sei Kriegstheologie, was ich da vorgetragen habe. Nur ist es allerdings auch nicht einfache, eindeutige Antikriegstheologie, prinzipieller Pazifismus."

[534] Ibid., 68.

[535] See the whole page (paragraphs on either side of this remark) but this is the infamous 3.5 lines: "I may remark in passing that I myself should see it as such a case if there were any attack on the independence,

"just war" (*bellum iustum*) to be and how therefore it would be extremely rare that there could be a "just war."[536]

Despite his criticism of Barth, Yoder praises Barth's wariness toward war—more so than "any really prominent theologian in the history of European Protestant dogmatics."[537] Yoder states that Barth is "almost pacifist" and that his criticism of war is in some ways unprecedented. "It is not exaggerating to say that in the pages devoted to the question of war [in *Church Dogmatics* III/4 (1951)] Barth offers a criticism of the belligerent tradition of official Christianity which is unprecedented and unparalleled from the pen of the occupant of any official European chair of theology."[538]

Yoder does not mention it (though he does later call Barth a "post-Christendom theologian"[539]), but Barth twice uses the word "post-Constantinian" in German—a phrase Yoder uses as well.[540] Barth says, even if he "cannot accept the absolutism of the pacifist thesis," he opposes the dominant "post-Constantinian theology of war."[541] A few pages earlier, Barth also uses the adjective to modify church: "post-Constantinian

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neutrality and territorial integrity of the Swiss Confederation, and I should speak and act accordingly." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 462.

[536] Barth, "12 Gespräch mit der Kirchlichen Bruderschaft in Württemberg (15.7.1963)," 65-75.

[537] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 10.

[538] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 121.

[539] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian."

[540] See for example Yoder's memorable reference to the possibility of "neo-neo-neo-neo-Constantinianism." Yoder, "Christ, the Hope of the World," 197.

[541] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 460. Cf. "*die nachkonstantinische Kriegstheologie*" Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, III/4, 527.

church" *nachkonstantinischen Kirche*—to discuss the way the church after Constantine has accommodated itself to war.[542] In other words, Barth, like Yoder, questions the habitual acceptance of war by Christians since Christianity became allied with the state around the time of Constantine.

Yoder praises Barth's increasingly explicit "practically pacifist" position articulated in IV/2 (1955).[543] Barth writes in IV/2, "According to the sense of the New Testament we cannot be pacifists in principle, only in practice. But we have to consider very closely whether, if we are called to discipleship, we can avoid being practical pacifists, or fail to be so."[544] Barth criticizes being "pacifists in principle" because Barth thinks of "principles" as the fuel of legalism. "Principles are fixed. You cannot live by principles."[545] In other words, Barth thinks that Christians will end up being pacifists in their behavior but not because of a principle but because in the overwhelming number

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[542] The "post-Constantinian church" phrase is not obvious in the English translation. "There is indeed a strange difference between the position adopted by the Christian world during the first centuries and that which followed in the centuries **after Constantine**. In the earlier period there was a fairly general aversion on the part of the community, tacit but for that reason all the more self-evident, towards the whole world of war and warring." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 455. "Es war tatsächlich eine wunderliche Wendung, die sich zwischen der von der Kirche der ersten Jahrhunderte eingenommenen Haltung und der der konstantinischen und **nachkonstantinischen** Kirche, die dann allgemein die aller folgenden Jahrhunderte geworden ist, vollzogen hat. Damals, vorher, eine fast allgemeine stille, aber nur um so selbstverständlichere Fremdheit der Gemeinde gegenüber der ganzen Welt des Krieges und der Kriegführung."

[543] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 126. Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 88.

[544] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 550.

[545] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 82.

of situations, that will be what it means to be obedient to the Word of God. Yoder paraphrases Barth's objection to pacifism as a principle.

> To give a too absolute or too slavishly literal interpretation of 'Thou shalt not kill' is to insult not only sovereign God, but also free man, who is only truly man when he takes upon himself in the last analysis all the weight of his being a free creature. The 'pacifist,' tying himself ahead of time to an abstract principle, is in so doing not a free man.[546]

Yoder does not disagree that "principles" cannot be used in isolation by the church as the final word in ethical deliberation. Instead, "careful theologizing" and "committed churchmanship" are called for: the church must consider such biblical or dogmatic "criteria" in the light of the Spirit with reflection on the whole of the Scriptures in the circumstances. Yoder's worry is that Christians would take Barth's protest about "principles" as justification to make decisions based on their intuition or the situation (without careful theologizing or the dialogue with the church) to overrule a clear teaching from Scripture.[547] Whereas, Barth wants to make sure that he makes clear God could speak to someone and tell them to do something even other Christians perceive to be harmful, radical, or foolish.

In summary, Barth argues Christians should utilize just war criteria to reflect on how to respond to war. Yoder and he agree that this would make war rare but Barth is

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[546] Yoder, "The Pacifism of Karl Barth," 122.

[547] Yoder says Barth does not intend an intuitionist approach but his work is susceptible to that reading. "Our minds could turn here to an illuminist or 'enthusiastic' conception of knowledge, or to some sort of ecstatic prophesy, or a kind of 'inner light;' but of this there can be no question for Barth." Ibid., 123.

not a pacifist of the historic peace church variety. Pacifism is not the most significant aspect of Barth's ecclesiology.

(9) Congregationalism: Barth does prefer congregationalism but he does not condemn other forms of polity.

Ninth, Barth "used the noun *Gemeinde* (assembly or congregation) as a theological signal of low-church identity."[548] Yoder is incorrect to suggest that Barth's use of *Gemeinde* is an indication of Barth's emphasis on the free church rather than the state church.

> Where any traditional ecclesiology would have dealt with the church as *Kirche,* Barth uniformly uses *Gemeinde*. Bromiley regularly translates this as 'community,' which is not linguistically wrong, but fails to render anything of the specific church political bias of the German terminology. The standard German term *Kirche* means the established institution with its official definition and unquestionable legitimacy. The alternative *Gemeinde* has in the past been used by pietists and schismatics and those who concentrate on the quality of the relationship of the gathered church.[549]

Yoder is off here in that it is not the case that Barth "uniformly uses *Gemeinde*" but rather Barth uses it alongside *Kirche*. Moreover, *Kirche* never occurs in German translations of the Bible as a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*[550] so using the biblical word *Gemeinde*

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[548] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian," 186.
[549] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143.
[550] It does not appear in these five German versions: Hoffnung für Alle, Luther Bibel 1545, Neue Genfer Übersetzung, Schlachter 1951, Schlachter 2000 available at https://www.biblegateway.com/ Luther did use it a few times but not for *ekklesia.* "Luther's dislike of the word *Kirche* is well-known. Less well-known is the fact that in the revised Luther Bible, and in the corresponding concordance, we do not find the term at all, whereas Luther himself used it in his own translation, though mostly in relation to pagan shrines in the OT,

instead of *Kirche* is not as radical as Yoder implies. The use of *Gemeinde* does not indicate that Barth is signaling sympathy with pietists and schismatics. Yoder's larger argument is that Barth's use of *Gemeinde* is another indication of his "free church" ecclesiology. However, we have noted that the "free church" term is inexact.

However, Yoder is correct that Barth is not as interested in national churches but rather congregations.

> The coming to prominence of the concept of *Gemeinde* in Barth's thought is a post-1932 development which Herberg misses by leaping from 1932 to 1946 and back. *Gemeinde* means congregation, rather than "church" in some more hierarchical or structural sense, though it does not mean only a strictly local gathering. It is the gathering-under-the-Word, of which the local assembly is the typical but not the exclusive form.[551]

Barth does prefer "congregational polity" which is a characteristic of some "free church ecclesiology" such as that of the Mennonites and Baptists (though not the Moravians or Methodists). But Barth is supportive of other forms of polity as well as long they

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and in the NT only in connection with the dedication at Jn. 10:22 (as a rendering of τὰ ἐγκαίνια 'the dedication of the temple,' d. 2 Macc 2:9)." Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 531. This article which is cited below was likely commissioned before 1933 when the first volume of the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* was published. and was published in volume 3 in 1938. Schmidt had been dismissed from his position as a professor in Bonn, Germany in 1933 like Barth would be in January 1934. Schmidt had refused to join the German Christians. The editor of the series Gerhard Kittel was a supporter of the Nazis. Both Schmidt and Barth eventually came to Basel, Switzerland. Karl Ludwig Schmidt is not to be confused with Carl Schmitt who did cooperate with Nazis. Karl Barth wrote of Karl Ludwig Schmidt in 1959: "Looking back more generally over the years since the appearance of the last volume, I am struck by the fact that so many close contemporaries, who have followed my whole course and therefore the *Church Dogmatics* with critical or at least attentive good-will, have now passed from the present scene. . . . Again, I must refer to my colleague both in Bonn and Basel, K. L. Schmidt, far superior to me in both learning and pugnacity, but always so stimulating." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, Preface.

[551] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 96.

contribute to the church being dependent on and "confessing" the "living Lord Jesus Christ" and facilitate witness to outsiders.

What we will see is Barth uses *Gemeinde* in two different ways: as a people and as a congregation. This can be confusing because Barth himself is not clear about this. But Barth's instincts here are mostly sound in that the Greek word *ekklesia* has these two different meanings: the total church and a congregation. We will also see that in his 1947 essay, Barth makes a few overstatements about the *ekklesia* only meaning a "congregation" and about the *ekklesia* being an "event." However, these mistakes are not repeated in his mature ecclesiology in the 1950's in the *Church Dogmatics.* Then we will clarify Barth's congregationalist polity convictions.

Gemeinde as a people

Barth's first use of *Gemeinde* refers to the people of God, which includes the Old Testament and New Testament people of God. (This is not an especially "congregationalist" way of speaking about the church against Yoder's claim that Barth's use of *Gemeinde* is "free church.") We also note that Barth uses *Gemeinde* in a way that assumes the *ekklesia* are the people of the assembly. This meaning mitigates to some extent a few excessively congregationalist statements and actualist statements that we will look at in the section on *Gemeinde* as congregation.

Barth's use of Gemeinde as umbrella term for the community of God in both Old and New Testaments

In §34 "The Election of the Community [*Gemeinde*]" in II/2, Barth mentions that he prefers *Gemeinde* (as opposed to *Kirche* church) because it can encompass both God's Old Testament people Israel and God's New Testament people the church. Barth writes "To designate the object of this 'other' election we choose the concept of the community [*Begriff der Gemeinde]* because it covers the reality both of Israel and of the Church."[552] Kimlyn Bender sees this as the main reason that Barth has chosen the term: "The term 'community' [*Gemeinde]* is chosen, Barth explains, because it can include both Israel and the church (*CD* II.2, 196)."[553] Bender sees this as the main rationale for *Gemeinde* whereas Yoder sees the "congregationalist" emphasis as the main rationale for *Gemeinde,* when Barth (unwittingly perhaps) uses it for both reasons. This is a strikingly pro-Jewish comment for Barth to make in II/2 in 1942 (while World War II was still raging)—that Israel and the church are part of the same "community of God." But as we will see this is also simply a biblical way of speaking reflecting that the same Greek word *ekklesia* is used in the Septuagint and New Testament and the same German word *Gemeinde* is used in German translations of the Old and New Testament.

[552] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 196. Cf. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik,* II/2, 216.
[553] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 121.

Referring back to the above section of the *Church Dogmatics*, in 1951, Barth repeats that Jews and Christians are two different forms of one community [*Gemeinde*].

> the people [*Volk*] of Israel . . . and the Christian Church [*Kirche*] . . . . are two forms and aspects (cf. *Church Dogmatics* II/2, §34, 1) of the one inseparable community [*Gemeinde*].[554]

Barth says there are two forms of the one community of God. Only in English does this sound strange. Barth is expressing solidarity with the Jewish people but Barth is also simply noting the linguistic continuity between the *ekklesia* / *Gemeinde* of God/Lord which is mentioned in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

It surprises many English readers to learn that ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) is used not just in the New Testament but also in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, 103 times. The Hebrew word קָהָל (*qahal)* occurs 123 times. Fifty-three times ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) in the LXX translates the Hebrew word קָהָל (*qahal).*[555] In German, one can see the continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament, because the instances of *qahal* and *ekklesia* in both the Old and New Testament are translated with *Gemeinde.* This differs from English translations where *qahal* (or *ekklesia)* in the Old Testament is never translated "church." Rather, in the instances when *ekklesia* replaces

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[554] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 670. "**das Volk Israel** . . . getretene **christliche Kirche** in zwei Gestalten und unter zwei Aspekten gesehen (KD II, 2 § 34, 1!) untrennbar die eine Gemeinde." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 747-748. Bold in original.

[555] Deut 9:10; 18:16; 23:2; 23:3; 23:4; 23:8; 31:30; Judg 20:2; 21:5; 21:8; 1 Sam 17:47; 1 Kgs 8:14; 8:22; 8:55; 8:65; Joel 2:16; Mic 2:5; Ps 22:22; 22:25; 26:5; 35:18; 40:10; 89:6; 107:32; 149:1; Job 30:28; Prov 5:14; Lam 1:10; Ezra 2:64; 10:1; 10:8; 10:12; 10:14; 1 Chr 13:2; 13:4; 28:8; 29:1; 29:10; 29:20; 2 Chr 1:3; 1:5; 6:3; 6:12; 6:13; 7:8; 20:5; 20:14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:31; 29:32; 30:2; 30:4; 30:13; 30:17; 30:23; 30:24; 30:25.

qahal, the English uses "assembly" or in some translations occasionally, "congregation."[556]

In the Old and New Testaments, the common meaning is that an *ekklesia* is a gathering of people in God's name. In the Old Testament, there is an "assembly of the Lord" (German: *Gemeinde des HERRN*; LXX: ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου) in Deut 23:2, 3 (Hebrew: בִּקְהַל יְהוָה) and in 1 Chr 28:8 (Hebrew: קְהַל־יְהוָה).[557] And in the New Testament there is a "church of God" (ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ / *Gemeinde Gottes*) (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 10:32; 11:16, 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4). The instances of *ekklesia* in the LXX that translate the Hebrew *qadal* are a series of moments of community renewal –with Moses, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Ezra guiding the people in listening to God.[558] Seeing these highlights in the Old Testament, it is clear why the New Testament writers would want to appropriate *ekklesia.* They want to associate their

[556] The NIV always translates these as "assembly." The NRSV usually does with approximately 46 instances of "assembly" and seven instances of "congregation."

[557] Cf. "ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ" (an assembly of the people of God / *Gemeinde Gottes*) in Judg 20:2. See a New Testament reference as well to God's presence at his assembly in the Old Testament in Acts 7:38.

[558] Same references as above: Deut 9:10; 18:16; 23:2; 23:3; 23:4; 23:8; 31:30; Judg 20:2; 21:5; 21:8; 1 Sam 17:47; 1 Kgs 8:14; 8:22; 8:55; 8:65; Joel 2:16; Mic 2:5; Ps 22:22; 22:25; 26:5; 35:18; 40:10; 89:6; 107:32; 149:1; Job 30:28; Prov 5:14; Lam 1:10; Ezra 2:64; 10:1; 10:8; 10:12; 10:14; 1 Chr 13:2; 13:4; 28:8; 29:1; 29:10; 29:20; 2 Chr 1:3; 1:5; 6:3; 6:12; 6:13; 7:8; 20:5; 20:14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:31; 29:32; 30:2; 30:4; 30:13; 30:17; 30:23; 30:24; 30:25. *Ekklesia* also definitely never means what the etymological legend: "called out ones." If anything, it means the "called in ones"—the assembled (as these Old Testament references indicate). "Though some persons have tried to see in the term ἐκκλησία a more or less literal meaning of 'called-out ones,' this type of etymologizing is not warranted either by the meaning of ἐκκλησία in NT times or even by its earlier usage." Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 125.

gatherings with the *ekklesia* of God—the people gathered to dedicate themselves to God.[559]

Ekklesia can have the literal meaning "assembly" or the more figurative meaning of the "people who assemble"

Ekklesia in Greek has a literal and a more figurative meaning. (Again, Barth's two uses of *Gemeinde* parallel these two meanings). The literal meaning of *ekklesia* is a formal assembly (Acts 19:39). But in the Old Testament and New Testament, the term is used not just to refer to the meeting of an assembly but figuratively to the *people* who belong to the assembly or assemblies: the representatives, the members, the congregants, the assembled, the attendees. Schmidt writes in his lexicon entry. "The decisive point is not that someone or something assembles; it is who or what assembles."[560] This is the case in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Schmidt says to consider "the OT use of ἐκκλησία for the total community of Israel."[561] In a recent commentary on Deuteronomy, an Old Testament scholar confirms this. "The *qāhāl*, 'assembly, refers to participation in corporate worship, sacral war, and civil gatherings. In Deuteronomy, however, this religious assembly has been generalized into a synonym for the national

[559] Another factor that leads to the confusion is that *church* in English and *Kirche* in German are so often thought of as buildings. *Ekklesia* in Greek never means building or temple or chapel or cathedral. "In the rendering of ἐκκλησίαa a translator must beware of using a term which refers primarily to a building rather than to a congregation of believers." Ibid.
[560] Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 505.
[561] Ibid., 503.

community as a whole."[562] So when the New Testament says: "Christ loved the *ekklesia* and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25), it is not that Christ loves and gave himself for the gathering or the meeting but the people.[563]

Homiletically, it is useful to have a general term when one is discussing a theme that continues between the Old Testament and New Testament.[564] Referring to Achan (Josh 7) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), a preacher might say something like "God punishes stealing in both the nation of Israel and in the church . . . Stealing is not to be

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[562] Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 278.

[563] Indeed, in English and in German it is often useful to attempt to overcome the deeply held association of the world "church" with a "church building" by reading *Gemeinde* / church / *ekklesia* as "people of God." The best example is Matthew 16:18 when Jesus says, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Jesus is not building a meeting or assembly but a people. Another good example is Eph 3:10: "His intent was that now, through the **church** [German: *Gemeinde; original Greek:* ἐκκλησίας], the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." God is not making himself known through the "church meeting" but through the "people of God." From the other references in Ephesians (1:22; 3:21; 5:23, 5:24; 5:25; 5:27; 5:29; 5:32) it does not seem like the reference is specifically to the gathering or assembly or worship service but rather it is a shorthand reference to "Christians" or "people of God." Someone who thinks that the church means "assembly" might think that the writer of Ephesians is specifically referring to the people of God "gathered" or "assembled" and that something special (charismatic signs and wonders or preaching encounters) occurs during corporate worship and this is how the manifold wisdom of God is made known. Or they might think that the act of "assembling" on Sunday morning in a multi-ethnic way, that overcomes the Jew-Greek divide, is what the author of Ephesians is saying about how the manifold wisdom of God is made known. But as mentioned above, already in the Deuteronomy, the word "ekklesia" began to be associated with "the community" not just the community in its gathered state. That is to say that writer of Ephesians is probably referring to the people of God both gathered and scattered. The wisdom of God as attested by the people of God is demonstrated not just when they are gathered but also the other six days as Christians live their lives. So to a large extent *ekklesia of God* can be thought of as the "people of God"—as long at there some sense that they belong to one another—that they are one community. The children's rhyme is wrong: "Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the doors, see all the people." What it should say is this: "Here is the building, here is the steeple, open the doors, see the church."

[564] There are highly debated issues regarding "supercessionism" with regard to whether Barth sees the church "replacing" Israel but Barth's description here certainly has nuance as Barth says they are one people of God but also distinct.

practiced by the people of God."[565] That is that last phrase, "the people of God" may be a useful umbrella or catchall term for something that is the same in both Israel and the church.[566]

Barth's increasing use of Gemeinde instead of Kirche

In his 1947 comments on *Gemeinde* in comparison to *Kirche*, he stresses that *Gemeinde* connotes a "concrete" meaning.

> Luther seems to have thought for a time of dropping the word "Church" [*Kirche*] altogether and replacing it with the word *Gemeinde:* congregation, or community. It could have had an immeasurable significance—not alone for the Lutheran Church!—had he carried through with this seriously. The proposal has much to be said for it. The thing which is designated "Church" [Latin: *ecclesiam* / Greek: εκκλησίαν in the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds] in the Creed is so concrete [*konkret*] that the word which we use for it must under all circumstances be the kind of word which mediates to the hearer or reader a correspondingly concrete [*konkrete*] picture. The Greek-Latin word *ecclesia* did that originally. The French word *église* certainly does not do this any longer, and the Nordic word *kirche, kerk* (Church), over the meaning of which scholars fail to agree, definitely does not do it for us today. The word *Gemeinde* (*congregatio*) expresses, on the contrary, something which is surely still concrete [*konkrete*] for us now.[567]

[565] Note that the the more literal meaning of a congregation or assembly is a singular noun. But the people who gather in the assembly, the figurative meaning, is a plural entity.

[566] The "community of God" phrase sounds odd in English—partly because of the history of translating the Hebrew *qahal* (LXX: ἐκκλησία) in the Old Testament as "assembly" rather than "community" or "church." Is there another term that more closely approximates how people speak but also indicates Jews and Christians together? The "Judeo-Christian community"? "Jewish and Christian communities?" Synagogues and churches"? Do these terms sound odd because the church has a history of playing down the importance of its continuity with Israel or is it just odd to talk about a "community" that transcends space and time? Occasionally, in English you see reference to the "international community" putting pressure on North Korea or something like that but generally "community" is not used as an umbrella term.

[567] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 82; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 26; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 66-67.

Barth says that *Kirche* is not concrete but *Gemeinde* is. In English, Barth's statement sounds odd because church buildings are made out of concrete blocks and cement but recall that the German word for concrete blocks is: *Betonblöcke*. But the correct meaning of *konkret* is "specific, definite." Recall that Bonhoeffer criticized Barth's theology of the church for not being "concrete" enough. Now here Barth is talking about *Kirche* not being "concrete" enough. Barth agrees that the church properly understood is not something theoretical and ethereal but visible and practical.[568] However, the need for a "concrete" church does not mean that what is needed is a denomination led by bishops or a super-organization like the World Council of Churches (*Weltkirchenkonferenz*) but rather something concrete in the sense of something: specific, definite, local, practical, tangible, personal, communal. For Barth, this is what the biblical Greek word *ekklesia* connotes. And in German, *Gemeinde* better captures this than *Kirche.*

On the first two pages of his formal ecclesiology in IV/1 §62 written in 1951, Barth prominently uses both "*Kirche*" and "*christliche Gemeinde*." The section title has "*christliche Gemeinde*" but there are six strong statements on the first pages that begin

[568] "The Church does not exist as the *invisible* and thus amorphous sum of all the 'faithful' then alive." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 94. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 76.

"The Church *is* . . ." [*Kirche* ***ist*** . . .][569] Remarkably, Barth ends up using *Gemeinde* and *Kirche* the exact same amount of times (357 occurrences) in §62 in IV/1 (1951).

By 1955 and the writing of IV/2, Barth uses *Kirche* far less and *Gemeinde* far more. In §67 in IV/2 (1955) *Kirche* has 175 occurrences; *Gemeinde* has 617 occurrences. And the ratio gets more disparate by 1959. In §72 in IV/3.2 (1959), Barth uses *Kirche* 116 times and *Gemeinde* gets used 943 times.

In two informal contexts, Barth simply states his preference for *Gemeinde.* During one of his seminars in 1953-1956, he remarks "I prefer the word '*Gemeinde*' to '*Kirche,*' because *Gemeinde* means togetherness."[570] In the 1962, he addresses this issue again in his lectures in America entitled *Evangelical Theology.* He writes,

> The word "community" [*Gemeinde*] rather than "Church [*Kirche*]," is used advisedly, for from a theological point of view it is best to avoid the word "Church [*Kirche*]" as much as possible, if not altogether. At all events, this overshadowed and overburdened word should be immediately and consistently interpreted by the word "community [*Gemeinde*]"[571]

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[569] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650-652; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 727-728. We see an earlier version of this in 1947 but the phrasing has changed. "The congregation / church is the event in which . . ." (second draft) or "The essence of the Church is the event in which" (first draft) (as the topic sentence of 6 paragraphs in the second version and 8 times in the first version). Karl Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, ed. World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949; reprint, British title: The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study, London: S.C.M. Press, 1948.), 67-69; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 77-83.

[570] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 78.

[571] Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 37. Karl Barth, *Einfuhrung in die evangelische Theologie* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1962), 45.

Barth is contrasting institutional bureaucracy with human interaction. *Gemeinde* denotes a group of people.

Note as well that Barth says it is best to avoid the word *Kirche*. Recall that the adjectival form *kirchliche* is in the title of Barth's main work, the *Church Dogmatics*. For Barth, *Kirche* connotes buildings and bureaucracy rather than the people of God. It is interesting to think that by the end of writing 8000 pages under a book title, Barth begins to dislike the title and perhaps would have preferred something like the *Dogmatics of the Christian Community [Dogmatik der christlichen Gemeinde].*

Barth's use of Gemeinde (community) of God as overlapping with the Volk (people) of God

Not only can *Gemeinde* connote "people" for Barth, Barth explicitly uses "people" (*Volk*) language in an overlapping way. For example, Barth uses the words *Gemeinde* (community) and *Volk* (people) (each with an adjective) in apposition synonymously: "a special race [*ein besonderes Menschenvolk*], of His own community [*seine Gemeinde*]."[572] As we saw earlier *Gemeinde* is a term that can describe both the Old Testament and New Testament people of God. In IV/3.2 in 1959, when he is referring to Israel and the church together, he tends to use the word "people" *[Volk*] with a modifier such as "special" or

[572] "He is the man in whose person God has, of course, elected and loved from all eternity the wider circle of humanity as a whole, but also, with a view to this wider circle, the narrower circle of a special race, of His own community within humanity." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 682. "Er ist ja der Mann, in dessen Person Gott im weiteren Kreis freilich die ganze Menschheit, im engeren Kreis aber und im Blick auf jenen weiteren zunächst ein besonderes Menschenvolk, inmitten der Menschheit seine Gemeinde von Ewigkeit her geliebt und erwählt hat." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 781.

"of God" to talk about both groups. For example, when he treates how the Old Testament and New Testament people of God interacted with the surrounding world, he titles the sub-section: "The People of God [*das Volk Gottes*] in World-Occurrence." *Gemeinde* never occurs in his two page small print exegetical session about the Old Testament; whereas *Volk* occurs 53 times.[573] So: *christliche Gemeinde* = church. *Volk Gottes* / people of God = Israel and the Church.

Most instances of Gemeinde refer back to the topic being treated which is usually the *christliche Gemeinde*.[574] This adjective and noun are the topic of his three ecclesiology sections: 62, 67, and 72: "The Holy Spirit and the gathering / upbuilding / sending of the Christian community (*christlichen Gemeinde*)."

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[573] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 688-693.

[574] It is first useful to clarify for English readers an easily corrected error of people reading *Gemeinde* translated as "community." Consider that Barack Obama was a "community organizer" before running for office. In English, this means he was involved in grass roots social justice activism in a certain neighborhood. This description does not mean Obama as a "community organizer" was a "religious congregation organizer" (though being a "community organizer" might involve that). A person reading Barth's work translated into English might be surprised to see Barth extensively describing what "the community" should be and do. They might think Barth seems to have a lot of opinions about what neighborhoods should do. But this is totally a "lost in translation" mistake. When Barth says *Gemeinde* (translated "community") Barth is never referring to neighborhoods or "surrounding non-Christian society." Rather, Barth is talking about the community of God. When he is talking about the Christian *Gemeinde*, he is referring to the "church-community." In translating for the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* project, the translators faced the same issues and translated the term *Gemeinde* "church-community" which is cumbersome but not as confusing as the term "community" in English which usually means in contemporary parlance the municipality in which one lives. They write, "Whereas some translators of Bonhoeffer have used 'church' and others 'community' for *Gemeinde*, we have chosen 'church-community.'" Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 16. "Perhaps "church community" might be recommended as a term to describe the "assembly (of God)." Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 531.

The point that needs to be made here is Barth is not only referring to *Gemeinde* as a congregation. We will see him do this below. Rather, here he is using *Gemeinde* to refer to the people of God. This—Barth's larger body of work—is a more adequate treatment of the meaning of *ekklesia* than some of his isolated statements we will see below that seem to emphasize the *ekklesia* as only a congregation. It is also the people of God. Now to the second use of *Gemeinde* by Barth—the congregation.

Gemeinde as a congregation

As we have seen Barth used *Gemeinde* to refer to the people of God, but Barth also uses *Gemeinde* to refer to a congregation. In his 1947 essay, Barth calls for living congregations as opposed to "a merely nominal church, an ecclesiastical shell from which the life has fled."[575] Barth asserts that congregations are churches.[576] However, in his zeal to defend congregations, he also makes a few overstatements, which he does not repeat in his mature ecclesiology.

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[575] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67.

[576] "The primary, normal, and visible form of the event . . . . in which two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ . . . is the local congregation." Ibid., 73. "the simplest, most available, and insofar exemplary and regular form of such a gathering is in fact the local congregation." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 78; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 96.

Barth's congregationalist essay rejected by World Council of Churches episcopal polity interlocuters

Barth wrote "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," ("*Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus*") as part of the preparatory work for Study Commission 1 in preparation for the first World Council of Churches Assembly in Amsterdam from August 22 to September 4, 1948.[577] There ended up being two versions of the same essay by Barth being published. The first version cheerfully explores a congregationalist polity; while the second version is biting about other polities. It is important to explore what happened because it is in this essay that we see Barth's most explicit defense of congregationalist polity.[578]

We know that earlier in the decade Barth had been quite wary about the formation of World Council of Churches.[579] Barth was formally asked to participate in

[577] "This book, with its companion volumes, was written in preparation for the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, Hollan, August 22nd - September 4th, 1948. Two years and a half in advance of the Assembly, the Provisional Committee of the Council determined that the main theme of the Assembly should be: 'Man's Disorder and God's Design' and that this theme should be considered under four aspects: 1. The Universal Church in God's Design. 2. The Church's Witness to God's Design. 3. The Church and the Disorder of Society. 4. The Church and the International Disorder." World Council of Churches, *Man's Disorder and God's Design: A One-Volume Edition of Four Books Including I. The Universal Church in God's Design. II. The Church's Witness to God's Design. III. The Church and the Disorder of Society. IV. The Church and the International Disorder.*, ed. Henry P. Van Dusen, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949), General Preface, xi. In the English translation, *Gemeinde* is translated as "congregation" rather than "community."

[578] Thomas Herwig narrates aspects of this story as well but does not delve into the content of the two essays. Thomas Herwig, *Karl Barth und die ökumenische Bewegung: das Gespräch zwischen Karl Barth und Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft auf der Grundlage ihres Briefwechsels 1930-1968* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1998), 146-147.

[579] Karl Barth and Willem Adolph Visser 't Hooft, *Karl Barth – Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft Briefwechsel 1916–1966 (GA V.43)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2006); Herwig, *Karl Barth und die ökumenische Bewegung: das Gespräch zwischen Karl Barth und Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft auf der Grundlage ihres*

the preparation for the assembly two years prior to it by Anglican church leader Oliver S. Tomkins in a letter dated October 24, 1946 but it gave no details.[580] In a warm letter from Tomkins dated January 7, 1947, Barth learned he was to send a 3000-5000 word contribution on "The Church and Her Responsibility."[581] Barth's first draft was about 24 pages[582] (which Barth later refers to as 7000 words so about 2000 words over the suggested size)[583] and was sent off April 1, 1947.[584] When he sent it off, Barth is cheerful.

Briefwechsels 1930-1968; Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement."; Willem Adolph Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (London; Philadelphia: SCM Press; Westminster Press, 1973); Karl Barth, *The Church and the Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

[580] Oliver S. Tomkins, "Letter to Karl Barth, October 24, 1946," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1946). Oliver S. Tomkins (1908-1992). In 1959 Tomkins would become an Anglican bishop. Barth and Visser 't Hooft, *Karl Barth – Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft Briefwechsel 1916–1966 (GA V.43)*, 220, 431.

[581] Oliver S. Tomkins, "Letter to Karl Barth, January 7, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947).

[582] When it is printed in German, the background information is accurate: "Dieser Aufsatz gehört zu den Vorbereitungsarbeiten (Studienkommission 1) für die im September 1948 in Amsterdam Stattfindende Versammlung des World Council of Churches." My translation: "This paper belongs to the preparatory work (Study Commission 1) leading up to the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in September 1948." Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 21.
But the background information printed in both versions of *God Here and Now* incorrectly says that "This is substantially the address which Barth made in 1948 at the Amsterdam Assembly in which the World Council of Churches was established." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 61. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 75. Neither version of "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ" is related to the main keynote address that Barth gave at the assembly. See below.

[583] Karl Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Oliver S. Tomkins [Letter from Karl Barth to Oliver S. Tomkins] October 7, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947).

[584] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]."; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]." Karl Barth, *Die Kirche, die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]* (Genf: Oekumenischer Rat der Kirchen, Studien Abteilung, 1947); Karl Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," in *Die lebendige Gemeinde und die freie Gnade* (München: C. Kaiser, 1947); Karl Barth, *Die lebendige Gemeinde und die freie Gnade [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]*, Neue Folge, Theologische Existenz heute, vol. 9 (München: C. Kaiser, 1947); Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]."

This was an opportunity to reflect on issues in 1947 that he would eventually need to tackle once he came to volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics.* (In 1947, he was writing III/2, which he would finish in May 1948). Indeed parts of the essay would appear in 1951-1959 in volume IV in the formal ecclesiology of the *Church Dogmatics.*[585] Barth's original 24 page version is breezy and informal with jokes and contemporary allusions. He seems to look forward to engaging with other esteemed theologians Gustaf Aulén and Georges Florovsky who he understands to be involved in the project.

He writes a cheerful letter to his uncle after sending it off on April 1, 1947. "I have demolished the whole concept of church 'authority'—in both its episcopal and synodical form—and constructed everything (rather like the Pilgrim Fathers) on the congregation."[586] In an accompanying letter to Nils Ehrenström with his contribution,

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[585] See below about the theses Barth develops in both versions of the essay.

[586] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 343, 536. This is taken from Barth's Letter to his uncle Ernst Sartorius (1 April 1947). "Die Genfer Oekumene hat mich nun auch erwischt. Ich habe nicht nur im Januar an einer internationalen Schriftgelehrten Konferenz in Bossey teilgenommen, sondern nun auch ein 'paper' für des beabsichtigte Weltkonzil von 1948 in Amsterdam verfasst über 'die Kirche.' Ich kann freilich nicht damit rechnen, es dabei Vielen recht gemacht zu haben, weil ich den ganzen Begriff von kirchlicher Obrigkeit - sowohl in der bischöflichen wie in der synodalen Form abgebaut und Alles ein wenig in der Art der 'Pilgervater' auf die Gemeinde aufgebaut habe." Karl Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Ernst Sartorius [Letter from Karl Barth to Ernst Sartorius] April 1, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947). My translation: "The Geneva Ecumenism has now caught me. I have not only participated in January at an international preparatory conference in Bossey, but now also have drawn up a 'paper' for the proposed World Council of 1948 in Amsterdam on 'the church.' I certainly cannot expect this to be received well because I have degraded the whole concept of ecclesiastical authorities both in the episcopal and in synodal form and built all on the congregation—a little in the way of the 'Pilgrim Fathers.'" Not only are the "Pilgrim Fathers" mentioned in this letter but also at the end of the first draft of the 1947 essay. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 84; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 43.

Barth makes clear that someone else should be asked to give the presbyterian perspective, since he himself argues the congregationalist case. "I would like to point out that the article moves along so-called 'Congregationalist' lines. If the intention is to appoint a fourth man for the work of the Commission 1 in addition to [Gustaf] Aulén, [Georges] Florovsky and me, I should like to suggest that you should designate a theologian from a very presbyterian posture."[587]

Eberhard Busch, Barth's assistant and biographer notes that "Under the title 'The Church—The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ,' he put down in

[587] German original: "Ich sende Ihnen beiliegend mit einer kleinen Verspätung den mit Ihnen und Prof. Bennett verabredeten "grundlegenden systematischen Aufsatz" ber "Die Kirche" fur die Kommission 1 (Amsterdam 1948). Wenn die Sache gedruckt werden soll, so werden Sie mir wohl Korrekturbogen zusenden lassen. Da ich vom Mai bis und mit August im Deutschland bin, gehen sie am Besten an die Adresse meines Sohnes Pfr. Markus Barth, Bubendorf, Kt. Paselland, der dann alles Nötige veranlassen wird. Da ich in diesem Aufsatz Einiges zum ersten mal so genau und ausführlich gesagt habe, ware ich froh, wenn ich uber den Aufsatz auch sonst verfügen könnte. Noch möchte ich Sie darauf aufmerksam machen, dass sich der Aufsatz auf der sog ''kongregationalistischen' Linie bewegt. Wenn wie ich höre, die Absicht besteht, ausser [Gustaf] Aulén und [Georges] Florovsky und mir noch einen vierten Mann fur die Arbeit der Kommission 1 heranzuziehen, so möchte ich darum anregen, dass man dazu einen Theologen von ausgesprochen presbyterianischer -- Haltung bestimmen sollte." Karl Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Nils Ehrenström [Letter from Karl Barth to Nils Ehrenström] April 1, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947). My translation: "I send you the enclosed "basic systematic essay" about "The Church" for the Commission 1 (Amsterdam 1948) with the slight delay you and Professor Bennett agreed to. If the essay is to be printed, it would be good if you could send me the proofs. Since I will be in Germany from May through August, it would be best to send them to the address of my son Rev. Markus Barth (Bubendorf, Kt. Paselland) who will arrange everything necessary. As I said in this essay for the first time some things accurately and in detail, I would be happy if I could make the essay available elsewhere. I would like to point out that the article moves along so-called 'Congregationalist' lines. If I hear that the intention is to appoint a fourth man for the work of the Commission 1 besides [Gustaf] Aulén, [Georges] Florovsky and me, I should like to suggest that you should to designate a theologian from a very presbyterian posture." Nils Ehrenström (1903-1984) was a Swedish theologian and ecumenist who worked in the ecumenical research department in Geneva from 1930 onward. From 1946-1954 he was director of the academic section of the World Council of Churches. He was an international contact with Dietrich Bonhoeffer from 1939-1941. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Indexes and Supplementary Materials*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 17 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 314. Keith W. Clements, *The Moot Papers: Faith, Freedom and Society 1938-1947* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 139-140.

writing thoughts which in his view he was expressing for the first time with such precision and detail. They were on so-called 'congregationalist' lines."[588]

There are three basic types of church government or polity. One is "episcopal" and involves bishops (Greek ἐπίσκοπος *episcopos)* overseeing clergy. A second kind is "presbyterian" where clergy (Greek πρεσβύτερος *presbuteros)* from a number of churches serve as a court that makes judgments about the local churches under their jurisdiction.[589] A third kind is congregational which means that the local congregation is without authoritative outside oversight. In other words, the first two types espouse "connectionalism" in that they suggest that a congregation needs to belong to a larger group of congregations. Barth describes himself as writing along "congregationalist lines" and explicitly says he does not represent a presbyterian position.

A month later, on May 29, 1947, Barth puts his theological reflection in the April 1 essay to use in a letter to a worried bishop about the influence of Rudolf Bultmann. Barth writes that the solution to theological error is a "living congregation"—"the church really being the church."[590] But then things become less cheery.

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[588] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 343.
[589] In a letter, Barth refers to three forms of church government as: episcopal, synodical, and congregational. It is not certain whether synodical refers to "presbyterian" but it certainly refers to "synods" or "councils" that make decisions above the congregational level. Synods function differently in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian denominations. Ibid.
[590] Barth and Bultmann, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966*, 146-147.

Both the chairman of the commission Gustav Aulén and Barth missed the deliberations of Study Commission 1 in June 1947 in Essertines, Switzerland. Barth lived in Switzerland but was away in Germany that summer. In a report alongside a letter from Tomkins dated September 16, 1947, Barth learned his contribution was too long and would be put in a special "section on congregationalist prophecy" [Abteilung für kongregationalistische Prophetie] at the end of the book and not in the dogmatics section at the front.[591] On October 7, 1947, Barth sent off an abridged version of 9 pages (which eventually was published in the World Council of Churches volume in the dogmatics section).[592] Having had his initial contribution rebuffed as "congregationalist prophecy" and rejected as a contribution to the systematic theology section, the second version is terse, more formal, even cold. His accompanying note to Tomkins[593] says that

[591] Oliver S. Tomkins, "Letter to Member of Study Commisssion I on September 16, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947). See also the "Revised Outline" and "Report on Present Plans" documents. Barth and Visser 't Hooft, *Karl Barth – Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft Briefwechsel 1916–1966 (GA V.43)*, 221.

[592] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]." Karl Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [zweite (kürzere) Entwurf. 7 Oktober 1947]," in *Die Kirche in Gottes Heilsplan: oekumenische Studien*, ed. Gustaf Aulén et al., Die Unordnung der Welt und Gottes Heilsplan (Tübingen: Furche-Verl., 1948).

[593] Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Oliver S. Tomkins [Letter from Karl Barth to Oliver S. Tomkins] October 7, 1947." German original: Past. Pierre Maury hat mir mündlich Ihren Wunsch mitgeteilt, ich möchte das Paper «Die Kirche, die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus « von 7000 auf 5000 Worte reduzieren. Ich habe diesem Wunsch nur in Form einer umfassenden formalen Umarbeitung des Ganzen Rechnung tragen können, in der ich es in eine Folge von Thesen verwandelt habe , deren Numerierung mit den von Ihnen dem Druck meines ersten Entwurfs beigegebenen Randnummern übereinstimmt. Inhaltlich ist dieser zweite mit dem ersten Entwurf identisch. Ich habe aber selbstverstandlich die mir zugegangenen "Stellungnahmen» vor Augen gehabt und -- soweit mir das sachlich möglich war -- berucksichtigt. Der mir mitgeteilten «Revised Outline» vom Juli 1947 entnehme ich, dass die Absicht nun die ist, meinen Beitrag unter Nr.III als eine besondere Abteilung innerhalb der projektierten Veröffentlichung zu charakterisieren.Nach dem ursprünglichen Plan, im Blick auf den ich mein Paper geschrieben hatte, sollte es zusammen mit den Beiträgen von Bischof Aulén und von Father Florovski zu dem introductory

he has abridged his essay into just a series of theses, which were present in the original first version.[594] Though he says the content is identical in the two versions, he says he

chapter:basic doctrine . . . gehören. Darf ich fragen, aus welchen Gründen und in welcher Meinung man diese Veranderung vorgenommen hat? Ist mein Entwurf dort nicht als ein Versuch von Basic doctrine, sondern als eine interessante (Vielleicht «prophetische»?) Spezialität verstanden worden? Ich möchte jedenfalls um eine Erklarung darüber bitten, aus welchen Erwägung man mich aus Abteilung 1 entfernt und durch Prof. Clarence Craig ersetzt hat. Ferner möchte ich Sie bitten, die übersetzer ins Englische und Französische darauf aufmerksam zu machen, dass das Wort "Gemeinde» in meinem Manuskript konsequent mit congregation (nicht mit community, communauté!) ubersetzt werden muss. Die Worte community, communauté entsprechen bei mir dem Wort «Gemeinschaftt» (communion wenn es sich um die Gemeinschaft des Heiligen Geistes handelt). Ich wäre Ihnen dankbar, wenn Sie mir die Übersetzungen diesmal vor der Drucklegung oder sonstigen Vervielfältigung zur Ueberprüfung zugänglich machen wurden.
My translation:
Pastor Pierre Maury has orally passed on to me your question about whether I would like to reduce the paper "The Church, the living community of the living Lord Jesus Christ" from 7000 to 5000 words.
I have taken into account this desire in the form of a comprehensive formal makeover of the whole, in which I have transformed it into a sequence of theses whose numbering matches the accompanying paragraphs in the printing of the first draft. In terms of content, this second is identical to the first draft. But I have kept in mind the "comments" that I received and have—as far as objectively possible—considered them. Having been notified of the "Revised Outline" [for the conference papers book] from July 1947, I gather that the intention is now to make my contribution under Nr. III be categorized as a special department within the projected publication. According to the original plan, in view of which I had written my paper, it should be included together with the contributions of Bishop Aulén and Father Florovsky in the introductory chapter: basic doctrine. May I ask on what grounds and in what thinking you have made this alteration? Has my draft not been understood as an attempt at basic doctrine, but as an interesting (perhaps "prophetic"?) specialty? I want in any case to ask for an explanation about what has made you remove me from Division 1 and be replaced by Prof. Clarence Craig. I would also like to ask you to make it be pointed out to the translator into English and French that the word 'Gemeinde' in my manuscript has to be translated consistent with 'congregation' (not with 'community,' 'communauté'!). To me, the words 'community,' 'communauté' correspond to the word "Gemeinschaftt" ('communion' when it comes to the communion of the Holy Spirit). I should be grateful if you were to make the translations available [to me] before printing or other official reproduction."

[594] In both versions, Barth's content is organized into three sections. **First,** Barth describes the church with this phrasing: "The essence of the Church is the event in which" (first draft) ["Das Sein der Kirche ist das Ereignis, in welchem . . ."] and "The congregation / church is the event in which . . ." (second version) (as the topic sentence of 8 paragraphs in the first version and 6 paragraphs in the second version). In so doing, Barth builds up a description of what happens in a church. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67-69; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 77-83. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 22-25. Barth will cover this material again at the beginning of his mature ecclesiology in "The Church is . . ." statements of §62: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650-652.

considered the comments he received. He reiterates that his contribution is intended to be an essay in dogmatics and to be placed alongside those of Aulén and Florovsky. He asks why it has been removed and replaced by an essay from Clarence Craig.

Barth receives a letter dated November 25, 1947 from Tomkins explaining that the second abridged version might yet be accepted into the systematic theology section 1.[595] On January 14, 1948 Barth wrote a letter to Willem Adolph Visser't Hooft asking if it was really necessary for him to come to Amsterdam in August / September 1948 since it hardly seemed that the World Council of Churches organizers were eager for his help regarding systematic theology.[596] Visser't Hooft responded in a letter dated February 5,

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Second, Barth lists the dangers the church faces Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 69-72., later expanded upon in §67 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 662-671.. **Third,** Barth reflects on polity, which will be treated below.

[595] Oliver S. Tomkins, "Letter to Karl Barth, November 25, 1947," (Karl Barth Archiv, 1947). "I am afraid I have been a long time in answering an enquiry which reached me indirectly as to why your contribution was placed under a special section within the projected publication of Assembly Volume I. I am afraid there is no deep theological reason for this, but simply that when the Commission read your paper in June they felt it to be both longer and more comprehensive than the other essays which would be accompanying it in that section, and to contain material which from an editorial point of view would have come well at that point of the volume. However, I understand that the new draft (of which I have not yet seen a translation) is a good deal shorter, and it may well be that it should stand as one of various interpretations of the basic doctrine of the Church with which the volume opens."

[596] "Als ich dann mein Manuskript zuerst in einer längeren, dann in einer kürzeren Fassung eingereicht hatte, fand ich mich in den weiteren mir zugegangenen Dispositionen des Gesamtplans auf einmal einsam in eine Sonderrubrik unter dem von mir gewählten Titel meines Beitrags verwiesen: ich fürchte als eine Art Prophet in nächste Nähe zu allerhand bereits mit praktischen Fragen beschäftigten Abteilungen, während man mich unter Ziffer I, wo es um die dogmatische Voraussetzung gehen soll, stillschweigend durch jemand Anderen ersetzt hat." A rough paraphrase conveys that Barth was not happy about what had transpired. "As I had first submitted my manuscript in a longer, and then in a shorter version, arrangements reached me of the overall plan that my contribution would be isolated in a special section: I fear I am being placed as a kind of prophet in the midst of sections concerned with practical issues while you silently replaced me by somebody else in the dogmatic presuppositions section where I was supposed to be." [This

1948 that the idea to put his contribution in a separate section had been abandoned and he affirmed that Barth was indeed needed and offered him an opening day address at the assembly.[597] Barth wrote back on February 7, 1948 accepting and asking for clarification on the details.[598] Barth would eventually deliver this address on August 23, 1948. It was entitled "Die Unordnung der Welt und Gottes Heilsplan" [printed in English as "No Christian Marshall Plan"].[599]

Certainly Barth went over the word limit in his first draft but his submission was hardly treated in the congenial way with which Barth seems to have drafted it. It is understandable that he would be put off that his submission was being ejected from the

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paraphrase should be improved.] Barth and Visser 't Hooft, *Karl Barth – Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft Briefwechsel 1916–1966 (GA V.43)*, 220.

[597] "Berkelbach wird dir besonders erzählt haben, daß der Gedanke, Dich in einer Sonderrubrik unterzubringen, aufgegeben ist." Ibid., 225. "Berkelbach will especially tell you that the thought you be placed in a special category had been abandoned." Simon Frederik Hendrik Jan Berkelbach van der Sprenkel (1882 - 1967) was the ecclesiastical professor of practical theology, Dutch Reformed church polity, doctrinal theology, and Christian morals at the Utrecht University, Netherlands. Ibid., 424. For more on Barth's relationship to Visser 't Hooft and the ecumenical movement, see: ibid.; Herwig, *Karl Barth und die ökumenische Bewegung: das Gespräch zwischen Karl Barth und Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft auf der Grundlage ihres Briefwechsels 1930-1968*; Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement."; Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*.

[598] Barth and Visser 't Hooft, *Karl Barth – Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft Briefwechsel 1916–1966 (GA V.43)*, 226-228.

[599] Karl Barth, "Die Unordnung der Welt und Gottes Heilsplan (Vortrag, gehalten vor der Ersten Vollversammlung des Oekumenischen Rates der Kirchen, Amsterdam, 23.8.1948) " *Evangelische Theologie* 8, no. 4 (1948). Karl Barth, *Die Unordnung der Welt und Gottes Heilsplan* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948). The lecture begins: "Our main theme . . . is 'the world's disorder and God's design.' May I begin by asking whether we must not deal with this theme, as a whole and in all its aspects, in reverse order?" But instead of titling it "The Disorder of the World and God's Plan of Salvation," the editors at the *The Christian Century* put a reference to George Marshall's development plan to help Western Europe after World War II in the title, which Barth indeed refers to in passing. Karl Barth, "No Christian Marshall Plan," *Christian Century* 65, no. 49 (1948). "Should we not also come to the clear understanding that 'God's design' really means his plan . . .That 'God's design' does not mean something like a Christian Marshall plan?"

Systematic Theology section on the basic theology of the church to another section. By any measure, it is systematic theology—as Barth himself makes clear in his pared down second version with his color commentary stripped out. With the criticism that his original submission was too long and not systematic theology, Barth begins the second version saying he can easily make his original version more clear and concise—it is the title. "The title of this paper constitutes a *definition* of the idea, 'Church.'"[600] In case, they still do not understand he says he is contrasting the "living congregation" with "a merely nominal church, an ecclesiastical shell from which the life has fled."[601]

This is as close as Barth comes to referring explicitly to the other members of the committee. Barth notes that he is referring to the Church Struggle (between the Confessing Church and German Christians under Hitler),[602] but surely he is also critiquing implicitly the developing World Council of Churches organization, and the other episcopal "apostolic succession" polity theologians in this World Council of Churches working group for which he wrote the essay.

Barth was given the impression that his initial version appeared to his committee colleagues to be polemical criticism rather than a formal constructive proposal of what the church should be. Certainly it is hard not to suspect that the episcopal polity

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[600] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67.
[601] Ibid.
[602] Ibid., 72.

inclinations of the other participants contributed to the attempted marginalizing of Barth. The friendly spokesperson for Study Commision 1, Tomkins, later would become an Anglican bishop in 1959. The other four scholars eventually published in the "Doctrine of the Church" section also come from churches with episcopal polity. The Lutheran, Russian Orthodox, and Anglican authors explicitly assert the traditional episcopal polity position that the legitimacy of a church depends on it being overseen by a bishop who oversees multiple congregations. The fourth perspective is a Methodist New Testament scholar's account of the meaning of *ekklesia*.[603]

A bishop himself, John A. F. Gregg of the Church of Ireland (Anglican polity) writes that a church is kept faithful through bishops who can trace their lineage back to the apostles. A church must have

> certain governing elements of authority and continuity necessary for the preservation of its identity. And thus the Church was no self-appointed or self-governing democracy. It acknowledged an abiding and directing constraint upon its freedom exercised by the Apostolic stewards whom Christ in the beginning

[603] Clarence Tucker Craig was professor of New Testament at Oberlin (Ohio) Graduate School Theology from 1928-1946 then at Yale Divinity School between 1946-1949. Craig's article focuses on the New Testament understanding of the church so because it is less theological or polemical, there is less to criticize. Clarence Tucker Craig, "The Church in the New Testament," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, ed. World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949; reprint, British title: The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study, London: S.C.M. Press, 1948.). Craig would go on to be Dean at Drew Theological Seminary in 1949. He describes himself as an "American free church man" and is called by Oliver Tomkins a "Methodist." "The first of the volumes written for Amsterdam sets forth five representative interpretations, the work respectively of a Swedish Lutheran, a Russian Orthodox, an American free church man, an Anglican bishop and a Swiss Reformed theologian." Clarence Tucker Craig, "The Church Examines Her Mission," *The Christian Century* 65, no. 19 (1948). Craig later will write a book praised by reviewers for its balance: arguing that episcopal and congregational polity have flaws. Clarence Tucker Craig, *The One Church, in the Light of the New Testament* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951).

> had set over his earthly household. This authoritative constraint manifests itself down the ages . . . in the historic ministry set within it from Apostolic days . . . as the organ for the performance of the corporate actions of the society.[604]

As Anglicanism teaches, there are four marks which characterize a church: (1) Scripture, (2) Creeds, (3) Sacraments, and (4) "Apostolic Ministry of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, transmitted by those having authority to transmit."[605] Gregg's strongest statement is that churches with episcopal polity should be wary of cooperating with groups who reject these crucial elements. An episcopal church cannot cannot enter "into communion with a society which has lost, and shows no desire to recover, its hold upon any one of those few but vital institutions specified above which are the visible pledges of continuity with the undivided Church."[606]

Another episcopal polity advocate, Swedish (Lutheran) theologian Gustaf Aulén, famous for his 1931 book *Christus Victor*, writes that the "The backbone of the organization is the apostolic Ministry as a divine institution on behalf of the word and sacraments."[607]

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[604] John A. F. Gregg, "One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, ed. World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949; reprint, British title: The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study, London: S.C.M. Press, 1948.).

[605] Ibid., 65.

[606] Ibid., 66. Barth seems to respond with the comment that "living congregations" of Jesus Christ can have "neither friendship nor peace" with "dead congregations" and he names the "Church Struggle" between the Nazi-influenced German Christians and the Confessing Church as an example. Recall he was writing this in 1947 while this example was still fresh. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 72.

[607] Gustaf Aulén, "The Church in the Light of the New Testament," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, ed. World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949; reprint, British title: The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study, London: S.C.M. Press, 1948.), 29.

Finally, Russian orthodox theologian George Florovsky also emphasizes the importance of the bishop ensuring the global unity of the church.

> The unity of every local congregation springs from the unity in the Eucharistic meal. And it is as the celebrant of the Eucharist that the priest is the minister and the builder of Church unity. But there is another and higher office: to secure the universal and catholic unity of the whole Church in space and time. This is the episcopal office to ordain, and again this is not only a jurisdictional privilege, but precisely a power of sacramental action beyond that possessed by the priest. Thus the Bishop as 'ordainer' is the builder of Church unity on a wider scale . . . In the episcopacy Pentecost becomes universal and continuous, in the undivided episcopate of the Church (*episcopatus unus* [one episcopate] of St. Cyprian) the unity in space is secured.[608]

A congregation is in the fullest sense of the word a Church

Barth claims that a congregation is "church." "The definition [in the title of the essay] describes the Church as a congregation."[609] As stated above, from the letters he wrote on April 1, 1947 when he sent off his first draft that he was working along "congregationalist lines" and someone else would need to write up the presbyterian polity position, Barth knew what he had written would be seen by some as surprisingly "congregationalist."[610] Barth writes from the standpoint that the primary meaning of *ekklesia* is congregation. Barth stresses the description of the church in Matthew 18:20

[608] George Florovsky, "The Church: Her Nature and Task," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, ed. World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Assembly Series (New York: Harper, 1949; reprint, British title: The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study, London: S.C.M. Press, 1948.), 52.
[609] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67.
[610] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 343, 536. Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Nils Ehrenström [Letter from Karl Barth to Nils Ehrenström] April 1, 1947."; Barth, "Brief von Karl Barth zu Ernst Sartorius [Letter from Karl Barth to Ernst Sartorius] April 1, 1947."

(which picks up on the reference to *ekklesia* in Matthew 18:17), "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."[611] If the Lord is with a group, there is an *ekklesia:* "each local congregation [*Ortsgemeinde*], in its immediate relation to the one Lord, is in the fullest sense of the word a Church [*Kirche*], i.e. a congregation [*Gemeinde*]."[612]

In the next number of pages, we will be exploring what *ekklesia* means but it is important to note that the community of God is described in other ways in the New Testament without using the word *ekklesia*.[613]

Ekklesia in the New Testament can refer to a congregation that meets in a house but it can also refer to all the people of Jesus Christ—the total church. Here we are using Barth's New Testament collegue at Bonn and then at Basel, Karl Ludwig Schmidt's

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[611] As mentioned above, an "event" does not adequately describe how *ekklesia* is used in the New Testament. The act of assembling is not what *ekklesia* means but rather the people gathered. God did not give himself up for the event of assembling but for the assembled (Eph 5:25). Paul does not write to the event of Corinth but the those assembled at Corinth (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1). As also mentioned above, Barth himself does not often use the language of "event" with regard to the church in the ecclesiology sections in volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics,* written in the 1950's—his "mature" ecclesiology.

[612] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73-74. "each [local congregation (*Ortsgemeinde)*] is itself, in the full sense of the word, *the* Church [*die Kirche*]" Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 98; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 39.

[613] A lexical fallacy (fallen into by biblical scholars and theologians) is that a concept is only treated when a specific word is mentioned. Louw and Nida's work specifically tries to combat this by its organization by meaning not be word. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. In the case of understanding the New Testament understanding of the concept of *ekklesia,* we need to move beyond the specific occurrences of the word *ekklesia.* So the New Testament use of the words people, saints, chosen, Israel of God, family, household, body, temple, commonwealth, city, and disciples should also be drawn upon. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, "*Laos* and Leadership Under the New Covenant," in *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 125-131.

phrasing when he says that for the apostle Paul *ekklesia* can mean both "total Church (*Kirche*) and the individual congregation (*Gemeinde)*."[614] The main Greek lexicons always recognize these two most distinctive uses of *ekklesia* in the New Testament. On the one hand, as congregationalist polity partisans emphasize, *ekklesia* can signify a local congregation. As the BAGD lexicon puts it, *ekklesia* is used

> of Christians in a specific place or area . . . of a specific Christian group *assembly, gathering . . . congregation* or *church* as the totality of Christians living and meeting in a particular locality or larger geographical area, but not necessarily limited to one meeting place.[615]

On the other hand, as episcopal polity partisans emphasize, *ekklesia* can also signify the total church: "the global community of Christians, *(universal) church*."[616] More recently, Kevin N. Giles reaffirms the the dual use of *ekklesia* in Luke-Acts:

> Luke uses the word *ekklesia* in a specifically Christian sense to speak of Christians as theologically defined community, restored Israel. In this sense, it carries the content of the more developed meaning of this word in the Septuagint. . . Luke uses the one word [*ekklesia*] to designative a local community of Christians . . . and the Christian community in its entirety.[617]

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[614] "We normally distinguish between the total Church and the individual congregation. We are thus accustomed to speaking of the Church of God, but not of the congregations of God. The fact that such distinction is impossible for Paul is an indication that he does not make the differentiation which later came into use." Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 507. Perhaps counterintuitively "the whole church" can refer to the total church—the larger collection (Acts 15:22 ὅλη τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ); but "the whole church" may also refer to all the people in one congregation (1 Cor 14:23 ἐκκλησία ὅλη).

[615] Arndt and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, 303-304.

[616] Ibid.

[617] Kevin N. Giles, "Church III: Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles, Revelation," in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: a One-Volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 205.

The total church sense is seen in the New Testament in the singular form of *ekklesia* when it refers to all Christians (Matt 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph 1:22; 3:10; 3:21; 5:25; Col 1:18; 1:24; Heb 12:23).

So Barth is correct that there is evidence in the New Testament that a small congregation, was called an *ekklesia.* Barth is correct that is not the case that only the regional entity was called *ekklesia* and the household was given a lesser designation.[618] One might think from the Septuagint uses of *ekklesia* to describe massive gatherings of those who would hear the Scriptures (under Moses, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Ezra)[619] that *ekklesia* would in the New Testament indicate a large entity. But in a number of cases the *ekklesia* in the New Testament seem to be meeting in a house.[620] The activities described seem to depict a smaller group. We see the *ekklesia*

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[618] Karl Ludwig Schmidt rightly points out that a local congregation is identified in the New Testament as an *ekklesia*. "The one ἐκκλησία is present in the places mentioned . . . We have pointed out that the sum of the individual congregations does not produce the total community or the Church. Each community, however small, represents the total community, the Church." Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 505, 506.

[619] References also listed above: Deut 9:10; 18:16; 23:2; 23:3; 23:4; 23:8; 31:30; Judg 20:2; 21:5; 21:8; 1 Sam 17:47; 1 Kgs 8:14; 8:22; 8:55; 8:65; Joel 2:16; Mic 2:5; Ps 22:22; 22:25; 26:5; 35:18; 40:10; 89:6; 107:32; 149:1; Job 30:28; Prov 5:14; Lam 1:10; Ezra 2:64; 10:1; 10:8; 10:12; 10:14; 1 Chr 13:2; 13:4; 28:8; 29:1; 29:10; 29:20; 2 Chr 1:3; 1:5; 6:3; 6:12; 6:13; 7:8; 20:5; 20:14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:31; 29:32; 30:2; 30:4; 30:13; 30:17; 30:23; 30:24; 30:25.

[620] Consider the four references to the *ekklesia* that meet in homes. There is very similar wording in each instance "the church at a certain person's house." The context is greetings from and to churches that meet in homes: Rom 16:5 τὴν κατ᾽ οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν; 1 Cor 16:19 τῇ κατ᾽ οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ; Phlm 2 τῇ κατ᾽ οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ; Col 4:15 τὴν κατ᾽ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν. The references in Rom 16 and 1 Cor 16 both refer to the same *ekklesia*—the one that meets in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Paul sends greetings from them in 1 Cor 16. Paul sends greetings to them in Rom 16 after sending the letter more broadly to Christians in Rome (Rom 1:7). This would suggest that the people of God in Rome is broader than that *ekklesia.* Furthermore, a number of "churches" are mentioned in the Philemon and Colossian correspondence: the church that meets at Philemon's home, the one that meets in the Nymphas's home, and the Laodicean church. "The household assembly in Philemon's house was apparently not the whole of the Colossian church, nor that in Nympha's household the only one in Laodicea." Wayne A. Meeks, *The First*

having regular meals together (1 Cor 11:18). All attendees contribute to a common worship experience (1 Cor 14:23). Conflict mediation escalates from the level of two to three witnesses to the level of the church (Matt 18:17). People seek out prayer for healing by elders of the *ekklesia* (Jas 5:14). These activities taking place in the *ekklesia* do not depict the total church—all the people who are Christians everywhere. Nor are these

Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). If a connectional polity zealot argued that an *ekklesia* was only a regional entity rather than a household one, the smaller gatherings, the parishes, would derive their identity as church from the regional group: they would be parts of the church at Laodicea or Colossae, not churches in their own right. But the occurences about an *ekklesia* that meets in homes in the New Testament seem to refute that argument. Moreover, the frequent use of the plural for *ekklesia* is an additional devastating blow against the argument that a little gathering cannot be called an *ecclesia,* that it is only the larger regional entities that deserve the label *ekklesia.*

small gatherings described as parts of the *ekklesia.*[621] Though small, they are given the dignified label *ekklesia.*[622]

In the mature ecclesiology of the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth affirms again that a local church does not need a denomination or external organization to legitimize it.

> All human mediation of this unity, all the mutual understanding and agreement and co-ordination between the individual members, can only be a free human service. It cannot supply, let alone create, the guarantee of unity, the mutual

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[621] Connectional (presbyterian and episcopal) polity partisans do not typically argue that *ekklesia* cannot mean a small individual congregation. They argue for their polity based on church history more than exegesis. But they could delegitimize congregational polity if this argument was sound. For the sake of a thought experiment, is it possible that *ekklesia* never refers to a small congregation but rather only to regional occasional gatherings of Christians? Is it possible to see every one of the occurrences of *ekklesia* as referring to beyond-congregational entities like what we would call today a "denomination?" Could it be argued that Paul is writing to the the church of Corinth not about their congregational gatherings but about their denominational gatherings when many "parts of the church" gathered together? So Paul is referring to denominational gatherings in 1 Cor 11 (meal) and 1 Cor 14 (worship)? Under this thinking, congregations that met in homes would not be full-fledged legimate churches but rather *part* of the church in that regional area. In other words, this would mean the church of Corinth was made up of the Corinthian church that met at (speculating here) the house of Stephanas, the Corinthian church that met at the house of Crispus, and the Corinthian church that met at the house of Gaius? None of the individual gatherings would be called *ekklesia* but only when they gathered together. One could imagine the activities described in the house churches supersized: a meal for thousands of people, a stadium worship gathering, formal disciplinary court proceedings, and a mass healing service. The church discipline described in Matthew 18:17 and prayer for healing James 5:14 would only occur at these larger gatherings. Indeed, the references to *ekklesia* in the New Testament do seem to be bigger than the 2-3 Jesus mentions in Matt 18:20. The *ekklesia* do seem to be bigger than one family.
But, to evaluate the connectionalism-partisan thought experiment, the New Testament does not only refer to the *ekklesia* when there is a regional meeting of the church such as in Acts 15. It is hard to argue from these New Testament texts that that small house-sized congregational versions of gatherings are not churches but only a part of the church. No, each congregational gathering seems to be called *ekklesia.* Under this connectional partisan line of thinking, no direction is given whatsoever in the New Testament to the regular congregational gatherings which meet in houses (which we see referred to in Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 2; Col 4:15) but rather only to these regional (occasional) gatherings (which also probably met in houses). As stated above, this view is refuted by the activities of the *ekklesia* that seem to occur in a house, the *ekklesia* that meet in houses, and the plural use of *ekklesia*.

[622] "For the assembly of God's people, however, size is of no account. It is in being when God gathers His own. How many there are depends first on the One who calls and gathers it, and only then on those who answer the call and gather together. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt. 18:20)." Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 505.

> recognition of the individual communities. This does not mean that the existence of a particular organ of mediation, an institution which demands and maintains the oneness of the locally separated communities, is completely impossible. What it does mean is that such an organ or institution is not an integral constituent of the essence of the Church. The one Church does not exist either in an ideal or in an organised or organising totality to which the individual communities stand in the relationship of participating Churches (like the digits in a figure or the notes in a chord).[623]

This is significant as it means Barth's congregationalist convictions lasted through his mature ecclesiology. And it is profoundly significant if Barth is right. For Barth, based on Matthew 18:20, a congregation does not need to be part of a denomination to be a church. A congregation certainly may be part of a denomination or association. Indeed it is foolish to believe it is the only true congregation or that it has nothing to learn from other congregations. The apostle Paul fumes at such idiocy. "Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?" (1 Cor 14:36). But a congregation of two or three can begin without formal sanction or official approval by a bishop who claims the lineage of apostolic succession. If they meet in Jesus' name, they need not fear they are transgressing some sacred prerequisite. They are easily granted the label "church" and can then move on to be all that Scripture says about the church. For most people who are part of established churches, this point is largely a non-issue. They have few doubts that their church is a church. It may put at ease a few who are disturbed by Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic claims that other churches do not

[623] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 672-673.

have divine approval. But most importantly this should be encouraging to the persecuted believer who may be severely restricted with regard to gathering. Their 2-3 may be a church. Finally, this should be encouraging to believers everywhere who band together to be God's people in a dark world. Church planters can be put at ease. The barrier to entry—to be a "church"—is low. The ongoing responsibility to be all that the church is supposed to be is daunting but they may cheerfully begin without worrying they are doing it wrong.

In the 1947 essay, Barth wrongly limits the ekklesia *to meaning a congregation when it can also mean the total church*

As we have shown above, there are two meanings of *ekklesia* in the New Testament: sometimes it refers to "congregation" and other times to "the total church." In his zeal to emphasize the congregation in the first draft of the 1947 article, Barth protests too much against the *ekklesia* as "total church." Barth writes, "The Church does not exist as the invisible thus amorphous sum of all the 'faithful' then alive."[624] Contrary to what Barth implies here, *ekklesia* seems to connote "the faithful" in verses like Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 3:10 that seem to refer to the total church. Barth here

[624] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 94. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 76. This is less pronounced in the second version: "The Church is neither the invisible fellowship, nor the visible community, of all those who believe in Christ." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73.

denies the invisibility of the church whereas later in his mature ecclesiology he recognizes the invisibility and visibility of the church.[625] Later in the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth himself later explicitly accepts the "total church" usage of *ekklesia*. A repeated phrase in his mature ecclesiology is that the congregation, the "Christian community" (*Gemeinde*) is "the provisional representation of the whole world of humanity justified in Him."[626] Regarding the "the New Testament community," Barth writes,

> It can be said of it (Eph. 3:10) that by it the manifold truth of God will be declared to heavenly powers and forces. It is promised (Mt. 16:18) that even the gates of hell shall have no power to swallow it up.[627]

Barth is clearly not talking about a single congregation that meets in a home. In these instances, when he is talking about the "church," he is not just talking about a local congregation but the people in all the congregations.

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[625] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 652-661.

[626] Ibid., IV/1, 643.

[627] Barth is talking about "the second form" of the "people of God." The "first form" is the "Old Testament community" and "second form" is "the New Testament community." "We must now say further, however, that only in the fact that it is the people of God, that God lives and acts and speaks as its God, is it this people . . . Nor should we forget the obvious connexion between the first form and the second, which marks them off in common and most significantly from other historical phenomena . . . When we turn to the New Testament community, we find it said of it (Mt. 13:17) that it is given to see and hear what many prophets and righteous men had in vain sought to see and hear, to perceive things (1 Pet. 1:12) which even the angels desired to look into. It is called the house or community of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15), the elect nation, the royal priesthood, the holy people, the people of possession (1 Pet. 2:9, cf. Rev. 1:6), and the light of the world, the city set on a hill (Mt. 5:14). It can be said of it (Eph. 3:10) that by it the manifold truth of God will be declared to heavenly powers and forces. It is promised (Mt. 16:18) that even the gates of hell shall have no power to swallow it up. This is how it can and should understand itself. This is the high point on which it finds itself placed and where it can and should maintain itself." Ibid., 731, 732-733.

In the 1947 essay, Barth wrongly conflates a congregation with the total church

There are many New Testament references to *ekklesia* where it is not indisputably clear whether the local congregation or a part of the total church is being signified.[628] There are 114 occurrences in the New Testament of *ekklesia*. The 35 plural instances clearly connote "congregations." But of the 79 additional occurences, many refer to the church of God in a certain geographic area so they too seem to be congregations rather than the total church but one could read them as references to the total people of God in a certain area.

With regard to the more figurative meaning of the "total church," one could talk about "all the churches" and "the church" to signify the same thing. With regard to the more figurative meaning of *ekklesia*, "The singular [church / community] and plural [churches / communities] are interchangeable."[629]

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[628] "there is not always a hard and fast distinction between the local community and the universal community" Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 503.

[629] Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 398. That statement abridges this in the longer article by Schmidt. "It should be noted that the textual evidence supports the plural as well as the singular at Acts 9:31, so that ἐκκλησία = ἐκκλησίαι . . . Elsewhere, too, it is easy to pass from the singular to the plural and *vice versa*. . . .There is a similar relation of singular and plural at 1 Cor 10:32 and 11:16, where the two seem to be fully interchangeable . . . That it is used with both [singular and plural forms] is more important than might appear. We normally distinguish between the total Church and the individual congregation. We are thus accustomed to speaking of the Church of God, but not of the congregations of God. The fact that such distinction is impossible for Paul is an indication that he does not make the differentiation which later came into use." Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 504, 506, 507. As will be noted below, Schmidt misstates this a bit. It is not that Paul cannot make the distinction between a congregation and the total church but that he uses both meanings.

There was a short time when the meanings of the congregation and total church overlapped: there was one congregation which was the total church—the church in Jerusalem. But in Acts 8:1 we see a shift from the one total church to the plural congregations. "And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1 NASB). The one total church of God becomes a plural "all" [πάντες] so they will now assemble locally as plural congregations. So *ekklesia* signifies something like the one congregation and one total church of "Christians gathered in Jerusalem" were "all scattered."

Schmidt mentions the tendency for people's denominational tradition to influence which definition of *ekklesia* they emphasize.

> The distinctions mentioned are mostly those of denomination or school rather than of lexical or biblical and theological enquiry. Thus an Anglican may speak of the ἐκκλησία as the one Church, 'the body of Christians.' A Roman Catholic will begin with the universal *ecclesia* on the basis of Mt. 16:18, and he will then go on to emphasize the subordination of the individual congregation to the bishop. The orthodox Protestant will refer first to the whole community, while the liberal Protestant will think of the local congregation, and some confusion may be caused by earlier territorial church government (*alicubi regionum*). The translations and commentaries reflect this.[630]

[630] Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 503. A contemporary example of a congregational argument is from Peter O'Brien. O'Brien describes the *ekklesia* on the one hand as "A Local Assembly or Congregation of Christians . . . A House Church." And then on the other hand, as "A Heavenly Gathering." O'Brien downplays the universal church connotation, suggesting the local church might be the focus in every case. "Most commentators interpret these references in Colossians (and the similar instances in Ephesians) of 'the church universal, to which all believers belong' (Bauer) and which is scattered throughout the world . . . But the point being made here is that *ekklesia* is not the term used in the NT of those wider, universal links." Peter T. O'Brien,

For congregational polity advocates, the main meaning of *ekklesia* as congregation is extended metaphorically to connote the total church. Barth is an example of a polemical congregationalist in 1947 when he writes,

> The primary, normal, and visible form of this event is the *local congregation* [*Ortsgemeinde*], meeting in a 'parish' or 'district' with clearly defined boundaries. Such a local congregation is constituted by the possibility and the actuality of regular public worship . . . The Church lives (she actually *is*) in the form of a local congregation, which is the basis of all other forms of her life.[631]

Those inclined to polities (like episcopal and presbyterian) that involve formal "connectionalism" tend to emphasize the New Testament instances where *ekklesia* connotes the total church as the main meaning. For them, the congregation is significant because of its relation to the total church.

The congregational advocates are correct to say that the majority of instances in the New Testament refer to smaller gatherings than the total church. However, the connectional advocates are right that the church of God is inherently a connectional term that implies a continuity with other churches.

However, there is a hermeneutical problem here in trying to figure out a primary meaning of *ekklesia* that shapes its secondary meaning when the word seems to have two

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"Church II: Paul," in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: a One-Volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 195-196.

[631] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73. Cf. "the simplest, most available, and insofar exemplary and regular form of such a gathering is in fact the local congregation." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 78; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 96.

distinct meanings. It is a problem to say that each instance of *ekklesia* connotes the entire range of what *ekklesia* can mean.

The congregationalist one-sidedness of the 1947 essay is most apparent in Barth's attempt in the first draft to shoehorn the Nicene Creed adjectives into describing a congregation. "The one, holy, universal, apostolic Church exists as a *visible congregation*."[632] It sounds strange to see Barth referring to the church in the Nicene Creed: "one holy catholic and apostolic Church" in terms of one congregation. (E.g. I believe in the "one holy catholic and apostolic" congregation that meets in that house). The line in the creed instead means that I believe in the "one holy catholic and apostolic" total church (or group of churches or people of God). Indeed, the writers of the Nicene Creed were surely not thinking of the instances of *ekklesia* in the New Testament that refer to a small gathering of people eating a meal, contributing verbal expressions of worship, addressing individual sins, and praying for healing. Instead, they were

[632] "The one, holy, universal, apostolic Church exists as a *visible congregation,* the visible congregation which is [1] assembled by God's Word, [2] comforted and exhorted by God's Word, and [3] which serves God's Word in the world. That is what the polity of the Church has to express first of all." "Die eine, heilige, allgemeine apostolische Kirche existiert [1] in der durch das Wort Gottes versammelten, [2] durch das Wort Gottes getrösteten und ermahnten, [3] dem Wort Gottes in der Welt dienenden *sichtbaren Gemeinde.* Das is es, was die Ordnung der Kirche vor allem darzustellen hat.» Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 94. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 76. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 36. Numbered brackets added to note preliminary forms of Barth's three titles of his ecclesiology sections: The Holy Spirit gathers, upbuilds, and sends the Christian Community" (§62, §67, §72 of volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics*).

referring to the instances of *ekklesia* in the New Testament that connote the total church.[633] A prime example is: "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matt 16:18). The creed uses church in a similar way to verses like that. E.g. I believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic church (Nicene Creed). . . that is built by Jesus and it will not be overcome (Matt 16:18).

At first glance, it seems homiletically interesting to suggest that the biblical writers who used *ekklesia* always intended the full spectrum of meaning from total church to local congregation every time they used the word. But this is not usually how language is used except in puns. Usually, there is a predominant primary sense of a word when it is used. It is appropriate to say that *ekklesia* has a range of meaning from congregation to total church. However, we risk overemphasizing the lexical choice of *ekklesia* and playing down the main meaning of the sentence in its context when we try to project onto every occurrence of the local congregation the grandiose things said about the total church; or remind people that the grandiose statements about the total church in Ephesians are only possible because of local congregational practices. In other words, it is quite tempting and beautiful to say a local congregation is loved by Jesus (Eph 5:25), built by Jesus (Matt 16:18), and sent by Jesus (Eph 3:10) but we risk distorting the Ephesians and Matthew 16 passages by importing local congregational emphases

[633] Matt 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph 1:22; 3:10; 3:21; 5:25; Col 1:18; 1:24; Heb 12:23.

which are not strong in Ephesians and Matthew 16. Similarly, it dulls the urgency of the exhortation in the congregational passages if we import the total church promises. The church is to: eat together equitably (1 Cor 11:18), worship together chariably (1 Cor 14:23), resolve confict together carefully (Matt 18), and pray for one another diligently (Jas 5:14). If we import total church promises into these contexts, it leads to the false point that though it seems like Paul and Jesus are giving important directives here, they certainly do not mean it because the gates of hell will not prevail against the church regardless of whether it obeys.

Barth does not include this line in his second revised version. He also does not in the *Church Dogmatics* where instead he wrestles what the Nicene Creed means by "We believe . . . in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" and concludes that the church is both visible and invisible.[634] Still, he attempts to find a middle ground with his language of "special visibility" [*besondere Sichtbarkeit*]—a phrase he uses just three times over two pages.[635] Again, the New Testament, without embarrassment, has two distinct meanings of *ekklesia* (congregation and total church) so this quest to decide whether the church was visible or invisible was bound to fail. God's people are both. Even in Deuteronomy in the Septuagint, *ekklesia* (the assembly) can refer to the whole people of God (invisible)

[634] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 652-661.
[635] Ibid., IV/1, 654-655; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 731-733.

and the physical gathered assembly (visible). There is no need to synthesize what the biblical writers had no problem juxtaposing. Is the church visible and invisible? Yes. Is the church both the total people of God and a congregation? Yes.

Barth also includes this rhetorical flourish defending the idea that a congregation is a church. "The one Church exists in its totality in each of the individual communities."[636] Basically, he is saying (with imprecise homiletical flourish) that the total church is in each congregation. His colleague Schmidt also problematically mashes together the two meanings: "Each community, however small, represents the total community, the Church."[637] Barth and Schmidt are correct that the total church position by itself is inadequate. There do not need to be many local congregations added together to make a church. But they are also incorrect insofar as they suggest that the most grandiose promises about the *ekklesia* seem to be about a local congregation. Jesus is not saying in Matthew 16:18 that he is building one local congregation and the the gates of Hades will not prevail against that local congregation but rather that he is building the total church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against that. Again, this is an example of fusing together two different meanings of *ekklesia.*

[636] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 672-673.
[637] Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," 505, 506.

In the 1947 essay, Barth wrongly states that the ekklesia *is an event*

Over against those who would see the church as an institution overseen by bishops or a superorganization like the World Council of Churches, Barth says that *ekklesia* is not an ideal nor a bureaucracy but a "dynamic reality."[638] "The reality which we have in mind when we use the word 'Church' [*Kirche*] is the living congregation [*Gemeinde*] of the living Lord Jesus Christ . . . The Church exists by *happening*. The Church exists as the *event* of this *gathering together*."[639] Barth is drawing here on *ekklesia* in Matthew 18:17 and the "event" of Matthew 18:20: "tell it to the church [*ekklesia* / *Gemeinde*] . . . For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."[640]

> The Church is the 'event' in which two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ, i.e. in the power of His calling and commission. Church order is concerned exclusively with this event, with the living congregation itself.[641]

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[638] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 76. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 62.

[639] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 76, 77. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 62.

[640] In the first draft, he writes, "there is no reason to evade the simple proposition: the Church is there and only there 'where two or three are gathered together in my name' (Matt 18:20)." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 95. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 77. In the abridged second draft, Barth writes, "The Church is the 'event' in which two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73.

[641] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73.

Ekklesia occurs when Jesus Christ makes himself present among the people gathered. There is a dynamism here that Barth is contrasting with "apostolic succession" as the foundational element of the church. *Ekklesia* happens when the people of God prayerfully engage in practices such as conflict resolution—that is the topic in that text. There is almost something "charismatic" or "Pentecostal" here. Jesus' promise to be present is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is "the actually operative might and power of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ."[642] The "actually" here as an example of Barth's "actualism." There is a supernatural interaction that occurs—"there I am with them." Again, this is in contrast to an organization's wheels of bureaucracy churning without necessarily God's presence.

Of course, an episcopal polity advocate would respond that the means of bishops and apostolic succession are given by Jesus and the Spirit so asking for some charismatic presence of God to intervene is like the drowning man who is offered rescue by a boat and instead asks for God's help. Even though we have seen Colm O'Grady and Wendell Dietrich criticize Barth's actualism, we will also see that many Catholic readers of Barth appreciate his actualism. They too want a church that is not static and bureaucratic but dependent on the presence of Jesus Christ showing up.

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[642] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 80. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 65.

But lexically Barth does err here in describing *ekklesia* in terms of an "event." "The Church exists by *happening*. The Church exists as the *event* of this *gathering together*."[643]"The Church is the 'event' in which two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ."[644] Barth is right to say that human beings are dependent on the Holy Spirit for the church's existence. However, Barth errs in saying that *ekklesia* describes an action. "The Greek-Latin word *ecclesia* speaks basically not of the existence or condition of a community or congregation, but of the event of its congregating."[645] Barth is saying that the word *ekklesia* means "assembling" and this is just not the case. In fact, *ekklesia* in the New Testament (and the Old Testament) does mean a group of people. They are identified by the fact that they gather in God's name. Contra to what Barth says here, the word *ekklesia* does not mean only the moment or event of their gathering.

As mentioned above, in Scripture, the *ekklesia* refers to the attendees or the people gathered. *Ekklesia* has at a literal level the meaning of "a gathered assembly" but it also has the more figurative meaning of the people who typically attend God's

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[643] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 76, 77. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 62.
[644] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73.
[645] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 82; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 67.

gathering. They are the *ekklesia* even when the gathering is not in session. For example, consider the biblical writer's anthropomorphism of referring to the church as a bride: "and to present her to himself as a radiant *ekklesia* [ἐκκλησίαν*]* without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Eph 5:27). Does *ekklesia* here signify the literal meaning, "assembly" or "gathering"? No. The meaning here is more like "people" or "community." This has nothing to do with the event of the church being gathered. More examples are the thirty-five instances of the plural of *ekklesia* in the New Testament.[646] "And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian *ekklesia plural* [ἐκκλησίαις]." Does "events of gathering" or "events of gatherings" make sense here? No. What is being referred to is communities of people (who gather regularly).[647]

Ekklesia is not just "the event of its congregating." Even in this 1947 essay where the event language is problematic, Barth only inconsistently uses it. He rightly says that "The Church [*Kirche*] is the community [*Gemeinde*] of people, which God allows to live

[646] Acts 15:41; 16:5; Rom 16:4; 16:16; 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 14:34; 16:1; 16:19; 2 Cor 8:1; 8;18; 8:19; 8:23; 8:24; 11:8; 11:28; 12:13; Gal 1:2; 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4; Rev 1:4; 1:11; 1:20 twice; 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:23; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22; 22:16.

[647] "an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned" Henry G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged From Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 239. "a regularly summoned political body" Arndt and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, 240.

under this determination and with his character."[648] The sentence would not make sense as "The Church is the event of people" or "The Church is the event of the community of people." No, clearly Barth is referring to the people of God not the act of assembling. Barth still correctly indicates the necessity of God's agency in forming these people. Again, that emphasis is correct.

Barth moves away from calling *Gemeinde* an event in his mature ecclesiology. In the opening pages of his mature ecclesiology in 1951, he explains that he finds no good reason for using *Kirche* and notes that Martin Luther was right to use *Gemeinde* but he does not say that *ekklesia* means "event."[649]

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[648] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 77. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 62. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 22. Translation revised to translate community of "men" [*Menschen*] with "people" here. In describing "The Community [*Gemeinde*]" in *Evangelical Theology,* Barth writes again that the community and church are "the people [men] who encountered the Word" and "The community represents the secondary witnesses, the society of people [men] called to believe in and simultaneously to testify to, the Word in the world." Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 37.

[649] "The English equivalent "church" or "kirk," and the German "*Kirche*," is usually explained to be a mutilated rendering of the [Greek] adjective Κυριακή [Lord's - short for Lord's Day]. But it may go back to the same root to which the Latin words *circare, circa, circum, circulus*, etc., belong, indicating the circumscribed sphere in which this gathering, this hastening and coming together of the community [*Gemeinde*], takes place, or even more concretely the half-circular apse with the altar and the bishop's throne on which the assembled congregation [*Gemeinde*] was focused in its worship in churches built after the older Roman style. A third guess is that the word "church" [*Kirche*] comes from the term κηρυγεία (the office of a herald). None of these explanations is completely satisfying. What is certain is that Luther preferred not to use the word [*Kirche*] at all, but to speak of the "community" [*Gemeine*], the "congregation" [*Sammlung*], the "company" [*Haufen*], or "little company" [*Häuflein*], or even "Christendom" [*Christenheit*]." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 651. German words have been placed in brackets in the quotation above to give more clarity to the English translation. Cf. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 727-728. Barth is correct that Luther uses *Gemeine* [without the 'd']. Luther writes, "in our mother tongue and in good German it ought to be called 'a Christian community or assembly' [*Gemeine*] . . . Likewise, the word *communio* . . . should not be translated 'communion' but rather 'community' [*Gemeine*] . . . To speak proper German, we ought to say 'community

As described above, elsewhere Barth correctly uses *Gemeinde* in a similar way to his use of *Volk* (people). In his mature ecclesiology in volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* in the 1950's, we do not see "the church as event" in the same way Barth describes it here in the first draft of his 1947 essay. Rather than calling the *ekklesia* an event, Barth says the *ekklesia* are the people affected by the event of the Holy Spirit's gathering,[650] upbuilding,[651] and sending.[652]

Barth is on stronger exegetical ground when he adds an adjective to emphasize the actualistic, dynamic, charismatic, Pentecostal nature of the church. "The better word 'community [*Gemeinde*]'" does not indicate as well as it should the "the event of its congregating" or "the event of a gathering."[653] Barth says the church rightly understood is not just a "congregation *[Gemeinde*]" but a "living congregation [*lebendige*

[*Gemeine*] of saints'" Kirsi I. Stjerna, "The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529," in *The Annotated Luther, Volume 2: Word and Faith*, ed. Martin Luther and Kirsi I. Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 362. The Luther Bibel originally had the spelling *Gemeine* but has added the 'd' to modern versions so it is *Gemeinde*. See for example Romans 16:1. "the church in Cenchreae" was originally "der Gemeine zu Kenchrea" (1545) but now has "der Gemeinde zu Kenchreä" (1912). http://www.bibel-online.net/ *Gemeine* is only used one other time by Barth and that is when he is quoting Johann Gottlieb Fichte from 1845 about "eine große freie moralische Gemeine" (a great free moral community). Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, III/2, 118. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 101. quoting Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke* vol. 2 (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 306.

[650] "the event of their gathering" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 675.

[651] "the upbuilding of the community, the event of the communion of saints" ibid., IV/2, 643, 677.

[652] "its witness among other people. The event in which this takes places is the work of the Holy Spirit." Ibid., IV/3.2, 759.

[653] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 82-83. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 67.

Gemeinde.]"[654] *Ekklesia* in the New Testament does not always indicate that Jesus' presence burns brightly among them. It is rather a word the signifies God's people and can be used to refer to them even when things are not well such as in Galatians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 1:2. *Ekklesia* and *Gemeinde* signify "community" not an event. It is appropriate however for Barth to call for living communities of God's people filled with his presence.

Barth's congregationalist leanings clarified

There are a number of questions that are raised once it is revealed that Barth affirms the congregationalist plank of Matthew 18:20 that when two or three people gather in Jesus' name, there is a church. Those questions are addressed next.

What role do denominations play in approving churches? A church should be assumed to be a real church but there is a human role in discerning whether a church is a true church.

Barth's emphasis is on the role of Jesus rather than the two or three gathered. It is Jesus' presence which makes a church a "real church." One could read the necessity of Jesus' presence as rendering human response futile. That is, it is arbitrary whether Jesus deems to be present. Or, one could read this promise of Jesus generously so that it is taken for granted by the two or three gathered that Jesus will be present.

[654] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 83. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 67.

Barth makes clear that it is possible for a group to gather but be without the presence of Jesus Christ. No group should presume that Jesus will be present. A church is only a "*real* church . . . in so far as it is filled with the life of this primary subject [Jesus] and only if its life is based on this foundation."[655] This is what Barth discussed later in IV/2 as the "apparent church" vs. the "real church."[656] There is an appropriate sense of fear and awe when the church meets. The church asks for the presence of Jesus. So, the human observer cannot definitively determine whether an apparent church is a real church.

However, there is another sense in which Barth it is possible to become a "false . . . heretical . . . apostate church" rather than a "true" one.[657] It is possible for outside observers to give input regarding this. This is not as mysterious as to whether Jesus will be present.

Barth writes in 1938 in the *Church Dogmatics* that he takes an open posture, an assuming-the-best, innocent-until-proven-guilty stance toward those who claim to be a

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[655] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67.

[656] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 618.

[657] Barth is contrasting catholic church with the false, heretical, apostate. "It is the false Church in every form in which it does not activate or confirm its identical being but has and reveals and maintains an alien being. It is then a 'heretical' Church, i.e., a Church which chooses for itself such an alien being. At the very worst it may even become an 'apostate' Church, i.e. one which falls away, which turns its back on the being of the true Church and denies it." Ibid., IV/1, 702.

church. He assumes a "confession" that constitutes a church has taken place unless he finds out otherwise.

> That these two or three were really gathered together in the name of the Lord, i.e., really in a common hearing and accepting of the Word of God, I will not deny to them in advance—for I believe in a forgiveness of sins and therefore I also see and understand the Church under the forgiveness of sins. On a closer hearing I may not be able, or may be only partially able, to ascribe to them the presence of this basic presupposition of Church confession. I may have to declare the result of their agreement to be more or less false and therefore their authority wholly or partly unfounded. But this is something which I cannot know in advance. What I can and should and must concede in advance—and the fact of their agreement confirms this prior judgment—is that this presupposition has been fulfilled, that what they say in common they say with the authority of the Church, and that therefore I have always to listen to it. If I wanted to have it otherwise, if I wanted not to give them this honour and love, where would be the love and honour which I owe to their Lord and mine, where would be the seriousness of my hearing and receiving and myself believing and confessing the Word of God in the Church and therefore in community with others?[658]

Barth models here how a denominational official might approach a church that claims to be a church. He would approach optimistically and cautiously. A first step is that they claim to be gathering in the name of Jesus. Whether indeed they are a "real church," that Jesus is present, is something that human beings can not finally determine. The next step is to see to what extent they seek to be a "true church."

Even if there is a problem in the way they are setting about to be a church, probably the observer will not withhold the label "church" from them. For example, despite the severe problems in the church of Corinth (1 Cor 1:2) and the churches of

[658] Ibid., I/2, 593.

Galatia (Gal 1:2), there is no threat by Paul to remove the label *ekklesia* from them.[659] This is not how rebuking works—questioning whether a group is an *ekklesia.*

However, there may be the adding of a derogative adjective. It may be appropriate to call a church a "false" church as we see this adjective used of apostles, prophets, messiahs, and teachers in the New Testament.

Many denominations wrongly withhold from new congregations the label "church." A new congregation is given a lesser label such a "a mission," "a fresh expression of church," or "a new church development," or "a church plant." Rowan Williams has responded to the question of whether "fresh expressions" are "churches" with the response: "Let's wait and see" which suggests a non-definite but open response.[660] Barth would say that the denomination is unable to definitively determine whether Jesus is present, which would definitively determine whether an "apparent church" is a "real church." However, a denomination could give input regarding whether a new church is a "true church" rather than a "false church." If we were to conform to the New Testament nomenclature, one would call these groups "churches"

[659] "Paul, in spite of everything, could still address the Galatian communities as ἐκκλησίαι" ibid., IV/1, 692.
[660] John P. Bowen, *What Is a Fresh Expression of Church? A Beginner's Guide to a Movement That Is Changing the Church*, The Wycliffe Booklets (Toronto, ON: Wycliffe College, 2015), 8. Yoder says this well: "For the [Zwinglian "Reformers"] preachers the question is an ontological one: is our church a church? For the Anabaptists the question is an ethical-eschatological one: to what is the congregation called?" Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, 266.

because they have apparently the bare minimum requirements of a church: two or three gathered in the name of Jesus with Jesus present. However, a denomination might withhold their recommendation that this church is indeed a "true church" or a "catholic church."[661] A new church that wants to be endorsed by a denomination must open itself to scrutiny about its ways and beliefs. A new church that does not want to face this accountability can expect to have a denomination say that apparently this new church is a church but we are not sure to what extent it is a true church or a false one since it is not in relationship with other churches.

Can two people be a church? Yes.

Based on Matthew 18:20, the minimum requirements for a church, seem to be that two or three gather in the name of Jesus, and Jesus is present with them. However, it is important to note that even in the larger context of that verse, there certainly seem to be more than two or three people involved. In fact, in each instance where *ekklesia* occurs in Scripture, there seem to be more than two or three gathered. We see in 1 Cor 11 a meal where there are various divisions; in 1 Cor 14 there are various expressions of

[661] In this sense we are not able to delineate a clear "bounded set" of people who are in the "real church" as opposed to an "apparent church." The "real church" is a "centered set" of people met by Jesus. However, as we will see below, it is appropriate for a denomination to attempt to determine what is a "true church" as opposed to a "false church." They can sketch out a "bounded set" of "true churches" that they have vetted. The denomination cannot guarantee that this is a "real church" as they cannot guarantee Jesus' presence. See on sets the work of Paul Hiebert. Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). brought to prominence afresh in Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, 205-209.

worship; in James 5 there are elders praying for a sick person; in Matt 18 conflict resolution. These are congregational practices, but they seem slightly larger than a small group of two or even three. The New Testament does not stipulate that an *ekklesia* needs to have a quorum of ten adults as in a synagogue. Could a church just be two people? Yes. Consider extreme persecution where two Christians gathering in Jesus' name is indeed an *ekklesia.* Jesus is present with them. Though it is not called a church, Philip seems to have baptized the eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 in a setting where they were the only two Christians. Again, a church, a real church, may be very tiny—two people if they meet in Jesus' name and Jesus' presence is among them. They may be a "real church." However, the people of a church will also want to be a "true church" and so will be taking steps to be worthy of that label.

Should congregations be independent? No. Congregations should and typically do cooperate with other churches.

The congregationalist partisan touting the importance of the congregation should also acknowledge that in the New Testament congregations are not supposed to be alone and be proud of their independence. As Barth says, some of those who practice congregational polity have an inadequate understanding of how they should relate with other congregations.

> Not even the Congregationalist church order is above criticism. Its representatives have not yet been able to offer a satisfactory answer to the

> problem of the unity of the Church and of the churches. This paper is not a plea for the uncritical adoption of this [Congregationalist] particular system.[662]

Many local gatherings are dignified with the title *ekklesia* but there are also many references in the New Testament to *ekklesia* plural and the implication is clearly that an individual *ekklesia* are connected to these others.

Diverse expressions should be checked by what the Spirit is doing in other congregations. "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people" (1 Cor 14:33). There is wisdom found in consulting with other churches. Originality may be a leading indicator that something is amiss.[663] Instead, the church should seek "best practices" of other churches—"as in all the congregations of the Lord's people." A single local *ekklesia* misunderstands itself it if thinks it can remain independent of other other churches. Their purpose and identity are the same. The apostle Paul assumes that they are in relationship with one another. No congregationalist should doubt the benefits of connecting with other congregations.

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[662] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 75. Note the "the church and the churches" phrase in the quote perhaps refers to Barth's 1936 paper which was prepared for the global Second World Conference on Faith and Order which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, a decade earlier in 1937. Barth, *The Church and the Churches*. In that paper, Barth argues that the unity of the churches can only be found in Jesus Christ. He returned to this point in his treatment of the description of the church in the Nicene Creed as "one" in §62: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 668-685. In this 1947 piece Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version].", Barth much more thoroughly describes how churches should relate to other churches than the 1937 piece Barth, *The Church and the Churches*.—despite their titles.

[663] 1 Cor 14:36

Barth does not think that a congregation must remain independent. He thinks it is appropriate for congregations to work together: to "mutually acknowledge each other, stand by each other in their life as congregations, advise, help, and to this extent guide one another."[664] But the congregations should relate with one another in a way that is similar to how they function as a congregation—with mutuality and service. "But such 'guidance,' or 'direction,' is not domination or authority, but service."[665] Indeed some congregationalist polity denominations have structures where congregations cooperate in a conference, association, or convention but do not have authority over one another. Barth says this association would "guarantee to them their 'catholic,' their 'ecumenical' character."[666] Barth envisions a "synodical / synodal congregation" or "synod"[667] that would occasionally be formed for specific purposes. It would be "made up *ad hoc* of

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[664] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 74. "If each of them is itself, in the full sense of the word, *the* Church, it must follow that they know and acknowledge each other mutually in their indirect identity, and mutually support, advise, help, and to this extent guide each other in their existence and therefore in the renewal and reformation of their existence." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 80. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 98.

[665] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 74.

[666] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 81. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 99.

[667] All three forms appear: "*synodical congregation* . . . synod or 'synodical congregation'" Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 74. "Synodalgemeinde" Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 40, 41. "synodal congregation" Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 80, 81, 82. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 99, 100, 101.

certain members."[668] In his formal ecclesiology in the *Church Dogmatics*, we can see that when Barth says "*ad hoc*" he is thinking about the Acts 15 gathering that was convened to address a specific question about the inclusion of Gentile believers.[669] Despite this "synod" sounding a bit like a Presbytery or General Assembly in Presbyterian polity, Barth specificially says he does not mean the "presbyterian-synodal church order," which he groups with "papal, episcopal, and consistorial" as "systems that obstruct the free access of God's Word to the actual congregation."[670] Seven years later in IV/2 in his mature ecclesiology in the *Church Dogmatics*, he is more charitable about these forms—

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[668] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 74.

[669] "The discussion in Ac. 15 between Paul and Barnabas as the delegates of the community in Syrian Antioch and the 'apostles and elders' in Jerusalem has often been described as an Apostolic Council. Was this, then, the beginning of the synodal direction of the Church? But the result of it was not a decree or dogma conjointly accepted by this assembly, but the consolation which, according to v. 31, was sent by the believers of Jerusalem to their brethren at Antioch. And the incident as a whole did not involve the appearance of an institution, but the ad hoc introduction and execution of an act, the practical result of which was accorded only a partial and occasional respect . . . It certainly cannot be maintained that the existence of a synodal or episcopal organ to guarantee the unity of the communities is essential to the New Testament idea of the Church, even if the texts do not record all the actual and perhaps very strong connexions which did exist in New Testament days. If these connexions did exist in any form, and if their organs (if there were any) were of great practical value for mutual correlation and co-ordination, it is still obviously the case that no one thought of them as basically indispensable for founding and maintaining the unity of the communities, that no one, therefore, thought of them as necessary to salvation, that no one ascribed to them either infallible authority or unconditional efficacy. Rather, those who proclaimed the authority of Jesus Christ pointed to Him and His Spirit as the creator and guarantee of their unity (even of their unity one with another)—confident that fundamentally He was a sufficient guarantee in the matter, and presupposing that there could not be any other beside Him. Our own decision will have to be the same in relation to it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 673, 674.

[670] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 75. "papale . . . episkopalen und presbyterial-synodalen"Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 42. "papal . . . episcopal and presbyterian synodal forms" Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 83. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 102.

noting all the polities have their weaknesses and each needs to align themselves more fully with the way of Jesus Christ and perhaps it is better get the plank out of one's own polity's eye rather than the speck out of another's.[671]

Again, Barth has a single cautionary comment: the congregationalists need only a way of thinking about how they interact with other congregations.

> The inner necessity of their way need only be more deeply grounded, their ecumenical validity and significance need only be set more sharply in the light and more consequentially and at the same time more circumspectly argued than has been the case up till now.[672]

But Barth, in this paper, takes it upon himself to provide such a clarification.

> The question about church order arises again when we turn to the relation of different local congregations to each other. Since each of them, in its immediate relation to the one Lord, is in the fullest sense of the word a Church, i.e. a congregation, they can only mutually acknowledge each other, stand by each other in their life as congregrations, advise, help, and to this extent, guide one

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[671] "No Church order is perfect, for none has fallen directly from heaven and none is identical with the basic law of the Christian community. Even the orders of the primitive New Testament community (whatever form they took) were not perfect, nor are those of the Western Papacy, the Eastern Patriarchate, the Synodal Presbyterianism which derives from Calvin's system, Anglican, Methodist, Neo-Lutheran and other forms of Episcopacy, or Congregationalism with its sovereignty of the individual community. Nor are the orders of all different systems which are derivative variations of these basic types. There is no reason to look down proudly and distastefully from one to the others. At one time they may all have been living law sought and in a certain exaggeration found in obedience, and therefore legitimate forms of the body of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they may be this still. Thus for all the problems to which they give rise they must be respected by the others. Indeed, as we have reason to leave this question open, we have equally good ground to put the counter-question how we ourselves are fixed in relation to living law; whether the removal of the beam in our own eye (Mt. 7:4) is not a more urgent task than concern about the mote in our brother's eye; and whether in the last analysis we do not need to learn from this brother something for our own reformation." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 718.

[672] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103.

> another. But such 'guidance,' or 'direction,' is not domination or authority, but service.[673]

It is with this attitude that representatives of various churches might gather together—that they might provide input and assistance to the local churches.[674]

But these representatives should not see themselves as "governing" the local churches. In some ways, Barth's recommendation here for a "synodal congregation" [*Synodalgemeinde*] or "mother congregation" [*Muttergemeinde*][675] is similar to the loose way baptist churches "associate" or "cooperate" with one another. They can pass resolutions at a general conference, assembly, convention, meeting, advisory panel, but these are "guidance" rather than authoritative. However, Barth thinks that the concept of "*Gemeinde*" or "congregation" should never be far from the minds of those who participate in such "organs for the guidance of many congregations" [*Organe der Leitung aller christlichen Gemeinden*][676] lest the structure lose the key dynamic of what the church is to be: praying that the Holy Spirit might empower our sitting under the Scriptures together. To the extent that it becomes meetings, decision-making, reports, management,

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[673] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73-74. Cf. much the same statement in the second version: Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 98.
[674] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 98-99.
[675] Ibid., 99; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 40.
[676] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 98; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 40.

supervision, policy-making, and enforcement, Barth worries that the core of what the church is being lost. Instead, "it would work with the congregations as a congregation."[677] Barth suggests that the church could be a powerful demonstration of the gospel to the world (perhaps particularly after World War II).

> A Church which was in all its forms a living congregation would be already, in its exemplary existence in the midst of the political structure, a proclamation also in the political realm. But how can it have and be such a proclamation as long as the basis of its polity is contempt of the congregation and anxiety at the thought of its freedom?[678]

Instead of being an example to the world, these papal, episcopal, and presbyterian synod forms of church structure cling to power—afraid of allowing congregations to sit under the Scriptures in their local context.

What are Barth's complaints against denominations? Jesus diminished, congregations throttled, and authority sought contrary to Scripture.

In second version of the 1947 article, Barth angrily states that a church can become "a merely nominal church, an ecclesiastical shell from which the life has fled."[679] Barth has two practical problems with denominations and a biblical objection.

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[677] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 99. "*als Gemeinde an die Gemeinden*" Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 40.
[678] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 102-103.
[679] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 67.

His first practical concern is that this bureaucracy takes attention off listening to Jesus Christ. What is crucial is not the denominational structure but the presence of the "living Lord Jesus Christ." The subtext here is that the event of the presence of Jesus Christ among those who gather in his name is *the* crucial mark a Christian church, not this historic episcopacy—despite the argument of virtually all the other participants in the dialogue. The idea that episcopal oversight is required is for Barth an appalling misallocation of emphasis.

His second practical concern is that the denomination can hurt the congregation, which is what the denomination is supposed to support. The denomination serves as a bottleneck. The New Testament indicates that "overseers" should faithfully watch over their flocks (Acts 20:28) and that overseers / bishops should be people of character (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7).[680] Barth worries that these rather modest intimations about

[680] The group gathered in Acts 20 is called "elders" in Acts 20:17, then "overseers" in 20:28. This is one of the pieces of evidence for these terms to have some overlap in meaning. It is not controversial to say that in the New Testament: *episcopos* (bishops, overseers) and *presbuteros* (presbyters, elders, priests) are used in an overlapping way. People who believe in episcopal polity argue that episcopal polity emerged late in the New Testament and was solidified by the church fathers so there is a three-fold leadership structure of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Presbyterian and congregational polity advocates tend to argue there is not a three-fold ministry but that presbyters and bishops were one position (and a second position was deacons). Another possible solution is suggested by New Testament scholar Gordon Fee who speculates that presbyters is the umbrella category that has within it two positions: bishops and deacons. "The elders in the local churches seem to have been composed of both *episkopoi* (overseers) and *diakonoi* (deacons)." Fee, "*Laos* and Leadership Under the New Covenant," 141. "The term 'elders' is probably a covering term for both overseers and deacons. In any case the grammar of Titus 1:5, 7 demands that 'elder' and 'overseer' are interchangeable terms (as in Acts 20:17, 28), but they are not thereby necessarily coextensive." Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles," 157. Note in Fee's language that this is a suggestion rather than something he thinks is definite.

responsible episcopal oversight have morphed into the formation of a government bureaucracy which regulates congregations.[681] Episcopal and presbyterian forms of polity (and similary, the formation of the World Council of Churches, which occasioned this essay) tend to stress their authority over congregations.

> Against the papal form, and also against the episcopal and presbyterian synodal forms of constitution, there is this basic objection, that they not only do not serve the readiness, openness, and freedom of the congregation for the Word of God and therefore for the reformation of the Church; they actually hinder it.[682]

At worst, those forms of church structure function as if the bureaucratic structure of meetings among leaders of different congregations is the church. But the church in its most basic form is not when clergy gather for committee meetings of a denomination but when people in a congregation sit under the Scripture together (where two or three are gathered), where baptisms occur, where the Lord's Supper is taken, where disciple-making is occurring. Barth in the first version makes clear that this congregational polity has far more potential than the alternatives.[683]

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[681] To say "episcopal oversight" is something of a tautology. *Episcopos* (bishop) means overseer. So "overseer oversight."

[682] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 102."The objection to the papal church order, and, in lesser degree, also to the episcopal, consistorial, and presbyterian-synodal church order, is that these systems obstruct the free access of God's Word to the actual congregation."Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 74.

[683] "The other way [Congregationalism], which we have glanced at, is also not a completely new way. It showed itself quite clearly in its basic lines already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in an ecclesiastical movement in England, a movement which until now has been too little noticed or too quickly rejected. The congregations which dared in that time and place to let themselves be formed by this movement made themselves noteworthy at any rate in the critical eighteenth century by having been able to make a far better stand in the face of the Enlightenment, strange as it may seem, than the other English

Barth says these large bureaucratic structures are set up to prevent bad things from happening. "These other polities are all open to the charge that they smell a bit of unbelief."[684] Barth thinks denominational officials exerting authority from on high in the papal, episcopal and presbyterian synodal church structures, hurt the cause of Christ more than the local churches ever do.

> All of these systems of church order are due, more or less, to a quite unnecessary fear of arbitrary human action on the part of those who are chosen and called to be members of the living congregation of Jesus Christ, coupled with a scandalous lack of concern about the arbitrary behavior of certain officials, chosen and appointed by men, to wield authority within, and over, the Church.[685]

Barth thinks that local Christians wandering off course as they seek to follow Jesus is less likely to result in major problems than church officials wandering off course while trying to wield authority. In reality, both can do much damage to the name of Christ.

Barth finds the work of denominational officials to be ineffective. "The discussions between their representatives have long since become sterile."[686] Rather than

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churches, which were apparently so much better armed with their episcopal or presbyterian synodal authority." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103.

[684] Ibid., 102.

[685] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 75. "They all rest on the remarkable contradiction that they entrust *too little* to men—namely, to the men gathered as Christians to be the living congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ—yet, on the other hand, they entrust too much to men—namely, to those particular office bearers and representatives chosen and ordained by men, entrusted to be representatives within and without the congregation." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 102.

[686] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 102.

attempting to form themselves for the future, they are merely trying to recover some past idealized structure. "All that remain as possibilities in their context are restorations, not reformations."[687] It would be better to let congregations be freed to follow Jesus with minimal interference from outside.

Barth's biblical and theological problem with denominations is that they develop a mentality of doing exactly what Jesus said his disciples are not to do with regard to lording authority over one another. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:25-26; Cf. Mark 10:42-43). Barth points to the problem of an authority or governance mentality in these forms of connectional polity. Not "governance" but service is needed from the church's leaders. It is inappropriate to even talk about church "governance" beyond the work that Christ does in governing the church. "The government that guarantees the unity of the living congregation is the concern of her living Lord alone."[688] Only Christ rules.[689] Thus, it is appropriate to speak of "church order" but not "church governance."

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[687] Ibid.

[688] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73.

[689] Cf. on the problem of such offices replacing Christ: "In the sphere of Romanism and Eastern Orthodoxy we have examples of the transgression of this upper limit of the ministry of the community to the extent that in them the Church ascribes to itself, to its life and institutions and organs, particularly to its administration

Barth also objects to how the New Testament description of "overseers" and "elders" have morphed into positions of authority. Instead, all people serve. The Word of God is the only "authority."

> Let us speak of services [*Diensten*] and not of offices [*Ämtern*]! When the different services are acknowledged, then there can be congregational service and the whole congregation arises and endures. In the living congregation, it is axiomatic that no member may be without such a service. . . There are simply no ecclesiastical 'authorities' [*Obrigkeit*, or "magristracy"] in the congregation except the Word of God in its biblical witness, and it is served by the *whole* congregation in all its services.[690]

There are different roles but no person is in a position over one another. There is a place for a "servant of the Word" but only in the context of mutual service.

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of the sacraments and the means of grace entrusted to it, and in Romanism to its government by the teaching office, certain functions in the exercise of which it is not only not subordinate to Jesus Christ but is ranked alongside and in practice even set above Him as His vicar in earthly history, its ministry of witness being left far behind." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 836.

[690] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 97. The translator Paul M. van Buren translates *Diensten* and its variations five times in this quotation as "services" which sounds wooden and so one could replace with either "ministries," "works," or "duties" for ease of reading but van Buren, following Barth, is rightly trying to capture the dynamic of a community of servants rather than a hierarchical division with authority figures and consumers/minions. Later, in 1955, Barth reiterates this point in §67, "Even linguistically, it must avoid the fatal word 'office' [*Amt*] and replace it by 'service,' [*Dienstes*] which can be applied to all Christians. Or, if it does use it, it can do so only on the understanding that in the Christian community either all are office-bearers [*Amtsträger*] or none; and if all, then only as servants." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 694. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 787. In the second version of the 1947 essay, Barth puts it this way, "Apart from Him there is no ecclesiastical office (*officium*). There can only be the service (*Diakonia, ministerium*) of the whole congregation, divided and organized in relation to all that worship requires, both in that which it presupposes, and that to which it leads. For the fulfillment of this service all the members of the congregation are responsible together, as a whole, in which all share; in this service for practical reasons some may have to take precedence of others, but in principle there are no 'higher' or 'lower' forms of service. Such service can be shared among the members only on the basis of a recognition of the different gifts bestowed by the one Holy Spirit, Who is promised to all." Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 73. Eberhard Busch says Barth rejected the automatic distribution of God's work through an office-holder. Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 89-90, 92. Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 258-259, 262. Cf. on deacons and service. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 693, IV/3.2, 889-892.

> Reaching a consensus about the aptitude of this or that congregation member for this or that service of the Word [*Dienst am Wort*]—that is '~~Church~~ ecclesiastical elections' [*Kirchliche Wahlen*]. There is a particular 'servant of the Word' [*Diener am Wort*] who, in the framework of *his* particular form of the gift and task which is given to *all*, helps make the worship of the whole congregation, and so the congregation itself, the existence of the Church on its human side, possible and real [*wirklich*]. But there can follow from this no idea whatsoever of one service over or under other services: it is a matter of difference of function [*funktionen*]. The ~~minister~~ pastor [*Pfarrer*] is not placed above the other elders [*Ältesten*], nor the bellringer beneath the professor of theology! There is no room here for the distinction between 'clergy' [*Geistlichen*] and 'laity' [*Laien*] or for a merely '~~learning~~' 'teaching' [*lehrende*] or 'listening' [*hörende*] Church, because there is no member of the Church who is not in his own place all of this.[691]

In other words, sharp categorization of those who issue orders and those who consume is not an accurate biblical description of the church. Barth writes in the *Church Dogmatics* that the divide between clergy and laity has allowed laity to think of the clergy as the church.

> the community is divided into two subjects, a smaller, superior, active and directly responsible, and a greater, subordinate, passive and only indirectly responsible, the mediaeval scheme being thus revived in a new clergy and laity. In other words, a theological basis is found for the misunderstanding which is still so fatefully powerful even to-day, causing countless people not to think of themselves when they speak of the Church but only of the parsons and theologians and other leading members.[692]

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[691] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 97. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 38-39. (Some alternations made with the ~~strikethrough~~ in the translation). Cf. on the diversity of gifts. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 854-860, IV/4, 38.

[692] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 765-766.

It is not that lay people should make every decision. The popular will of the people often gets things wrong. However, Barth worries that the Protestant divide between clergy and lay people developed out of the feudal structues of the aristocracy and the peasants.

Are parachurches churches? Yes. And they are evidence of unity among congregations.

Barth is being asked to think theologically about the church and implicitly about the World Council of Churches as an organization. Barth mentions that congregations are not merely unified when they exist in major hierarchical organizations like the World Council of Churches or denominational structures. Congregations also express their unity with one another through cooperating with one another in many other "special communities of work" [*besonderen . . . Arbeitsgemeinschaften*][693] that Protestants today call "parachurch organizations" and Roman Catholics call "sodalities."

> Aside from the synodal congregation, there are other organized cross-connections between individual local congregations, which are therefore other representations and organs of their unity. Free work-communities [*freien Werk-gemeinden*, independent workplace Christian groups] come to mind, such as the different youth groups [*Jugendgemeinden*], mission societies [*die Missionsgemeinde*n], diaconesses [*die Diakonissen*], and other special institution [*besonderen Anstalts*] and house communities [*Hausgemeinden*]. The military congregations [*Militärgemeinden*] come also to mind, and why should there not also be, in all freedom and honor (not in opposition to the unity of the

[693] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 100-101; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 81-82. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 41-42. An example is: "Working associations like the Evangelical Academies in Germany [Arbeitsgemeinschaften wie die «Evangelischen Akademien» in Deutschland]." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 33-34; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.1, 35.

> congregation, but in confirmation of it) from time to time communities of particular Christian intention and tendency?[694]

Barth praises these dynamic, diverse, practical expressions of the Spirit.[695]

These parachurch organizations and groups within a congregation are usually not thought of as "churches" or "congregations" but Barth says that according to the minimalist definition (wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name)—they are. Barth's point is that the sober label "church" should serve as a challenge to them.

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[694] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 100. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 41.

[695] Later, in IV/3.2, Barth again lauds the importance of such groups—noting that the congregation should bustle with creativity of outreach and fellowship. "the 'communion [*Gemeinschaft*] of the Holy Ghost' (2 Cor. 13[13]) . . . will always express itself concretely in the form of **specific** communions [***besonderen*** *Gemeinschaften*] which within the sphere of the one action of the community [*Gemeinde*] are called and equipped in detail for the same or similar action. It can and should develop special **working** fellowships [*besonderen* ***Arbeits****gemeinschaften*] to which all Christians cannot and will not necessarily belong but in which, in execution of the activity demanded of all Christians, a **particular** service [***besonderer*** *Dienst*] is rendered in common in a particular form of thought, speech and action, Christian witness being given in a particular way. Care must be taken that the formation of such trends and groups within the Church [*innerkirchlicher*] is really based on **divine** [***göttliche***] gifts and endowments received in concert, and not on the arbitrariness and self-will of common whims and impressions. Care must also be taken that it really takes place within the 'communion [*Gemeinschaft]* of the Holy Ghost' which embraces the whole community [*Gemeinde*], expressing rather than disrupting this communion. Separations, schisms and the founding of sects cannot arise if everything is in order in this matter. Finally, care must be taken—and this is the criterion of the true churchmanship [*Kirchlichkeit*] of these particular fellowships [*Gemeinschaftsbildungen*]—that they do not consist of inactive groups of like-minded people concerned only to satisfy certain needs of soul which they experience in common, but rather of genuine working fellowships [*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*], of particular forms in which the aim is simply to achieve in closer fellowship the **ministry** and **witness** of the community [*Gemeinde*] in the **world**. Where these presuppositions are present, no objection need be raised; we may welcome and encourage the rise and continuation of particular fellowships [*besonderer Gemeinschaften*] of the few or the many within the general fellowship [*allgemeinen Gemeinschaft*] of all Christians. In the **plurality** of such fellowships of work and service and witness [*Arbeits-, Dienst- und Zeugnisgemeinschaften*] the **unity** of the living community [*Gemeinde*] of the living Jesus Christ will be the more powerful and visible, speaking the more clearly for that which it has to express with its existence in the world." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 856; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 981-982. Bold is in the original German.

> Let us call it by name at once. These special communities of work [*besonderen . . . Arbeitsgemeinschaften*], which have become necessary and been realized from out of many congregations, and within many congregations have always felt themselves to be and *de facto* [in fact / in practice] have been some sort of congregation in the service of God. They may and should do so in all seriousness *de jure* [officially]. They should in no way evade the claim and the responsibility of being in fact congregations, whether large or small, conducting worship, thinking and acting in the service of God and therefore in their particular form, being also the one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church. They are no more merely associations, groups, circles, or parties than the leadership of the Church are merely officials. They too each stand on its own spot in the service of the gift and task given to the whole living congregation of the living Lord Jesus Christ, and in consort with the local congregations and with the synodal congregation in the service of their common commission. If they exist by knowing and wanting this, if they exist in the exercise of this service, then they are also the Church [*die Kirche*] in the full meaning of the word. [696]

In contrast to Roman Catholics who draw a strong distinction between the modalities (churches) and sodalities (parachurch organizations), for Barth, parachurch organizations may be "a church" or may become a church. Barth encourages them to take their work with as much seriousness as if they are "congregations" or "churches." They should not see themselves as mere bureaucrats, employees, volunteers, or lay workers but as being people with whom Jesus is present as they seek to obey him.

[696] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 100-101; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 81-82. Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 41-42. An example is: "Working associations like the Evangelical Academies in Germany [Arbeitsgemeinschaften wie die «Evangelischen Akademien» in Deutschland]." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 33-34; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.1, 35.

Is there a correct structure? No. Form should follow function.

If the parachurch organization might possibly be a church, Barth makes the next logical move and says that a congregation can be innovative with regard to its organization. In §72, Barth says that the "people of God" can take on whatever "sociological structure" seems best fit for its mission.[697] "The free God gives to this human people . . . the freedom to adopt its own form, i.e., the form corresponding to its calling and commission, in the sphere of general human possibilities."[698] Barth stresses that each form or structure will be rather human and thus likely be beset with similar strengths and flaws of other secular institutions with similar structures—Barth does not think one should idealize a certain structure as a secret for producing a good church. "It may follow as its principle of order a monarchical, aristocratic or liberal and democratic constitution, or the model of a free association."[699] However, their so-called choice or freedom will be limited by what is most obedient to Jesus Christ: "their free selection as the community among the different possibilities of form and structure will always be that of obedience and not of caprice or externally motivated opportunism and convenience."[700] It is not what is most convenient or easiest but what will enable them to

[697] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 739, Cf. 739-742.
[698] Ibid., IV/3.2, 741.
[699] Ibid.
[700] Ibid.

point to Jesus Christ. We have also quoted this above in our discussion of "free church" but this discussion of "structure" is its context:

> Their Church may thus be a national Church, a state Church or a free Church, but its invisible essence must always be made visible in the fact that it is a **confessing** and **missionary** Church which leaves those around in no doubt as to whom or what it has to represent among them.[701]

Recall that for Barth confessing has a dynamism of a present listening to and speaking to one another about Jesus Christ. Beyond conforming to Jesus Christ, the life of the congregation and its missionary effectiveness must be the prime considerations for questions of polity.

Blumhardts and Zinzendorf demonstrate externally-focused congregations

As a theologian in the 1950's, Barth was far more aware of the different forms of church than were generations of theologians prior to the 20th century. Though Barth did not travel much until the very end of his life when he visited the United States in 1962 at age 76 and the Vatican in 1966 at age 80, Christians from around the world visited him in Switzerland. He taught seminars in both English and French besides teaching in German.

[701] Ibid., IV/3.2, 742."So wird sie, sei es als Volkskirche und vielleicht Staatskirche, sei es als Freikirche, ihr unsichtbares Wesen unter allen Umständen darin sichtbar machen müssen, daß sie **bekennende**, daß sie **Missionskirche** ist, ihrer Umgebung keinen Zweifel darüber läßt, für wen und für was sie in ihrer Mitte einzustehen hat." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 849.

Furthermore, unlike previous generations of theologians, Barth, working in Switzerland in the 1940's and 1950's, did not have to worry about the reaction from ecclesiastical and political authorities if he praised congregationalist forms of church. In the 1947 article when congregationalist polity in particular is in view, he praises English and American congregationalist polity. "The other way, which we have glanced at, is also not a completely new way."[702]

Counterintuitively, these congregationalist churches did a better job theologically in resisting the excesses of the Enlightenment than the churches with "episcopal or presbyterian synodal authority."[703] And also counterintuitively, these congregationalist polity churches have also demonstrated "organizing strength" if one considers the growth of the church in the United States.[704] Finally, Barth says that congregationalist polity has contributed to the "the well-known political health and maturity of Englishmen in general."[705] He clarifies this point in the second version of the 1947 essay

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[702] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 84; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 43.

[703] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 84; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 43.

[704] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 84; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 43-44.

[705] "And it is scarcely an arbitrary construction on the matter, adding to this with good reason the well-known political health and maturity of Englishmen in general, that there for centuries have been just such

saying the healthy functioning of local congregations would be a good example to national governments about how organizations should function.

> It is obvious that the last remnants of sovereign authority in the idea of a *corpus christianum* [Christian society] are disappearing; this suggests that we should now look in this other (Congregationalist) direction. Indirectly, this argument receives further confirmation in the reflection that a Church formed on the basis of these principles would be an event of exemplary importance in the political world of the present day.[706]

Later, he will write that

> True Church law is exemplary law . . . It [The Christian community] orders itself—its own life which is distinct from that of the world. It does this from its centre in public worship. It does it above all in its ordering of public worship. But it does not do it for the sake of itself.[707]

Note Barth is touting the good effects on the outside world of congregational polity.

Though Yoder also argues that Barth was not very familiar with free churches, Yoder also argues that the prominence of the congregation in Barth's work is partly attributable to his familiarity with previous examples of congregationalist thinking. It is "partly from his ecumenically appreciative assimilation of some of those strands of

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Christian congregations." «Und es ist kaum eine willkürliche Konstruktion, wenn man die mit gutem Anlass vielgerühmt, politische Gesundheit und Reife des englischen Menschen überhaupt damit in Zusammenhang bringt, das es dort seit Jahrhunderten gerade solche christliche Gemeinden gegeben hat.» Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 84; Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 103; Barth, "Die Kirche - die lebendige Gemeinde des lebendigen Herrn Jesus Christus [erste (längere) Entwurf. 1 April 1947]," 44. It seems Barth is giving the "exemplary" argument that congregationalist habits may contribute to political health and maturity; not the Anglophilia sentiment that the political health and maturity of England have permitted congregationalist polity churches.

[706] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ: [Second (Abridged) Version]," 75-76. He removes the English and American references in the second condensed version.

[707] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 719.

pietism which had sowed into European Protestantism the seeds of ecumenical, missionary, and social concern (Zinzendorf, Blumhardt)."[708]

Yoder is correct that Zinzendorf provided an historical example for Barth of the importance of the congregation and the Blumhardts articulated some main theological themes that Barth would further develop. However, what Yoder misses is that Barth does not emphasize so much the "congregationalist" polity or "free church" character of the *Gemeinde* but rather the emphasis on the congregation involved in intentional witness to the world.

Barth writes that the key contribution of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)[709] was that he developed a "missionary church."

> Yet the true genius of this Evangelical awakening was not that of Francke and Pietism in the narrower sense, but of Count Zinzendorf and his community. By the time of his death, their missionary achievement surpassed everything previously done by Protestantism for the proclamation of the Gospel among the heathen, and in proportion to its membership his community is still unrivalled in this field. This is connected with the fact that Zinzendorf's personal Christianity, for him identical with his love for Jesus Christ, coincided as such from the very

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[708] Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War: And Other Essays on Barth*, 96.

[709] "Obedience to God always means that we become and are continually obedient to Jesus. The concentration and intensity with which this was continually said by Nicolas von Zinzendorf was amply justified. He said it in opposition not only to a secularised orthodoxy, and not only to the Enlightenment, but also to the moral and mystical ambiguities of the Pietism of his time. In so doing, he reestablished not merely a Reformation but a New Testament insight. We may be astonished at baroque features in the way in which he said it. And we may argue that, entangled in certain Lutheran ideas, he did not say it universally enough. But we must give him credit that he was one of the few not only of his own time but of all times who have said it so definitely and loudly and impressively." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 568. Cf. "I have become increasingly a Zinzendorfian to the extent that in the NT only the one central figure as such has begun to occupy me—or each and everything else only in the light and under the sign of this central figure." Karl Barth, "Basel, 24 December 1952," in *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann Letters, 1922-1966* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 107.

> first with his irresistible urge to be the Saviour's witness to each and every man and to the whole world. The basic thing which had been spoken by Suravia, Lord von Weltz and Francke was lived out by Zinzendorf. In and with his one 'passion' there was directly proscribed for him his action, the way of the Gospel to far and near. As and because he wanted to belong to the One who died for him and for all men, he could not and would not be in debt to any as His messenger. This was not merely his central but his one and only missionary motive. And as he was able to implant it in others, his community, which he had never envisaged or established as a private community but as an *oecumene in nuce* [a microcosm (literally in Latin, the inhabited world in a nutshell)], became in some sense radically and essentially a missionary Church [*Missionskirche*] to a degree not yet reached or excelled by any other in the Evangelical sphere.[710]

In a complex passage in *Church Dogmatics,* Barth later cites Zinzendorf and J. C. Blumhardt (1805-1880) as two figures who were able to move beyond an overly inward "constricting" impulse toward an "external focus."

> And it was the older Pietism itself which produced its great counterpart in Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf, who was educated and fashioned by Halle, who then outgrew it, and who from the very first understood his particular vocation both as a call to a supremely personal and direct intercourse and life with the Saviour and also as a call to His service, to the passing on of what he had received from Him, and finally as the commission to form a free ecumenical community of those united in and committed to Him. Again, we are forced to admit that the Awakening of the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic period, which in contrast to Francke and especially to Zinzendorf implied a certain constriction, did not carry with it any desire on the part of those who participated in it to keep their materially very private Christianity to themselves, but rather impelled them to proclaim it *urbi et orbi* [to the city and to the world] and to seek to assert it both in Church and society. It was this movement which gave the real impulse to evangelical mission. And it was from it that its counterpart emerged as Zinzendorf had done from Pietism, namely, J. C. Blumhardt, in whose message of hope, which in the name of Jesus embraced the body as well as the soul and the world as well as the community, and in whose expectation of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, the old Gospel acquired a freedom, freshness, breadth and significance for which there are hardly any previous parallels. And the same may be said of the English-inspired social and evangelistic movement of the later 19th and our own centuries, which for all its orientation on a

[710] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 25. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.1, 25.

> personally committed Christianity largely aimed from the very outset, not at the mere formation of groups, but at the preaching of the Gospel to those not yet reached by it. On the left wing of this movement stands the Salvation Army, which had its origin in Methodism, whose activities leave nothing to be desired in terms of an external focus. Mention may also be made of the resolute John Mott, who shortly before the catastrophe of 1914 felt that he could proclaim the slogan: "The evangelisation of the world in this generation." And if in this particular sphere there has not yet emerged, so far as may be seen, an even greater counterpart corresponding to Zinzendorf and Blumhardt, this is hardly the fault of the movement, which is no less adapted than the older Pietism and the Awakening some day to transcend and seriously to point beyond itself.[711]

The above passage is complex because Barth is reflecting on to what extent each of these movements is inward and outward oriented. But Barth's conclusion is straightforward. He cites Blumhardt and Zinzendorf because they emphasized an outward focus.

> The shadow [of egocentricity] is dispelled only in the very few cases . . . as happened in the case of J. C Blumhardt and even, with some reservations, in that of Zinzendorf.[712]

Yoder may be correct that Barth's prodigious use of *Gemeinde* is influenced by the Blumhardts though Barth himself does not say so.[713] But it is especially the outward

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[711] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 568-569. The sentence of the translation regarding the Salvation Army is slightly altered. German: «am äußersten Flügel dieser Richtung die aus dem Methodismus hervorgegangene **Heilsarmee**, deren Aktion ja an Extravertiertheit gewiß nichts zu wünschen übrig läßt.» Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.1, 653.

[712] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 570.

[713] C. F. Blumhardt is described as "identifying the hope of the Church with the *Gemeinde*." Christian T. Collins Winn, *"Jesus Is Victor!": The Significance of the Blumhardts for the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 35. Barth would say that the hope is in Jesus Christ—as Blumhardt would surely as well. The point Winn is making is how Blumhardt contrasts the church and *Gemeinde.* C. F. Blumhardt may draw a strong distinction between *Gemeinde* and *Kirche* (church). As we have seen, Barth uses Christian *Gemeinde* and *Kirche* (Church) interchangeably but increasingly uses *Gemeinde* more than *Kirche* because he says it connotes "community." Recall that Barth cites Martin Luther as himself preferring *Gemeinde* to *Kirche* but perhaps the Blumhardts drew his attention to this. Moreover, "Christoph emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who called, formed, and sent forth . . . the *Gemeinde."* Ibid., 36. This parallels the titles of Barth's three ecclesiology sections 62, 67, 72: "The Holy Spirit gathers, upbuilds, and sends the Christian community." It would be quite remarkable if Barth drew this so directly from Blumhardt since he did not

movement of the church, which Barth praises. The elder Blumhardt's son, Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, (1842-1919) like Barth, argues "that the Church exists as a witness of God *for the sake* of the whole world."[714]

Yoder cites Zinzendorf and the Blumhardts as pietists but as Eberhard Busch notes that it is not all pietists that Barth affirms. Rather it is the ecclesial (as opposed to individualistic) and missionary (as opposed to inward) and wholistic (as opposed to mere words) forms of pietism that Barth praises.[715] It is only Zinzendorf and Blumhardt who are hardly central to pietism who Barth affirms in terms of their vision for wholistic, missionary congregations.

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mention this and instead this three-fold arrangement seems can be seen in an early form in Barth's description of the Holy Spirit's work: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 455. The three-fold arrangement is also seen here in undeveloped form: Jesus relationship to his disciples. Ibid., II/2, 449.

[714] Winn, *"Jesus Is Victor!": The Significance of the Blumhardts for the Theology of Karl Barth*, 35.

[715] Busch says Barth would ask pietists, "Are you making your critique of the church . . . in solidarity with the church?" "The church only has meaning when it does not seek to be an end in itself, but understands itself to be sent forth in the service of witness to Jesus Christ and his reconciliation throughout the whole world." "Why are you only interested in repentance in terms of private matters, but not with the turning away from the social sins?" Eberhard Busch, "Karl Barth and Pietism," in *Karl Barth and the Future of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn and John L. Drury (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 39, 39, 41.

The significance of Yoder's use of Barth's ecclesiology

Rendering judgment on Yoder's characterization of Barth's ecclesiology as becoming like that of the "free church"

Yoder's argument that Barth's theology is "free church" theology is most justifiable in the contexts of which Yoder originally made the argument. Will Herberg had argued that Barth inexplicably failed to oppose communism and Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt had argued that Barth was primarily driven by socialist convictions. Instead, Yoder rightly argued that Barth's *ad hoc* approach to politics is similar to the "Free Church." Yoder argued that it was not an accident that Barth did not rally to the anti-communist national policy supported by civil religion approach favored by Herberg. Nor, Yoder argues is it accurate to understand Barth's politics as oriented by his ideological sympathy toward Marxism as argued by Marquardt. In comparison to to anti-communist or Marxist, Barth's approach is "Free Church."

But as we have seen, it is more precise to say that Barth was passionate about the development of confessing and missionary local congregations than the separation of church and state. Barth was for the church being free theologically (*freie Kirche*) more than the church being free formally (*Freikirche*).[716]

[716] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 689; Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 781.

It is unfortunate that Yoder emphasizes the phrase "Free Church" as what Barth is moving toward which distracts from Barth's primary emphasis on the church being missionary. As we have seen, there is a connection here. The main strength of the denominations founded as "free churches" is that they were not handed members by the state and thus had to win them. It is not so much "governmental interference" which is the problem with State Churches but the Christendom assumption that everyone in the society is a Christian and it is just a matter of teaching them. An American church that is free of governmental interference is almost as likely to become inward focused as a European State Church and even more likely to wander into shallow theology. Being free of governmental assistance and the accompanying interference is neither Barth's emphasis nor a recipe for a healthy church.

If Yoder would have been arguing that the church must be missionary if it is to survive, he would have been accurate in arguing that a "narrowing process" which "takes place in church history" is at work with many different church traditions coming to this conclusion at the same time.[717] But instead, as we have seen, Yoder was trying in vain to find common traits emerging among the "Free Churches" such as pacifism, biblicism, congregationalism, lack of sacraments, etc.[718] Rather, the common "agenda"

[717] Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 162, 165.
[718] Yoder, "The Restitution of the Church: An Alternative Perspective on Christian History," 135-137.

that churches across the denominational spectrum find themselves working on is the development of confessing and missionary local congregations.

In the 1980's and 1990's, Yoder seems to have sensed this. He becomes less interested in defending Mennonite and other church traditions founded as "free churches" against their detractors, and instead urges the cultivation of dynamic congregational life (we might say confessing and missionary congregations).[719] Yoder hopes to bring attention to some neglected aspects of church life. This can be most clearly seen in the various iterations of his 1987 lecture "Sacraments as Social Process" arguing that churches across the ecumenical spectrum re-appropriate and engage in biblical church practices (which he began exploring in 1978).[720] For this purpose Yoder draws on Barth in a new way—utilizing Barth's observation about the church's practices being "exemplary."[721] Again, in this period Yoder does not use Barth to defend Mennonite pacifism or Free Church separation of church and state practice (which perhaps he senses is tenuous). Nor in this period is Yoder interested in defending Barth

[719] By Yoder's 1992 *Body Politics*, readers are not asked to emulate "free church" insights but rather biblical ones. There are only three passing references to free churches and only the last is positive: "This corrects for an anti-Catholic bias to which we in the free churches are prone" "Baptists and other free churches have tended to abandon the word sacrament to the opposition . . . " "especially the history of free church renewal" Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, 3, 72, 74. Barth is not mentioned in *Body Politics.*

[720] Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture." See also: Yoder, "The New Humanity as Pulpit and Paradigm."

[721] This is first done in the last few pages of his response to Marquardt in 1978. Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 142-145.

against his critics. Instead, Yoder is interested in promoting dynamic congregational practices and he makes his case stronger by showing that Barth argues for much the same thing.[722] The most significant contribution by Barth that is reflected on extensively by Yoder is that these congregational practices have the potential to be attractive to outsiders. This is indeed what Barth is arguing in his ecclesiology and so is an accurate drawing upon and utilizing of Barth's ecclesiology.

Post-Christendom the most helpful description of Barth's ecclesiology proferred by Yoder in that it approximates "missionary."

Though there is much that Yoder does not say and there are some idiosyncrasies to his terminology, the analysis reveals Yoder to be a prescient, accurate, and concise interpreter of Barth's ecclesiology. The overall argument of the dissertation is that the "conversation" about ecclesiology "among" all of these interpreters adds richness and nuance to our understanding of the church—something Yoder would have heartily affirmed. What has been revealed in this chapter is that the biblical word "witness"

[722] "By no means does what I mean to argue here depend for its claim to credibility upon Karl Barth's having said it well before me. But his having said it may well result from its being true and especially appropriate for our age." Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 104. There is something in this quote from Yoder of the apostle Paul's claim that he came to these insights independently of the apostles but then also citing as supporting evidence that the apostles affirm the same position. "I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it . . . As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised" (Gal 1:11-12; 2:6-7). Yoder too is saying that it is not that significant that Barth says the same thing that Yoder does but it has some persuasive value.

rather than "free church," "missionary," "post-Christendom," "dialectical," or "Christological" best describes what should be praised about Barth's ecclesiology.

We have seen and will see in other chapters the befuddlement of some readers of Barth who regard his ecclesiology as a curious decline of an otherwise commendable theology. Roman Catholics, in particular, had hoped that his dogmatic reflections on the church might settle into structures compatible with Roman Catholic ecclesiology but were disappointed by his mature ecclesiology which not only remained Protestant but grew even more radical in its criticism of the language of "sacrament" and the practice of infant baptism. Later we will see another group of readers who praise Barth for what they perceive to be his constant refrain distancing God's revelation from religion including the church. These readers of Barth's downplay Barth's affirmation of many aspects of congregational life and play up Barth's critical comments toward the church.

Yoder does not himself engage in these conversations though as we have seen above he did respond to other criticisms of Barth's ecclesiology—that Barth had become politically quietistic (Will Herberg) and that his theology was influenced by his socialist sympathies (Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt). In both cases, Yoder cited Barth's movement toward a free church ecclesiology as a more adequate explanation of Yoder's theology than either the quietistic or socialistic thesis. This dissertation argues that two more characterizations are incorrect: the Sacramental interpreter thesis that Barth is

hopelessly blindly Protestant and the Apocalyptic interpreter thesis that Barth envisions some sort of chastened church that recognizes its fallibility to such an extent that it sees engagement in church community life and practice as dangerously idolatrous.

Yoder's reflections on Barth's ecclesiology are apt in response to these "new" readings of Barth's ecclesiology. Barth's ecclesiology is not compulsively anti-institutional (i.e., "Protestant") as the Sacramental critics think, nor can it be summarized as wholly critical warnings against self-important religion as the apocalyptic interpreters believe. Yoder suggests Barth's ecclesiology is similar to other existing churches—the "free churches." These congregations look quite different from Roman Catholic but can affirm Christian community practices.

However, Yoder writes that this was an "incomplete pilgrimage." What Yoder means is that Barth never himself explicitly called himself a "free church theologian" or an "Anabaptist" per se. Instead, Yoder is connecting the dots—claiming Barth had all (or at least many) of the characteristics of a free church thinker but that he did not recognize himself as such. This is an inauspicious start as the claim that Barth did not "connect the dots" on a theological matter or categorize his own theology correctly—given his massive explicit reflection over 8,000 pages and thirty years writing the *Church Dogmatics*—must be greeted with a significant dose of skepticism.

The problem for Yoder is that many of the characteristics that Yoder calls identifies as "Free Church" characteristics came to be embraced across the ecumenical spectrum after Christendom. In other words, when churches lost the backing of the state, they implemented many of the characteristics that Yoder mentions. For example, churches began to distinguish membership and involvement in the church as different from being an ordinary citizen of the state—thus leading to discipleship and sitting under the word and more intentional community practices within the church and missionary and evangelistic endeavors aimed at outsiders. All churches, for example, in the United States modified their ecclesiologies to a context in which the state was not wedded to a particular religion so that to survive a church would need to educate its children to be adult members (i.e., "discipleship) and persuade outsiders to join (i.e., "evangelism"). Many of the ecclesiologies developed under Christendom (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.) have still not shed their practice of infant baptism but with regard to preaching, Bible study, outreach initiatives, seminary training, lay involvement, and involvement in secular politics can look more similar to the ecclesiologies of the "free churches" (which do not practice infant baptism) such as Baptist, Mennonite, Mennonite, Stone-Campbell, Evangelical Free, Christian and Missionary Alliance than their founding ecclesiological practices. There are a number of denominations in the United States who allow both infant

baptism and infant dedication including: Free Methodist, Wesleyan Church, Nazarenes, UCC, and Evangelical Covenant. In other words, Barth's ecclesiology is part of a larger trend across the ecumenical spectrum to reconceive ecclesiology for the new challenges after church-state ties were rent. Instead of "free church theologian," it is more precise to call Barth (as Yoder does at one point) a "post-Christendom theologian."[723] Still Yoder rightfully draws attention to the possible lessons that the "free church" has to teach because its ecclesiology was founded with post-Christendom assumptions.

It is better then to describe Barth's ecclesiology as (a) witnessing or "evangelistic" and (b) "post-Christendom" than "Free Church." The adjectives "evangelistic" and "post-Christendom" describe more accurately what distinguished Barth's ecclesiology from the establishment ecclesiology of Herberg, the socialist ecclesiology of Marquardt, the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of O'Grady, and the denunciation of ecclesiology by the Reformed. Barth's ecclesiology is not an invitation to "Free Church" ecclesiology as much as it is an invitation to reform the church around the task of witness. To be fair to Yoder, he also calls Barth' "post-Christendom" theologian, which is more precise. Furthermore, what Yoder means by "Free Church" is related to a constellation of other terms: congregational, diaspora, missionary—all which could with qualification describe

[723] Yoder, "Karl Barth, Post-Christendom Theologian."; Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder."

Barth's ecclesiology. Congregationalist is Barth's preferred form of polity but he gives little attention to this subject—instead calling for confessional and missionary churches of any polity structure episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational. Diaspora is a word that Yoder has taken from Jewish usage to describe small communities dispersed among a non-devout population.

He describes a similar set of ecclesiological characteristics with a number of terms: free church, post-Christendom, congregational, missionary, diaspora. Yoder's argument is that Barth's ecclesiology has many of these characteristics regardless of what one calls it. In some ways, this is a rather pedestrian thesis as these characteristics have become more prominent all along the ecclesiological spectrum from Mennonite to Roman Catholic with the breakdown of state-sponsored-church hegemony. Hans von Balthasar sees the need for a "diaspora" church[724] and Vatican II affirmed the missionary nature of the church.[725] "Post-Christendom" more accurately describes the people of God living in a confused world. "Missionary" can suggest social justice initiatives (helping the poor, running hospitals, etc.) without pointing to Jesus Christ. Barth of course is not against this but witness or even "evangelism" more accurately describe what Barth

[724] Balthasar, *Spirit and Institution*, 67.
[725] "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature."Second Vatican Council, "Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," chapter 1, article 2.

perceives to be the "task of the church."[726] It is not enough to be "sent" (mission), the church must also witness to Jesus Christ. Again, this can take the form predominantly of social justice action and may even be very circumspect about how this witnessing is verbalized but theologically it is inappropriate to view the church as doing anything less than pointing to Jesus Christ—witness.

Furthermore, Yoder's pointing to the "Free Church" is very useful in that it invites churches whose ecclesiologies were established under Christendom structures where the state played a mammoth role and evangelism was a non-issue, to consider what a witnessing post-Christendom church might look like and to "prove" that such churches can survive despite Roman Catholic worries about the chaos that would result without its bureaucracy.

[726] «Doch was heißt «Auftrag der Kirche»? Der Auftrag der Kirche ist die Aufgabe, das Reich Gottes, das Werk Christi und des Heiligen Geistes wie ein Spiegel widerzuspiegeln. Es widerspiegeln, aber nicht es machen! Wir können auch sagen, daß es die Aufgabe, der Auftrag der Kirche ist, das Reich Gottes zu verkündigen oder, um einen biblischen Begriff zu gebrauchen, es zu bezeugen. Ein Zeuge ist jemand, der ein Geschehen gesehen und gehört hat. Er kann dieses Geschehen nicht selbst vollziehen, aber weil er es gesehen und gehört hat, kann er es bezeugen.» Barth, "Fragebeantwortung bei der Konferenz des «Weltbundes christlicher Studenten» in Straßburg (19.7.1960)." 99-100. "But what does the mission of the Church mean? The mission of the Church is the task of reflecting, like a mirror, the Kingdom of God—the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. To reflect it, not to do it! We can also say that the task of the Church, its mission, is to proclaim the Kingdom, or, to use the biblical term, 'to witness to it'. A witness is a man who has seen and heard something that happened; he cannot do himself what happened, but because he saw and heard it, he can witness to it." Barth, "Fragebeantwortung bei der Konferenz der World Student Christian Federation [Englisch]," 421-422.

Concluding remarks on Yoder's reading of Barth's ecclesiology

John Howard Yoder's remarks on Barth's ecclesiology contribute to another angle of understanding of Barth's ecclesiology. Against the argument that Barth is not sufficiently "catholic" and that his ecclesiology is non-existent, Yoder sees that for Barth "catholicity" is related to the local church. Furthermore, Barth's ecclesiology is functional—other congregations practice it. Barth makes clear that he thinks that the structures of the church should be crafted in the local context with an eye to missionary implications (at the level of practical theology or canon law). Yoder rightly rejects the notion that Barth's ecclesiology can be boiled down to "a few foundational moves."[727] He later derisively calls this kind of approach "Logological Christology."[728] One of Yoder's greatest contributions to the conversation surrounding Barth's ecclesiology is the suggestion that Barth is articulating in broad strokes the basic tenets of a "free church" ecclesiology which indeed had a discernible (even if one might not say "stable") history and is practiced (one might even say, "thriving") all over the world. Yoder maintains that Barth is not merely doing a thought experiment or dreaming up an ideal church but sketching the basic convictions that fuel existing congregations. These congregations have not inevitably imploded for lack of structure as the Sacramental critics worry but have instead expanded with their missionary mobility borne of Barth-

[727] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338.
[728] Yoder, "The Christological Presuppositions of Discipleship," 40-42.

style ecclesiological "minimalism" (minimalistic to the point of incomplete according to a Roman Catholic) to all corners of the globe. These congregations are not then, on sociological terms, hopelessly impractical because of their lack of structure, but rather demonstrably effective. Given this defense by Yoder (i.e. that Barth is articulating "free church ecclesiology"), the critic must then move beyond what is feasible or functional to questioning the substance of what Barth affirms, such as questioning whether such free churches are theologically legitimate (that is, worthy of the Nicene Creed descriptor "catholic") or are unfaithfully sectarian ("cultish," "unorthodox," "quasi or un-catholic").

There is one final tangential point to make here and that is that if Yoder's theology is as consistent with Barth's as argued here, then this can serve as a bulwark against those who either think of Yoder's work as "heterodox"[729] or want to take Yoder's work and apply it in a way that is "liberal" (i.e., contrary to Barth's theology).[730] In other words, the reader of Yoder will best understand his work in ethics on top of the foundation in dogmatics laid by Barth.

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[729] Martens, *The Heterodox Yoder*.

[730] Craig A. Carter, "The Liberal Reading of Yoder: The Problem of Yoder Reception and the Need for a Comprehensive Christian Witness," in *Radical Ecumenicity* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2010).

Chapter 5: 1976-2000: James Buckley

James J. Buckley

Long-time associate editor of *Modern Theology,* James Buckley wrote a fine unpublished dissertation at Yale in 1976 with George Lindbeck and Hans Frei on Barth's ecclesiology, and an important but rarely cited article on Barth's ecclesiology defending it from misinterpretations by both Robert Jenson and George Hunsinger, and the article on ecclesiology for the *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth.* Buckley's work is careful and perceptive. Though a Roman Catholic himself, he criticizes O'Grady's reading of Barth's ecclesiology. In the process of his analysis, Buckley debunks many readings of Barth's ecclesiology—most significantly the one that says Barth's actualism is a flaw. Buckley shows in the dissertation exactly where and why Barth put so many qualifications about the authority of the church. Later in the 1994 article, he again defends Barth and (like Nicholas Healy will in 2004) suggests Barth may provide a way of thinking about the church beyond the Roman Catholic institutional hierarchy. Finally, in the *Cambridge Companion* article, Buckley hints that Yoder's interpretation of church's practices as social processes may be an appropriate extension of Barth's thinking. In other words, if Buckley's analysis is correct, it reinforces Yoder's assertion that Barth's ecclesiology is highly suggestive and useful. As we will see, Buckley's only niggle of complaint is that

Barth does not do more on the level of practical theology but as will be shown, Barth has a reason for this.

1976 Dissertation

"The church as event" as problematic and infrequent

In the dissertation, he carefully probes how Barth describes the church as "event" but also emphasizes that this motif drops off significantly after II/1. Buckley writes, "One of the more controversial and problematic entries in Barth's explicit ecclesiology is his discussion of 'the being of the community' . . . His discussions are problematic both because of what he says and because it is not clear how these discussions cohere with other descriptions of the community."[1]

Barth emphasizes the church as event at the beginning of his mature ecclesiology in IV/1. "The Church *is* when it takes place that God lets certain men live as His servants, His friends, His children, the witnesses of the reconciliation of the world with Himself as it has taken place in Jesus Christ."[2] This echoes his writing on the church in the *Römerbrief* from Romans 9. God's people are those to whom God has shown mercy—"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy" (Rom 9:15; Ex 33:19). Barth will go on to

[1] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 63.
[2] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650.

sketch what human beings do to respond to God's action but who are finally the people of God is ultimately God's choice.

But Buckley asks if this does not unnecessarily deride human agency. With regard to the church being an "event," Buckley writes, "One obvious problem with this perspective is that it is difficult to see how persons can have any extension beyond the punctiliar encounter and thus how the Church can have a dimension in which to be either sinful or institutional."[3] Buckley grants that it is true that the church is only church when God makes it so but Buckley wants to know how the admittedly sinful institutional church should proceed as they wait for God's empowering.

Furthermore, Buckley insightfully probes whether Barth's understanding of "event" as the unidirectional reception of revelation is an accurate description of how communication takes place. Does one person consciously reveal himself and then another person receive that knowledge? Buckley argues this is an overly wooden model of communication: that any agency on the part of the receiver is sinisterly characterized as "control" and that "revelation" is a particularly good description of how God or human beings relationally interact. Buckley writes, "It is far from clear that knowledge

[3] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 64.

of any sort implies 'control' or that persons are known only when they 'reveal themselves.'"[4]

Buckley points out that references to the church as the "event" of revelation drop off dramatically after *Church Dogmatics* II/1 written by Barth in 1940. Buckley writes, "But it [the problem] is less significant because the role of this sort of talk recedes as the *Dogmatics* proceeds. Instead of using it in a massive way, Barth begins to be more selective in later volumes. Used at some key points in IV/1 [1953] and IV/2 [1955] (as we have seen in this section), it has almost disappeared in favor of other notions in IV/3 [1959]."[5] Barth defines the church in his first ecclesiological section in terms of "event" but then rarely returns to it.[6] "Perhaps the most puzzling feature of Barth's discussions of the 'being' of the community is that, despite its structural importance as the first paragraph explicitly on the community [§62.2 "The Being of the Community" IV/1, 650-725] it plays a subordinate role in almost every other context."[7] In §62 in IV/1, when

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[4] Ibid., 68.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 650-668.
[7] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 70-71. Buckley realizes that because Barth's understanding that the existence or definition or boundaries of the church is dependent on God, Barth's systematic theology will not have a clear distinction between "the marks of the church" (requirements verifiable by human beings) and then a section on "the tasks of the church." Instead, for Barth all of this, is only possible if God wills it, and it is all a response to God. Buckley writes, "Given the sort of 'actualism' implied by the 'being-in-act' of the community, the transition to a discussion of the 'function' of the community is not a separate analysis. That is, the community is (and is known) only in what it does—including its function; thus, the analysis could just as well have begun with the 'function' of the community as with its 'being.'" ibid., 71. Barth superficially does have these sections: defining the church using the Nicene Creed's one, holy, catholic, apostolic predicates

Barth begins treating the church as a topic, he emphasizes God's agency. But Buckley observes convincingly that in the non-ecclesiological sections, Barth is not as disciplined about foregrounding the church's dependence on Jesus Christ. Because in those sections, he is treating the supremacy of Jesus Christ, he does not feel the need to put the church in its place—to emphasize human agency is secondary to God's. Buckley thinks in §72 in IV/3.2, Barth gets the balance right.

> In the non-ecclesiological sections . . . it is always clear that Barth is speaking primarily of the 'objective atonement' so that the narrative depiction can be highlighted without fear that the 'life-act' of Jesus will become the 'predicate' of the narrative of the community. In these sections, the Church as 'event and form' is used, but it is not elaborated. The exception to this (the ecclesiological sections of IV/3) would seem to prove the rule; that is, this section exhibits a close balance of Barth's various descriptions of the community because the emphasis is no longer on the subordination of the community to Jesus Christ but rather on the coordination of the Church's mission to the world with the mission of Jesus Christ.[8]

In IV/3.2 Barth forthrightly details the importance of the church in relation to the world. Therefore, this is the best location for gauging the degree to which Barth takes seriously the church's role in the world.[9]

(§62 IV/1) and describing the functions of the church as upbuilding (§67 IV/2) and being sent (§72 IV/3.2) but all have the same theme: dependence on God and appropriate response.

[8] Ibid., 195.

[9] The exception to Barth's carefulness in IV/3.2 is Barth's infamous statement that virtually every one of Barth's Sacramental critics mentions. Buckley writes, "One climax of this sort of contention is Barth's claim that 'the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church.' Both the concept of 'necessity' and the hypothetical mood of Barth's claim allow for broad interpretation." Ibid., 310. quoting Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826. Buckley mildly states that "There are . . . other ways to bring out" Barth's overall point than this formulation. We will study this statement by Barth in detail and indeed criticize the hypothetical formulation of this argument by Barth in the next section on Nicholas Healy's 1994 article.

Looking at the whole of Barth's ecclesiology, Buckley does not see Barth depicting the church as thoroughly passive, that God does everything and humans do nothing except acknowledge what God has done. "This is not a question of Christian identity becoming merely 'cognitive;' this essay has attempted to take as seriously as possible Barth's conclusions about the reality of the creaturely *analogia relationis* and the witnessing correspondence of the Christian community."[10] Buckley recognizes that Barth says the church must respond (that is "correspond" in Barth's language) to God's initiative.

Criticism of O'Grady's interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology

Buckley comments about Roman Catholic interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology up to the time of his writing.

> Nothing less than a distinct theological genre has grown up in Roman Catholic theology which engages in specifically doctrinal study of Karl Barth . . . finally resulting into a sort of consensus in the work . . . The consensus can be summarized by the claim that Barth's 'actualism' so dominates other strands of his thought that the anthropological exigencies urged on theology by modernity cannot be met.[11]

Buckley takes special notice of O'Grady's two-volume work but argues that even though it is the longest work in any language, it lacks consistency. Buckley admits he has not made significant use of it himself.

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[10] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 85-86.
[11] Ibid., 304.

> The immensity of O'Grady's project is enough to forestall offering any overall evaluation. In fact, the very immensity forces one to ask whether O'Grady's dialectic of appreciation and criticism is any more consistent than some of the texts of Barth with which he tries to deal. However, the fact that this—the largest work on Barth's ecclesiology in any language—has influenced this essay so little seems to demand some accounting.[12]

Buckley says straightforwardly that O'Grady's "analysis and critique of Barth differs" from his own.[13]

> Perhaps the most important difference between O'Grady's analysis of Barth and the one offered here is that O'Grady interprets Barth's being-*in*-act ontology as a being-*is*-act ontology; the result is that O'Grady claims that Barth has a divine mono-actualism that allows no room for human activity. The interpretation here, on the other hand, has distinguished some of the different senses of 'actualism' and questioned their consistency. Further, O'Grady interprets part of the transition in Barth's *Dogmatics* as a shift from a theology of mediation to a theology of witness. Our analysis tried to show some of the respects in which Barth seems willing to retain a theology of 'mediation' even though the distinctive response of human agents becomes emphasized. Finally, O'Grady overlooks the richness of Barth's narrative depiction of the community by reducing narrative to actualism and typology to allegory. There are many details of O'Grady's explication of certain texts in the *Dogmatics* that this analysis would contest; but the above are substantial enough to suggest the main differences.[14]

Buckley notes that O'Grady has caricatured various aspects of Barth's ecclesiology—not taking into account the nuanced in the way Barth deals with actualism, "mediation," and Barth's account of the church in the world (what Buckley calls "narrative").

Buckley also argues that O'Grady's analysis suffers from flaws that are readily apparent compared with the sophisticated account given by Karl Rahner on these issues.

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[12] Ibid., 305-306.
[13] Ibid., 306.
[14] Ibid., 305-306. Emphasis added.

"First, there is a deductivist strain in O'Grady's approach"[15] which fails to make clear that some areas of doctrine are more important than others—insisting that one doctrine unspools logically into another one—rather than calibrating a doctrine's relative importance by its depiction in Scripture. "This is most apparent when he [O'Grady] regards Mariology as on the same (or almost the same) plane of what Rahner would call the 'hierarchy of truths' as christology, justification, and ecclesiology."[16] In other words, O'Grady's logical deductions lead him to put Mariology on the level of more important doctrines.

Buckley says that "Second, his [O'Grady's] frequent (though not systematic) use of scholastic categories makes no effort to show how these categories cohere with the shaping of communal and individual identity. This is a question of coherence: O'Grady wants, for example, to use both scholastic and 'actualist' categories, but he does not discuss how they might be brought into a coherent conceptual scheme."[17] In other words, O'Grady confidently judges doctrine as adequate or lacking (e.g. Nestorian, Monophysite) but it is not clear on what basis a Christian or community might know God is present or working beyond successfully getting one's doctrine correct.

[15] Ibid., 307.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

Finally, Buckley points out that O'Grady does not demonstrate his awareness of the tensions among and ambiguities within the Vatican II documents. "Third, although he [O'Grady] criticizes Vatican II's ecclesiological 'introversion,' he attends to tensions in the conciliar texts much less frequently than Rahner does; this may be because he thinks such problems are negligible, but a brief analysis of Barth's *Ad Limina Apostolorum* or Rahner's exegesis of the Council's documents would indicate otherwise."[18] The point for Buckley is that Rahner's writing suggests that "there may be considerably more diversity among proposals that would count as 'Roman Catholic' than O'Grady allows for."[19]

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[18] Ibid., 307-308. Buckley is certainly not saying his questioning of O'Grady's stark conclusions means that there are no traditional Protestant vs. Roman Catholic differences in Barth's ecclesiology vs. Roman Catholic ecclesiology. "These comments on O'Grady do not imply that an agreement with the analysis here implies 'doctrinal' agreement between Barth and Rahner." Ibid., 308. But Buckley does think that O'Grady's excesses are unfortunately commonplace in ecclesiology arguments between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Both sides declare some issues as settled prematurely so profitable discussion is undermined. Roman Catholics emphasize that the church is part of the "mode of God's presence" and conversation breaks down when Protestant refuse to accept this phrase as a useful starting point for discussion. Roman Catholics cite the church as the mode of God's presence to justify "tradition" being cited without reference to Scripture and without proper space for the inbreaking ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. "It is because the Church is part of the 'mode of God's presence' that the question of doctrinal development has the status of an independent consideration for Roman Catholics." Ibid., 309. The Holy Spirit is seen as reliably guiding the church's hierarchy rather than speaking afresh through the Scriptures. Buckley is sympathetic with Barth's Protestant critique that "such a view of the community continually threatens to make Jesus a predicate of the Church." Ibid., 310.

[19] Ibid., 308. Buckley argues that instead of proceeding from propositions to ecclesiological positions, it may be more useful to describe rules or parameters for discussing the church and in this way the best Protestant and Roman Catholic ecclesiologies may find common ground. For example, Barth argues the church is subordinate with Christ but must seek to correspond to Christ; while Rahner believes the church is both the "fruit of salvation and the means of salvation." Though different phrases are used, there is significant overlap here, Buckley suggests. "The rule . . . at stake here in Barth's terms is that there must be both subordination and coordination of the community with Jesus Christ; the rule in Rahner's terms is that the community must understand itself as the 'fruit of salvation' while constantly referring its mediatorship to

Buckley's complaint about Barth's missing *applicatio* and Barth's understanding of dogmatics

One of the unique features of Buckley's analysis is that he classifies Barth's various arguments in terms of *explicatio, meditatio,* and *applicatio*, which is how Barth early in the *Church Dogmatics* describes the various facets of Scriptural interpretation.[20] Much of Buckley's criticism is couched in these terms—how Barth's *applicatio* is inadequate. The problem with this approach is that Barth makes no claim to be working with these distinctions in the architectonics of the *Dogmatics.*

Indeed Barth does describe Scriptural interpretation in terms of three moments in I/2. There is first: "observation" (*explicatio*).

> The first plainly distinguishable aspect of the process is the act of **observation** [*Beobachtung*]. In this phase, exegesis is entirely concerned with the *sensus* of the word of Scripture as such; it is still entirely a question of *explicatio*, explanation, i.e., as the very word suggests, the unravelling or unfolding of the scriptural word which comes to us in a, so to speak, rolled-up form, thus concealing its meaning, that is, what it has to say to us.[21]

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the ever greater Mystery of God. It is within the parameters of these 'rules'—subordination and coordination, fruit of salvation and means of salvation—that the essentials of Christian communal identity is found." Ibid., 311. Buckley grants that some who are focused on propositional "doctrinal issues" will see these agreements as secondary, paltry, superficial; but Buckley argues that this common ground, this lowest common denominator, these working nominal agreements, these "rules," may lead to more progress on doctrinal crafting and tweaking. Buckley writes, "The issue is to state the problems so that the dialogue will not, in Balthasar's phrase, again 'freeze over.' The point of these comments on O'Grady is to emphasize how a study which avoids doctrinal issues [like Buckley's dissertation] can re-open some questions by pointing out issues that are understandably secondary to students of such 'doctrines.' Perhaps these secondary issues can then be recycled in doctrinal studies in a profitable way." Ibid., 308. Quoting Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth (1st Ed.)*, 298.

[20] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 36.

[21] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 722. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 810. Bold originally in the German.

There is second: "reflection" (*meditatio).*

> The second plainly distinguishable moment in the process of scriptural exegesis is the act of **reflection** [*Nachdenkens*] on what Scripture declares to us . . . We are now just at the middle point between . . . *explicatio* and *applicatio*.[22]

Finally, there is third: "appropriation" (*applicatio*).

> The third individual moment in the process of scriptural exposition is the act of **appropriation** [*Aneignung*]. From *explicatio* we must pass over the bridge of *meditatio* to *applicatio*.[23]

Though Barth does talk about these three moments of scriptural exegesis in this passage, he makes clear that these are more importantly one continuous process.

> What is meant is not, of course, an act which follows the first in time, nor a second act which takes place independently of the first, but the one act of scriptural exegesis.[24]

But Buckley's use of the Latin phrases in his dissertation suggests that Barth uses these categories in an ongoing technical way, which Barth does not. Barth's use of the phrases is rare. *Explicatio* occurs only 14 times in the entire *Church Dogmatics*, *mediatio* 6 times, and *Applicatio* 14 times. Barth instead typically uses a variety of German words to describe the process of Scriptural interpretation as he does in the quotes above foregrounding more informal words: observation [*Beobachtung*], reflection [*Nachdenkens*], and appropriation [*Aneignung*]. Barth also uses other German synonyms—for example he uses two different words in the thesis statement of the section: "each individual who

[22] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 727. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 815. Bold originally in the German.
[23] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 736. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 825. Bold originally in the German.
[24] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 727.

confesses his acceptance of the testimony of Scripture must be willing and prepared to undertake the responsibility for its interpretation [*Auslegung*] and application [*Anwendung*]."[25] In other words, Barth is not using these phrases programmatically or technically.

In one other instance in the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth refers to the three Latin terms Buckley employs as his paradigm. He writes that *explicatio*, *meditatio,* and *applicatio* roughly correspond to biblical studies ("biblical theology"), systematic theology ("dogmatic theology"), and practical theology. Barth is attempting in the *Church Dogmatics* to do the middle one (i.e. *meditatio)* but dogmatics certainly rests between the other two.

> At this point we might quite justifiably speak of theology as such and as a whole, that is, of the unity of biblical, dogmatic and practical theology. And in this unity there is certainly no question of precedence. Yet there is in it, as in the Holy Trinity, and not as a sum of the whole, a concrete centre which is constituted by dogmatics. In biblical theology it is a question of the foundation, in practical theology a question of the form, but in dogmatic theology—in the transition from the one to the other—a question of the content of Church preaching, its agreement with the revelation attested in Scripture. These three theological tasks are completely, or almost completely, implicated in each other, so that none can be even correctly seen and defined without the other. Yet the distinction between them arises inevitably from the practical application of the distinction which has compelled our attention in the doctrine of freedom under the Word (§21[2. 3-5]): observation (*explicatio*), assimilation (*applicatio*) and between the two the transition formed by reflection on the Word spoken to us in the biblical witness to revelation. We have seen how the true decision with regard to the right hearing of the Word of God in the Church is made in this reflection. To this reflection corresponds dogmatics, as the theological task which along with exegetical and practical theology is laid upon the Church in its mission and

[25] Ibid., I/2, 661. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, 741.

> proclamation. But reflection does not take place in the void. It takes place at the central, transitional point between *explicatio* and *applicatio*, between the *sensus* and the *usus scripturae*. In the same way, dogmatics arises only at the central and transitional point between exegetical and practical theology. [26]

Buckley understandably wants to adjudge Barth's theology by the degree to which he: attends to Scripture ("*explicatio*") (Buckley often calls this "narrative depiction")[27], interacts with church tradition ("*meditatio*"), and applies all of this to modern life ("*applicatio*") but by imposing this grid or criteria upon Barth and then concluding that Barth does not measure up—that Barth does not do enough with regard to "*applicatio*"—Buckley's criticism falls flat. In all of his concluding summaries of Barth's failures Buckley frames them in terms of Barth's lacking *applicatio*. "By not working out the full implications of *applicatio*, Barth either risks engulfing 'the world' in the 'Church' or appeals too quickly to ad hoc exercises of practical reason to solve questions of *applicatio*."[28] But it should be noted that Barth repeatedly states that he is not intending to do *applicatio*; local churches will need to do the practical theology based on dogmatic reflection. In I/2, he writes, "Dogmatics arises only at the central and transitional point between exegetical and practical theology."[29] In IV/2, he writes about canon law. "In this connexion, we can only indicate general presuppositions which are theologically

[26] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 766-767.
[27] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 332.
[28] Ibid., 329.
[29] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 767.

binding on all Churches and their law. We cannot develop the law itself. This is a matter for the different Churches in different places and times and situations."[30] And with regard to the church's ministries, he writes in IV/3.2,

> We can and must ask concerning the different basic forms [of the Church's ministry] . . . [but] we cannot undertake. . . to try to make a positive system of one such variation supposed normative and binding in our own age and place . . . Such a system, however, in the sphere of practical theology, could have only limited and passing validity. For even to-day the history of the community moves on from century to century. And under the influence of different traditions, but also of the different places and circumstances in which it exists, the community might well find itself inspired and summoned to new variations of the basic forms, and endowed for them. [31]

In each case, Barth argues that basic principles can be set forth by dogmatics but that it constitutes overreach for dogmatics to delve into practical theology which instead should be developed locally.

Buckley though says that it is because Barth does not place appropriate emphasis on human agency that this error occurs.

> It is, however, because Barth is wary of violating the 'irreversible relationship' between Jesus Christ and the community (or so this essay has proposed) that directs attention away from developing the *applicatio* of the community the way a large part of his program demands.[32]

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[30] Ibid., IV/2, 690. Cf. "We cannot undertake to develop and answer in detail these questions of order. This is a matter for canon law rather than dogmatics. But dogmatics cannot refrain from considering the standpoints normative for canon law." Ibid., IV/2, 678.
[31] Ibid., IV/3.2, 859-860.
[32] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 36, 336.

But Barth's unwillingness to delineate practical theology solutions to all people and places is not because he is worried about the Church eclipsing Jesus Christ but rather because he does not believe that the dogmatician should be doing so. Barth does do this in his own local situation (writing letters, etc.) but is hesitant to do so in all churches and cultures. Practical theology must be local theology, thinks Barth. Arguably, this represents Barth's high regard for human agency—that local Christians should be able to read the Scriptures and witness to Jesus Christ in the way that seems best to them (as empowered by the Holy Spirit and hewing to the general principles set forth by dogmaticians).

One could say that Buckley's argument comes down to a complaint of omission, that Barth did not write enough *applicatio.* Indeed Barth would have had some more ethics material in *Doctrine of Reconciliation* (volume IV) and the *Doctrine of Redemption* (volume V) if he had finished them; but more importantly, he believed practical theology or "special ethics" was better done at the local level wheras his goal was to do dogmatics.

Buckley's conclusion is rather understated as opposed to polemical—saying Barth's ecclesiology is not sufficiently developed at the level of the local church.

> In Barth's case the question is how this practical life of the community is a genuine *applicatio* . . . In short, despite their emphases on the social and communal character of Christianity, for neither Barth nor Rahner does the practical, everyday life of the community significantly shape their ecclesiologies . . . Barth's narrative depiction of the community seems to leave a broad basis for

> positive development here; the inseparability of characters and circumstance, contingency and profundity in a narrative framework seems in fact to call for a setting in practical theology. Yet the profound realism of Jesus' presence and prior actuality is the real shaper of identity. The narrative is used more centrally in relationship to Jesus Christ than it is to the community; the ongoing encounter and discipleship with Jesus is not developed as much as this segment of Barth's program seems to require . . . In Barth the essay has highlighted the narrative depiction of the community, but asked whether Barth has provided the conceptual tools to solve problems about the *applicatio* of the community and the doctrine of the Spirit.[33]

Buckley's 1994 article

Seventeen years later Buckley revisited Barth's ecclesiology in a January 1994 article in *Modern Theology*.[34] As in his dissertation, Buckley sought to demonstrate that Barth's ecclesiology has the potential to bring out strengths in both Catholic and Protestant ecclesiology. He admits his argument may seem to some "unsatisfyingly irenic"[35] (i.e. being nice to an extent that strains credulity).

The occasion for Buckley's article is dueling articles by Robert Jenson[36] and George Hunsinger[37] about the role of the Holy Spirit in Barth's theology. Buckley

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[33] Ibid., 334, 336.
[34] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church." As will see, Nicholas Healy's 1994 article in *Modern Theology* is cited frequently, but Buckley's article is rarely cited—perhaps because of the density and complexity of Buckley's argument, and the absence of bombast.
[35] Ibid., 82.
[36] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went."
[37] Hunsinger originally presented a paper at the Karl Barth Society in November 1991. The revised article was published in two places some nine years later: Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit."; Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit."

comments that these can be seen to be the continuation of a debate "over how important a Catholic strand there is to Barth's evangelical theology."[38] Buckley argues that the debate is really about ecclesiology. "This issue, I have suggested, is part of that complex debate between Catholic and Evangelical theology over the identity and mission of the church."[39] Buckley writes that like most interpreters, Jenson and Hunsinger, agree that the "evangelical" thrust of Barth's ecclesiology overwhelms the "Catholic" emphasis.[40] Jenson faults Barth for neglecting "Catholic" elements for "Evangelical" ones, while Hunsinger lauds Barth for it.

Buckley admits that that Catholic interpreters have typically viewed Barth's ecclesiology as flagrantly Protestant—no doubt Buckley is referring here to O'Grady. Returning to a topic covered in his dissertation, Buckley writes that it is particularly Barth's description of the church as "event" that provokes strong disagreement from Catholics. For Catholics, the church "as event" is unmoored from the stable presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[41]

> As the Catholic counterargument has been for some time, this seems to make the work of the Spirit (including the Church) occasion-specific (*ad hoc*) rather than occasion-comprehensive (catholic). In other words, as Catholics have long

[38] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 81.
[39] Ibid., 86.
[40] "I previously [earlier in the article] argued that the Jenson-Hunsinger debate could stand surety for the debate over how broad and deep a Catholic strand there is to Barth's Evangelical theology. Jenson and Hunsinger imply that this strand is neither broad nor deep, although they assess this result differently." Ibid., 91.
[41] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church (1st. Ed.)*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

> argued, we must say that the Church has the being of an institution as well as an event.[42]

However, as in his dissertation, Buckley argues that this "church as event" aspect to Barth's ecclesiology is only in one portion of his ecclesiology. If one looks at not just what Barth "says" about the church as event and looks at what he "shows" the church's task to be, an ecclesiology that is more compatible with Catholic ecclesiology emerges. "My argument now is that there is a deep Catholic movement in Barth's theology."[43] Here is a dense summary of Buckley's argument: in §62 in IV/1, Barth "says" (*meditatio*) the church's being is an event of Jesus Christ;[44] whereas in §72 in IV/3.2, Barth "shows" (*narratio*) the significance of the church's action in the world by the Holy Spirit.[45] Both sides of the ledger are necessary. The church should be grounded in Jesus but should be propelled in mission by the Spirit.

Both Protestant and Catholic ecclesiologies can benefit from this approach. But Buckley softly mentions that Roman Catholic ecclesiology has failed to attend to the latter—the "critically consoling fire of God." The Spirit both admonishes/criticizes/disrupts/disturbs the church and consoles it.[46] He makes clear that

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[42] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 87.
[43] Ibid., 91.
[44] "Here Barth moves from making grammatical observations to (what we might call) ontological *meditatio* on "the Being of the Community" (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, §62.2)." Ibid., 87.
[45] "Consider how this is described in one paragraph [section]: The Holy Spirit and the Sending of the Christian Community (*Church Dogmatics IV/3.2, §*72)." Ibid., 90.
[46] "The message of the Spirit's criticism of the Church is, I hope, at once consoling and alarming." Ibid., 96. Joseph Mangina says something quite similar. "the Spirit as a salvific economy in its own right. . . From a

he is "not claiming (Roman) Catholic theology has successfully developed this strand of the relationship between the Spirit and the Church . . . John Paul's profound exegesis applies to the work of the Spirit in the world, and one is left wondering whether it might apply at all to the Church."[47]

Buckley's 2000 article

Then six years later in 2000, Buckley presents an overview of Barth's ecclesiology in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth.* Buckley's responsibility here was to give an overview of Barth's ecclesiology but his point is similar to how he ended the 1994 article. "Barth forces us to ask how, if at all, we can speak with one voice for and about as well as against the church."[48] He again attempts to jog the conversation beyond Sacramental interpreter dismissal of Barth's ecclesiology. "Most critics of Barth's theology of Christian community, baptism, and Lord's Supper have proceeded by ignoring it—not always out of ignorance of Barth's theology, but often because they think Barth himself ignores the important issues in this regard."[49] These critics have underestimated Barth. Though Barth rejects sacramentalism he makes much of the church's practices. "The

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Reformation point of view, the important thing is to maintain a lively sense of God's judgment *over against* the church, yet without denying the reality of God's gifts *to* the church." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 301.

[47] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 96.

[48] Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 195.

[49] Ibid., 205.

point is that in one breath Barth could align himself with liturgical reform, while in the next breath he could distance himself from most of the theology that was used to justify that renewal in the twentieth century."[50] While Barth probably never aligned himself with "liturgical reform" per se, Buckley is certainly correct that his subsection on "liturgical law" is essentially that.[51]

After tracing the roots and development of Barth's ecclesiology, Buckley turns to Barth's critics. Buckley writes that the typical accusation is that "his Christology only too often yields a church with something like two natures, only occasionally united (ecclesiological 'occasionalism' or 'Nestorianism.')"[52] But Buckley suggests that there is a constructive conversation to be had about Barth's ecclesiology using Barth's own terms.

> One way to bring out the debates on Barth's own terms is to consider Barth's warning against 'the Church in excess' as well as 'the Church in defect' . . . On

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Within that subsection on church law is "liturgical law," Barth has three sub-points which he takes up on the following pages: "Thus from its liturgical root Church law must be understood as a law which (1) is ordered by divine service [worship]; (2) is continually to be found again in it; and (3) has itself the task of ordering it. We shall now consider the problem from these three standpoints." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 698, Cf. 695-710. Barth emphasizes the importance of and the importance of reforming corporate listening to the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, baptism, and prayer. Ibid., IV/2, 695-710.
Here is an outline of that subsection to illustrate Barth's interest in "liturgy."
Church law is "liturgical law" (pp. 695-710).
Opening comment: "divine service" [worship] and "dispersion" of church (pp. 695-698).
(1) Church law is "ordered by divine service [worship]" (pp. 698-706). It has "four concrete elements:" First, Word of God (pp. 699-701); Second, Baptism (pp. 701-702); Third, Lord's Supper (pp. 702-704); Fourth, Prayer (pp. 704-706)
(2) Church law "is continually to be found again in" divine service [worship]. Review and implications of the four concrete elements (pp. 706-709).
(3) Church law "has itself the task of ordering" divine service [worship] (pp. 709-710).

[52] Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 208. Buckley is referring here with "occasionalism" to the early Roman Catholic critics treated by Wendell Dietrich and the "Nestorian" charge of O'Grady treated earlier in this dissertation.

> one level, Barth's critics can be divided into those who think Barth commits his own mistakes – some critics thinking he has a church in defect, some a church in excess.[53]

Buckley himself suggests that Barth is for the most part criticizing bad or superstitious sacramental theology that deserves to be critiqued. It is matter of debate "whether Barth's denial of sacramentality denies what churches for whom sacraments are 'signs' and 'causes' of God's free grace are concerned to affirm."[54] Buckley writes that it is possible that Barth's theology gets corrupted or distorted here in his denial of the sacraments; but it may instead be a plea for the biblical foundations and practicality of church practices along the lines suggested by John Howard Yoder. Buckley writes, "Is Barth's a-theology of sacraments inconsistent with the rest of his theology, or is it pointing the way to a more radically reformed dogmatics of worship?"[55] He footnotes this question with this assertion. "For an argument to inconsistency, see Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation;* for a more radically reformed theology of worship, see J. H. Yoder, *Body Politics.*"[56] In other words, it is possible that John Webster is correct in stating that Barth's otherwise reliable theology breaks down in his opposition to the "sacramental." While it is also possible, that Yoder is right to see that there are a number

[53] Ibid., 205.
[54] Ibid., 208.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 210.

of church social processes that are used by the Holy Spirit (whether those practices are called “sacraments” or not) and that there is room for rediscovering their “exemplarity.”

Chapter 6: 1994-2004: Sacramental interpreter concern about the lack of catholicity of Barth's ecclesiology: Healy, Hütter, Mangina, Hauerwas

Nicholas M. Healy's 1994 article "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology"

The influence of Healy's two articles

Much of the recent discussion surrounding Barth's ecclesiology seems to stem from Nicholas Healy's 1994 article "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications"[1] based on a chapter of his dissertation defended in 1992.[2] At least eleven theologians have cited it in the last 18 years.[3] This 1994

[1] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications."
[2] Nicholas M. Healy, "The Logic of Modern Ecclesiology: Four Case Studies and a Suggestion From St. Thomas Aquinas" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1992). The dissertation cites Buckley's 1976 dissertation at Yale in the bibliography but does not interact with it and has no mention of O'Grady. It does interestingly reflect on Barth and Bonhoeffer which is excluded from this 1994 article. Ibid., 162-166.
[3] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 100-101, 103, 109-111; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 228-229, 266; Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145, 192; Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 295; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non* (Journal Article)," 149, 151; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90-91, 93; Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 204; Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 185; Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 273, 278; McFarland, "The Body of Christ: Rethinking a Classic Ecclesiological Model," 226, 230, 231; McIntosh, "The Contribution of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Appropriation to a Trinitarian Ecclesiology," 231; Rasmusson, "The Politics of Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Theologies of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder," 102-103; Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 97; Webster, "The

article is a stinging Catholic critique echoing many of the themes O'Grady raised in his reading of Barth but seemingly not reliant on it. Healy concludes, "Barth's ecclesiology is internally inconsistent, is difficult to reconcile with Scripture, and seems to work against his larger theological agenda."[4] Six years later in 2000 Healy wrote a book on ecclesiology in which he repeats his criticism of Barth's ecclesiology in passing but does not mention it further.[5] However, in 2004 Healy tempers his earlier blast with something of a *mea culpa*—he calls it a "reconsideration" of Barth's ecclesiology.[6] There he surprisingly defends Barth against those who would overemphasize practices—taking particular aim at Stanley Hauerwas who had drawn upon Healy's own 1994 article.[7] The later article (analyzed closely later in the dissertation) seems to have garnered less notice than the initial polemic.

So why read this 1994 article carefully? First, even though Healy has "reconsidered" his position on Barth's ecclesiolgy, he does not specifically disavow the earlier article in the later article. Second, this is the most detailed comprehensive critique of Barth's ecclesiology that has been published since O'Grady and it is quoted approvingly by many. Third, summaries of Barth's ecclesiology rarely generate much

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Visible Attests the Invisible," 99; Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching*, 256-257; Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*, 59, 108, 111, 118.

[4] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.

[5] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, 29-32.

[6] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered."

[7] Ibid.

reaction[8] but analyzing a very critical article such as this one allows us to see where misunderstanding and disagreements emerge.

If Healy's concerns in this 1994 article are vindicated, Barth's ecclesiology must not be looked to as a seminal for future ecclesiological thinking. However, despite a cascade of concerns about Barth's ecclesiology, upon further examination, none of Healy's worrries are found to be fatal flaws. Healy is affirmed however regarding his criticism of Barth's hypothetical line of reflection probing "if there were no Church." It should also be noted that Healy's convictions regarding ecclesiology are never attacked here but rather his reading of Barth's ecclesiology. Healy's concerns are almost always valid ones but upon further inspection, Barth does not succumb to them. The only place where there would be strong disagreement would be Healy's rather depressing conclusion at the end of this 1994 article that ecclesiology may very well be futile and Healy seems to have definitively moved past this worry in his later work.

[8] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 162-269; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 85-88; Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, 191-194, 211-214, 232-237; Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 152-161; O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 250-337.

Criticism of Barth's use of the "body of Christ" being only vertical actualism, not horizontal social

In the original 1994 article, Healy's thesis is that Barth's "use of a single systematic principle leads to several problems."[9] Healy argues that Barth's selection of the "Body of Christ" as his "definition of the church" overly determines the rest of his ecclesiology. Healy writes that for Barth "his initial move is to establish a single definition of the church that he then uses as the basis and norm for developing his systematic ecclesiology."[10] "It comes as no surprise to find that Barth selects the biblical image of the 'Body of Christ' as his definition of the church."[11] Healy's lone mention in the book in 2000 to Barth's ecclesiology is to say that Barth privileges this image of the church as something of what Avery Dulles calls a "supermodel" (not the kind that walk on runways)—instead "an image or concept of the church that is entirely adequate and that relativizes all other models."[12] But Dulles does not seem to include the quotation in later editions and does not himself say that Barth overemphasizes the "body of Christ."[13]

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[9] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 253. Cf. McFarland cites Healy in his criticism of Barth along the same lines. McFarland, "The Body of Christ: Rethinking a Classic Ecclesiological Model," 226, 230, 231.

[10] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 253.

[11] Ibid., 256.

[12] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, 32. Citing Dulles, *Models of the Church (1st. Ed.)*, 206.

[13] Dulles includes Barth's ecclesiology "to exemplify the kerygmatic approach to ecclesiology" (Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church (Rev. Ed.)*, Rev. ed. (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2002), 4.; "the church as herald" (79f.); "churches of the word" (143); and "the Congregational type of ecclesiology that tends to accompany a theology centered on proclamation" (143).

Furthermore, Barth's treatment of the "body of Christ" image is only in two places: I/2, 209-242 (especially 215-221) and in his mature ecclesiology IV/1, 659-668. It is questionable whether this is the controlling metaphor of his whole ecclesiology when it is treated in only 9 pages of Barth's mature ecclesiology. It is also mistaken to say that this is Barth's "definition of the church." Here is what Barth says:

> The community is the earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ Himself. The time has now come to adopt the New Testament term used to describe this matter. The Church is His body, created and continually renewed by the awakening power of the Holy Spirit.[14]

Barth is of course drawing on the New Testament for his description of the church but he has no intention of using only one New Testament image. Note that even in using the "body of Christ" here, Barth also mentions the Spirit. Later, in the same article, Healy will admit that Barth's use of the "body of Christ" is not always operative but that is because Barth is not consistent. "The matter is not done, however, for Barth's is not exactly a systematic ecclesiology, if systematic means attempting to describe the reality of the church from a single perspective."[15]

Healy goes on to say that the problem is a "one-sided" interpretation of the metaphor of the body of Christ.[16] According to Healy, Barth ignores the "horizontal" aspect of the metaphor (the social dynamics among people in the Christian community)

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[14] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 661.
[15] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications."
[16] Ibid., 253.

and instead emphasizes the vertical dimension (the church's relationship to the Triune God). Healy writes that for Barth "in Scripture the word 'body' is not used primarily to refer to the church as a 'social body.' Rather, it is used to indicate the derivation of the church from Christ's own body."[17] Healy is correct to say that for Barth the church is derived from Christ. But immediately after saying that Jesus is present in the church, Barth goes on to say that the church is a community of people. "But because He is its Head, the Christian community which is His body is the gathering of . . . men."[18]

Criticism about bifurcation of the church: true vs. false and apparent vs. real

Healy claims that Barth envisions a pure church which does not sin and only this church is worthy of the title "body of Christ;" Barth labels a church that sins a "false church." According to Healy, Barth's understanding of Jesus Christ and the church necessarily leads to an idealization of "the church" to an unattainable level.

> Indeed, such a view would seem to follow necessarily from the definition of the church as denotatively the Body of Christ, for Christ, of course, does not sin. So when the "church" sins it cannot be the action of the Body of Christ. It must therefore be something else that sins, some other entity, namely the "false" church.[19]

[17] Ibid., 256.
[18] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 661.
[19] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 259.

Healy is concerned that Barth has such awe for Christ in the "body of Christ" that he rejects that a sinful church can be a "church." The logical extension of this would be that no churches exist (since they are all sinful). "The decision for this kind of identity threatens, however, to turn Barth's logical distinction between the true and the apparent church into a real distinction."[20]

Healy has hit on an issue that can be quite confusing. On the one hand, Healy is raising a legitimate question about Barth's actualism or the "church as event" mentioned by both Dietrich, O'Grady, and Buckley as potentially problematic.[21]

On the other hand, Healy mixes up two different concepts because of a mistake in the English translation of *wirkliche Kirche* in §67 of IV/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*, which should have been translated "real church." The *wirkliche Kirche* should be translated "real church" because it is the antidote to the *Scheinkirche* (apparent or ostensible church)—that latter of which occurs 9 times in §67 of KD IV/2 and nowhere else.[22] The problem is that Geoffrey Bromiley translated both *wirkliche* and *wahren* into English as

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Barth maintains the church does not become church unless Christ makes it so. The critics wonder how is a group of people (who consider themselves Christians) to know if they have been struck by lightning by God and deemed to be "church."

[22] *Scheinkirche* connotes not something derogatory or disparaging like "make-believe" church (as Healy puts it) or "sham" church (as some woodenly translate it) Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 247. or "phantom church" Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 98.. Instead, it means "apparent" church or "ostensible" church. God only knows definitively whether an apparent church is a real church; or whether it merely has a sign on the door where they meet that says "church."

"true."[23] The *wahren Kirche* should be translated "true church" because it is the antidote to the *falschen Kirche* or false church, the latter of which occurs 3 times in §62 of KD IV/1. In §67 of KD IV/2, *wirkliche Kirche* (real church) occurs 34 times; it occurs 0 times in §62 *of* KD IV/1. On the other hand, in §62 of KD IV/1 *wahren Kirche* (true church) occurs 9 times; it only occurs 1 time in §67 of KD IV/2.

If one is tipped off that Barth is making two different arguments in the different volumes, Barth's points are coherent. But if one thinks he is talking about the "true church" in both cases, confusion reigns. As one can see, Healy is aware of the German original but quotes from both IV/1 and IV/2 about "the true Church" as if Barth is talking about the same thing in both cases.[24] This needs to be highlighted because some of his sharpest critiques of Barth are fueled by this confusion.

Barth on the real church (IV/2 §67)

In Barth's subsection on the real church [*wirkliche Kirche*] vs. the *Scheinkirche* (apparent church) in IV/2 §67, he is making the point that denominational affiliation, a

[23] Let there be no disrespect for Geoffrey Bromiley (1915-2009) who almost single-handedly translated the *Church Dogmatics* from German. See also his immensively helpful, but underutilized, summary and guide to the *Church Dogmatics.* Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*.

[24] "For Barth, 'church' can refer to a 'true' or 'real' church (*die wirkliche Kirche,* KD IV/2 695ff.) or the 'apparent' or 'make-believe' church (*die Scheinkirche,* KD IV/2 698). The true church is that which is 'visible to faith' (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 668), known thereby to be church as an event of the 'awakening power of the Holy Spirit' (IV/1, 661 and see *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 641)." Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 258-259.

sacred building, etc. do not make a group of people the "the body of Christ" or "the temple of the Holy Spirit." The people gathered are dependent on the Holy Spirit's work. Barth thinks that all churches should live with dependence on God—never taking for granted that humans by themselves make a church "the household of God." What humans can see is people gathered in a church building. This is ostensibly the church, the "apparent church," but it is not necessarily the real thing. Human practices in themselves do not make the church. God's presence makes the church. Human practices only produce what is apparently a church. "To the extent that it is anything in itself, it is the phenomenon of the mere semblance of a Church (*Scheinkirche*], and it is only this semblance, and not the ~~true~~ [real] [*wirkliche*] Church, that we shall see when we consider this phenomenon."[25] It is God that makes a group of people what the Bible describes as: "the people of God, or the city or house or planting of God, or the flock of Jesus Christ, or His bride, or even His body, or the communion of saints, or (according to 1 Tim. 3:15) the pillar and ground of truth" or "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."[26] The church only becomes a real church by the work of God. Barth is here trying to convey Jesus' comment that "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). Barth writes, "Nor is it something

[25] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 617.
[26] Ibid.

self-evident, but always the omnipotent act of a special divine mercy, if the Church is not merely the semblance of a Church, but in spite of the sinfulness of the human action of Christians a ~~true~~ [real] [*wirkliche*] Church, and expressed and revealed as such. In its own strength this is quite impossible."[27]

Barth on the true church (IV/1 §62)

Healy conflates the issue of real church vs. apparent church with a different issue: true church (*wahren Kirche*) vs. false churches (*falschen Kirche*). Barth uses this terminology and deals with the question of the "false church" in IV/1 §62. Here Barth's "actualism" is not as strong. Instead, he is discussing basically faithful churches (true churches) over against ones that are in sheer rebellion against God (false churches). False churches are corrupt or heretical or apostate or cults. Here Barth is talking about human agency—this dynamic is something that human beings can address.

Barth's use here of "false" echoes biblical language of juxtaposing a positive-sounding noun with a denouncing adjective. Consider the New Testament: false apostles (1 Cor 11:13; Rev 2:2), false prophets (1 John 4:1), false messiahs (Mt 24:24), and false teachers (2 Pet 2:1).[28]

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[27] Ibid., IV/2, 618.

[28] Similarly, when the people of God in the Old Testament were worshipping idols, they were still the people of God but called rebellious, stiff-necked, disobedient, and unfaithful. The apostle Paul seems to continue to call the churches in Galatia "churches" (Gal 1:2) but he called them foolish (Gal 3:1). The

Barth explicitly says another way of describing a "false church" is saying it lacks "catholicity."

> The term "catholic" speaks explicitly of the true Church activating and confirming its identical being in all its forms. Implicitly it speaks of the contrast between the true Church and the false. It is the false Church in every form in which it does not activate or confirm its identical being but has and reveals and maintains an alien being. It is then a "heretical" Church, i.e., a Church which chooses for itself such an alien being.[29]

Note the human agency alluded to in the last sentence: "a church which chooses for itself." What Barth is saying is that churches are called to seek out truth.[30]

In summary, Barth is making two different points: that (a) the church is not merely human activity (that is just apparently a church)—its needs God's presence to be a real church (IV/2); and (b) it is certainly possible for the people of God to be waylaid by idolatry and not be the true church (IV/1). Healy's conflation of these ideas leads to him understanding Barth's actualism to be even more dialectical or severe than Barth understands it to be—as if the church is either deemed by God "true and real" or "false and apparent."

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misguided churches in Revelation 2-3 are also called "churches" but called lukewarm (Rev 3:16) and other phrases.

[29] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 702.

[30] "I believe in the existence of a true [*wahren*] Church and not in that of a false Church." Ibid. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 784.

Because of the confusion above, Healy thinks Barth's actualism entails a view of the church's activities as "sinful human activities and nothing more"[31] which Barth does not say. Barth does have rather harsh things to say about humanity without God,[32] but he is more optimistic about the church's practices.[33]

Continuing with his impression that Barth thinks the church is either heretical and godless, or true and real, and there is nothing humans can do about it, Healy calls this lurching between dead sinful human activities and the living pure movement of God's Spirit, the "bifurcation of the church."[34]

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[31] Healy writes that for Barth, "the church as a human entity is a concatenation of sinful human activities and nothing more (*Church Dogmatics* IV/3.2, 760). Yet our human church *becomes* the Body of Christ insofar as it is established in a relation with Jesus Christ by the activity of the Holy Spirit . . . When this event occurs, the visible church is indeed the 'earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ himself' (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 661)." Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 257.

[32] The most harsh sentence by Barth on the page Healy cites is "Of itself it is only a people of blind, vain, stupid, perverted, defiant and despondent men like any other people." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 760. But this is not referring to the church's practices but rather humanity without God.

[33] Instead, Barth says something quite beautiful and optimistic about the church. The church has not arrived but good things are happening: Jesus is obeyed, attested, discipleship occurs, and the commission fulfilled. "In the work of the Holy Spirit it takes place that Jesus Christ is present and received in the life of His community of this or that century, land or place; that He issues recognisable commands and with some degree of perfection or imperfection is also obeyed; that He Himself actively precedes this people; that in its action or refraining from action there is more or less genuine and clear reflection, illustration and attestation of His action, more or less faithful discipleship in the life of this people, and therefore a fulfilment of its commission." Ibid., IV/3.2, 761.

[34] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 258. Hütter also emphasizes this break. There is a "distinction between the church's identity, which rests in God's reconciling activity in Christ, and the difference of human witness from that activity." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 88.

Criticism about Barth's actualism leading to uncertainty, even paranoia, about God's presence in the sacraments and in the church

Though Healy's rhetoric here is still charged with indignation, his description of baptism is quite accurate. The human church can baptize with water but must hope and pray that God does His part in confirming the human action.

> Barth has bifurcated the church: The true church cannot baptize by water, since that is a non-theological action; the *Scheinkirche* cannot baptize with the Holy Spirit, since that is more than a human action. By water we are brought in to the *Scheinkirche;* by the Holy Spirit we are brought into the true church. We can only hope in faith that the human 'act of obedience and hope' that we see is indeed accompanied by the invisible divine action so as to bring us into membership in the Body of Christ (CD IV/4 134; CD IV/1 697f.). Through grace alone is the movement made between the two churches.[35]

Healy is correct to say for Barth the church is not necessarily the real church, and baptism is not real baptism, unless the Holy Spirit animates it.[36] However, Barth makes clear that as much as there is "bifurcation" (i.e. what Barth calls "distinction") there is also unity ("correlation"). Barth writes,

> The crux of a correct answer to the question of the meaning of baptism lies in a strict *correlation* and a no less strict *distinction* between the human action as such and the divine action from which it springs, on whose basis it is possible, and towards which it moves.[37]

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[35] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263. Again, neither *wirkliche Kirche* nor *Scheinkirche* appear in IV/4 or IV/1 but in this instance Healy's analysis is not harmed by this.

[36] But is this so different from what Thomas Aquinas suggests? Buckley summarizes the view of Thomas: "sacraments are causes insofar as they are effected by 'God alone' through the instrumental power of his creatures in the words and deeds (form and matter) of the sacraments." Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 208.

[37] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 134. Emphasis added. Tracey Stout recognizes something is amiss here in Healy's analysis. "Yet, this is not where Barth ends his discussion of the human church. Healy seems to cut

But Healy concludes that "Barth bifurcates the church into two separate entities, the human church and its spiritual counterpart"[38] as if for Barth they never coincide. But, Barth says, because of God's grace, they do coincide or "correlate."

Furthermore, despite all of his cautions about equating the semblance of the church (i.e. what is apparently a church) with the real church, Barth admits that he expects that in these apparent churches, the real church will emerge. "Where is the semblance which does not conceal the ~~true~~ [real] Church, from which it may not emerge and shine out?" The whole quotation reads,

> We may and can and should hold aloof from the semblance of a Church whose only aim is to seek and express and glorify itself. But the ~~true~~ [real] Church—and where is the semblance which does not conceal the ~~true~~ [real] Church, from which it may not emerge and shine out?—is savingly necessary.[39]

In other words, we can still retain our doubts about pompous claims of the church but we must remember that likely amidst even these oversized claims, glimpses of the real church will shine through. Though they should be not be smug, Barth says Christians need not be paranoid about whether or not God is working among them; it is

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off Barth's dialectic at this point." "Healy's contention that, for Barth, baptism with water is baptism into merely the *Scheinkirche* and not the true church misses the point of the necessary relation between the visible and invisible." Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 90-91, 97.

[38] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263.

[39] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 621.

appropriate for Christians to proceed with the "working hypothesis" that God is at work among them.[40]

Criticism about Barth's actualism crowding out human agency in definition of the church

Healy says that for Barth the "four marks of the creed" (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) "apply *solely* to 'the divine operation which takes place in the church' (CD IV/2 617)."[41] Barth does say the visible church never achieves these predicates by itself. But Healy exaggerates by saying "solely." The divine operation is primary ("Jesus Christ as the Head of His body is the primary acting Subject, compared with whom the acting human communion of saints can be regarded only as secondary"[42]) but the human operation which takes place in the church is also indispensable. On the one hand, God is the primary builder of the church. Barth writes, "The decisive question is simply this: Who is the true builder? And there can be no doubt as to the answer. In the strict and primary and ultimate sense it is God Himself and He alone."[43] On the other hand, the church builds itself. "As His community (His body), this cannot be merely a passive object or spectator of its upbuilding. It builds itself. And we are forced to say that as its

[40] Ibid., IV/1, 699.
[41] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 259.
[42] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 678.
[43] Ibid., IV/2, 632.

upbuilding is wholly and utterly the work of God or Christ, so it is wholly and utterly its own work."[44]

Criticism about Barth's actualism crowding out human agency in church activities

Healy understands Barth to be undervaluing the visible human church. "One wonders what has become of . . . human agency . . . *What* people do, as such, is not a constituent element of the church's identity."[45] According to Healy, Barth is overly dismissive of human agency. Healy admits there are places where Barth does emphasize the church's human response to God's action in Christ.[46] Healy takes special note of the section on the "The Order of the Community" (IV/2 676ff) [47] upon which John Howard Yoder also pays particular attention as will be noted later in the dissertation.[48] But, according to Healy, Barth is still far too pessimistic about the human side of the church as if any accretion on the human side entails a loss on the divine side.

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[44] Ibid., IV/2, 634.
[45] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications."
[46] Healy criticizes Barth for being so careful of "claiming too much about our response [that] . . . What we do in the church is only a medium that may or may not be used by the 'true and primary acting Subject' (*Church Dogmatics,* IV/3.2, 757)." Ibid., 261.
[47] Ibid., 260-261.
[48] Healy commends Barth here for describing "our actions as they are used as a medium by the divine agent and therefore insofar as they are in a relation of *dependency* to the divine action." Ibid., 261. In other words, Barth does come close to saying church practices function sacramentally. They are "used as a medium by the divine agent."

Healy writes that "At times, this *Scheinkirche* becomes the true church by 'the divine occasioning and fashioning of this human action.'"[49] But Healy worries that this dependence on God's action denigrates human response: God's acting is "an event that takes place 'in spite of' human agency (CD IV/2 618)."[50]

This "in spite of" by Healy suggests that for Barth the church's response to God's initiative will invariably be counterproductive; whereas Barth's point (when he uses the phrase translated "in spite of") is that God makes a church a church despite human sin (not despite human agency as Healy suggests). Barth writes that it is "always the omnipotent act of a special divine mercy, if the Church is not merely the semblance of a Church, but *in spite of* the sinfulness of the human action of Christians a ~~true~~ [real] [*wirkliche*] Church."[51] Or again:

> If the divine occasioning and fashioning of this human action take place *in spite of it*, i.e., of its sinful tendency, this is not a quality of the Church in which it actualises its reality but the triumph of the power of Jesus Christ upbuilding it; an omnipotent act of the special divine mercy addressed to it, which makes use of the human and sinful action of the community but does not proceed from it and cannot be understood in terms of it.[52]

Barth is adamant that God's mercy be given primary credit for the outcome of the church. Barth is getting here at New Testament themes. It is the Spirit that produces the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus will build his church and the gates will not overcome it. The

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[49] Ibid., 259.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 618. Emphasis added.
[52] Ibid. Emphasis added.

apostle Paul will lay a foundation but it is not the real foundation, which is Jesus Christ.[53]

Later in the article, Healy returns to this topic and writes that Barth's Christological emphasis in his ecclesiology leaves no room for human response and thus leads to the bifurcation of the church. Barth "describes Jesus Christ by directly applying doctrinal concepts to him as a logical subject . . . this approach was a factor prompting his move to bifurcate the church."[54]

But, Healy argues, this could have been ameliorated, if Barth had more sufficiently linked his ecclesiology with an account of the narrative of God's people and Jesus.[55] Healy argues that this approach would help ameliorate the tension between the human and divine.[56] Healy thinks that the Scriptures reveal God's pattern of

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[53] "I laid a foundation as a wise builder . . . but . . . no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10-11).

[54] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265. In responding to O'Grady, we have seen how Barth has explicitly disavowed the "christomonist solution" that says "Jesus Christ, then, is fundamentally alone as the only subject truly at work. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 17.

[55] Barth could have developed for ecclesiology Jesus' "particular identity cumulatively, as a personal agent, by retelling elements of his life-story." Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266.

[56] Healy says this narrative ecclesiological approach has borne fruit. "Ecclesiological applications of narrative approaches somewhat like his have been the focus of interest among a number of theologians recently and by their accounts, at least, offer a number of advantages. They have argued, for example, that a narrative ecclesiology can describe the church in a way more consonant with Scripture; that the historical and social life of the church can be treated more concretely, as can the church's sinfulness, its power structures, and its relation to Israel and the world." Ibid. Giving attention to Israel and the early church reveals God's faithfulness to the church in spite of its unfaithfulness. "This approach would enable us to begin with the concrete, the human history that is constitutive of the church, rather than from some abstract theological notion such as an ecclesiological 'event.'" ibid.

involvement to be not so much of an interventionist as steady. Salvation history is more shepherding than spectacular.

Healy suggests that perhaps church history ("describing the church in terms of history") or biblical studies ("narrative descriptions of the church") may provide a breakthrough in ecclesiology past the misguided models and sterility of dogmatics.

> Instead of trying to achieve an unattainable consensus about *the* basic definition of the church, we should focus our attention on describing the church in terms of its history, since a historical description can do greater justice to the richness and diversity of Christian identity. And for that very reason, it may be that narrative descriptions of the church will provide us with a common starting-point for making practical proposals commensurate with our own particular agendas. If Barth had based his ecclesiology on such a narrative, and had developed further some of the unsystematic aspects of his theological method, it is conceivable that his own agenda would have been even better served than it was.[57]

Healy argues that agreeing upon a relatively-objective account of church history or some consensus in biblical studies about how God works with his people might yield a "common starting point" for discussion of ecclesiology that Barth's failed attempt to sketch out a common ecumenical dogmatic ecclesiology.

This is precisely how Buckley thinks Barth's ecclesiology should be read: not fixated on what he "says" about actualistic nature of the church[58] but also noting what Barth "shows" about what the church does, especially in §72 of IV/3.2.[59] Buckley criticizes O'Grady in his dissertation but it could also apply to Healy. "O'Grady

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[57] Ibid., 268.
[58] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 87.
[59] Ibid., 90.

overlooks the richness of Barth's narrative depiction of the community be reducing narrative to actualism."[60]

Criticism about Barth's unwillingness to theologically describe the human church

Healy goes on to say that for Barth the physical visible church (the *Scheinkirche*) "can be analyzed by the non-theological sciences (CD IV/1 655) but it is not in itself amenable to theological treatment since '[i]t is an abstraction to interpret the church only in terms of what is visible' (CD IV/3.2 727)."[61] It is not accurate to say that Barth denies that the apparent church or the visible church's practices cannot be "theologically treated."[62] Instead, in the context of the IV/1 quote and the page of the IV/3.2, Barth is making just the opposite point: he is arguing the social sciences cannot adequately deem

[60] Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 305-306. Buckley did however suggest that this narrative approach could have been more developed with regard to the church in §62 and §67 more as it was in §72 and in non-ecclesiological sections of the *Church Dogmatics*. Ibid., 195, 334.

[61] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 259. Healy apparently does his own translation here of the "what is visible" quote from IV/3.2 which reads: "Hence any interpretation which abstracts from this fact, keeping only to what is visible to all, can only miss and misunderstand its being, and indeed its total being, including that wherein it is visible." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 727. "So daß jede Deutung, die davon abstrahieren, die sich nur an das halten will, was vor Aller Augen, worin sie in diesem allgemeinen Sinn sichtbar ist, ihr Wesen, und zwar gleich ihr ganzes Wesen – also auch das, worin dieses sichtbar ist – nur verfehlen, nur mißdeuten kann." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 832. The *Church Dogmatics* translation is preferable to Healy's in that Barth does not label secular sociological description with the noun "an abstraction" as Healy suggests.

[62] Barth is not in this section talking about the *Scheinkirche* per se but is rather talking about the "visible" vs. the "invisible" church. However, "visible church" (Latin: *ekklesia visibilis*) (German: *sichtbare Kirche*) in IV/1 is indeed quite close to Barth's concept of the *Scheinkirche* in IV/2 so Healy's gloss is defensible on this point.

what is a church or the nature of Christianity. There is more to the church than what a sociologist might measure qualitatively and quantitatively measured. Similarly, comparitative religion will likely assume things about religion, which Christianity will reject from the outset.[63] In both places, Barth is saying the church is not totally "invisible," nor is it totally "visible" that is, able to be dissected and analyzed like any other organization by the social sciences. Instead, in IV/1, Barth says the church has a "special visibility"—it is visible but doing an anthropological study of its habits, practices, and organizational chart would not exhaust its significance.[64] A person needs to put on their theological glasses in order to see its "special visibility" (which Barth will

[63] "It is for this reason that disastrous misunderstanding necessarily results when interpretations are attempted which assume that it is to be reduced to a common denominator with such analogous phenomena as Islam or Buddhism or even Communism, and considered together, and perhaps conceived in historico-critical terms, probably under the master concept of religion, as either a link in historical development or the particular actualisation of a general possibility." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 727.

[64] In his work, Barth only uses this phrase "special visibility" [*besondere Sichtbarkeit*] three times in two consecutive pages. Therefore, it is not a highly important technical phrase for him. Here are those three instances highlighted in bold: "But what it is, the character, the truth of its [the church's] existence in time and space, is not a matter of a general but a very **special visibility** [sehr besonderen Sichtbarkeit] . . . Without this **special visibility** [besondere Sichtbarkeit] all that can be seen is the men united in it and their common activity, and this will be explained in terms of the categories which are regarded as the most appropriate for the understanding and appraisal of common human activities, with an attempt to subordinate it to some picture of the world and of history." Ibid., IV/1, 654-655. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 731. This third reference (on the same page) rephrases the content of the previous quote. "For where there is not this **special visibility** [besondere Sichtbarkeit], where there cannot be an insight into its earthly and historical form, even what it can confess and ever so impressively explain concerning its true being as visible in this external picture will, of course, have its greater or lesser interest as its particular ideology and may even be noted with a nod of the head, but it will at once be translated onto the historical and psychological and sociological level and irresistibly absorbed into the external picture as such." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 655. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 732. This theological weighing of sociological descriptions of the church is what Bonhoeffer is doing in *Sanctorum Communio*, which, as we have seen, Barth strongly praised. Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*.

attempt to do in the subsequent pages of IV/1 §62). In IV/3.2, Barth says the power of Jesus Christ in the church "is visible to some, though not all."[65] One example of Barth's "theological treatment" of the visible church is from IV/2 when he insists the "structure . . . form . . . law and order" of the church should be oriented by Jesus Christ.[66]

Criticism about Barth's unwillingness to discuss the human church sociologically, institutionally, in terms of canon law

Healy finds Barth to be willfully refusing to discuss how human institutions and communities function. Barth

> rejects non-theological treatment of the 'human phenomena' associated with the development of canon law. The use of non-theological categories to describe church law would be, once again, to stop at the surface, at the level of the *Scheinkirche* . . . To talk of the law of the true church, then, we must describe the 'spiritual law,' for it is this which distinguishes the church from all other human institutions. Sociological analysis is irrelevant for Barth (CD IV/2 683).[67]

Barth, however, explains why he does not deal with "canon law"—namely because it should be dealt with at the local level, i.e. where "practical theology" should be done, as noted above in our discussion of Bonhoeffer.[68] Barth is doing dogmatics.

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[65] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 727.

[66] "The basic form which characterises the Christian community necessarily demands that the whole structure of its life would be unique . . . He, Jesus Christ, is here the Lord and Head, the primary acting Subject. It is He who gives them, not only their faith and confession and prayer and proclamation, but also the form of their life, the law and order of all that they do." Ibid., 681-682.

[67] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 261.

[68] "Dogmatics arises only at the central and transitional point between exegetical and practical theology." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 767. "We cannot undertake to develop and answer in detail these questions of order. This is a matter for canon law rather than dogmatics. But dogmatics cannot refrain from considering the standpoints normative for canon law." Ibid., IV/2, 678.

But Healy rejects Barth's four dogmatic principles as too aloof. Though Healy grants that human churchly action is implied in each of these laws, he protests that "But it is a human identity that is of the most abstract sort since the governing principles are empty of any historical-cultural content."[69] Theoretically, human action is necessary, but it is only "described formally and abstractly."[70] Healy says that when Barth does attempt to connect these two separate entities "when describing the human aspects of the church in their relation of dependency upon the Holy Spirit, he discusses these actions in an abstract and formal manner, bare of concrete descriptions of the 'human phenomena' involved."[71] Healy fails to mention the twelve ministries Barth describes in detail in IV/3.2 §72 as the most obvious refutation to this assertion.[72] Despite his general stance not to address issues of canon law, Barth does address canon law issues (such as public worship, individual functions within the church, issues related to polity, and the church's relationship with the state) in his essays, speeches, and letters. A number of his comments on these issues are in his essays and speeches such as his address to the

[69] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 262.
[70] Ibid. Reinhardt Hütter too writes that Barth's understanding of the church as "event" is woefully abstract, it "has to remain abstract from each concrete ecclesial body." "the conceptual superiority of the 'transcendental ecclesiology' that is 'genuine Protestantism' is bought at a high price, namely, the loss of the church's concreteness." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 89, 90.
[71] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263.
[72] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 864-901.

Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Church on "The Church,"[73] other comments are in his letters,[74] in his recorded seminary meetings.[75]

Healy questions Barth's decision to limit himself to the discipline of "dogmatics" rather than getting into canon law, thus "presenting us with a one-sided doctrinal description" of the church, while canon law would make up the missing half.[76] "Barth's ecclesiology . . . makes it difficult to describe our ecclesial response to Jesus Christ as a concretely *human* response . . . one likely consequence of not treating the worldly aspects of the empirical church is that one's account of it will be naïve and ideological."[77] Healy argues that Barth does not sufficiently explain how sociological and theological aspects of the church can be integrated. He grants that "Barth is . . . right to try to distinguish these two languages. The problem is that he does not then go on to discuss more concretely how they are 'mixed.'"[78]

Barth does describe how sociological description should be used in conjunction with theological description[79] but Healy finds Barth's strict prioritization of theological language results in an abstract ecclesiology.

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[73] Barth, *God Here and Now: With a New Introduction by George Hunsinger*, 75-104.
[74] Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*.
[75] Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*.
[76] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263.
[77] Ibid., 264.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 686-687.

Criticism that Barth abets and enables liberal Protestantism by not setting out practical ecclesiology

Healy makes clear later that his main concern is that because Barth does not spell out more details to his ecclesiology, there is the possibility that it will be manipulated in directions that Barth himself would have opposed. Healy is especially concerned that the flexible parameters of Barth's ecclesiology do not sufficiently curtail the slipperiness of liberal Protestantism.

Healy worries that Barth's limiting of himself to dogmatic principles is impractical and functionally enables the worst of Protestant liberalism. The vacuum will be filled by "neo-Protestant tendencies to assimilate Christianity into non-Christian culture" because "Barth says that our response to the acts of God in Jesus Christ cannot be such that we ourselves develop institutional forms that are (however partially) constitutive of the true church."[80] Healy sees Barth's reticence to set forth local canon law to be a fatal flaw.

Healy however misses that Barth does think that "canon law" is necessary; it is just that he thinks that the dogmaticians should set forth principles and practical theologians should work on questions of canon law at the local level.

[80] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264.

Criticism that Barth's ecclesiology is naively biblicist if accepting only the practices instituted by Jesus

Healy understands Barth to be rigidly biblicist in his ecclesiology in his stress that church practices should be somehow connected to an incident or saying of Jesus. "The visible institutions that mediate grace are limited therefore to those that can be derived *directly* from Jesus Christ as founded upon his command: baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer and proclamation."[81] Healy suggests Barth's development of dogmatic ecclesiological principles by the life of Jesus Christ is a tortured stretch. "In each case Barth's primary concern is to make conceptual connection between the principle and Jesus Christ."[82] Healy wonders whether this principle of connecting church practices to sayings and actions of Jesus will not spur strained, implausible, tendentious proof-texting. "His procedure is to discuss in exclusively theological terms (and notably without any exegesis to support his claims) the church's law under four 'basic principles of true canon law' (CD IV/2 686)."[83] As a Roman Catholic, Healy thinks it would be far wiser for Barth to learn from the wisdom of the church's history now resident in canon law. "By ruling out a sociohistorically concrete treatment of the (real) church Barth thus

[81] Ibid., 264-265.
[82] Ibid., 262. Yoder however sees their relation to Jesus as a major strength of precisely these four principles. "To say that the order of the gathered community must be derived from Christology is itself a free church move." Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 143.
[83] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 261-262. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 698-709.

proscribes the development of a set of institutions that could contribute to a distinctive Christian ethos."[84] In other words, Barth from the outset rigidly rules out any wisdom the church may have accumulated over time as illegitimate if Jesus did not institute or initiate it.[85]

But after criticizing this approach, later, he suggests that Barth would have done well if he would have developed his ecclesiology on the basis of the narrative of Jesus' life. Barth should have developed Jesus' "particular identity cumulatively, as a personal agent, by retelling elements of his life-story."[86] As noted above, Buckley thinks that those who stress Barth's actualism overlook Barth's narrative sections. John Howard Yoder thinks this is what Barth is doing here in IV/2 in relating the practices of the church to Jesus. Yoder says that Barth understood "the church's self-understanding is narrative rather than deductive."[87]

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[84] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264-265.

[85] Barth would say that he is attempting to learn from the historic wisdom of the church but this brings us back to his response to the Roman Catholic criticism by Erik Peterson.

[86] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266.

[87] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 695-696. "The principle of coherence of the church's self-understanding is narrative rather than deductive . . . This is what Karl Barth meant, in the paragraph of *Church Dogmatics* immediately preceding the one we read, where he spoke of the life of the church as 'liturgical.' By this Barth clearly did *not* mean a concentration on rites. He meant that because the meaning of Jesus was known within the categories of ordinary historical reality, he must be re-known, re-presented, on through time in a celebratory recounting that ties the particularity of his history to the particularity of ours, without trusting to the 'bridge' of some mediating generalizations about the nature of things." Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 110.

In other words, Healy is on the one hand skeptical of Barth's drawing church practices merely from what Jesus instituted, but on the other hand, thinks that Barth's ecclesiology might be improved by developing it out of Jesus' life-story. Healy does name a distinction here but it is a subtle one and he has not definitively made the case that Barth fails in the latter (in that both Buckley and Yoder contest it).

Criticism that Barth's ecclesiology is not structured enough if accepting only the practices instituted by Jesus

Furthermore, Healy sees Barth's insistence that dogmatic principles of ecclesiology be strictly related to Christ to be impractical. Attempting to ground ecclesiology in Jesus leads to a slim ecclesiology: four "visible institutions" (hearing the Scriptures, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and prayer).[88] But these four do not include many necessary rules, regulations, and canon law that are necessary for the global church to function.

Healy goes on to say about Barth's ecclesiology, "Although the Christian community may well have its own ethos as the *Scheinkirche,* its institutions are largely *adiaphora,* for the (real) community's way of life is limited to the four works mentioned above."[89] Healy says that the church's organization is for Barth *adiaphora*—that is, a non-

[88] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 698-709.
[89] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.

essential. Healy seems to say that pejoratively as if therefore it is not of interest to Barth.[90]

But Barth says instead says that the form of the church is important but it is in the realm of "practical theology" or "canon law" that should be resolved locally for the sake of witness in that culture.[91] Barth argues that even mundane issues of canon law or practical theology should be filtered through the grid of the ecclesiological principles he sets forth in §67 that Healy finds not specific enough. For Barth, who thinks that each congregation is a church, the bureaucracy and structure required for a functioning church is small in comparison to a Roman Catholic assumption that community life would be unstable and susceptible to corruption without extensive hierarchy and canon law.

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[90] Again later Healy suggests that Barth's disinterest in institutions (i.e. canon law) and practical theology has to do with his emphasis on God doing everything and humans doing nothing. "The human response to salvation in Jesus Christ by the (real) church is therefore distinctive neither in its ethos nor in the effects of its actions." Ibid. Understood in Barth's terms, this statement is close to nonsense. The real church is the people of God, who empowered by the Holy Spirit, correspond, and so of course the church is distinctive in its actions (gifts of the Spirit) and ethos (fruit of the Spirit). But Healy is trying to make another point: that Barth's actualism leads him to underestimate the importance of institutions. Healy is trying to emphasize that because in Barth's "actualism" God does all the work and humans do nothing (which is an exaggeration of Barth's position), there really is no need for Christians to create a Christ-like community. Again, as we have seen, there really are two issues here: (a) that Barth does want to give God's agency its due, and (b) that Barth thinks it is best for the dogmatician not to spell out canon law even though he thinks it is necessary. Recall that he ridicules Brunner for saying it is not necessary—that the Spirit is enough.

[91] Theodora Hawksley calls this Barth's ecclesiological minimalism. She seems too to be arguing that Barth leaves space for local decision-making. "I have argued that Barth's reticence in directly addressing the historical form of the concrete church can be read as preserving the freedom of the Holy Spirit in relation to the concrete church." Theodora Hawksley, "The Freedom of the Spirit:The Pneumatological Point of Barth's Ecclesiological Minimalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 02 (2011).

Criticism about Barth separating the spiritual from the material especially in consideration of the materiality of the people of God in the Old Testament

In the assessment part of his article, Healy criticizes Barth's "bifurcation of the church" on exegetical grounds. "More troubling is that . . . the very idea of bifurcating the church into its theological and its human aspects . . .[is] very hard to reconcile with Scripture."[92] Healy argues that there is no precedent for separating Israel theologically from the "its sociocultural identity." "Scripture locates the spiritual and the theological not apart from, but as identifiable with and through the material." Healy accuses Barth of a misreading of Scripture but Healy's assertions here are by no means clear even though Reinhard Hütter cites his statement here approvingly.[93] Healy writes,

> Try to think of an invisible yet 'real' Israel distinct from its sociocultural identity; the notion strikes one immediately as quite odd. Israel's identity is constituted by its distinctive beliefs, practices and valuations developed within the narrative of what Israel construes as its dealing with God in history. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Paul, or Luke-Acts, or any other New Testament ecclesiological tradition, would think otherwise with regard to the identity of the church. Neither Testament makes or even suggests making a division between the empirical church and its essential reality. God is regarded as continually present and active within the one, all-too-human church, a church that remains such in spite of its faithlessness. Scripture speaks both theologically *and* concretely about Israel and the church, restricting itself neither to their relation to God nor to a spiritual essence.[94]

This seems to be a categorical denial of actualism by Healy. Healy is trying to make the point that Jews and Christians are not Gnostics who devalue the material world. Israel

[92] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264.
[93] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90.
[94] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264.

was a nation of living, breathing human beings. Paul knew congregations of human beings gathering together—this was "church." Healy finds it historically implausible that the people who belonged to the nation of Israel and the church wondered whether indeed they were really the people of God. He implies that God's presence and work among them was constant, stable, and predictable.

Reinhard Hütter agrees and expands on Healy's point here explicitly.

> Healy's trenchant remark regarding Israel holds even in light of Barth's late ecclesiology. As much as Israel, the church is first of all *a way of life,* that is, a distinct set of practices interwoven with normative beliefs, concretely and distinctly embodied. And interestingly, understanding the church primarily as a concrete way of life in analogy to Israel is much closer to both Roman Catholicism and the church of the Reformation, at least to Luther, than is Barth's account.[95]

Certainly, Reinhard Hütter is correct to say that this characterization is "much closer" to Roman Catholicism than Barth's account but it is questionable whether it accurately depicts the experience of the people of God in the Old and New Testament. Healy's point may at first make intuitive sense—that Israel is Israel, the church in the church; that it is only the post-16th century disturbed monk, fueled by motivation to deconstruct the church that introduces doubt whether he is a Christian and whether the church is the church.

[95] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 91.

But Healy underestimates the degree to which the question "who is the true Israel" was contested. N.T. Wright argues that this was precisely the question that had been building up within the people of Israel during and after the exile and was at a fever pitch when Jesus arrived on the scene. For example, Wright writes about the Essenes,

> If we press this group for answers to the basic worldview questions, they are not slow in coming. Who are we? We are the true Israel, the heirs of the promises, ignored at present but with a great future before us. We are the elect ones of Israel's god, the bearers of Israel's destiny. Where are we? We are in exile . . . away from the rest of Israel, demonstrating by our wilderness existence the fact that the promises of restoration and redemption are yet to be fulfilled. What is wrong? . . . Israel as a whole is blind, without knowledge and insight, deaf to the call of her god.[96]

There was indeed angst about where God was moving and who were his true people.

Healy criticizes Barth for emphasizing that the apparent church is not in itself necessarily the real church, Healy says there was never such a thing as an "invisible yet 'real' Israel distinct from its sociocultural identity" but the prophets constantly dispute that the "sociocultural identity of Israel" is enough to really be God's people.

> Tell them that this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Cursed is the one who does not obey the terms of this covenant— the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace.' I said, 'Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God. (Jeremiah 11:3-4)

> Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord. (Ezekiel 11:20:21)

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[96] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 206.

The people of God is not a static status that can be taken for granted. It has to do with obedience and not just obedience to community standards and practices but "seeking God with all one's heart"(Deut 4:29, 1Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 15:12; Ps 119:2, 10; Jer 29:13). Barth correctly says that "Certainly it cannot be said that this membership of the nation or Church turns men into recipients of revelation . . . in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament we always find men who appear not to be recipients of revelation at all."[97] It should be noted that Barth does not claim that the real church is "invisible" but he does dispute that the real church is merely "visible" (that everyone who attends church is a real Christian). "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21).

But Healy insists the identity of God's people is "sociocultural . . . distinctive beliefs, practices and valuations . . . empirical" or as Hütter puts it "*a way of life,* that is, a distinct set of practices interwoven with normative beliefs, concretely and distinctly embodied . . . a concrete way of life." But it is not merely that. It is dynamic and surprising.

> I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" (Hosea 2:23 quoted also in Rom 9:25)
>
> I will put my law in their minds
> and write it on their hearts.

[97] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 210.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people. (Jer 31:33 quoted also in Heb 8:10).

Therefore, the debate within the people of God about what it means to be legitimate is an appropriate one. The identity of Israel is continually challenged by the prophets and then reconceived by Jesus and profoundly disturbed again by the Gentile mission. The legitimacy of the Gentile churches are constantly questioned. Paul says the churches of Galatia, "the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother . . . Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now" (Gal 4:26, 28-29). In other words, the church's identity as the children of promise is something that has occurred by the power of the Spirit even if they have not been physically circumcised. The point is that Barth is not being overly critical and skeptical to insist that communities of self-described Christians confess that it is not their "way of life" that makes them Christians but something "invisible" that has occurred to "really" make them so. It is appropriate to probe what it means to be faithful. To say that Israel may not be Israel and the church may not be church is not some modern supercessionist or Protestant innovation but rather one of the key questions always scrutinized and debated by the people of God.[98]

[98] As Rowan Williams says that the Roman Catholic is tempted to read history as if there has never been debate about where the church is located: "The Fathers say the same thing, and say the same thing as we now say." Whereas, Protestants imagine they can skip all that history and go back to the early church before

Criticism about Barth saying the church is not finally necessary

"In fact, even the church's acknowledgement need not occur: Barth insists that the church is not finally necessary (CD IV/3.2 826)."[99] This is something Buckley, Reinhard Hütter, Stanley Hauerwas, and D. Stephen Long also criticize.[100] Hütter writes, "Barth's claim that 'the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church' is a claim in starkest contrast to the church of the Reformation and to Roman Catholicism."[101]

The context of Barth's infamous quote is in an otherwise uncontroversial small subsection (824-830) at the end of the "The Task of the Community" in §72 of IV/3.2. Barth is teaching that there are two temptations which the church must avoid with regard to witness: neglecting the addressee (825-827) and patronizing the addressee (827-830). The controversial statement "that the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church" occurs on page 826. The main topic of these three pages (825-827) is that the church must not neglect its task of sharing the good news with outsiders.

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the "devastating loss at or near the very beginning." Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past?: The Quest for the Historical Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 20, 19.

[99] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.

[100] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 192-193. "The quotation from Barth is from *Church Dogmatics* **III/4**, 826." The correct citation would be: IV/3.2, 826. The mistake is twice in *With the Grain of the University* on pages 192 in the text and 193 in a footnote.

[101] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 92. quoting Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.

A strong affirmation of the church's importance: Barth's case that the church is a relative necessity for the world

Barth says that the world and the church ("community" *Gemeinde*[102]) are inseparably connected to one another. The world needs the church, and the church needs the world. "In Jesus Christ the community and the rest of humanity constitute a differentiated, yet in this differentiation firmly integrated, whole."[103] They are a whole. The church cannot be dispensed with. The world is stuck with the church whether it likes it or not. The church will continue to brush against the world, challenging it and prodding it. The world cannot get rid of the salt of God's people.

> This means on the one side that, elected by God, reconciled to Him and called to His service in Jesus Christ, humanity cannot in practice escape confrontation and co-existence with the community which is actually brought into relation with it and established among it by Jesus Christ. It must always accept its presence and action and be reminded of its existence.[104]

It is God's plan to have the church rubbing against the world, irritating the world and witnessing to the world about Jesus Christ. The church should not underestimate the contribution it makes to the world—the importance of its missionary calling.

In this section, Barth argues in the strongest terms that the church should fulfill its role in witnessing to the world. The church is missing its *raison d'être* if it ignores the world. Barth writes,

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[102] Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 946.
[103] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.
[104] Ibid.

> It is with a very different necessity, however, that the community belongs together with humanity. Of the community it must be said that it is referred absolutely and inescapably to its co-existence with humanity. Its [The church's] existence finds not merely its meaning but its very basis and possibility only in its mission, its ministry, its witness, its task and therefore its positive relation to those who are without. It stands or falls with this relation.[105]

The church is a light. It should shine.[106]

Then he goes on to riff on this theme but the point is probably already clear for our purposes. Woe to the church if it hides its light under a bushel. If it does not share the bread that it has found with a hungry world.

> Woe to it if it abandons instead of actualising this relation, if it does not confess before men what it specifically may know among them, if for the many and good reasons which it may adduce it neglects the men of the world in the sense already described! . . . To the degree, therefore, that through laziness or self-will it neglects the man of the world, either seeing him no more or only at a distance, and preferring to be without him, it is brought into mortal peril. For this other is absolutely indispensable to it. It is thus really in danger of perishing without hope of salvation if it succumbs to this temptation.[107]

If one is put off by Barth's point here, one could say that Jesus' metaphor of the salt losing is saltiness is similar. If it is not functional, it gets "thrown out and trampled underfoot."[108] It is hard to imagine a more vigorous case that the church must be

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Jesus says, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:14-16 NIV).

[107] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826-827.

[108] "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matt 5:13). This could be taken to be a rather degrading statement that those who do not function, get thrown out but the point is to be distinct witnesses. Recall O'Grady's worry that Barth is stressing service (*diakonia*) at the expense of fellowship (*koinonia*) as if the church is worthless unless it successfully witnesses. When Jesus gave this

witnessing to the world. They know the gospel, "the new reality," which the world needs, and they are supposed to make it known.[109]

The church is in that sense a "necessity." But in comparison with Jesus Christ, who is the true necessity, they are less necessary. "This does not set aside the necessity with which humanity does actually belong together with the community and has to co-exist with it. But it relativises this necessity."[110] Despite the importance of the church being witnesses to the world, Barth says the church should not delude itself that it is in itself what the world needs. Strictly speaking what the world needs is Jesus Christ—"its true reality."[111] The church should not point to itself but to Jesus Christ. It should not think that it itself is the savior of the world.[112] "True, the rest of humanity does not need

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challenge, he had just finished giving the Beatitudes, which speak of God's love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven . . . " (Matt 5:3). That God loves people (Matt 5:3-12) *and* wants to use them (Matt 5:13-16) should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Biblically this is a false choice. The church is both a light (functional) but also Christ's wife (beloved). They are a "royal priesthood" (beloved functional) and a "holy nation" (functional beloved). And Barth reguarly emphasizes this. Yoder highlights Barth's understanding of the church's (internal / formational / *koinonia*) practices as exemplary for the world (external / missionary */diakonia).* Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 104. Yoder quotes Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.2 719.

[109] "It is only in respect of its perception of this new reality that the world is referred to the community to the extent that this is commissioned by Jesus Christ to attest it and in this sense to make it known to the world." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826. The translation of that sentence in the *Church Dogmatics* is woefully garbled. My translation: "It is only with regard to the church's knowledge of this new Reality that the world relies to such an extent on the church; for it is effectively the people of Jesus Christ with their witness, who are, in a sense, in charge of the Reality's publication to the world." Original: "Nur hinsichtlich ihrer Erkenntnis dieser ihrer neuen Wirklichkeit ist die Welt insofern auf die Gemeinde angewiesen, als diese von Jesus Christus faktisch mit ihrer Bezeugung und in diesem Sinn: mit ihrer Bekanntmachung an die Welt beauftragt ist." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 946.

[110] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.

[111] Ibid.

[112] And even if the church is in charge of publicizing Jesus Christ to the world, it is the Holy Spirit who is the true communicator who "speaks" to people. "It cannot be said that even in this respect the world is referred

the community [the church] in respect of its new and true reality."[113] In other words, compared to its need for "its new and true reality" Jesus Christ, "humanity does not need the church." The church pales in comparison to Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, the world does not need the church but merely Jesus Christ who the church points to. But as Buckley says, this musing about degrees of "necessity"[114] is rather inexact.

God has been known to use other means than his own people to get things done

Barth continues his warning to the church not to overstate its own importance. God in his graciousness allows the church to participate in his work—God is not obliged to do so. "It is an act of free grace that Jesus Christ wills to claim its [the church's] service in this matter. He is not bound to it [the church] in His prophetic action. He is not restricted to what He can and does accomplish by means of its [the church's] ministering work."[115]

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absolutely and inescapably to the existence of the community. It is not the community, but Jesus Christ Himself in His prophetic office and work, who mediates this perception. The community has a part in this occurrence, yet not in the form of an independent enterprise, but only in ministering participation in His action." Ibid. The church is involved, it "has a part," it participates, but technically it is Jesus Christ who is the mediator.

[113] Ibid.

[114] "One climax of this sort of contention is Barth's claim that 'the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church.' Both the concept of 'necessity' and the hypothetical mood of Barth's claim allow for broad interpretation." Buckley, "Karl Barth and Karl Rahner on the Christian Community: Analysis, Comparison, and Assessment", 310. quoting Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826. Buckley deadpans that there are other ways Barth might have made his point.

[115] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.

Barth is on good biblical grounds to make this warning. Barth has a significant subsection expanding on this point in I/2. Barth grants that God's normal procedure is to use Israel and the Church but ostensible membership in these bodies does not necessarily ensure people fulfill their role. "Certainly it cannot be said that this membership of the nation or Church turns men into recipients of revelation . . . in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament we always find men who appear not to be recipients of revelation at all."[116] And not only does God not invariably use every member of Israel and the Church equally but God seems to regularly surprisingly use outsiders. Barth writes that "figures are constantly turning up, who, quite away from the given place, outside the nation Israel, seem nevertheless to have become genuine recipients of God's revelation."[117] In IV/3.2, Barth lists these Old Testament "exceptions" to God's general approach of using his own people: Melchizedek, Abimelech, Jethro, Baalam, Rahab, Ruth, Jael, King Hiram of Tyre, Queen of Sheba, Naaman, Cyrus, and the people of Nineveh.[118] Still, this is not God's standard practice but rather keeps Israel and the church humble. God's using of outsiders "appears more and more to have the significance of a corrective. Those who perhaps boast of their membership instead of boasting in God must be checked and shamed."[119]

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[116] Ibid., I/2, 210.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., IV/3.2, 690-691.
[119] Ibid., I/2, 210.

Barth stresses that it is not proper to say God absolutely must communicate to the world through the church. "Who is to prevent Him from going His own direct way to man without it in His self-declaration?"[120] It is not appropriate to definitively seal off the possibility that God could speak to people in some other way. Consider for example Jesus' statement, "'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'" (Lk 19:40). Jesus too is saying that God will receive his praise regardless of the faithfulness of his people.

Barth wants to blunt talk that everything depends on the church. He does not want people to get carried away with a Messiah complex insisting that if they did not do the work of Jesus, the work of Jesus would utterly fail. To Barth, that is a big part of the story of the Gospels—that the disciples failed but that Jesus prevailed. Similarly today human beings are invited to participate in what God is doing but they should not delude themselves that everything depends on them. Barth cannot bear that presumption. The world needs Jesus. Jesus is the one who speaks to people. The church has the joy and duty of pointing to him (as John the Baptist did).

[120] Ibid.

Questionable rhetorical questions and metaphysical musings: Barth's infamous hypothetical adventure

Buckley, Healy, Hütter, Hauerwas, and Long all seize upon this ill-considered move by Barth.

> We may thus venture the three statements: 1. the world would be lost without Jesus Christ and His Word and work; 2. the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church; and 3. the Church would be lost if it had no counterpart in the world.[121]

Clearly, Barth is continuing along the same lines as what he has just said. 1. The world most definitely needs Jesus. 2. The world does not need the church to the same degree that it needs Jesus. 3. The church needs the world because without it, it would be purposeless because its task is to be a light, a witness, to the world.

The point Barth is trying to make here is the third assertion here that the church cannot "neglect" the outsider. But Barth's style of argument here is the flaw. Barth effectively spools out three lines of dubious hypothetical questioning: What if there were no Jesus? What if there were no church? What if there were no world? These are not the most useful questions because there is no way to access this alternative hypothetical universe. We have, Jesus, the church and the world so it is quite futile to imagine an existence without them.

[121] Ibid., IV/3.2, 826.

In Barth's defense, there is some precedent in Christian theology for engaging the hypothetical. Gregory of Nazianzus famously mused that: "For that which he [Christ] has not assumed, he has not healed"[122]—musing that if Jesus would not have assumed flesh, he could not have healed it. But Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that "Gregory makes constant use of the common figures of thought, particularly rhetorical question and exclamation. Exaggeration was the characteristic of sophistic style, and Gregory uses these techniques so frequently that we must speak of his style as consistently hyperbolic and exclamatory. The rhetorical question could serve a number of functions in sophistic prose."[123] In other words, perhaps just because the rhetorical question was used by Gregory does not mean that one should use it indiscriminately unless one wants to be called hyperbolic and a habitual exaggerator.

Bruce McCormack complains about a similar instance in *Church Dogmatics* I/2, where Barth wanders into the speculative and hypothetical in defending "the divine freedom." Barth there is making the point that God is not compelled to do anything in particular. McCormack quotes Barth's statement, "His Word would still be His Word

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[122] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series*, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 440. T.F. Torrance writes that Barth embraced this concept of the Greek Fathers even if there are "strangely few references to their views by Barth. Nevertheless the main burden of their argument 'the unassumed is the unhealed,' 'what has not been taken up, has not been saved' was appropriated and developed by Barth." Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 202.
[123] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 70. Cf. Vladimir Kharlamov, "Rhetorical Application of Theosis in Greek Patristic Theology," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 126.

apart from this becoming, just as Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be none the less eternal God, if no world had been created."[124] Note that Barth is here musing about whether the Word had to become incarnate if the world had not been created. We are here in the realm of the hypothetical and speculative. It gets Barth in trouble, says McCormack. McCormack writes that he understands Barth's basic point, "but there is something problematic, nevertheless, about the formulation which Barth advanced here."[125] Having made this assertion about what would have happened if there were no incarnation or world, (a dubious line of speculation), Barth is forced to explain the implications of this assertion. McCormack writes that that Barth now has to speculate on how the Trinity would have operated if the world were not created—to reflect on the

> trinitarian background of the event of incarnation, where the problem of substantialistic thinking first reared its head. God's Word would still be his Word even if the incarnation had never happened.[126]

At that point, Barth has painted himself into a corner and describes what Jesus would be like if he had not become human.[127] Later, with his doctrine of election, Barth argues that the creation of the world and the incarnation were God's plan from the beginning—

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[124] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 135. McCormack rightly replaces the "His Word will" with "His Word would" for minor clarification.
[125] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 209.
[126] Ibid., 212.
[127] "Once Barth has committed himself to this thought, then the only possible way to handle the problem of divine immutability is the way he finally handled it, namely, by driving a wedge between what the divine Word truly is (in and for himself) and what he might seem to be (but is not!) through the verbal ascription to him of acts and experiences which are not his own." Ibid., 211.

drawing on texts like "For he [God the Father] chose us in him [Jesus] before the creation of the world" (Eph 1:4).[128]

McCormack writes that these moments (which he calls "metaphysical" reflection) are happily rare later in the *Church Dogmatics* though they do occur. "It also has to be candidly admitted that such [metaphysical] moments would not entirely disappear from his theology even after the change . . . in his doctrine of election."[129]

For example, Joseph Mangina puzzles over one of these metaphysical moments when Barth muses about "if His [Jesus'] mission had concluded at that ninth hour of Good Friday."[130] Mangina calls this a "curious . . . speculative . . . thought-experiment."[131] Mangina perceptively names this a "thought-experiment." Barth's contemporary Albert Einstein was famous for his "thought experiments" in theoretical physics; McCormack thinks Barth's "thought experiements" in theoretical metaphysics sometimes leads him astray.[132] But McCormack writes that when Barth does have these

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[128] "It is not as though we are really making an innovation when we describe the name of Jesus Christ as the basis of the doctrine of election . . . Chief amongst such utterances is Eph. 1:4f." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 60. Cf. brief references of Eph 1:4 in all three ecclesiology sections. Ibid., IV/1, 664, 667, IV/2, 624, IV/3.2, 753.
[129] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 212.
[130] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 308.
[131] "In a curious small-print passage in IV/1 Barth speculates on what would have happened had God chosen to withhold his affirmative verdict on Jesus' work . . . Of course this is merely a thought-experiment, since Barth spends long pages affirming that God *did* move beyond Good Friday to Easter." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 276.
[132] In his biography of Albert Einstein, Walter Isaacson twenty-seven times describes Einstein's "thought experiments" in physics. Walter Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007). McCormack's criticizes Barth's speculative forays as "metaphysics." Barth mentions Einstein in a 1921 sermon: "as the discoveries by a young scholar named Einstein in recent years, also to some extent have proven" "Wenn die Entdeckungen, die ein junger Gelehrter namens Einstein in den letzten Jahren gemacht

moments in volume IV, they are mostly benign, not significant materially (i.e. shaping the content). McCormack writes, "later, in his doctrine of reconciliation, such moments function as a kind of limit-concept whose purpose is to point to the importance of the divine freedom."[133]

Returning now to "if there were no Church"[134] lines, D. Stephen Long is correct to say that Barth's musing here is "a speculative move bordering on the seminominalism he usually rejects."[135] Barth's main emphasis in the section is the importance of the church, not its triviality. However, by delving into hypotheticals (a distracting but happily uncharacteristic move)—musing about the church or the world not existing, he opened the door for criticism that the church is not "necessary."[136]

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hat, sich auch nur einigermassen bewähren." Karl Barth, *Predigten 1921 (GA I.44)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007), 104. Might Barth have picked up this form of argumentation from Einstein? Barth (1886-1968) was born seven years after and died thirteen years after Einstein (1879-1955). In 1932, both wrote articles published in the book. Michael M. Hoffmann, ed. *Jugend und Krisis der Kultur* (Berlin & Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1932). Both Einstein and Barth left their professor positions in Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933-1934. Both lectured in Princeton, NJ on their first visits to the United States (Einstein, 1921; Barth, 1962) (where McCormack teaches).

[133] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 212.

[134] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.

[135] Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, 217.

[136] More specifically, Barth makes himself vulnerable to the accusation that for him the church is merely instrumental—that is, that a church member is only valuable if they "witness effectively." But this contradicts Barth's own emphasis that God's plan was to love human beings before the beginning of the world (election). This was covered above with regard to O'Grady's accusation that Barth places diakonia over koinonia.

Criticism about whether the church is being derided as optional and the question of *Extra ekklesiam nulla salus*

In addition to this instance in IV/3.2, Barth reflects on the "necessity" of the church in IV/1 and in IV/2 as well. In both cases the phrase *Extra ekklesiam nulla salus* arises.[137] In IV/2, Barth asserts strongly the "saving necessity" of the church.

In the second instance, in IV/1, he makes the point that God has often used people and circumstances apart from the people of God so as to get their attention.

> We must also be careful not to maintain that participation in the salvation of the world grounded in Jesus Christ is bound absolutely to the mediation of the Church and therefore to its proclamation. We have to reckon with the hidden ways of God in which He may put into effect the power of the atonement made in Jesus Christ (Jn. 10:16) even *extra ekklesiam* [outside the church], i.e., other than through its ministry in the world. He may have provided and may still provide in some other way for those who are never reached, let alone called to Him, by the Church. It does not detract from the glory of the community or weaken its commission if we keep at least an open mind in this respect.[138]

Note that like the passage discussed just above in IV/3.2, Barth flirts with the hypothetical—writing God may "provide in some other way" so we should "keep at least an open mind"—downplaying whether the church is strictly necessary. Barth is squeamish about dictums that seem to constrain God. Barth wants to make ample room for God's freedom. God can theoretically provide another way to do his work than the

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[137] Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 213, 215, 216, 217, 220. Here in I/2 Barth embraces the phrase *extra ekklesiam nulla salus* though on 213 he explains how it can be misinterpreted. The other occurrence of the phrase is in ibid., II/2, 197. where Barth also affirms the phrase. This occurrence is quoted in Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 272. , an article treated below that quotes Healy's 1994 article.

[138] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 688.

church. But here Barth is not speculating about something farfetched—whether the church or world exists. Instead, he is expositing Scripture.

And there is some good reason for his hesitation to embrace *extra ekklesiam nulla salus.* In looking at the Scriptures, one could say that God very frequently uses his people to accomplish his salvation, but one should not conclude the God's saving is limited to using his people (recall Melchizedek, Cyrus, etc.). Here Barth alludes to Jesus' enigmatic statement in John 10:16—probably about the Gentiles: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

But immediately after this reminder that God is capable of using people beyond the church, Barth reiterates that for Christians, participation in the church is necessary.[139] "What is true is that there is no legitimate private Christianity . . . to try to be a Christian in and for oneself is to be . . . .not a Christian . . . the Holy Ghost leads him directly into the community and not into a private relationship with Christ."[140] God may choose to work in whatever ways he would like, but from a human vantage point, there is no substitute for the church.

[139] See "savingly necessary" in the next paragraph below.
[140] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 689.

In IV/2, Barth emphasizes that the church's practices and life together (the "form" of the church)—"the provisional representation of the sanctification of all humanity and human life as it has taken place in Him"[141] is part of God's salvation plan. The church is a necessity.

> It is not merely possible. Nor is the necessity only external or technical or incidental. It is internal and material and decisive. It is a saving necessity . . . It is not something which has a mere form we can take into account merely accidentally or relatively or perhaps even optionally. It is not just the means to an end which can be dispensed with, or treated with a certain aloofness, when other and perhaps better means are perceived.[142]

It "is savingly necessary."[143] It is not superfluous. One cannot be saved and be utterly dismissive of the church. Barth writes, "It is essential, and therefore necessary to Him," and even cites approvingly, *Extra ekklesiam nulla salus.* [Outside the church, there is no salvation].[144]

Criticism that Barth reduces the church to knowledge-reporting clocks

Like O'Grady, Healy (and Hütter following him) also worries that for Barth, being a Christian only has to do with "knowing" what God has done. There is nothing to do beyond that. "Nothing further needs to be done, according to Barth, except to

[141] Ibid., IV/2, 620.
[142] Ibid., IV/2, 621.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., IV/2, 622.

acknowledge what has occurred."[145] They argue that for Barth the church's only contribution is that of "knowledge." The church is only a means by which to disseminate information. It is like a clock—telling the world what time it is. Healy is nonplussed by the belittling notion that the church is like a clock.

> But if it should exist, the church's sole distinguishing characteristic is its knowledge. As Barth says (perhaps not too felicitously), the church is that body of people that "knows what time it is" (CD IV/1 727), i.e., they are those who are aware of what has happened and will happen in Jesus Christ.[146]

Healy is not impressed that just knowing what time it is and acting accordingly (showing up on time, following the schedule) is that great of a feat. However, Barth's description here is well-developed. The church "comes from Easter"[147] and looks forward to the "second and final *parousia* of Jesus Christ"--"in this knowledge it is held and impelled and directed both behind and before."[148] That the church is the community of people who orients itself by these events is no small matter. But Healy worries that this implies that only these divine events (Easter and the *parousia*) are significant; the church's practices have little significance in themselves. They are just instrumental—done merely to announce the time. There is nothing inherently valuable about the

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[145] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.
[146] Ibid. Hütter quotes Healy's use of Barth here. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 92.
[147] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 725, Cf. 726.
[148] Ibid., IV/1, 727-728.

practices—merely what message they convey.[149] "On the basis of this knowledge the church engages in proclamation, prayer, baptism and the Lord's Supper in order to be a sign of witness to what it knows."[150] If Barth is trying to say that the church should be like John the Baptist saying, "Jesus must increase, I must decrease," Healy and Hütter understand him to be saying that the church is merely a finger—just a signal. Is this not a derogatory image of Christ's wife, they ask? Does the Bible really depict the church as wholly valueless, that its only worth is conveying the message?

With regard to the church just being a purveyor of "knowledge," it is important to remember that Barth describes the church as the "earthly-historical form of existence" of Jesus Christ in the thesis statement of each of his ecclesiology sections (§62, §67, §72)[151] (which Healy had earlier critiqued as too exalted). The church is really the body of Jesus Christ. It was not just launched or inspired or set in motion by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is present in it: "there am I with them" (Matt 18:20). "It does not exist merely because He exists, because its existence is established and created by His election, vocation and governance . . . there is more to it than this . . . it exists as He exists."[152] The church's being is Jesus Christ—though of course Barth is careful in how he describes this. The

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[149] This parallels Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth's ecclesiology as mere "demonstration." Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 243. Bonhoeffer, *Ökumene, Universität, Pfarramt 1931-1932*, 212-213.
[150] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.
[151] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 643; IV/2, 614; IV/3.2, 681.
[152] Ibid., IV/3.2, 754.

church is the body of Christ. The church's head is Jesus Christ. "the Christian community exists as Jesus Christ exists, that its being is a predicate, dimension and form of existence of His."[153] In other words, just because Barth says that the church has valuable knowledge to share with the world—the gospel—it does not mean that he is denying it has any intrinsic ontological worth. Rather, he is saying that its worth does not equal that of Jesus Christ. This should serve as evidence against this accusation that the church is just a clock or knowledge conveyer.

Criticism that in Barth's ecclesiology the church is denigrated as needing to learn from the world

Furthermore, Healy points out, for Barth, even the church's knowledge is equivocal and can be corrected by the world. Healy takes Barth to be saying the church is not only merely a spokesperson for God, it is not a particularly reliable one. It is like a clock with a glitch that does not necessarily keep the right time.

> However, even its knowledge is relative. There are "true words spoken in the secular world and addressed to the community" to which the church must listen if it is to be an adequate witness to its own knowledge (CD IV/3.1, 116).[154]

Apparently, the world also has clocks and the church should also learn from them.

[153] Ibid.
[154] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.

Healy has already criticized Barth for saying that the church are "those who know" when he thinks it is more such as the mediator of salvation. Now, Barth further diminishes the church's status by saying the world can also remind the church of truth—Healy does not think the church needs such reminders. Or at least, Healy is saying that to say the church sometimes needs reminders from the world, opens the door to liberal theology's notion of the outdated church needing to learn from what God is doing in the world.

Healy is quarrelling here with Barth's "parables of the kingdom."[155] But Barth does not say that the church's knowledge is inferior to that of the world. Rather, Barth is adamant that these valuable insights from the world are merely reminders or paraphrases of what the church already knows in the Scriptures.

> Naturally, there can be no question of words which say anything different from this one Word, but only of those which do materially say what it says, although from a different source and in another tongue. . . . Words of this kind cannot be such as overlook or even lead away from the Bible. They can only be those which, in material agreement with it, illumine, accentuate or explain the biblical witness in a particular time and situation, thus confirming it in the deepest sense by helping to make it sure and concretely evident and certain. They can only be words which will lead the community more truly and profoundly than ever before to Scripture . . . It must test them by the witness of Scripture.[156]

[155] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 114.
[156] Ibid., IV/3.1, 115.

The world's contributions to the church merely affirm truths the church already knows through the Scriptures. Barth makes clear that listening to secular parables does not detract from the knowledge the church has.

Criticism that for Barth the church has no unique powers

This leads to Healy's harshest assessment in the article. For Barth, he says, the church is "no more than one among a large number of other religious groups . . . it has neither unique powers nor a distinctive ethos."[157]

> Thus we might say that Barth's is a very low ecclesiology after all. Barth relativizes the visible institution to the extent that it becomes in itself no more than one among a large number of other religious groups that compete for people's allegiance on the basis of a set of beliefs about the way things really are. It is not a qualitatively distinct entity, for it has neither unique powers nor a distinctive ethos that would give its members the opportunity to engage in the most adequate way of life or response and witness to Jesus Christ.[158]

Healy has come to the conclusion that for Barth the church is barely distinguishable from the world; the people of God are merely one more voice trying to make themselves heard in the religious marketplace.[159] But Barth says that even though the church may be to some extent "what is called religion" and may be "one people among others," this is not its primary identity; it "cannot be subsumed under the

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[157] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Healy does not mention the section where Barth takes up in depth the issue of how he sees the church in the world in a thirty-page section in §72 of IV/3.2. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 721-752. Because of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, "the Christian community is what it is in the world, [a] visible and yet invisible, [b] in the world and yet not of it, [c] dependent and yet free, [d] weak and yet strong." Ibid., IV/3.2, 752. Labels a, b, c, d added.

concept of religion" and can only be understood with "Jesus Christ Himself being its basis, centre, and goal."[160]

Barth's actualism leads Healy to think that the church is only occasionally "church" when God deems to act and thus the rest of the time, it is "no more than" a religious group. Instead of being a special mediating entity with sacramental powers, Healy says for Barth the church has no "unique powers."

If the phrase, "apart from God" is appended to Healy's comment, Healy is accurate. Barth writes,

> Apart from God, even the *distinctive* contours in which it exists and is seen within world-occurrence would not shine out in their *uniqueness* as those of the people of God, but might very well be seen together and compared and interchanged with the contours of other historical phenomenon.[161]

But "By Him it really is distinguished from those around and exalted above them."[162]

Barth's actualism is so forcefully stated in his ecclesiology that his balancing remarks about the legitimate agency and significance of the church are often understandably missed. In this case, Barth balances his actualist statement musing about the church "apart from God" by by meditating on Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35-41. The disciples (and the church) are not apart from God and so have unique power.

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[160] Ibid., IV/3.2, 743.
[161] Ibid., IV/3.2, 732. Emphasis added.
[162] Ibid. Emphasis added.

Barth says "If Jesus were not in the ship, it must inevitably have gone down. But He is in the ship, and for this reason, if for this reason alone, it cannot go down."[163]

Criticism that for Barth the church has no distinctive ethos

Healy also mentioned that for Barth the church has no "distinctive ethos" and it has no mechanisms for forming one. It is too flexible and vague to withstand the creeping influence of the world.

> Whether we agree or not with Barth's views on the theological importance of the institutional church, the relativization of its empirical distinctiveness is troubling. Without developing the point here, we can note that theologians have argued with increasing frequency in recent years that without the effective socialization of church members through sets of distinctively Christian institutions and practices it is difficult for them to resist the assimilative forces of modern culture. The irony is that the more Barth reduces Christianity to a matter of knowledge, the more he unwittingly encourages its appropriation and domestication within a non-Christian framework. One result of the loss of sociocultural particularity could be that Christianity becomes a more or less dispensable part of an individual's private world-view. This 'neo-Protestant' outcome is clearly the last thing that Barth would want.[164]

Healy obliquely refers to the Aristotelian emphasis by Stanley Hauerwas on formation in virtue with his phrase "effective socialization of church members through sets of distinctively Christian institutions and practices." In his second article ten years later,

[163] Ibid., IV/3.2, 733.
[164] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.

Healy will take the opposite perspective—arguing that an emphasis on practices can become overly self-involved.

Barth's section on the "Holy Spirit and the upbuilding of the community" (§67 in IV/2) is devoted to the "distinctive ethos" of the church. From this section, Healy has mentioned Barth's description of four practices[165] and a different set of four ecclesiological principles[166] under which the rest of the details should be worked out, but Healy still thinks this is insufficiently detailed. Healy takes Barth's reticence to be more specific on issues of practical theology or canon law as an implicit statement that there is no need for on-the-ground structures and practices.

But for Barth the absence is by design. He does not want suggest structures that unintentionally impede God's people from obeying Jesus rather than helping them to do so. With regard to "sociological structure"[167] God gives to his people "the freedom to adopt its own form, i.e., the form corresponding to its calling and commission, in the sphere of general human possibilities . . . Again its freedom is limited only by its source.

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[165] Listening to the Scriptures, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and prayer. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 698-709. Outline of these pages: (1) Church law is "ordered by divine service" (pp. 698-706). It has "four concrete elements:" First, Word of God (pp. 699-701); Second, Baptism (pp. 701-702); Third, Lord's Supper (pp. 702-704); Fourth, Prayer (pp. 704-706); (2) Church law "is continually to be found again in" divine service. Review and implications of the four concrete elements (pp. 706-709).

[166] 1. Church law is "a law of service." pp. 690-695 2. Church law is "liturgical law." pp. 695-710. 3. "Church law is living law." pp. 710-718 4. "True Church law is exemplary law." pp. 718-726. Ibid., IV/2.

[167] Ibid., IV/3.2, 739.

But its source really is its limit."[168] It is limited by Jesus Christ but only by him. Later, Barth will add that this flexibility on the local level is for missionary effectiveness.[169]

Criticism about Barth's undermining of the notion of the church's indefectibility

Healy recommends a narrative approach that would involve paying "careful attention to the signs of God's gracious activity in the church, for example, and by maintaining our belief in the church's indefectibility in spite of its flawed character."[170] Healy mentions the "indefectibility" of the church here but does not use the term in his ecclesiology book.[171] Nor does Barth use the term.[172] The Latin phrase the *indefectibilitas ekklesiae* has been described in terms of "The Church is indefectible, which means the Church will remain until the end of times as founded by Christ for the sake of eternal salvation."[173] Healy's point is that phrases such as this can be affirmed if they are understood in terms of seeing how God sustained his people in the Old Testament and New Testament despite their frequent faithlessness.

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[168] Ibid., IV/3.2, 741.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266.
[171] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*.
[172] Barth does talk about the "church in defect" but he is speaking about the church's temptation to be unfaithfully conformed to the world. Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 137-140, 190, 193.
[173] Johannes Brosseder, "Infallibilitas Papae — Indefectibilitas Ecclesiae: A Systematic and Ecumenical Approach," in *How Can the Petrine Ministry Be a Service to the Unity of the Universal Church?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 185; Cf.Peder Nørgaard-Højen, "Is Papal Infallibility Compatible With Ecclesial Indefectibility?," in *How Can the Petrine Ministry Be a Service to the Unity of the Universal Church?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

It has been argued in this dissertation that problems occur when Christology is projected upon ecclesiology. The dogmatic phrase "indefectibility" is not a Christological term but Jesus' sinlessness is. To say, the church is indefectible needs significantly more qualification than saying Jesus is without sin. To do ecclesiology, we need to do the Scriptural exegesis on how God works through and with human beings rather than assuming something like the Chalcedonian definition applies equally to both.

Criticism about Barth being too Christological in his ecclesiology

Healy sees Barth as too rigidly making deductions from Christology. "Barth's claim that our understanding of the church must be *directly* related to Christology requires some modification."[174] Healy explains that Barth "seeks to 'derive' canon law solely from 'a Christological-ecclesiological concept of the community' (CD IV/2 679)."[175]

Healy is referring here to what Barth calls the "basic law (the christologico-ecclesiological concept) of the community"[176] but most often shortens to "the basic

[174] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266-267.
[175] Ibid., 261.
[176] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 378. ***Grundrecht*** *(aus dem christologisch-ekklesiologischen Begriff) der Gemeinde* Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 788. Bold in original. Healy is correct to translate this as Christological-ecclesiological, rather than christologico-ecclesiological.

law."[177] The basic law is simply this: the church should obey Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ, on the one side; and on the other side, the obedient attitude of the human communion of saints in subordination to Him."[178] "This relationship [with Christ as Head] constitutes the Christian community. It is its principle of order, its basic law."[179] Healy agrees with this but worries that this is still very abstract.

> We can agree that in terms of the order of salvation, at least, the church is dependent upon Jesus Christ for its being. But in order to give a fully concrete description of the church we need to be able to show how even our sinful, 'merely' human activities also constitute its identity. Barth's case indicates that this is difficult to do if we base our ecclesiology too heavily upon Christology.[180]

But Barth insists that obedience to Christ is not merely formal but must form canon law, Church law, ecclesiastical law, polity, bylaws, policy, and procedures.

> we may now take up the task of stating the general presuppositions which on a christologico-ecclesiological view of the community as its basic law will always be normative for every true Church law, and operative and revealed within it.[181]

But recall that Barth does not think he, as a systematic theologian, should wander into the realm of practical theology beyond setting forth "general presuppositions."[182]

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[177] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 679, 680, 681, 686, 688, 689, 690, 695, 696, 698, 706, 710, 713, 714, 715, 718, 719, 720.

[178] Ibid., IV/2, 680. Original has typo: "and on the other side side of the obedient attitude."

[179] Ibid.

[180] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266-267.

[181] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 689.

[182] Brackets are added to the *Church Dogmatics* translation below in order to clarify when Barth is referring to canon law, i.e. Church law, canon law, ecclesiastical law, polity, bylaws, policy, and procedures. As compared to, when he refers to the basic law, which is very general: the church obeys Jesus. "In this connexion [doing dogmatics] we can only indicate the general presuppositions which are theologically binding on all Churches and their [canon] law. We cannot develop the [canon] law itself. This is a matter for the different Churches in different places and times and situations, and it may often demand special legal

Instead, "different churches in different places and times and situations" should use this "basic law" to develop their own canon law.[183]

Healy's statement "Barth's claim that our understanding of the church must be *directly* related to Christology"[184] muddies rather than clarifies. It is accurate that Barth thinks the Christologial-ecclesiological law (that the church should obey Christ) is crucial. But Barth is not drawing upon "Christological" concepts per se (i.e. Christ is one essence and two natures) to deduce church governance policies.

Criticism that Barth gives short shrift to creation and fall

Again, Healy does not think that Barth has explained well what role human beings play in the church because he has focused on the perfect Jesus; that Barth's account would be strengthened by a greater focus on other human beings: created and fallen.

> . . while preserving the primacy of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation, it is more useful within the order of knowledge to start with other ways of talking about the church that are less directly related to Christology. From the

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knowledge and skill in addition to the necessary theological insight. There is, of course, this basic law [the church obeys Jesus], and its analysis will yield certain general presuppositions which underlie all Church law. But there is no such thing as universal Church [canon] law. On the basis of this [basic] law, and the presuppositions to which it gives rise, true Church [canon] law may develop in many different directions. Our present concern is with the presuppositions of all Church [canon] law as they arise out of the basic law and explain it. These presuppositions have a demonstrable theological validity for all Church [canon] law. To clarify and assert them as valid in this way, thus furthering their recognition and acknowledgment, is one of the tasks of dogmatics. It is to this task that we now address ourselves." Ibid., IV/2, 690.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 266-267.

> perspective of creation and fall, for instance, it should be possible to discuss sociological issues more adequately.[185]

Healy here links Barth's so-called disinterest in institutions and structures (which is in fact Barth's reticence to delve into practical theology or canon law because of the importance of the local) with his lack of attention to the dynamics of creation and the fall. Healy suggests that creation teaches the sociological point that human institutions and relationships are important and the fall shows how social dynamics can become disordered. These are not to be gleaned from the Chalcedonian Christological formulations.

But Barth deals extensively in §72 in IV/3.2 with how the church is to be in the world—explicitly drawing on creation and fall.

> Now from the theological standpoint the relevant factors are the two elements of world history which are always entangled by man. On the one side there is the good creation of God . . . On the other side however—and it is here that we may seriously think of the devil—there is the reality and operation of the absurd.[186]

Barth uses the phrase *Hominum confusione et Dei providentia* [human confusion and God's providence] to describe how evil and good coexist alongside one another in the world.[187] He describes in what ways the church is very much like any secular group and in what ways it is not.

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[185] Ibid.
[186] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 695-696.
[187] Ibid., IV/3.2, 685-722.

Criticism that Barth does not use the breadth of biblical images of the church

Healy stresses that the use of a single image is problematic for ecclesiologies in general.

> But this point raises a larger methodological question: Should we continue to build our ecclesiologies upon a single definition? Should we, that is, try to find a more adequate definition than Barth's and then make similar claims about it? It is arguable that Barth's method of systematically building his ecclesiology on the basis of a single definition has some formal similarity to many other ecclesiologies of this century. Many of these, admittedly, do not make such a strong ontological claim as does Barth, preferring instead to talk, for example, of 'models' of the church. Yet for the most part they also talk about the church systematically, using a single model as basis and norm . . . this kind of approach is problematic if its limitations are not clearly recognized.[188]

Healy is correct that it is problematic to build an ecclesiology upon one biblical metaphor, given the variety of biblical and theological descriptions of the church.[189] Healy sees Barth's use of the image of the "Body of Christ" as his "single definition and "single model." He suggests Barth utilize a variety of images to temper this imbalance.

> Barth's ontological claim that the church really 'is' the Body of Christ needs some qualification. As I have tried to show, the force of this claim rules out adequate treatment of many of the human aspects of the church, aspects that could be fostered by complementary definitions such as 'People of God' or 'communion'[190]

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[188] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 267-268.

[189] Dulles, *Models of the Church (1st. Ed.)*. Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960; reprint, 2004).

[190] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 267.

Healy does not note that Barth does use prominently the image of the "people of God" in "The People of God in World-Occurence" in §72 in IV.3.2.[191] Barth also treats communion ("the Latin *communio* and the Greek κοινωνία") in the context of reflecting on the *sanctorum communio* (communion of the saints) in §67 in IV/2.[192] In this discussion, Barth reflects particularly on the biblical images of building[193] and growth.[194]

Criticism that the field of ecclesiology is too diverse to be coherent

Healy then voices his despair at trying to articulate a dogmatic and practical theology that will suffice everywhere.

> The practical nature of ecclesiology makes it difficult if not impossible to find a single systematic principle that could be adequate for all agendas. No one theologian's agenda is the same as another's and any two may be more or less incompatible. One theologian seeks to foster a renewed sense of the presence of God in the church, another to foster the awareness of its sinfulness with regard to a particular marginalized section of its membership. One theologian may be concerned to promote unity, another to preserve and strengthen a perceived denominational value, and so on. It is unlikely that a single definition can be found to support the immense variety of such agendas. Thus we should not

[191] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 681-763.
[192] Ibid., IV/2, 641.
[193] "Other terms can, of course . . . But 'the upbuilding of the community' is the main heading which comprehends the others and enables us to see the main outlines of the whole. The important role which it has in the New Testament invites us to begin at this point . . . In the New Testament passages which speak of the οἰκοδομή" ibid., IV/2, 626, 628.
[194] "To describe this, we will venture the proposition that it takes place as a growth. The term growth (αὔξειν, αὐξάνειν) is one which in the New Testament is parallel to the main concept of οἰκοδομή." Ibid., IV/2, 644.

> claim too much for our definitions or models of the church; they are only limited practical proposals.[195]

Healy here wrestles with the variety of ecclesiologies: some stress the renewal of worship, others note issues of justice, others unity, etc. He has criticized Barth for not being practical enough but then Healy wonders how all the practical emphases can possibly be put together again. Given this diversity, Healy says that it is likely futile to arrive at "a single systematic principle for ecclesiology."[196] Rather than attempting to comprehensive or unifying, perhaps ecclesiology is most useful as a corrective—to address practical deficiencies. "Rather than condemn ecclesiology to the never-ending task of constructing new systems, then, it is better to acknowledge the partial, unsystematic and practical nature of the discipline."[197] For example, says Healy, Barth's ecclesiology is useful for its critical edge— illuminating areas where the church has not lived up to its ideals. Barth's ecclesiology is useful for "fostering the awareness of a presently unnoticed inconsistency between the Gospel and the church's self-understanding and activity."[198] This is what Healy will again affirm in his next article ten years later.

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[195] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 267-268.
[196] Ibid., 268.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

As we have seen, Barth resolves this issue of ecclesiology needing to be practical and theoreticaly by dividing the responsibilities between dogmatics and local practitioners. Dogmatics name "basic principles of true canon law,"[199] Dogmaticians are not to attempt to set forth "canon law" or "Church law" for all churches everywhere. "This is a matter for the different Churches in different places and times and situations."[200]

Conclusion regarding Healy's 1994 article

Healy's fierce attack on Barth's ecclesiology, which he himself ten years later "reconsidered," remains the most cited article on Barth's ecclesiology. By proceeding carefully through his charges, we have sharpened our understanding of Barth's ecclesiology and how it can easily be misunderstood. In particular, Healy's conflating of Barth's depiction of the real church and true church led him to an exaggerated understanding of Barth's actualism. Healy also did not notice Barth's understanding of dogmatics as compared with the need for local church polity, policy, and procedures. The analysis has shown that Healy's concerns are usually addressed by Barth himself in either the immediate or broader context. In other cases, we have defended Barth's points

[199] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 686. Cf. "general presuppositions which are theologically binding on all Churches and their law. We cannot develop the law itself." Ibid., IV/2, 690.
[200] Ibid.

as Scripturally plausible. However, we have criticized Barth's "if there were no church" speculative thought-experiment as distracting. How Healy ends this article, with an appreciation for the critical corrective of Barth's ecclesiology, is what Healy himself thinks today is so helpful about Barth's ecclesiology.[201] Healy would say "most certainly that the time when I felt that I had to say 'No!' against him is long past."[202]

[201] See analysis of 2004 article below and affirmed in personal conversation at Karl Barth Society meeting at Society of Biblical Literature/American Academy of Religion meetings in Nov 2014.

[202] This was Barth's statement regarding Emil Brunner as Brunner lay dying. Barth and Brunner, *Karl Barth - Emil Brunner, Briefwechsel 1911-1966*, 391. Cited in McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal*, 223. Cf. Almost the same translation in Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 476-477.

Reinhard Hütter

Reinhard Hütter is another very important figure in debates about contemporary ecclesiology and particularly Barth's ecclesiology. He has written in multiple locations about his criticism of Barth's ecclesiology, is a native German speaker, and has proffered a significant constructive alternative.[203] His *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis* on Barth's ethics and ecclesiology was published in 1993 and included interaction with O'Grady.[204] His main publications on Barth's ecclesiology are from the year 2000 but reflect substantially the conclusions of the 1993 work.[205] Formerly a Lutheran,[206] he became a member of the Roman Catholic Church in 2004 and since then has written less about Barth. Hütter argues Barth's ecclesiology "should not be followed" because it is neither concrete nor catholic.

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[203] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)."; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non* (Journal Article)."; Reinhard Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit," *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 3 (1994); Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*; Reinhard Hütter, *Bound to Be Free: Evangelical Catholic Engagements in Ecclesiology, Ethics, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

[204] O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*; O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*. He also draws on Ernst-Wilhelm Wendebourg, *Die Christusgemeinde und ihr Herr. Eine kritische Studie zur Ekklesiologie Karl Barths* (Berlin; Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967).

[205] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non* (Journal Article)." Hütter's article "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity'" was originally published in 2000 and then was revised for publication for his 2004 book in which it forms a chapter. Because it is later and revised, this dissertation cities the 2004 book chapter rather than the 2000 article. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)."

[206] Perhaps prior to becoming Lutheran, perhaps Hütter was a Methodist in Germany. In 1993, he expresses gratitude to the Church of the Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Durham, NC and the Methodist Church in Erlangen, Germany ("der methodistischen Gemeinde in Erlangen"). Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, viii.

> Karl Barth was the most important Protestant theological voice of the twentieth century . . . it is precisely our greatest teachers from whom we can also learn what not to do and where not to follow. Barth's dialectical catholicity, as I have tried to show, while very tempting in its *conceptual* force and central for a full understanding of his theology, should not be followed—precisely in order to stay in touch with the concrete catholicity of the church of the Reformation.[207]

What may be helpful to point out from the outset is that other readers of Barth's ecclesiology have tended to view Hütter as espousing a naïve, idealistic, Roman Catholic understanding of the church and its practices as (*ex opere operato* - automatically) invariably being empowered by God. As we will see, Hütter does qualify this, but barely. If Barth repeatedly harps on actualistic themes that the church must always depend on the inbreaking of the Spirit but occassionally affirms the agency of the church; Hütter almost always seems totally trusting in the church and its practices but adds a brief qualification that occasionally the system breaks down.

This difference of emphasis becomes magnified when Hütter takes as his central theme the *enhypostatic* taking up of the church's practices by God; whereas Barth only twice briefly mentions this terminology in relation to the church and does so not to flatter the church but to assert its helplessness. There is a large discussion with many of Barth's interpreters about this move, which we will explore in the later section of this analysis of Hütter.

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[207] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 93-94.

Hütter's critique of Barth's ecclesiology

Criticism that Barth's dialecticalism leaves Christians doomed to passivity

Like all of the Catholic critics of Barth we have looked at, Hütter is concerned with Barth's actualism crowding out legitimate human agency. Hütter writes that Barth's dialectical discipline is so relentless that he never gives an account of how human beings might operate in correspondence with God.[208] "The key feature in the relationship between the two [Christ's authority and human correspondence] is the diastasis [gap] between them."[209] There is always an "absent center" so that human beings—even Christians—are utterly uninformed about when and how God will act.

> The consequence of this diastatic determination of the relation between God and human beings within the framework of a comprehensive logic of action involving two irreducible subjects is precisely this 'absent center,' a center that can be filled only again and again in the joint acting of these two subjects. Yet because precisely this center must always become a new event grounded in God's sovereignty—and thus also in his faithfulness—it can only be remembered and anticipated but never really apprehended.[210]

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[208] Hütter is unconvinced that Barth's supposed later turn from "dialectic" to "analogy" suggested by Balthasar is a significant shift. "The main lines of our reading of Barth will follow his own chronological development, that is, from 'dialectic' to 'analogy' . . . In his turn to analogy, Barth was able to overcome this philosophical dialectic as an exclusive method of theology." Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 63, 228. Whether it is referred to as "dialectics (as a radicalized analogy) or in analogy (as ameliorated dialectic)" the problem remains, says Hütter. Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 108. The other writers treated in this dissertation also tend to assume Barth's consistency. Cf. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 39-40.

[209] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 104.

[210] Ibid., 109.

In other words, human beings really have no idea when God and human beings will cooperate together—when the Holy Spirit will strike.

Criticism about the church as event

Occasionally a real congregation really becomes "church" when God freely acts and people respond purely but it is temporary and fleeting. Hütter describes Barth's theology of the church as "event" this way, "The one true church can only exist as an event in which, through the Holy Spirit's action, the human witness fully coincides with its referent, God's graceful election in Christ." A church for a moment becomes church—witness happens—whoosh—and it is gone.[211] Again, in this scheme, it is unclear what role human beings play.

Criticism that the church in Barth's ecclesiology is merely critical

Hütter argues that for Barth, the only entity that can be called "church" is the perfect pure church. This standard is wielded against all other "real, existing churches"—labeling them faulty. For Barth, says Hütter,

> "Genuine Protestantism' is the *critical* principle that offers a normative account of the nature and form of any genuine ecclesial witness. The deep problem now is that Barth's 'genuine Protestantism,' cannot really exist in an ecclesially embodied form. 'Genuine Protestantism,' for Barth, rather serves as a critical theological principle to be employed over against all real, existing churches."[212]

[211] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 88.
[212] Ibid. Emphasis original.

Hütter grants Barth's point that the human church must always be open to God's criticism that it might be continually reformed. But Barth takes this to an extreme. For Barth, God only criticizes the human church—comparing it with what it should be in its ideal state.

> What makes Barth's dialectical catholicity *conceptually* superior is its inherent power to situate, criticize, and overcome . . . because it is a *critical* account of all possible ecclesial communities . . . Yet the conceptual purity . . . is bought at a high price, namely, the loss of the church's concreteness.[213]

While this is an exalted view of the church, human effort—even church practices—is close to futile.

Criticism that Barth's dialecticalism leaves Christians doomed to subjectivity

We saw earlier that Hütter believes that Erik Peterson was indeed correct to suspect that Barth's undermining of church authority gives him little ability to combat liberal theology.

Hütter writes,

> Peterson unmasks Barth's early dialectical theology as a highly sophisticated but ultimately failed attempt at overcoming this liberal tradition. Camouflaging the otherwise obvious with a dazzling dialectic, Barth's theology suffers from same defects as liberal theology: the flight from authority and dogma—in short, from a view of revelation that has staying power, as it were, that can form and shape our identities as Christians.[214]

[213] Ibid., 90. Emphasis original.
[214] Hütter, "Dogma's Defender."

Hütter maintains that because Barth will not say that the Holy Spirit reliably works through church practices but will only say God *may* work through church practices, the vacuum between God and human beings is filled by people forced to gauge and monitor their own feelings about whether God is now working—whether the "event" is "happening."

> If indeed all human action per se can at best refer either anticipatorily or in response to this event, and yet if God's action in principle has never nor will it ever tie itself to any human action, then God's actions can be conceived only as becoming evident as God's self-manifestation in the interiority of the believer.[215]

Barth's "charisma ecclesiology" cannot prevent the liberal Protestant tendency of reverting to individual subjectivity.

Criticism that Barth's understanding of the Spirit is insipid and subjective

Hütter suggests that the skepticism about the church in Barth's ecclesiology is justified by an appeal to the "Holy Spirit." The "Holy Spirit" is an all-access ready excuse for ambiguity. Barth "makes the Holy Spirit into the principle of God's revelatory self-presentation and self-mediation" and "he connects this principle with the subjectivity of the individual believer."[216]

There is thus a Trinitarian flaw, a "pneumatological deficit" in Barth work.[217] "Barth unfolds the inner-trinitarian communion of Father and Son as a two-sided

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[215] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 109.
[216] Ibid., 105.
[217] Ibid., 108.

communion according to which the Spirit is the communion itself."[218] Hütter grants that Barth is clear about naming the Father as a person and the Son as a person ("he does break through the logic of modes of being and at least analogically introduces the logic of person"[219]). But the Spirit has a lesser role: "Interestingly, though, this [the logic of person] does not apply to the Holy Spirit, who on the basis of the *vinculum*-doctrine comes into focus exclusively as a *mode*."[220] The Father and Son map onto the divine (i.e. Father) and human (i.e. Son) sides of the dialectical contrast. "Barth cannot overcome the diastatic logic of action obtaining between God and human beings, and is able to articulate the Holy Spirit *only* as a *mode*."[221] In other words, in Barth's understanding of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is merely this ephemeral glue between human beings and God. Hütter says that Barth's Trinity is a teetering between the Father and Son.

Criticism that the Holy Spirit is not a constant presence in the church

When Barth's pneumatology manifests itself in ecclesiology, it is a similar ephemeral occurrence of the Spirit; the Spirit occasionally appears to help humans to conform with God's will. Barth's church is unstable, veering back and forth, between being the divine-empowered "church" and the merely-human church. For Barth, occasionally the Spirit strikes when these divine and human action come together and

[218] Ibid., 111.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.

church "happens" but all of this is rather uncertain and erratic. For Hütter, the church is better understood as stable with the sure leg of the Spirit reliably present (instead of just occasionally arriving).

Hütter put it this way,

> The identity of the church rests, according to Barth, precisely in God's freedom and faithfulness . . . something that the church receives provisionally and periodically 'again and again,' something that in no way and to no degree subsists in the real existing communities of witness and service.[222]

In other words, to Hütter it seems that "God's freedom and faithfulness" descend in what seem to be random bursts of action; Barth's extreme reticence to concede that the Spirit's work "subsists" that is, remains upon, "real existing" congregations is debilitating. Barth's prickliness or jumpiness around this leads to real uncertainty about the location and character of God's work. As a human being one can try to respond appropriately to this "action" by God but there is no certain way of doing so. Theoretically one could respond faithfully but no one church has the way to do so.

[222] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 89. This phrase "again and again" does not occur with regard to the church occasionally becoming the church in the mature ecclesiology sections in volume IV. "For Barth the meaning and goal of pneumatology is to render a theological conception of this manifestation of the 'event' in which God's action joins human action freely, that is, again and again." Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 109. "The church as such has no signifying power, no communicative potency whatsoever." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 88.

Later, Stanley Hauerwas writes that Hütter is right to think that "Barth's refusal to maintain the bond between the Spirit and particular church practices . . . weaken[s] his ecclesiology and ethics."[223]

Hütter's proposed solution building on Martin Luther's emphasis on practices

In *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis*, Hütter writes that the problem with Barth's ecclesiology is a lack of confidence and expectations that the Spirit binds himself to church practices like Word and sacrament.[224] According to Hütter, Martin Luther is not reticent to declare definitively that when certain church practices take place, the church is present. "Luther names a distinct number of practices through which God's saving economy instantiates itself. He regards them as constitutive of the church—that

[223] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 199. Citing Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*; John B. Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 147, 170.

[224] "Das Problem der nicht vorhandenen (Selbst-)Bindung des Geistes an bestimmte kirchliche Vollzüge. Stehen nicht bestimmte kirchliche Vollzüge — dh zumindest Wort und Sakrament — unter der Verheißung, daß in ihrem Vollzug die Gemeinde zunächst selbst auf Gottes Handeln im Geist stößt und dieses Handeln im Geist von dort her vertrauensvoll erwarten darf? Und ist nicht darüber hinaus von der Berufung der Kirche zum Zeugnishandeln so zu reden, daß sich die Kirche mit ihrem bezeugenden Handeln vertrauensvoll so in Gottes Handeln hineinziehen lassen kann, daß es selbst »in, mit und unter« bestimmten bezeugenden kirchlichen Vollzügen erwartet werden darf?" [The problem [is] the lack of (self-) binding the Spirit to certain church practices. Are not there certain church practices—i.e. at least Word and Sacrament—that under the promise of God's initial action in the Spirit can be expected in a spirit of trust to be completed? And is not beyond that to speak of the vocation of the Church to witness so that the church with its witnessing can be confidently so drawn into God's action, that it may be expected even "in, with and under" certain witnessing practices?] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 55.

is, wherever they are practiced, there the church of Christ is, and wherever they are not practiced, there the church of Christ is not."[225]

Preferring Luther's approach to Barth's, Hütter says that certain practices are where the church is located and through them, the Holy Spirit reliably—he stops short of saying "always"—works. God reliably empowers "the proclamation of God's word and its reception in faith, confession, and deeds; baptism; the Lord's Supper; the office of the keys; ordination and ordained office; prayer, doxology, and catechesis; and the way of the cross."[226]

Hütter's judgment on Barth's ecclesiology

Because Barth has turned the church into an event by the Spirit that only occurs occasionally, he has a "disembodied pneumatology and critical ecclesiology."[227] For Barth, "the church only 'is' in its distinct acts."[228] Barth's ecclesiology according to Hütter does not depict the Spirit indwelling and getting dirty in churches but instead only doing its convicting work of showing how the church has fallen short. For Barth, the Spirit is only "critical."[229] Hütter suggests instead "an embodied pneumatology and

[225] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 91.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid., 90.
[228] Ibid., 92.
[229] If the Spirit were only "critical," it would be troublingly similar to the term "accuser" which is what Satan is called in Rev 12:9-10.

a concrete ecclesiology."[230] Hütter wants to affirm that people can count on the Spirit working in the church.

Responses to Hütter's criticisms

Actualism, liberal theology, and church authority

Hütter also can conceive of a church practice that is so corrupt that it will not function automatically (*ex opere operato*) but he calls such aborted attempts "meaningless" rather than dignifying them with the label church practice. "Without their sociological telos, however, these core church practices become utterly meaningless; that is taken, 'in and for themselves,' they lose precisely that which constitutes them."[231]

In analyzing the criticism of other Catholic readers of Barth's ecclesiology, we have argued that upon close inspection Barth's ecclesiology is not one-dimensionally actualistic. It encourages local sitting under the Scriptures to obey Jesus Christ as a response to liberal theology. Barth also responds to Peterson that Roman Catholic church authority is not nearly as simple and clear as Peterson imagines.

Hütter imagines that resting in the church practices should give reassurance and reduce rancor and form God's people. But, before his switch, Hütter criticized Peterson for idealizing church authority as solid and faithful when instead in Roman Catholicism

[230] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90.
[231] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 249.

the messy theological debate just shifts into clerical circles, where lay people are unable to participate.[232] In a system where the preaching and sacraments are utterly trusted, lay people certainly may be formed by them and obey. But lay people may not reflect on what it means to rightly participate in them, the clergy handle that. They need not ask for God's Spirit to empower the practices, they are sure that God does. They need only be passive. Hütter sees Barth's ecclesiology as encouraging passivity. He asks what Christians are to do if God's presence is not automatic. But the Roman Catholic approach is also susceptible to the charge that Christians are relegated to a passive posture when God's presence is understood to be automatic.

Actualism leading to uncertainty and subjectivity about whether the church is the church

According to Barth, the church cannot render definitive judgments about its own status as a church. "For only Jesus Christ Himself can pronounce this judgment on it."[233] Dependence on God demands some limitation about what we can pronounce definitively. Recall the warning of James 4:13-16.

> Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

[232] Ibid., 99.
[233] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 693.

Like author of James, Barth is sensitive to presumption. Therefore even the question "who is most definitely a Christian?" is not one that should be answered glibly. "The Church which is not deeply disturbed by it is not a Christian Church."[234]

The obvious question then is if one should live skeptically, cynically, doubtfully wondering whether we are real Christians ourselves, wondering whether others are Christians or Judases, and whether our church practices are indeed being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Barth affirms that there is no getting beyond his "discovery" in the *Römerbrief* that God is God. Human beings should tremble before God. Even God's people cannot be glib. Only God knows who is definitively a Christian.

But this does not mean one need be paralyzed or filled with doubt—let alone introspection which is almost useless. Instead, says, Barth, we should proceed in faith. As long as I "look to Jesus Christ," "I do not need to doubt my election and calling, my true Christianity, my holiness."[235] Similarly, with regard to others wondering about the salvation of others, I should also "look to Jesus Christ" and "commend both myself and them, them and myself, to His hand."[236] In practice, we can proceed as if God is indeed at work.

> Certainly we do not have any knowledge of that which is invisible in this respect, and we ought to maintain that we do not have it. But when we believe in Jesus Christ, presupposing that we are in the community which is before us and that

[234] Ibid., IV/1, 695.
[235] Ibid., IV/1, 699.
[236] Ibid.

> we live with it, we are required to accept as a working hypothesis that other members as well as ourselves . . . are . . . real Christians.[237]

Regarding Barth encouraging relentless criticism of the church

Hütter is troubled by the relentless criticism of the church, which Barth encourages. However, Barth himself, as we have seen even as early as the *Römerbrief*, urges Christians to be in solidarity with the church, rather than aloof and critical of it.

> The Church . . . has always needed, and it always will need, self-examination and self-correction . . . But the authority and power of God are behind it and it will never fail . . . From this it is clear that it is always a responsible and dangerous matter to criticise the Church.[238]

Barth says Christians should be careful with hurling criticism at a church because we might be wrong and "it might well be directed against Jesus Christ Himself."[239] The point is that Barth's ecclesiology is not so conceptually pure that it is one-dimensionally critical but instead addresses issues such as proper limits on criticizing the church.[240]

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[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid., IV/1, 690, 691. In another place, Barth says that the church should initially be considered trustworthy. "And if this is the case then in relation to the rest of the Church and its confession I cannot possibly begin with mistrust and rejection, just as in relation to our parents, no matter who they are or what they are like, we do not begin with mistrust and rejection or with the assertion that we must obey God rather than man, but with trust and respect and therefore, in the limits appointed to them as men, with obedience." Ibid., I/2, 590. Eberhard Busch summarizes Barth on this point. "A legitimate criticism of the church can, therefore, never be made except from a position of true solidarity with it."Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 88. Cf. Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, 250.

[239] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 692.

[240] Ibid., IV/1, 691-692.

But indeed, Barth does not think Christians should receive teaching from other Christians (that is, the church) without active discernment.[241]

> The Church is most faithful to its tradition, and realises its unity with the Church of every age, when, linked but not tied by its past, it to-day searches the Scriptures and orientates its life by them as though this had to happen to-day for the first time.[242]

Hütter uses Barth's ecclesiology to communicate his own positive proposal

Hütter thinks that he has characterized Barth's ecclesiology correctly but stresses that Barth's ecclesiology per se is not his primary interest. Instead, he hopes his description—even if it only describes an impression of Barth's theology—might provoke reflection on the role of the Spirit and the church. "My inquiry is not intended to exhaustively clarify a specific issue in the history of theology. Rather, its goal is to illuminate a central theological issue . . . the playing off against one another of *institution* and *charisma*."[243]

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[241] "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

[242] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 647.

[243] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 108. Hütter says the same about the Barth chapter in *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis*. "The Barth chapter is therefore to be understood primarily as the most important vehicle on the path of knowledge of the construction of a church ethics of ecclesiology here and is only secondarily to contribute to the 'never-ending story' that constitutes Barth interpretation." "Das Barthkapitel ist in erster Linie also als wichtigstes Vehikel auf dem Erkenntnisweg der Konstruktion einer kirchlichen Ethik von der Ekklesiologie her zu verstehen und stellt nur in zweiter Linie einen Beitrag zur »unendlichen Geschichte« der Barthinterpretation dar." Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 22.

Hütter's proposal is designed to "try to get beyond Barthian actualism, which brings on the danger of spiritualistic individualism, and Petersonian realism, which already bears within it the seeds of ecclesiastical institutionalism."[244] But Hütter admits that Barth too was attempting to to "steer a course between neo-Protestantism on the one side and Roman Catholicism on the other,"[245]—to navigate between the Scylla of liberal Protestantism ("spiritualistic individualism") and the Charybdis of Roman Catholicism ("ecclesiastical institutionalism").[246]

Hütter depends on Healy's 1994 article for Barth's ecclesiology in volume IV

Hütter's analysis in his "Dialectical Catholicity" article is not based on volume IV where Barth's mature ecclesiology lies. He acknowledges this deficit of his analysis, but,

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[244] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 113.

[245] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 83. McCormack lambasts this. "Parenthetically, it may be observed that talking of steering a course between neo-Protestantism and Catholicism is impossible. Why would Barth want to mediated between what he explicitly referred to as 'two evils?'" McCormack, "Foreword to the German Edition of Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology," 299. But in his response to Peterson, Barth explicitly says he is trying to get back to "old Protestant" approach that is against both the left and the right: "directed against visionaries and spiritists . . . as against Rome." Barth, "Church and Theology," 287. He then tries to work out this way to describe the authority of the church against Schleiermacher on the left and Thomas Aquinas on the right. The middle way is the way of Luther and Calvin. "If one accepts Schleiermacher without blushing, then Thomas Aquinas is equally acceptable. Both are equally far from Luther and Calvin." Ibid., 288. It is true that Barth later in the essay aligns his position with that of "dialectic" making the dialectic-loving McCormack very happy. Barth writes, "I cannot help it if this word dialectic, once it is thrown into a discussion, immediately becomes a body with which one frightens children." Ibid., 302. Yes, Barth thinks that his middle older-Protestant, Luther-Calvin, dialectical way is very different than the ways on the Neo-protestant left and the Roman Catholic right; it is not just a mere mid-point or average of them (it frightens children!) but McCormack is too hard on Hütter for saying Barth is trying to articulate a sense of church authority between the left and the right—Barth introduces that language.

[246] "One must find a way between the Scylla of a simple identification of the Spirit's activity with church doctrine and practice, on the one hand, and the Charybdis of a pneumatological agnosticism on the other." Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 245.

relying on Nicholas Healy's 1994 article, denies that there is an ecclesiology there that contradicts his reading.

> One might want to argue that Barth makes major efforts in *Church Dogmatics* IV to overcome the danger of abstraction by offering a denser and more concrete ecclesiology. But as Healy has shown, it is precisely the bifurcation in Barth's ecclesiology between the church as God's act, the true church, and the human witness to God's act, the *Scheinkirche*, and the dialectical relationship between the two, that undercuts any possibility of offering a denser account of the church.[247]

Hütter thinks that Barth's scruples against guaranteeing that God is working through a church necessarily entails a lack of interest in the church's form and practices.

Hütter had in his 1993 *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis* worked through Barth's ecclesiology in volume IV.[248] His arguments in his 2000 articles would have been stronger if he had drawn on that work.

As we have seen above, in our treatment of Healy's 1994 article, Healy conflates Barth's treatment of the true church vs. the false church in IV/1 with the real church vs. the apparent church (*Scheinkirche*) in IV/2. Hütter's sentence here is convoluted. Some of

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[247] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 91.

[248] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 45-105. For example, Hütter writes that the following sentence by Barth is 'one of the few places that emphasize the continuity, the duration of the action of God in the Spirit." [Dies ist eine der wenigen Stellen, die die Kontinuität, die Dauer des Handelns Gottes im Geist betonen.] Ibid., 56. Barth writes this about the church, "No, it cannot create and assure its own holiness. It can only trust His holiness and therefore its own. But there is another No, which is this: No, it cannot legitimately trust His holiness and therefore its own without recognising and confessing and respecting it as the imperative and standard of its own human activity, without finding that indolence and self-will are both forbidden and distasteful, without being very definitely stirred into action by His holiness, the holiness of the living Lord, without being summoned to a very definite expectation and movement."Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 701. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/1, 783.

this may be mere semantics but it is convoluted to say that for Barth "the human witness to God's act" is "the *Scheinkirche*." For Barth, if the church is indeed "witness," then it is the "real church."[249] The *Scheinkirche* refers to the human ecclesial superstructure, which Barth says may or may not successfully "witness." And Barth's point is not that Christians should not and cannot seek a "denser account of the church;" instead, Barth is giving disclaimers in §67 in IV/2 before he does just that—treating the internal practices of the church (the church's "upbuilding). He works out quite a "dense account of the church" as far as principles and then explains that additional details need to be worked out locally rather than in dogmatics.[250]

[249] "There is in fact a coincidence of its divine separation and its own separations in and with its activity (in its preaching, in its worship, in its constitution, in its ordinances, in its theology, in its attitude in questions and decisions which affect the world). There are human acts and attitudes which are holy as such, i.e., which have the character of real witness to the One whose earthly historical existence the Church is allowed to be. But that they have this character is always dependent upon the answering witness of the One whom they aim and profess to attest." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 693-694.

[250] "We must assert already—and it is something that has significance for the whole of this section—that it is necessary that this provisional representation should take place. It is not merely possible. Nor is the necessity only external or technical or incidental. It is internal and material and decisive. It is a saving necessity. The ~~true~~ [real] Church is no mere form of grace, of the salvation directed to men by God, of the reconciliation of the world with Him. It is not something which has a mere form we can take into account merely accidentally or relatively or perhaps even optionally. It is not just the means to an end which can be dispensed with, or treated with a certain aloofness, when other and perhaps better means are perceived. We may and can and should hold aloof from the semblance of a Church [*Scheinkirche*] whose only aim is to seek and express and glorify itself. But the ~~true~~ [real] Church—and where is the semblance [*Scheinkirche*] which does not conceal the ~~true~~ [real] Church, from which it may not emerge and shine out?—is savingly necessary." Ibid., IV/2, 621.

Barth's openness to practices

It is worth setting forth some basic evidence against the charge that Barth is thoroughly wary and suspicious of church practices.

In IV/1 §62, Barth says, "The Church *is* when it takes place, and it takes place in the form of a sequence and nexus of definite human activities."[251] So, God makes the church the church as the people in the church are engaged in church practices.

In IV/2 §67, Barth says there are "the holy tasks which they [the church] are called upon to perform." He offers a sample of such *sancta:* thanksgiving, penitence, prayer, service, prophecy, proclamation, and worship. The communion of saints or biblical "fellowship" occurs when the Spirit empowers these church practices. "the *communio sanctorum*, as the upbuilding of the community, is the event in which . . . we have to do with the common reception and exercise of these *sancta*."[252]

In IV/3.2 §72, Barth lists twelve ministry practice: six ministries of speech: (1) Praise, (2) Preaching, (3) Instruction, (4) Evangelisation, (5) Foreign Missions, (6) Theology; and six ministries of action: (7) Prayer, (8) Cure of souls, (9) Examples, (10) Diaconate, (11) Prophetic action, (12) Fellowship.[253] Hütter mentions these in his *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis.* "Barth identifies and outlines the content of

[251] Ibid., IV/1, 652.
[252] Ibid., IV/2, 642-643.
[253] Ibid., IV/3.2, 864-901.

twelve ecclesiastical practices that constitute the service and thus testimonial character of the community. . . The decisive factor is not the number but the simple recognition that can be given practices designated as the activity of the Church."[254]

These three examples from Barth's three ecclesiology sections indicate that Barth at least has some place for church practices. The church need not only wait to be struck by the occasional blast of God's presence. It is in the context of church "human activities" (IV/1), "holy tasks" (IV/2), and "ministries of speech and action" (IV/3.2) that the Holy Spirit "gathers" (IV/1) "upbuilds" (IV/2) and "sends" (IV/3.2) the church.

Hütter admits that in "Barth's late ecclesiology" he is willing to sketch out "in detail the conditions" where the church may occur.

> Barth's late ecclesiology, rather, has to be understood as a further development of his critical ecclesiological strategy of dialectical catholicity, now offering in detail the *conditions* under which a concrete witness is faithful to the nature and vocation of the church and to its referent.[255]

Hütter is likely here referring to Barth's willingness to treat the *allgemeinen Voraussetzungen* "general presuppositions" that are relevant to the development of church law. Barth writes, "In this connexion, we can only indicate general presuppositions [*allgemeinen Voraussetzungen*] which are theologically binding on all

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[254] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 81. "Barth benennt und umreißt inhaltlich zwölf kirchliche Vollzüge, die den Dienst- und damit Zeugnischarakter der Gemeinde konstituieren . . . Entscheidend ist nicht die Anzahl, sondern die schlichte Erkenntnis, daß sich bestimmte Vollzüge als das Tun der Kirche benennen lassen."

[255] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 91.

Churches and their law."[256] *Voraussetzungen* is translated here in the *Church Dogmatics* as "presuppositions" but could also be translated as "conditions."[257] This line of reflection by Hütter—trying to make sense of Barth's account of practices—is commendably more subtle and charitable.

The Spirit in Barth's ecclesiology

Concerns with Barth's pneumatology were addressed earlier in our treatment of Wendell Dietrich's reading of Barth. There we mentioned that Robert Jenson has raised concerns about pneumatology, which George Hunsinger has contested. James Buckley has suggested that pneumatological questions may be addressed through ecclesiology[258] and when that is done, Barth's actualism is not as thoroughgoing as Hütter suggests here.

Furthermore, Hütter's proposal seemingly represents the opposite extreme with the Spirit almost subservient to the church—at its beck and call.[259]

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[256] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 690. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 781.
[257] Bromiley translates "Erfordernisse" "conditions" but otherwise does not use that English word in §67 of IV/2. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 804. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 710.
[258] Buckley argued that the disagreement between Jenson and Hunsinger surrounding Barth's theology was not so much about pneumatology or time but ecclesiology. "I will now shift gears and suggest another range of problems with Barth on the Spirit and the Church—a range of problems we can still call Catholic-Evangelical but which are quite distinct from the problems raised by Jenson or Hunsinger." Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 91.
[259] Buckley's question to Jenson might also apply to Hütter: "Jenson's *prima facie* problem is how he is going to have pneumatological agency *other than* the Father and Son which is not *something other than* the Father and the Son." Ibid., 85.

A more productive conversation might be had by wrestling specifically with Barth's description of how the Spirit gathers, upbuilds, and sends the church (§62 of IV/1, §67 of IV/2, §72 of IV/3.2) in his mature ecclesiology, which Hütter does not address. The structure is hinted at already in volume I/1 of the *Church Dogmatics.* "The Holy Spirit is the [1] authorisation to speak about Christ; He is the [2] equipment of the prophet and apostle; He is the [3] summons to the Church to minister the Word."[260] Barth reflects on how the Holy Spirit and the church operate by looking at the relationship between Jesus and the twelve disciples (the "apostolate") in the Synoptic Gospels in II/2. "The prophetic office at the first (Galilean) stage, the priestly at the second (the passion) and the kingly at the third (the exaltation) all find their secondary continuation in those who are sent by Him."[261] That is to say Jesus gathers, upbuilds, and sends his disciples. This excursus §35 in II/2 finishes with this summary: "To what does God elect a man? The New Testament answers this question with its portrayal of the existence of the apostles; their [1] calling, [2] appointment and [3] mission."[262] In 1947

[260] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 455.
[261] Ibid., II/2, 431. Barth says the three "stages" description has problems. It can imply Jesus did not continue to embody all three aspects. Also the three stages can problematically imply Jesus grew out of the inferior prophetic stage, which is not Barth's meaning. Ibid., IV/3.1, 14. John Flett notes this reference. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 245. However, this description of Jesus' ministry is straightforwardly derived from the Gospels: Jesus gathered his disciples, built them up, and then sent them. Barth uses these main moves by Jesus in the titles of the ecclesiology sections: §§62, 67, 72: The Holy Spirit gathers, upbuilds, and sends the Christian community. The organization of his theology has a flow or structure rooted in the New Testament.
[262] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 449.

we see "God's Word" (rather than the "Holy Spirit") empowering practices in a congregation.

> the visible congregation which is [1] assembled by God's Word, [2] comforted and exhorted by God's Word, and which [3] serves God's Word in the world.[263]

In volume IV, the "Holy Spirit" is the agent—empowering the practices the church engages in: IV/1, §62 "The Holy Spirit and the gathering of the Christian community;" IV/2, §67 "The Holy Spirit and the upbuilding of the Christian community;" and IV/3.2, §72 "The Holy Spirit and the sending of the Christian community."

Barth uses these three verbs (gathering, upbuilding, and sending) along with three different adjectives regarding the Spirit's power in the sections' thesis statements. "We describe Him as His awakening [*erweckende*] power [in (§62 of IV/1]. Later we will have to describe Him as His quickening [*belebende*] [§67 of IV/2] and enlightening [*erleuchtende*] power [§72 of IV/3.2]."[264] Barth sketches here how the Spirit interacts with the church's practices. Barth himself would welcome a biblical exegetical discussion[265] about how to describe the Holy Spirit's relationship with God's people. For example,

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[263] Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 2003 Routledge]," 94. Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ [First (Longer) Version; 1964 Harper & Row]," 76. Numbers added in brackets to make Barth's outline more explicit.

[264] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 649.

[265] Barth concedes that the Bible does not tell us much about "how" the Spirit works. "Even the New Testament, although time and again it places the Holy Spirit between the event of Christ on the one hand and the Christian community and Christian faith on the other, does not really tell us anything about the How, the mode of His working. And the saying about the wind which blows and is heard, but we do not know whence it comes or whither it goes (Jn. 3:8), seems to repel any question as to the explanation of the fact that it does blow and is heard." Ibid. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

perhaps "convicting" might be a better adjective than "awakening;" "enlivening" or "healing" be a better translation than "quickening" or "invigorating;" and whether "enlightening" perhaps should be used in the first rather than third section.

Barth cites Luther that churches should be given the benefit of the doubt

Hütter says that Luther is less skeptical than Barth about where the church is located. But Barth agrees with Luther that churches should be given the benefit of the doubt. There may be "well-grounded and necessary and sharp" criticism against a people who call themselves "church" but it should "never harden into an absolute condemnation and rejection."[266] Barth writes,

> In the last resort it was Luther himself who in answer to the question how Paul, in spite of everything, could still address the Galatian communities as ἐκκλησίαι stated quite plainly: *So we today also call the Roman Church holy, and all the Sees holy, even if they be corrupted, and wicked servants of themselves. For God reigns amidst his enemies, the Antichrist is seated in the Temple of God, and Satan is present in the midst of the sons of God. Therefore even if the Church be in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation… of wolves and robbers - that is, of spiritual tyrants - it is nevertheless still the Church*. Even in the city of Rome (although it is worse than Sodom and Gomorrah) baptism and the Lord's Supper and the voice and word of the Gospel and Holy Scripture and the ministry and the name of Christ and the name of God still remain. Where these are found in a people, that people is holy.[267]

[266] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 692.

[267] Ibid. *Sic et nos hodie vocamus Ekklesiam Romanam Sanctam et omnes episcopatus sanctos, etiamsi sint subverstet ministri eorum impii. Deus enim regnat in medio inimicorum, (item) Antichristus sedet in templo Dei et Satan adest in media filiorum Dei. Idea ekklesia etiamsi sit in medio nationis pravae et perversae … luporum et latronum, hoc est tyrranorum spiritualium, nihilominus Ekklesia est*

Luther says in the quote that even though we may be tempted to be very pessimistic about a neighboring church, we can still be confident that God is at work.

Barth's use of Luther regarding actualism

Luther says that because the practices of the church are in operation, there is hope for that group of people. Barth agrees as long as one indicates that it is not the practices themselves that make the church holy. "the holiness of the community . . . is His work, the gift of His Holy Spirit."[268] The church's practices do not invariably work.[269] The church's holiness is not due to its own practices but is dependent on God's action.

But Barth then goes on to say that Luther himself was quite conscious to also make this qualification.

The church

> does not, as it were, automatically, necessarily and consistently coincide with the peculiarity of its common being and activity in which it often distinguishes and marks itself off from the activity of the world and that of other neighbouring human societies. To quote Luther again: *christiana sanctitas non est activa, sed passiva sanctitas* [Christian holiness is not active, but passive holiness].[270]

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[268] Ibid.

[269] "If He does not give it, then even its ostensibly most holy work is profane: its preaching is simply a kind of explanation and instruction, or enthusiastic protestation; its baptism and Lord's Supper are religious rites like others; its theology is a kind of philosophy, its mission a species of propaganda, etc. They may all have their interest and importance and practical value from other standpoints—intellectual, moral, psychological, sociological—but they cannot be holy without the work of the living Lord of the community. No institutions within which its activity is done, no good will on the part of the men who act, no old or new technique which is used, can make them holy or prevent them from again becoming secular." Ibid., IV/1, 694.

[270] Ibid., IV/1, 692.

It is not automatic. Hütter cites this in *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis*.[271]

Barth's use of Luther regarding the church practicing rightly

It is common for Protestants, drawing upon the Augsburg Confession, developed by Melanchton in 1530 and praised by Luther, to say that a church is a church if two marks are present: "the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered."[272] But Hütter does not qualify his description of successful practices with the mention of the adverb "rightly" (*recte*).

Barth however praises the "rightly" as a way of proscribing the presumption that God will work whenever he is conjured up.

> What it signifies is that the *pure docere* [pure teaching] and *recte administrare* [right administration] of VII are a matter of the human action of those gathered in the Church, and cannot therefore be presupposed as a self-evident quantity. They are a divine gift which is certainly promised to the Church, yet is not inherent to it as the content of the promise but has to be continually prayed for and received by it.[273]

[271] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 54. Before citing the quote, Hütter writes that for Barth, "Holiness is thus present, gift, and in no way be construed as purchase or performance." [*Heiligkeit ist somit Geschenk, Gabe, und in keiner Hinsicht als Erwerb oder Leistung zu verstehen*].

[272] Article VII of the Confessio Augustana [Augsburg Confession] "Est autem Ekklesia congregatio Sanctorum, in qua Evangelium recte docetur, et recte administrantur Sacramenta. [But the Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered]."

[273] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 618.

Barth argues that the church may be identified ("characterized") by these "external" marks as long as the importance of God's "internal" working, and the church's existence "for the world" are also included.[274]

We see that both Hütter and Barth claim to be drawing on Luther for their understanding of church practices. Hütter argues that Barth is more skeptical about church practices than Luther. But Barth, in his writing about church practices, notes that Luther did not assume church practices are "passive" responses to God's work and need to be done "rightly," which Hütter does not mention.

When Barth responded to Peterson, he recognized Peterson's arguments as inchoate Roman Catholic ones though Peterson had yet to switch from being a Lutheran to a Roman Catholic. "That it [Peterson's argument] is Roman Catholic and in more than one section super-Catholic, I certainly agree."[275] It is difficult not to wonder the same thing here about Hütter's writings in 2000 before his 2004 switch; one might think that

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[274] "The Christian Church is indeed *inwardly* constituted by the election, calling and gathering of certain men to faith in Jesus Christ with all that this may mean for the fellowship of these men and their personal lives by way of endowment, commission and eternal promise. And it is characterised *externally* by the proclamation which goes forth and is heard within it, by the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper which takes place in it, according to the standard and under the control and criterion of the Gospel which underlies, maintains and overrules it. There can be no doubt that all this is the Church." Ibid., IV/3.2, 766. Italics added. Barth does not mind this definition if the task of the church is appended with the following. "The true community of Jesus Christ is the community which God has sent out into the world in and with its foundation." Ibid., IV/3.2, 768.

[275] Barth, "Church and Theology," 287.

Hütter is projecting onto Luther his own burgeoning Roman Catholic convictions and caricaturing Barth as a hyper-Protestant.

Hütter is critical of how Barth applies "Chalcedonian logic" and the anhypostatic / enhypostastic terminology to ecclesiology.

The "Christological" nature of Barth's ecclesiology and whether it is "Chalcedonian" and whether the "anhypostasis / enhypostasis" terminology is significant will be discussed further in the section below on Kimlyn Bender. It is important to say here that Reinhard Hütter was writing his work on Barth during the time when these ideas were prominent. Reinhard Hütter's *Suffering Divine Things* was published in 2000. In 1991 George Hunsinger argued that Barth uses Chalcedonian logic[276] and in 1990 T. F. Torrance[277] and in 1995 Bruce McCormack[278] argued that anhypostasis / enhypostasis terminology is a significant aspect of Barth's theology. Hütter seems to posit the thesis of Hunsinger and Torrance that Barth "transfers . . . Chalcedonian logic . . . from Christology to the logic of divine and human action."[279] It will be argued later that Barth does not in fact do this.

[276] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*.
[277] Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*.
[278] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*.
[279] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 106.

Hütter is critical of how Barth applies this "Chalcedonian logic" in an actualist way. Hütter rightly understands Chalcedon's description of how the divine and human natures of Jesus' interact to not be occasionalistic or actualistic. It is not that sometimes Jesus is divine.

> At Chalcedon the focus was on the claim that in the one person of Christ the divine 'and' the human nature are together without being fused into a 'third' nature and without the one absorbing the other. In Barth's use, however, the focus shifts to the claim that the divine act of revelation 'and' the human act of responding witness come together always anew on the grounds of God's initiative.[280]

Hütter has difficult seeing how the Chalcedon Christology looks like Barth's understanding of how the sacraments work. For Barth, "actualism" is at work with regard to the sacraments: God's presence sometimes fills and empowers human action.[281] This is not Chalcedon Christology. This should already indicate the folly of applying Christology to other areas of theology. Hütter says the "problem is that Barth transfers the logic of Chalcedon to the entirety of theology. What doubtless constituted a meaningful regulative in a substance-ontological context does not in an action-determined context automatically apply."[282] Despite realizing applying Christology to ecclesiology is apples and oranges, Hütter still decides to see what it might look like to

[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.

try to apply "Chalcedonian logic" and the *anhypostatic* / *enhypostatic* language to ecclesiology. The result is many many disclaimers and a storm of confusion.

Hütter's attempt to apply Chalcedon to ecclesiology

So Hütter sketches out an alterative way of thinking about the church which corresponds more accurately to Chalcedon. Hütter suggests repeatedly that the Spirit's using of church practices can be called the "*pneumatological enhypostasis* of the core church practices."[283] He says repeatedly that the church practices operate "enhypostatically."[284] Recall Hütter's overarching argument supporting the Roman Catholic view that the sacraments function reliably; whereas Barth is arguing that the church must pray for God's enactment of the practice rather than be presumptuous that it will work every time. Typically in ecclesiology Hütter's claim regarding how the "sacraments" function is discussed in terms of whether they are effective automatically (*ex opere operato*). But instead Hütter attempts to use a concept used in systematic theology regarding Christology to illuminate this debate about the sacraments.

Bruce McCormack's concern about enhypostatic

Bruce McCormack thinks it is egregious to depict the church as almost wholly divine and hardly human. The term *enhypostatically* is the fullest description of the

[283] Ibid., 133.
[284] Hutter uses the word "enhypostatically" repeatedly. Ibid., 27, 133, 137, 138, 157.

awesome identity of Jesus Christ as both divine and human—as one "person" of the Trinity. It is jarring to have this applied to the church as a heuristic.

McCormack writes, "What Hütter really wants is that we should understand 'church doctrine' (i.e., dogma) and 'church practices' as 'concrete embodiments of the Holy Spirit.' Indeed he holds that church doctrine and church practices 'subsist enhypostatically in the Spirit.'"[285] McCormack sees Sacramental interpreter overreach here: that the church is invariably effective in its administration of the sacraments. McCormack argues that Barth had good reason to emphasize the Protestant "critical" perspective on the sacraments[286] because there are some—Hütter being an example—who are not scrupulous enough about emphasizing the church's dependence on the Spirit.

Nicholas Healy's concern about the emphasis on enhypostatic

Nicholas Healy, a Roman Catholic, too worries that Hütter's application of "enhypostatically" to church practices implies that they will invariably be endorsed by God. (This criticism of Hütter in 2003 indicates the movement Healy has made from his stance in his 1994 article to what he will express most fully in his 2004 article). For Hütter

[285] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 231. Cf. McCormack, "Foreword to the German Edition of Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology," 300.
[286] Recall that Hütter calls Barth's position not sufficiently "catholic" but rather overly "critical" and "dialectical." Hütter says Barth's "dialectical catholicity" "is bought at a high price, namely, the loss of the church's concreteness." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90.

> the 'real subject' (or hypostasis) of the church's core practices is not the human agent, whether individual or collective, but the Holy Spirit . . . Since their agent and speaker is divine, they are essentially impervious to human intention, confusion, sin and other *concreta*. Doctrines and core practices can therefore be described as the 'unequivocal' referent of the Spirit. They are the 'concrete incarnation' in which the Spirit speaks and acts.[287]

Healy worries that this implies that the (flawed human) church is the same as Jesus' flesh, definitively, always *enhypostatic,* imbued by the Word. This prematurely closes off questions about whether the church can go astray. It also implicitly projects agency onto God for the church's actions (e.g. clergy sexual abuse scandals) because the Holy Spirit is the primary Subject.[288] Healy writes of Hütter's proposal,

> What do we say theologically about the feeble sermons and the wrong-headed theological practice we so often run across? . . . Hütter's theory says little to help us understand the theological issues involved in our inevitable failure to perform practices as ideally described.[289]

Healy worries that Hütter has affirmed that the church hierarchy is infallible and that opposition to it is rebellion. Healy believes God used people like Luther and Barth who were not official leaders in the church.

> It is not unreasonable to think that the Spirit is at work within such prophetic figures [as Luther and Barth], particularly as they read the witness of scripture, a text which the Spirit employs to give them critical leverage over against the ecclesiastical status quo. The Spirit not only works within the church's tradition and practices, but also apart from them and even, at times, over against them, so as to destabilize what is settled and secure, whether through individual Christians or movements of reform, through scripture, events or worldly

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[287] Nicholas M. Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 3 (2003): 297.
[288] Barth affirms that the latter assertion that the Holy Spirit is the primary Subject, but is circumspect about the former claim, whether every self-described church is always *enhypostatic* the filled with the Holy Spirit.
[289] Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?," 298.

> challenges. It is hard to see how such prophetic events could affect the church as it is described by Hütter.[290]

Healy's concern is that if the Spirit is surely working through the church it is uncertain who will speak up when "the church" is being abusive. This sounds quite similar to the criticism Hütter made of Peterson.

> If theology as dogmatics coincides completely with binding church doctrine, one can no longer do justice to a theological discourse in which one can question, interpret, criticize, and argue in ongoing debate with different theological positions.[291]

Healy finds the overall message from Hütter to be far too optimistic, idealistic, or naïve about church practices.

Keith L. Johnson's concern about emphasis on enhypostasis

Keith L. Johnson also detects a troublesome enmeshment between the divine and human actions in Hütter's phrasing. To say a practice has been taken up or "assumed" by God's divine empowering (which is what "enhypostasis" implies) is to overestimate what happens in church practice. So Johnson complains,

> Making human action the *enhypostasis* of the Spirit, for example, would create a unity of action, but it would undermine both the distinction between God and creature, and the nature of this unity as an event with two distinct aspects. It would be a move, in other words, impossible on the soil of Barth's covenant of grace.[292]

[290] Ibid., 299.
[291] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 101.
[292] Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 217.

Johnson is saying that divine and human action are more separate with regard to the church. It should be said, though, that Hütter is correct with regard to Christology and Chalcedon that there is a unity of divine and human natures. Chalcedon definition was intended to combat Nestorianism. Again, all of this indicates once again what a bad idea it is to try to apply Christological logic to how the divine and human dynamics work in the church.

Hütter's description of how he uses enhypostasis with regard to ecclesiology

On careful inspection, Hütter does nuance his position here in such a way as to address some of the concerns raised by McCormack, Healy, and Johnson. He clarifies that "core church practices" do not operate automatically. They must be empowered by the Spirit or they are meaningless.[293]

He also admits that it is confusing to speak about the application of the Christological *anhypostatic* / *enhypostatic* formulation to the church. Therefore he is just speaking analogously. Moreover, it is not that the activity is filled with the Spirit. The Spirit acts through the activities.

> The analogous use of this christological term in pneumatology needs some explanation. Two very good objections can be raised *against* using it to refer to the core church practices: (1) Strictly speaking, practices are not hypostasized in any event, and rather represent the activities of hypostases.[294]

[293] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 249.
[294] Ibid., 248-249.

What Hütter is saying is that the Eucharist does not become a Person of the Trinity! The Persons of the Trinity are the agents here in the activities.

Hütter goes on to note the second valid objection to his use of the language.

> (2) Use of this term in reference to practices excludes the *presence* of human agency, since its christological use intends specifically to exclude any hypostasis of Christ's human nature different from the logos.[295]

In other words, there is a dangerous obscuring or denial of human agency as if God is operating the church and thus individual human representatives of the church cannot be blamed. In other words, it is totally appropriate that Jesus has one mind (even though he has two natures) but it is strange to say that God and human beings have one or one agency. Again, the right thing said about Christology is not the right thing to say about ecclesiology.

Hütter prefers to speak about practices that do not end up being empowered by the Spirit as not really being "core church practices." If practices "exist in and for themselves"[296] they are inert. "In the strict, univocal sense, no 'anhypostasis' can be asserted for them [core church practices], since they do after all exist 'in and for themselves.'"[297] Here is Hütter's dialecticalism or actualism! God either empowers the practices to be core church practices or they are merely nothing. The difference between

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[295] Ibid., 249.
[296] Recall Barth's comment, "If He does not give it [the Holy Spirit], then even its ostensibly most holy work is profane." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 694.
[297] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 249.

Hütter and Barth here is a matter of semantics.[298] Because Hütter is defining "core church practices" as *poemata* [works] of the Holy Spirit, then they cannot be *not* filled by the Holy Spirit [*anhypostasis*]. Whereas Barth says there is such a thing as a church practices (that are devoid of the Spirit); Hütter says these activities are meaningless.[299]

What Hütter is attempting to say is that church activities are not invariably, *ex opere operato,* Spirit-filled. But a church activity that does not intend to be used by God does not deserve to be called a practice. Hütter writes of these stunted activities, "Without their sociological telos, however, these core church practices become utterly meaningless; that is taken, 'in and for themselves,' they lose precisely that which constitutes them."[300] Hütter clarifies that he means that an activity is only a "core church practice" when the Holy Spirit takes it up for its purposes. In that sense, for Hütter "core church practices" are only inert and do not even reach the level of being called "practices" if they fail to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. But one can say quite exalted things about core church practices empowered by the Holy Spirit. In an analogical way, with enough qualifications, the church and its practices can be compared with the incarnation.

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[298] This is Barth's point in his treatment of the "a semblance of the church" vs. the "real church" in IV/2 which Hütter criticizes.
[299] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 249.
[300] Ibid.

Hütter's many qualifiers here are needed in order to apply the original use of the phrases in Christology to a very different sphere. "Both objections justifiably prohibit any strict, univocal application of the term 'enhypostasis' to pneumatology. By contrast, its *analogous* use seems both possible and promising."[301] He must resort to "analogy"—meaning the reader must see that some things that are similar and some things that are different in the comparison. "In that sense one can very well speak *analogously* about the 'anhypostasis' of the core church practices."[302] There are indeed *analogically* "anhypostatic" (nonexistent) core church practices—that is church activities not empowered by the Holy Spirit and thus absurd—betraying their very purpose. If we seemed tied up in knots, it is partly because this "anhypostasis" language in particular has to do with the theoretical and hypothetical—but Hütter is the one who chose to deploy this language. (Though Hunsinger and Torrance say Barth did as well).

Hütter's most lucid qualification is to say he is not prioritizing church practices over the Spirit, "The Holy Spirit remains the bearer of the soteriological features and efficacy of the core church practices."[303]

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[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.

Even-handed appreciation and criticism from John Flett and Joseph Mangina regarding biblical and missiological issues

John Flett, a strong critic of Hütter, admits that he detects Hütter's qualification. "Care is taken not to identify the action of the Spirit with human action. Human beings do not possess the Spirit." [304]

Still, as we have seen, many readers of Hütter are not content that he has given enough caveats about church practices invariably being used by the Spirit. Joseph Mangina, though deeply appreciative of Hütter's project, worries that church practices have not been sufficiently chastened by their limitations in Scripture. Hütter uses the seven "core practices" from Martin Luther's *Bondage of the Will* and "On the Councils and the Church" (1539).[305] Though he finds Hütter's proposal to have outstanding potential, Mangina too finds it worrisome that Hütter's account is so exegetically lacking

> a weakness that runs through his book as a whole. For with a few notable exceptions, the book's argument proceeds without much direct reference to scriptural support . . . Considering how decisive the Spirit-church nexus is for the book's argument, however, the book's evidence offered in support of it is surprisingly thin.[306]

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[304] John G. Flett, "Communion as Propaganda: Reinhard Hütter and the Missionary Witness of the 'Church as Public'," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 4 (2009): 464.
[305] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 128-129. Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit," 354-356.
[306] Joseph L. Mangina, "After Dogma: Reinhard Hütter's Challenge to Contemporary Theology: A Review Essay," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 3 (2000): 343-344.

Flett too worries that "core church practices" could get expanded exponentially and stifle mission.[307] Flett suspects that Hütter's confidence that "the Spirit works through the church" may unconsciously include practices as "core" that are *adiaphora* (peripheral not essential). For example, one can imagine some traditional Western missionary arguing hymnals and pews are "core church practices" in Papua New Guinea. This is what the history of missions following Martin Kähler has called "propaganda"[308]—meaning peripheral extraneous "human traditions" that have been added to the gospel that are passed along to outsiders as absolutely mandatory. Church practices need to be truly "core" in the sense of lean, minimal, biblical, so they can be applied in diverse settings. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements" (Acts 15:28).[309]

And last, Healy, Mangina, and Flett worry about Hütter's studied indifference toward the outside world. Hütter is so concerned about the seeping corruption of the

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[307] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 25, 207. Cf. David E. Demson, ""Church Practices": Sacraments or Invocations? Hütter's Proposal in Light of Barth's," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (2002).

[308] Propaganda occurs when those who 'think that in bringing their particular Christianity, they are bringing Christianity itself, and thus the gospel itself." Martin Kähler, *Schriften zur Christologie und Mission; Gesamtausgabe der Schriften zur Mission* (München: C. Kaiser, 1971), 115. Cf. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 63.

[309] See also on the Jerusalem Council decision. Flett, "Communion as Propaganda: Reinhard Hütter and the Missionary Witness of the 'Church as Public'," 473. See also a sample of the missiology literature on this: Andrew F. Walls, "Old Athens and New Jerusalem : Some Signposts for Christian Scholarship in the Early History of Mission Studies," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 4 (1997); Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis Over Conversion in the Early Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 1 (2004).

world and the church's need to be firm, public, stable, and defiant that there is a troubling indifference towards the world. The church should dig in and practice its core practices but it will likely only receive suffering and rejection from the world. Hütter ends a 2012 article darkly,

> An eminent prelate of the Catholic Church in America recently made the sobering remark that he will die peacefully in his bed but that his first successor might be imprisoned and that his next successor might die the death of a martyr. For this possibility, one he saw enacted in his own country, Erik Peterson's prophetic theology should prepare us.[310]

Mangina too recognizes Hütter's proposals as dark, but interpreted charitably, appropriately so. "If Hütter's challenge to contemporary theology meets us as law, its largely unspoken background is gospel . . . Heard as both law and gospel, the book makes a crucial contribution to the theological discourse of the present."[311] Hütter makes clear that the church should not withdraw for withdrawal's sake; that its fundamental posture is not defensiveness, contrariness, intransigence—becoming a "contrast community."[312] The church should not on principle interface with the world as contrast or intransigence. But his selective use of Luther's practices rather than the breadth of the practices in the Scripture dulls its outward evangelistic thrust. Flett puts Hütter's stance this way, "The church is outward as a natural by-product of its inward focus, due to its

[310] Hütter, "Dogma's Defender," 62.
[311] Mangina, "After Dogma: Reinhard Hütter's Challenge to Contemporary Theology: A Review Essay," 346.
[312] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 170.

identifiable particularity as a people."[313] The Spirit's work is seen in the internal practices of the church, not the ones related to contact with outsiders. The focus on the church is on doing these internal practices. Flett writes that for Hütter

> the actions of proclaiming the word and administering the sacraments are located in and directed towards those already within the church. While, precisely in its publicness, the church seeks contact with those external to this communion, this contact is a consequence of that communion, i.e. it does not inform, but results from communion.[314]

As we will see, Hütter's emphasis on the church being a "public" community is somewhat similar to Barth's understanding of the church as "exemplary" in that it is purposefully agnostic about what the effect will be on the world. For Hütter, Barth, and Yoder, the church is to be who it is and let the chips fall where they may. However, for Barth, outward proclamation of the gospel is not secondary to internal church practices but is complementary with it; whereas for Hütter, mission is an aftereffect of the most important work of the Spirit, which is forming faithfulness among God's people inside the church. Hütter's inclination is to hunker down and practice what has been passed down; whereas for Barth, while not jettisoning core church practices, the church should structure itself within those parameters for witness to outsiders. At one point, Barth uses the language of three stages of proclamation of the gospel: "declaration, explanation,

[313] Flett, "Communion as Propaganda: Reinhard Hütter and the Missionary Witness of the 'Church as Public'," 466.
[314] Ibid.

and application." The church is to declare the gospel without compromise,[315] explain the gospel so that people can understand its basic contours,[316] and apply the gospel, that is, attempt to be persuasive about the gospel's importance.[317] Hütter seems to suppose that the church can stop with "declaration."

Sacramental interpreters typically find Barth's actualism obstinate, contrarian, intransigent, ornery, reflexively anti-institutional, paranoid, and semantically nitpicky. But Barth's objections are precisely directed at those who would reflexively identify church practices with the work of the Holy Spirit—again many see Hütter as implying this but he stops short of doing so. The uncritical championing of the church could lead to authoritarian church leadership that takes advantage of its unchecked authority, the inevitable expanding of practice beyond what is essential, mission becomes unwieldy under the massive superstructure of supposedly God-endorsed-practices, and mission is stifled out of fear of contamination.

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[315] "Nor is the demand too severe that it should declare the Gospel, or its content as received by it, in a way which is not muffled or confused or embarrassed, but in clear and strong and unhesitating indicatives, just as clear and strong and unhesitating proclamations of other supposed or real facts are also made to it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 844-845.

[316] "The community's ministry of witness also consists directly in this explaining and unfolding of the Gospel, in making it intelligible . . . It is to do all this, according to the measure of God's own Word, in the constantly changing forms of human consideration, thought and expression." Ibid., IV/3.2, 846, 849.

[317] "The world needs this appeal. It needs to be given a jolt and moved in a particular direction by the witness of the community and its declaration and explanation of the Gospel . . . It should be a dynamic . . . invitation and wooing . . . a sign of the . . . invading kingdom of God . . . To address men evangelically is to challenge as strongly as possible their illusion that this is something peculiar which applies only to special individuals needing and capable of religion." Ibid., IV/3.2, 851, 852, 853.

Joseph Mangina

Interpreters of Barth's ecclesiology include something of a who's who in theological journal editors with *Modern Theology* and *Pro Ekklesia* associate editor James Buckley and *Pro Ekklesia* editor Joseph Mangina both heavily involved in the discussion. Mangina's most significant contribution to the discussion is his 1999 article: "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas"[318] though another 1999 article "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," is also relevant.[319] (Neither were published in the journals mentioned above: they were published in *Scottish Journal of Theology* and *International Journal of Systematic Theology* respectively). Mangina is situated in this dissertation after Hütter because he draws on Hütter's 1993 *Evangelische Ethik als Kirchliches Zeugnis*.[320]

Mangina must be regarded as one of the preeminent experts in Barth's ecclesiology: having published his Yale dissertation on Barth's ethics,[321] another book

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[318] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas."
[319] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice."
[320] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*.
[321] Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God*, Issues in Systematic Theology (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). Mangina's dissertation passed in 1994 and was published in 2001. Recall Buckley (1976) and Wendell S. Dietrich (1960) also did their dissertations on Barth at Yale. Hauerwas (1968) and Healy (1992) also did Yale dissertations. Yale dissertations were done by a number of people we have cited in the dissertation: George Lindbeck (1955), Hans Frei (1956), Wendell Dietrich (1960), Stanley Hauerwas (1968), James J. Buckley (1976), Peter Ochs (1979), Nicholas M. Healy (1992), and Joseph Mangina (1994). Later, we will see a number of Ph.D. graduates from Princeton Theological Seminary: Bruce McCormack (1989), George Hunsinger, (1988), Kimlyn Bender (2002), Todd Cioffi (2007), and Keith Johnson (2008).

surveying the *Church Dogmatics,*[322] numerous articles and book reviews on Barth, and reads German well.[323]

Mangina praises Barth on a number of matters and defends him against the coarsest of charges about his ecclesiology. "The problem is hardly that Barth denies the importance of the church for the Christian life—a ludicrous charge, indeed, to lay against the author of the *Church Dogmatics*."[324] Moreover, he marshalls a persuasive case that Barth's appreciation for church practices cannot be dismissed prematurely. Like Buckley, he sees Barth's §72 in IV/3.2 as counterevidence to be weighed alongside Barth's actualism. "The critical question is not whether Barth wants to see the church as a visible historical community; clearly he does, and in fact his ecclesiological accounts in *Church Dogmatics* IV (and especially IV/2 and IV/3) are very nearly exemplary in this regard."[325] Mangina also recognizes Barth's emphasis on the church being sent. Mangina

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[322] Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*.

[323] Mangina, "After Dogma: Reinhard Hütter's Challenge to Contemporary Theology: A Review Essay."; Joseph L. Mangina, "Karl Barth's Sixteen Answers to Adolf Harnack: God, Liberalism, and the End of Theological Method," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 15, no. 2 (1999); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought*," *Journal of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2000); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics*," *Pro Ecclesia* 5, no. 1 (1996); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *God's Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 1 (2003); Joseph L. Mangina, "Mediating Theologies: Karl Barth Between Radical and Neo-Orthodoxy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 4 (2003); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *The Barth Lectures*," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 2 (2009); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *Karl Barth and the Strange New World Within the Bible: Barth, Wittgenstein, and the Metadilemmas of the Enlightenment*," *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 4 (2004); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*," *Modern Theology* 17, no. 1 (2001); Joseph L. Mangina, "Review of *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons*," *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 17, no. 2 (2001).

[324] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 332.

[325] Ibid., 329.

muses that Barth might "find the postliberal vision lacking when it comes to evangelism and the church's mission."[326]

Still, at times, Mangina argues that Barth too radically separates God's and human action. "The question, rather, is whether his ontology of grace prevents him from moving beyond this 'social realism' into more specific reflection on ecclesial practices."[327] Mangina worries Barth's sharp division between what God does and what human beings do inevitably undervalues human agency. About his rejection of infant baptism, Mangina writes, "It is not only Barth's results that need to be questioned here; one could argue that his systematic distinction between water and baptism in the Spirit has, so to

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[326] Ibid., 323. John Flett has made the definitive case for Barth's emphasis on the task of "witness." Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*. Though any reader of §72 in Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2 or IV/3.1, 1-38. cannot miss this thrust. Mangina is here discussing Hauerwas and Yoder. However, Yoder's work rightly understood does emphasize evangelism to some extent though it has been argued above that Barth's is more evangelistic. For Yoder, the church exists "for the nations." Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*. Note also Daniel Boyarin's objection to Yoder's evangelism. "Where I part company with Yoder is in his insistence, paradoxical indeed from my point of view, that the peace tradition, the free church, must be a missionary church." Daniel Boyarin, "Judaism as a Free Church: Footnotes to John Howard Yoder's *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*," *Cross Currents* 56, no. 4 (2007): 13. Nathan Kerr has helpfully drawn out this side of Yoder even if he has understated the importance of the church for Yoder. Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock / Cascade Books, 2008). The notion of outward potential of the church's internal life is what is emphasized by Yoder's repeated praising of Barth's notion of church order as "exemplary." Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," 104-106. quoting from Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 719, 721, 722, 725, 726. Hauerwas too has tried to make clear that his project intends to embrace evangelism along the lines suggested by Yoder. Hauerwas responds to Kerr's emphasis on the missionary emphasis of Yoder against his own supposedly nonmissionary approach. "I hope to clarify my understanding of the missionary character of the church by responding to Kerr's critique . . . In spite of my claim to do no more than represent John Howard Yoder's position, Kerr argues in contast to Yoder that my understanding of the church harbors a pretension to universality inimical to Yoder's emphasis on the 'vulnerability of the particular.'" Hauerwas, "Beyond the Boundaries: The Church is Mission," 54, 63.

[327] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 329.

speak, been invented in order to maintain a maximum separation between divine and human action."[328] The concern about Barth's actualism overwhelming a constructive account of the church has been addressed to a certain extent in our treatment of how Barth's ecclesiology stands up against the criticisms hurled at him by Bonhoeffer, Peterson, Balthasar, Brunner, Dietrich, O'Grady, Buckley, and Hütter. However, like the critics before him, Mangina introduces a new set of vocabulary by which to test Barth's ecclesiology: durée, constitute, the means, the binding medium, etc.

Criticism that Barth's ecclesiology tends to stay at a general level because it is derived from the *Weisung* (instruction) of Jesus

Mangina criticizes the lack of specifics in Barth's ecclesiology.

> The practical dimension of ecclesiology seems to consist mainly in *Weisung* [instruction] that emerges from christological reflection, rather than from reflection on particular activities of the community considered as such.[329]

Mangina notes that Barth does not often treat church practices but instead is content to reflect on the implications of Jesus' life for the church. However, Mangina notes that practices would have been even more prominent had Barth finished the *Church Dogmatics.* Baptism, prayer, and the Lord's Supper were to be the "major elements that structure [the unfinished] *Church Dogmatics* IV/4."[330]

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[328]Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 163.
[329] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 329.
[330] Ibid., 331.

Furthermore, Mangina is pleasantly surprised by Barth's specific description of the twelve ministries in IV/3.2.[331] "It is, however, completely characteristic of Barth that what he disallows *de jure* [in principle] he may well embrace *de facto* [in practice] . . . It is in this context that Barth considers 'The Ministry of the Community,' culminating in a discussion that reads remarkably like an account of ecclesial practices."[332] Mangina has difficulty reconciling Barth's explicit method of drawing on Jesus' instruction *(Weisung)* yet these descriptions of the ministries of the church.

Barth admits that the church needs more specific policies and procedures than the direction [*Weisung*] indicated by Jesus as he speaks through the Scriptures. Barth criticizes Brunner and Sohm for their naïve rejection of all canon law.

> But a community which does not ask concerning law and order, inevitably abandoning its life to chance and caprice and confusion, will be just as much in contradiction to the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ as one which sets its answers to this question above or in place of the Holy Spirit.[333]

[331] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 864-901.
[332] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 330.
[333] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 681.

Canon law will need to be worked out by "different Churches in different places and times and situations."[334] Dogmatics is to sketch "general presuppositions" [*allgemeinen Voraussetzungen*] and "normative standpoints" [*Ort Rechenschaft*].[335]

For Barth, listening for Jesus' instruction [*Weisung*] through reading the Scriptures is a good place to begin. "It [the church] has to receive direction [*Weisung*] from the Bible . . . The direction [*Weisung*] given by the Bible is His direction [*Weisung*]."[336]

Barth's twelve ministries in IV/3.2 are specific but certainly not as specific as policies and procedures (canon law). Barth says that what he is trying to describe are the "basic forms" [***Grundformen***] of Christian ministry.[337] If he were to be more specific, he

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[334] In IV/2, he writes about canon law. "In this connexion, we can only indicate general presuppositions [*allgemeinen Voraussetzungen*] which are theologically binding on all Churches and their law. We cannot develop the law itself. This is a matter for the different Churches in different places and times and situations." Ibid., IV/2, 690. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 781.

[335] Cf. "We cannot undertake to develop and answer in detail these questions of order. This is a matter for canon law rather than dogmatics. But dogmatics cannot refrain from considering the standpoints normative [*den Ort Rechenschaft*] for canon law." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 678. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 768.

[336] The quote continues with two more references to *Weisung*. "… In the question of the form of its life as determined by Him the Church has not, then, merely to copy and adopt and imitate that which in response to His direction [*Weisung*] was achieved there and then, and may be seen in Scripture, as the form of life of Israel old and new. We can never handle the Bible in this way. On the other hand, it cannot listen to His direction [*Weisung*] here and now without paying close attention to the way in which He acted there and then as the Head of His body, and to the form, the laws and ordinances which corresponded there and then to His activity in the life of His body." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 683. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/2, 773.

[337] Bold in the German original. "If we finally turn to the question of the different forms of the Church's ministry as such, i.e., in their concrete particularity and distinction, it must be stated above all that we can and must ask concerning the different basic forms [*Grundformen*], i.e., the specific forms of the witness of the community, which, conditioned and demanded by its nature as declaration and explanation of the Gospel in the world and evangelical address to it, will characterise it in every age and place and in all circumstances if

would be doing "practical theology" and this work would quickly becomes dated because the church will find itself in new circumstances, which it will need to adapt to.[338] Barth hopes however that these twelve ministries are "basic forms" and thus have lasting value and leave ample space for adaptation in a variety of ways.

Criticism that the sacraments for Barth are "purely human responses"

Even if Barth does acknowledge the importance of church practices, Mangina writes that these are for Barth "purely human responses" and thus still quite inconsequential. Mangina, an Anglican, is disturbed by Barth's resistance to commit to sacramental language. "The sharp cleavage between divine and human action is problematic from the perspective of ecclesial ethics."[339] "The limit to this train of thought, however, is set by the strict conceptual distinction Barth maintains between God's action and all merely human action."[340] Mangina writes, "This is most clearly and

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it is the work of obedience, and which cannot indeed be lacking in so far as they are generally posited by God. In this connexion, therefore, we cannot undertake a historical survey and critical analysis of all the variations of these divinely posited basic forms [*Grundformen*] which have occurred at different times in different places, nor can we try to make a positive system of one such variation supposedly normative and binding in our own age and place." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 859. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 985.

[338] Even in "practical theology, [getting more specific than these basic forms] could have only limited and passing validity. For even to-day the history of the community moves on from century to century. And under the influence of different traditions, but also of the different places and circumstances in which it exists, the community might well find itself inspired and summoned to new variations of the basic forms, and endowed for them. Our concern, then, is with the forms of differentiated ministry which persist in both past and present." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 859-860. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 986.

[339] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 332.

[340] Ibid.

notoriously the case in his doctrine of baptism" where the distinction between Spirit baptism and water baptism is "dubious."[341] Barth is averse to saying how "God's action coincides . . . with certain human actions."[342]

We have noted above under Healy's concern about Barth's theology of baptism[343] that Barth's understanding of the divine action is not just distinguished from the human action but also "correlates" with it.[344] But Mangina finds Barth's notion of human action as "analogy or correspondence" to God's action unnecessarily skeptical.[345]

> But for Barth . . . The church is constituted by the Spirit as the social activity of witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; as witness to *him* it acquires a definite internal structure, law, and way of life; but the latter are purely human responses to the work of the Spirit, rather than divinely-willed coordinates that help to define the Spirit's action.[346]

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[341] Ibid. Tracey Stout agrees with Mangina, "Protecting both the freedom of the Spirit and the ethical nature of the church's practices led him to sever those practices from what makes them meaningful, the work of the Spirit." Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 66. Then Stout quotes John Yocum approvingly. "In 'ethicizing' baptism he desacramentalizes the Church." Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*, 66. For a defense of Barth, see John Flett's scathing review of Yocum's book Flett, "A Review of John Yocum's *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*." For a defense of the ethical as consistent with a concern about "sacramental" language, see the defense by James McClendon and John Howard Yoder of the charge that (not Barth but) McClendon "perniciously suppresses the 'sacramental' aspect of the eucharist in favor of an 'ethical' aspect." McClendon and Yoder, "Christian Identity in Ecumenical Perspective: A Response to David Wayne Layman," 571-572.

[342] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333.

[343] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263. Again, neither *wirkliche Kirche* nor *Scheinkirche* appear in IV/4 or IV/1 but Healy's analysis is not harmed by this.

[344] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 134.

[345] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 332.

[346] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 295. Tracy Stout agrees with Hütter and Mangina, saying, "Yet, on a basic level these critiques of Barth do point to a short-coming in Barth's ecclesiology. Barth's separation of the Spirit from the practices of the church, would leave the visible church as a purely human institution, despite his desire to avoid such a conclusion." Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 66.

Mangina is correct that Barth however does not want to say definitively where the Spirit works. For that reason Barth would object to Mangina's characterization of the Spirit's working within "divinely-willed coordinates" if this is construed as limitations.[347] On the other hand, Barth would not object to the notion that God has revealed to the church "divine-willed coordinates" in terms of "activities,"[348] "sancta,"[349] four "concrete elements,"[350] and twelve basic forms of ministry[351] within which the church can expectantly pray for God to animate and empower.

Criticism about the "durée" of Barth's ecclesiology: time, the Spirit, and church practices

The problem according to Mangina is that growing as disciples "is a movement that requires time and social space for its enactment."[352] Mangina says Barth is reluctant to point to any institution and definitively declare that the church is there. For Barth

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[347] Mangina does not say that church practices delimit where the Spirit can work but he does say they "condition or qualify" the Spirit's work. "The church is an 'event' for Barth not so much in that he denies its ordinary, historical character, but rather in that he refuses to allow the Spirit's work to be conditioned or qualified by the 'given' nexus of practices in which the church has its identity." Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333. Mangina says "conditioned" here. See the discussion in the section on Hütter regarding the word "conditions." Hütter says "Barth's late ecclesiology, rather, has to be understood as a further development of his critical ecclesiological strategy of dialectical catholicity, now offering in detail the *conditions* under which a concrete witness is faithful to the nature and vocation of the church and to its referent." Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 91.

[348] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 652.

[349] Ibid., IV/2, 642-643.

[350] Ibid., IV/2, 698-709.

[351] Ibid., IV/3.2, 864-901.

[352] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333.

what "we call 'church' are only potentially such."[353] The church is for Barth a shrugging, uncertain group of people—never sure if they are the real church or merely the semblance of one. Similar to Hütter ("the absent center") and Healy in 1994 ("the bifurcated church"), Mangina writes that "The result is an odd hiatus between the church (in a full theological sense) and the ordinary, empirical practices of the Christian community across time."[354]

Like Jenson,[355] Mangina raises a concern that for Barth the human church is only occasionally the church. "Stated differently, what Barth's ecclesiology lacks is a sense of persistence or *durée*, indeed, one could argue that a reluctance to see God's revelation 'captured' in human time ramifies throughout his ecclesiology."[356]

But recall Buckley saying this issue of "time" or "pneumatology" manifests itself in ecclesiology and in this respect Barth's formal *saying* the "church is an event" is balanced by what he *shows* about the church as a people of God in §72 of IV/3.2;[357] a

[353] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 280.
[354] Ibid., 270.
[355] In 2004, Buckley summarizes Jenson's view nicely, "Barth's theology of time (Jenson suggests) comes down firmly on the side of Protestant discontinuity rather than Catholic continuity; his Christology only too often yields a church with something like two natures, only occasionally united (ecclesiological 'occasionalism' or 'Nestorianism'); his theology of the Spirit identifies the Spirit too closely with the Son, leaving too little room for the Spirit's new and distinctive future work." Buckley, "Christian Community, Baptism, and Lord's Supper," 208.
[356] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333.
[357] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 87, 90.

section that Mangina himself argues is more affirming of the church *de facto* than what one would expect given Barth's comments *de jure*.[358]

Like Hütter, Mangina argues that these problems can be resolved by identifying the Spirit's work with the church. Barth's "inprinciple aversion to identifying the Spirit's work with persistent, enduring social forms or practices marks a problematic area in his thinking."[359] Mangina argues the Spirit has "an *agency* of its own"[360] which operates through the Church.

Again, note Buckley's comment that it is not easy to find an independent role for the Spirit. "Jenson's *prima facie* problem is how he is going to have pneumatological agency *other than* the Father and Son which is not *something other than* the Father and the Son."[361] And linking the Spirit with the church's practices is arguably shackling the Spirit to the church more than giving the Spirit "agency" (or freedom) of its own.[362] It is sometimes said that the Book of Acts should be called the Book of the Acts of the Spirit, not the Book of Acts of the Apostles—but it is of course both: the Spirit pushing beyond

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[358] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 330.
[359] Ibid., 333.
[360] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 270.
[361] Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 85.
[362] Barth begins his first ecclesiology section with a subsection on the The Work of the Holy Spirit. Barth includes this statement, "From all this it is self-evident that neither the Christian community nor the individual Christian can subjugate or possess or control Him, directing and overruling His work. He makes man free, but He Himself remains free in relation to him: the Spirit of the Lord." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 646.

the apostles and often surprising them but also working through them more or less regularly.

Mangina argues Barth should have affirmed more the reliability of the Spirit but Mangina notes that the Spirit is not limited by working through those practices. "I will argue for an acknowledgement of the Spirit as the subject of a distinct economy of grace, working through the practices and structures of the Christian community (as well as more mysteriously beyond the church)."[363]

Criticism that the church is not "necessary" for Barth

Mangina then explores the question: "How 'necessary' is the church in Barth's understanding of the Christian life?"[364] Mangina observes that "The question is not as easy to answer as one might think."[365] On the one hand, Mangina cites Barth's thought experiment about "if there were no Church."[366] On the other hand, Barth's "high Christology calls forth high ecclesiology" because for Barth the church is elected with Christ before the foundation of the world. "For he chose us in him before the creation of

[363] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 271.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Mangina writes, "See the excellent discussion of these issues in" Healy's 1994 article. Ibid., 273.
[366] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 826.

the world" (Eph 1:4).[367] Mangina also notes Barth's affirming that properly construed *extra ekklesiam nulla salus*.[368]

We have analyzed the "if there were no Church" statement and *extra ekklesiam nulla salus* in our treatment of Healy's 1994 article, which Mangina cites approvingly here.[369] And we have mentioned Barth's doctrine of election in the sections on Bonhoeffer, O'Grady, and Healy.

Criticism that for Barth "everything important has already happened"

Mangina then ponders another curious speculative thought-experiment by Barth. In this one, Barth muses about "if His [Jesus'] mission had concluded at that ninth hour of Good Friday."[370] Mangina concludes that Barth "is tempted to offer a totalizing interpretation of the cross that threatens to render superfluous Jesus' appearance to his disciples . . . it is hard not to get the impression that everything important has already happened."[371]

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[367] Ibid., II/2, 60, IV/1, 664, 667, IV/2, 624, IV/3.2, 753.
[368] Ibid., II/2, 197. quoted in Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 272.
[369] Mangina writes, "See the excellent discussion of these issues in" Healy's 1994 article. Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 273.
[370] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 308. Mangina too calls it a curious, speculative thought-experiment. "In a curious small-print passage in IV/1 Barth speculates on what would have happened had God chosen to withhold his affirmative verdict on Jesus' work . . . Of course this is merely a thought-experiment, since Barth spends long pages affirming that God *did* move beyond Good Friday to Easter." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 276.
[371] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 276-277.

This is again a familiar criticism that was extensively argued by O'Grady. O'Grady writes, "His doctrine of election says that everything has been decided beforehand."[372] And again, "Everything is decided in Jesus Christ."[373] This led O'Grady to think universalism was inevitable. Mangina does not address the universalism but instead looks at how Barth's high ecclesiology makes the church's agency superfluous. Mangina puts it this way, "I would contend that Barth purchases this high ecclesiology at a high price, namely that of dehistoricizing the church."[374] For Barth, "At the cross, the Christian community is positively established—and at the same moment deprived of its contingent historical identity."[375]

> I suggested earlier that Barth's ecclesiology operates against the backdrop of a key assumption: that public history is irrelevant to the actual salvation of creatures. The reason for this, of course, is that salvation has already been enacted in the life and death of Jesus Christ, so that all that remains to be accomplished is its manifestation in the human sphere.[376]

Like O'Grady and Healy, Mangina here stresses the "logic" of Barth's reasoning—that if one were to continue to make deductions based on these presuppositions, there would be no human agency whatsoever. But Barth is not strictly attempting to make logical, coherent deductions but rather is trying to hue to the Subject as aided by the Scriptures

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[372] O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 31.
[373] Ibid., 42.
[374] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 277.
[375] Ibid., 278.
[376] Ibid., 301.

in which some human agency is pervasively presupposed. At times both Buckley and Mangina recognize that a limiting statement does not preclude subsidiary statements.[377] In other words, Barth himself does not think that his emphasis on Christ's "It is finished" (John 19:30) means that human agency is finished.

We saw this above in our treatment of O'Grady's charge of "christomonism." Barth explicitly says he rejects the "christomonist" view where "the summons: 'Be ye reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:20) is rendered superfluous from the very first by the reconciliation of man with God which has been omnipotently effected in Jesus Christ."[378]

Criticism that the church as a "configuration of human practices does not make much difference"

Mangina worries that in Barth's scheme, the human church's agency is not meaningful.

> To be more precise, while Barth emphasizes the church's task as a witness to Christ, it is not clear that the church *as a configuration of human practices* makes much difference to this task.[379]

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[377] "One way to distinguish profound from mediocre commentators on Barth is by how well they can guide us through Barth by moving between these differences—between *using* Christian communal discourse and stating its *rules or principles,* between *showing* the rules at work and *stating* the rules." This is not to say Mangina is not a good reader of Barth. He is an excellent one. However, it is important to reign oneself in when one begins thinking that one thing inevitably leads to another yet Barth does not think this is the case. His "rules" as Buckley puts it, may not be deployed ("shown") in the way one thinks. Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 82. Mangina puts it less charitably, "It is, however, completely characteristic of Barth that what he disallows *de jure* he may well embrace *de facto*." Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 330.

[378] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 17. Mangina points to 2 Cor 5:20 as well. "The church does not reconcile itself or the world to God, but the movement from the indicative 'in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself' to the imperative 'be reconciled to God' is a movement that requires time and social space for its enactment." Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333.

[379] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 278.

Hauerwas also quotes this.[380] Above, we have seen that Mangina is relatively appreciative of Barth's engagement with the church's practices. He writes in his 1999 article "The Stranger as Sacrament," "The critical question is not whether Barth wants to see the church as a visible historical community; clearly he does, and in fact his ecclesiological accounts in *Church Dogmatics* IV (and especially IV/2 and IV/3) are very nearly exemplary in this regard."[381]

But here in his other 1999 article, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus," Mangina relies on Healy's 1994 article and its emphasis on the idealizing of the body of Christ on the one hand, and suspicion of the empirical church on the other. "As Nicholas Healy has pointed out, Barth's understanding of the church oscillates between the poles of the essential (Christ *is* his body, the church) and the merely accidental and empirical."[382] Later Mangina writes, "As many have noted, Barth's highly dialectical view of this relation seems singularly unhelpful, moving as it does between the poles of complete identity and complete non-identity."[383] Hauerwas also notes (explicitly following Mangina, Hütter, and Healy) that for Barth much of ecclesiology is "merely accidental

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[380] Hauerwas quotes Mangina that "it is not clear that the church *as a configuration of human practices* makes much difference to this task." Ibid. cited in Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 192.
[381] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 329.
[382] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 278.
[383] Ibid., 301-302.

and empirical" and Barth is "largely indifferent" to these aspects because they are "without theological significance."[384]

We have argued above that Healy in 1994 conflated Barth's understanding of the *wahren Kirche* (true church) vs. *falschen Kirche* (false church) in IV/1 with his understanding of the *wirkliche Kirche* (real church) vs. *Scheinkirche* (apparent church) in IV/2. Not every *Scheinkirche* (group of people who call themselves a "church)[385] is a *falschen Kirche* (on the way toward being a heretical or apostate church).[386]

The problem with this understanding of Barth is that—to speak technically—it conflates Barth's actualism with his emphasis on correspondence. In fact, Barth does think the apparent church needs God's Spirit to make it the real church—Barth's actualism. Barth also thinks that the church needs to correspond to God's initiative by pursuing truth not falsehood—Barth's ethics of correspondence. When these two are conflated, Barth is accused of not caring about correspondence (ethics) because of his actualism. While instead Barth's actualism leads him to focus on the need for humans to be prayerful, and correspondence means humans should respond to God by obeying Jesus. Barth is against presumption (apparent church vs. real church) and against disobedience (false church vs. true church). But the accusation is that Barth is against

[384] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 192.
[385] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 617-621.
[386] Ibid., IV/1, 702.

humanity because it is irretrieveably hopelessly bad. But Barth thinks God loves people and thus they can pray for his touch (actualism) and respond in joy (correspondence).

Criticism that the structure and practices of the church are for Barth insignificant

Mangina writes (this time drawing upon Hütter's discussion of Barth's response to Peterson that we treated above) that for Barth "the structures and practices of the church . . . all are subject to the suspicion of being 'human, all too human.'"[387] Mangina says for Barth, the empirical church "is without binding theological significance."[388]

Mangina is correct that for Barth the human church errs if it presumes it can operate without God (actualism), but barring that error, its response (correspondence) is significant.

Regarding the church's "binding theological significance," Mangina is correct that Barth denies that God is "bound" to what the church does—He "is certainly not bound" [*gewiß nicht gebunden*] to it.[389] But on the other hand, Barth affirms that God

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[387] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 281. drawing upon on Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit," 343.

[388] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 278. See also: "Das Problem der nicht vorhandenen (Selbst-)Bindung des Geistes an bestimmte kirchliche Vollzüge. [The problem [is] the lack of (self-) binding the Spirit to certain church practices.] Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 55.

[389] "Nicht umsonst hat er seine Sache zur ihrigen gemacht, indem er sie in seinen Dienst berief. Gott «im Himmel» ist nun eben – gewiß nicht gebunden an das, was durch sie «auf Erden» geschieht oder nicht geschieht, wohl aber aufs Intimste daran beteiligt." Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 988. The English translation is quoted in the next sentence. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 862. My paraphrase: It is not for nothing that God has identified his own ways with the ways of the church that he has called to serve him.

intimately associates himself with the church's actions in binding and loosing (Matt 16:19; John 20:23). "It is not in vain that He has made His cause that of the community in calling it to His service. If God in heaven is not bound to what is done or not done by it on earth, He shares most intimately in it."[390]

Criticism that for Barth the structure and practices of the church are "ever-shifting"

Mangina says that the empirical church for Barth "threatens to become an ever-shifting set of human arrangements, which at a given moment may or may not constitute Christ's body in the world."[391]

But Barth writes that the church's form and structure matter. "It is not something which has a mere form we can take into account merely accidentally or relatively or perhaps even optionally."[392]

However, Mangina is correct that Barth recommends more flexibility than someone from a Roman Catholic or Anglican background, who might find "ever-shifting" and unstable. Barth thinks there should be a degree of dynamism to the local church structures that they might be deployed in mission. "The free God gives to this

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God "in heaven" is—to be precise—certainly not bound by what is done or not done by the church "on earth;" but God is involved most intimately with it.

[390] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 862. The typo period in the English translation has been changed to a comma. "If God in heaven is not bound to what is done or not done by it on earth. [*sic]*."

[391] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 278.

[392] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 621.

human people . . . the freedom to adopt its own form, i.e., the form corresponding to its calling and commission, in the sphere of general human possibilities."[393]

Criticism about Barth's rejection of the "mediation" of the church

Building upon Robert Jenson's chapter "The Church's Mediation" in *Unbaptized God*,[394] Mangina explores to what extent Barth affirms the "mediation" of the church. Jenson points out that "mediation or instrumentality of the church" is a "sensitive concept" in Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogue.[395] Both Protestants and Roman Catholics can affirm that the church is God's instrument.[396] But Protestants resist the idea that the church "cooperates" in salvation. Roman Catholics typically affirm that the church is the subject of its own sanctification[397] whereas Protestants deny it. Protestants are of course attempting to avoid usurping Christ's role or asserting that the church can operate independent of Christ; while Roman Catholics are attempting to avoid the notion that the church is peripheral or optional to God's transaction with individuals.[398]

Mangina says that Barth will affirm a form of mediation of the church. Though Mangina will distinguish the views of Barth and Stanley Hauerwas, Mangina writes that

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[393] Ibid., IV/3.2, 741.
[394] Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, 90-106.
[395] Ibid., 91.
[396] Ibid., 92.
[397] "the church is sanctified in such a way as itself to become the subject of sanctifying acts." Ibid., 90.
[398] Ibid., 93.

both affirm at least a "weak" (or low level, or basic or Protestant) understanding of the "mediation" of the church.

> both Barth and Hauerwas would affirm the fact of churchly mediation. As I use the term here, a 'weak' doctrine of mediation is one that claims no more than that the community serves in God's hands as a sign or instrument of his grace. The church thus mediates in a passive sense.[399]

In other words, Barth is not so suspicious of the church, that he can find no role for it.

Criticism that the church does nothing to "constitute" itself

Then Mangina introduces the vocabulary "constitutes" saying that Barth would deny that "the human community of believers *constitutes* itself as such through any actions of its own . . . Rather, the community is passively constituted as Christ's body by divine action."[400] Mangina explains that this "constitutes" language, which Stanley Hauerwas will also use, comes from Hans Frei (though Barth, Healy, and Hütter also use it less prominently). Mangina suggests following Frei that "baptism and the Lord's Supper, along with scripture as their indispensable narrative context, can be seen as in some sense the central practices around which all other practices of the church cohere"

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[399] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 293. After quoting Hütter and Mangina, Tracey Stout writes, "This critics have identified a problematic element of Barth's theology. Barth's view of the Spirit in the church is not wholly adequate, precisely in line with the late rejection of sacramental mediation." Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 65.

[400] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 293.

and "they constitute the church rather than the church them."[401] Mangina writes that it is the "construal of the church as being constituted, in a theologically significant sense, by its visible history across time that seems most deeply problematic from a Barthian perspective."[402]

The concise dense statement: the practices "constitute the church rather than the church them"[403] deserves further inspection. When discussing church authority early in the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth says, "Our starting point in replying is that the Church is constituted as the Church by a common hearing and receiving of the Word of God."[404] But note that for Barth the "Word of God" is actualistic rather than the static "Scripture."

The language of "constituted" is not strictly biblical and thus ripe for metaphysical logical gymnastics but Barth, Frei, Mangina are correct that there is certainly potential here for fruitful engagement regarding what makes the church a church because the Greek word for church ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) means "gathering" or "assembly." One could etymologically say with Mangina and Frei that: assembling

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[401] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 339. quoting in the later phrase Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 159.
[402] Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice," 333.
[403] Ibid., 339. quoting in the later phrase Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology*, 159.
[404] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 588.

makes the people of God a church; (is more precise than): the people of God are a church whether they assemble or not.

Because of the lack of deference here to the Holy Spirit's freedom to work however and whenever He chooses, Barth would not say that church practices "are constitutive of the church" and "the human community of believers *constitutes* itself" through "actions of its own." But Barth can affirm the crucial role of church practices and actions.

When Barth is defining the church toward the beginning of his first ecclesiology section, he writes, that the church occurs "in the form of a human activity" and the church must "gather itself."

> As the work of the Holy Spirit the Christian community, Christendom, the Church is a work which takes place among men in the form of a human activity. Therefore it not only has a history, but—like man (*CD* III, 2 §44)—it exists only as a definite history takes place, that is to say, only as it is gathered and lets itself be gathered and gathers itself by the living Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.[405]

Surely there is "passivity" of a certain sort here (the church "is gathered") but there is also agency (the church "lets itself be gathered and gathers itself"). Barth certainly does not exclude all of the church's actions. The church is ("takes place") when the people gather together ("in the form of human activity"). The church does indeed need the Holy Spirit and it is a sign, witnessing, and conveying knowledge to the world; but it is

[405] Ibid., IV/1, 650.

not merely a signboard manipulated by God. As noted above in our discussion of Hütter, Luther, and Protestant definitions of the church, that church practices (right preaching and administration of the sacraments) are "external" indications along with God's "internal" work identify—we might say "constitute"—the church. Nicholas Healy puts it this way later, "The church is primarily constituted by God's actions, through which our actions are also enabled to be constitutive at their level."[406]

Criticism about Barth's rejection of strong mediation—that the church is constitutive of the gospel

Mangina goes on to say that "the strong version of mediation" which Protestants deny is that "the community constitutes part of the very gospel to be proclaimed."[407] Hauerwas draws on Mangina here[408] saying that Barth falters by not saying that the church is part of the message that is preached. "What he [Barth] cannot acknowledge is that the community called the church is constitutive of the gospel proclamation."[409] Hauerwas and Mangina worry that Barth is conveying that the gospel merely a

[406] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 294.
[407] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 294. However, it is not clear that the word "constitutes" is part of the technical vocabulary in the ecumenical conversation as Jenson does not seem to use it in *Unbaptized God*.
[408] "I am indebted to Mangina for helping me not only see but understand the difference, but not necessarily disagreement, between my work and Barth's." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145.
[409] Ibid.

transaction when in fact an invitation to Christ is inseparable from an invitation to join the church. The church should not be depicted as merely instrumental.

But it is not certain that Barth would deny that involvement in the church is a component of the Good News communicated. Barth insists that the call to become a Christian is inseparably the call to be in the church. "The Christian is in the church . . . If he were not in the church, he would not be in Christ."[410]

Furthermore, Barth comes close to saying the "the community constitutes part of the very gospel to be proclaimed" when he says the world needs the church to show it is not all that it could be. Stanley Hauerwas is known for saying "The first task of the church is to make the world the world."[411] but Barth strongly says this first (though Bonhoeffer says it before them both).[412] Barth writes, "The world does not know itself . . . It is blind to its own reality . . . The community of Jesus Christ exists for and is sent into the world . . . [that] the world may know itself in truth and reality."[413] It is not difficult to imagine Barth saying that church is certainly part of the gospel message—in that sense it is constitutive of the gospel message.

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[410] Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 188, Cf. 188-194.
[411] Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 158.
[412] "The space of the church is not there in order to fight with the world for a piece of its territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world, namely, the world that is loved and reconciled by God." Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 63.
[413] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 769.

Criticism that for Barth the church is not "the means" and "the binding medium" God uses

Mangina writes that for Barth "the church 'shows' or signifies Christ but does not serve as the means through which believers begin to participate in the new life he brings."[414] Mangina says Barth denies that "The medium is, if not the message, the condition of possibility of grasping the message in its truth."[415] Hauerwas quotes Mangina along these lines as well.[416] Mangina believes that outsiders can get a taste of Christ in the church. There they can get access to new life in Christ. Participating in the church is the best way to begin to understand who Christ is. Belong, then you will believe.

But instead of a beautiful rich life together in the church being intricately involved with Christian witness, Mangina worries that the church is merely a tool for Barth. It is merely a team of salespeople. The people of God are not to luxuriate in his love as they gather, but rather to be get trained so they can get to work. This is similar to O'Grady's criticism that Barth focuses on *diakonia* over *koinonia.*

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[414] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 270. This language of "shows" is different from how Buckley uses it technically as compared with "says." Buckley by "shows" is describing the genre or style of Barth's reflections in §72: *narratio*. Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 87, 90. Mangina is using "shows" as a gloss for Barth's description of the task of the church: to witness, or point to Jesus Christ e.g. John the Baptist.

[415] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 295.

[416] Hauerwas cites Mangina approvingly regarding the church being "the binding medium . . . the condition of possibility of grasping the message in its truth." Ibid. cited in Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145.

But it is not impossible to think Barth could basically affirm these statements (the church ("serve[s] as the means through which believers begin to participate in the new life he brings" and the church is "the condition of possibility of grasping the message in its truth"] about the crucial nature of the church with the additions of actualistic qualifications.[417] Barth would prefer instead of "*the* means" or "*the* condition," a caveat like "*almost always* the means" or "*almost always* the condition"—recall his comment about keeping "an open mind" about the church being the *only* way,[418] and his warnings that occasionally the church can try to operate without God's presence, [419] and that sometimes the church can become "false" like the biblical false prophets.[420]

Similarly, we can imagine Barth struggling with Mangina's description of strong mediation as "faith in Jesus Christ [that] involves not only the glad acceptance of the

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[417] But Todd Cioffi also sees little difference between Barth and Hauerwas if Hauerwas would accept a slight qualification to his phrasing. "In this sense, church practices make all the difference in the world in regard to knowing and nurturing knowledge of God and obeying God's will. The church, in other words—is indispensable for a *direct* witness to God and God's will. But this is not the only witness to God available in the world for Christ, as Barth puts it, does not sit idle in the world waiting for the church to act . . . In Barth's terms, Hauerwas's concerns to maintain the indispensability and integrity of the church are anything but lost, and so it is hard to see exactly why Hauerwas is so critical of Barth's construal of the church-world and of the church-state . . . while the church makes a difference in the world, for Barth, it simply does not, indeed cannot, make *all* the difference." Cioffi, "Stanley Hauerwas and Karl Barth: Matters of Christology, Church, and State," 362-363. Cioffi unfortunately does not refer to Healy's second article Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered." or the other secondary literature on Barth and Hauerwas by Mangina. Cf. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*. Mangina, "The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas."

[418] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 688.

[419] Ibid., IV/1, 694.

[420] Ibid., IV/1, 702.

church's preaching, but acceptance of the church itself as the binding medium in which faith takes shape."[421] It is not that Barth would disagree about the importance of the church, but it is the elevating of "the church itself" to the same status as the "church's preaching" (about Jesus) that he would find problematic. The church must not confuse what it does, as important as that is, with what Christ does. "The community [church] is not a prolongation of His incarnation, His death and resurrection, the acts of God and their revelation. It has not to do these things. It has to witness to them."[422]

Criticism about Barth's individualism that Barth will not affirm that the Church is an "active subject" and "cooperates" with God

Both Jenson and Mangina press what they perceive to be a contradiction in the Protestant view. Protestants are typically more open to language about the individual "cooperating" or being an "active subject" in the process of salvation but are more hesitant to say the church "cooperates" or is an "active subject."[423] At first blush, it appears Protestants indeed deny the importance of the church and stress individualism.

But Barth is willing to say that the church exercises agency and is a subject.

> For as men they are not in the first instance a common organism, but a heterogeneous collection of individuals . . . [But] As it integrates itself in this way, or rather allows the Holy Spirit to exercise it in self-integration, it is the true

[421] Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 294-295.
[422] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 317-318.
[423] Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, 92-93. Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 269, 297-299.

> Church . . . In short every Christian, the whole community, is the subject of edification.[424]

He writes that (a) it is appropriate to emphasize individual agency. Together this association of individuals becomes more than the sum of its parts, it becomes a new entity that is the wife of Christ, the body of Christ, the church. (b) Individually and corporately these individuals respond to the Spirit (c) In this respect, the individual Christians and the church exercise agency—they are Subjects—even if it is a secondary "subjectivity" to the Spirit.

Barth will even affirm cooperation with the appropriate qualifications about God and human beings not being co-equals. "Within the limits of its creaturely capacity and ability it [the church] is ordained and summoned to co-operate with Him in His work."[425]

Barth envisions the assembly of Christians (the church) sitting around listening for the voice of Jesus in the Scriptures. The individuals gathered (and one can speak of the assembly as a whole) are actively engaged in this response to God. The problem Barth has with the notion of "the Church" (rather than individuals) exercising agency—as Mangina and Jenson conceive of it—is that individual agency gets lost because real power becomes concentrated in those who are conceived of as "the Church"—the

[424] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 635, 636, 635.
[425] Ibid., IV/3.2, 777.

church hierarchy. In the Roman Catholic or another hierarchical episcopal system, the agency of the church is relegated to a few individuals—the priests. It is this polity which is "individualistic" because communal agency is formally handed over to a few individuals who will listen to the voice of God in the Scriptures on behalf of the others.

George Lindbeck recognizes this valid objection by Protestants to the Roman Catholic insistence that Protestants should be more "catholic" and should accept the "mediation" of the Church. Jenson too senses it—writing that "the best statement of what may be the matter" between Protestants and Catholics regarding the church as mediator is from Lindbeck.

> It seems that there is still one insurmountable barrier. Is it true that Roman Catholics are irrevocably committed to the view that the legitimacy of the office ultimately guarantees the authenticity of the Word, while the sons of the Reformation are equally committed to the converse, that the authenticity of the Word is the only guarantee for the legitimacy of the office?[426]

Protestant intransigence then to notions of "the church" "cooperating" or being an "active subject" in salvation has to do with a concern that this "agency" (by the collection of individuals) will be attributed to a few designated individuals in the church

[426] George A. Lindbeck, "Doctrinal Standards, Theological Theories and Practical Aspects of the Ministry in the Lutheran Churches," in *Evangelium- Welt- Kirche* (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck Verlag and Verlag Knecht, 1975), 238. quoted on Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, 90. The quote continues ". . . Catholics, it would seem, must deny that the ministry of the church can become unfaithful that it is obligatory (or at least legitimate) on occasion to establish discontinuous ministerial orders, as was done in the sixteenth century; and this, according to the sons of the Reformation, shows that Catholics make the ministry into something other than sheer service of the Word and instead regard it as a privilege, as possessing power over the Word."

and there will be no recourse, no mechanism, for reform. The people of God will be told not to question or criticize the priests because the Church is, i.e., these priests are, cooperating with God and are active subjects in bringing about their salvation. In other words, the special entity, the Church, has reverted to becoming an entity ruled by a few individuals.[427] The point is that Barth is not necessarily wary of the church but rather of those who would use the church's authority.

[427] Earlier in the book, Jenson asserts that "the priesthood of all believers" is now universally affirmed in ecumenical dialogue. "The unequivocal affirmation of the 'priesthood of all believers' is universal in the dialogues." Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, 48. But, as Jenson shows in chapters 4-6 of *Unbaptized God,* entitled "The Churchly Office," "Episcopacy" and "Roman Primacy," these issues are still very much still in dispute among Protestants and Catholics. This does not even include those labeled by Jenson as "more sectarian" (p. 52) such as Barth and Yoder who are more more suspicious of the sacramental and hierarchical. See Yoder, "A 'Free Church' Perspective on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry."

Stanley Hauerwas

Perhaps it is the prominence of the Gifford Lectures, his revere for Barth, and his credibility with regard to ecclesiology, that have made Stanley Hauerwas the most famous of critics of Barth's ecclesiology. Hauerwas writes, "It remains an open question whether or not Barth's ecclesiology is sufficient to sustain the witness that he thought was intrinsic to Christianity."[428] It is not surprising that Barth's supporters and detractors have attacked this bait that Hauerwas has thrown out—trying to answer this "open question." Many writers have contrasted Hauerwas's attention to formation and church practices with Barth's cynicism about the church—often citing Barth's *Römerbrief*.[429]

But Hauerwas's praise of Barth is effusive and his criticism not particularly biting. Hauerwas's own overall assessment of his similarity to Barth is quite conciliatory—they may not finally disagree. "I am indebted to Mangina for helping me

[428] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 39.
[429] Nathan Kerr represents one example. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*. See also the extended reflection on Hauerwas's treatment of Barth in *With the Grain of the Universe* in the next section of the dissertation on Healy's 2004 article. Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered." Cf. Cioffi, "Stanley Hauerwas and Karl Barth: Matters of Christology, Church, and State."; Paul J. Griffiths, "Witness and Conviction in *With the Grain of the Universe*," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 1 (2003); Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs."; Peter Ochs, "On Hauerwas' *With the Grain of the Universe*," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 1 (2003); Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?."; Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas." However, others see the emphasis on apocalyptic in Hauerwas and Barth as compatible. Douglas Karel Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003).

not only see but understand the difference, but not necessarily disagreement, between my work and Barth's."[430] Instead he probes Barth's ecclesiology quite cautiously inquiring whether indeed Barth's ecclesiology is adequate without definitively declaring Barth's failure. As we have seen in previous chapters, Hauerwas has drawn upon the concerns raised by Healy, Hütter, and Mangina.

> Rusty Reno thinks my Barth chapters are the least successful just to the extent that I let the scholarship surrounding Barth dominate my account. I confess that every time I write on Barth I feel overwhelmed, and I am sure that 'overwhelming' is present in the chapters on Barth in my book.[431]

Like Hütter, who did not intend to give a critical reading of Barth's ecclesiology for the sake of scholarship on Barth,[432] Hauerwas is most interested in utilizing Barth's insights for his own project. "Of course one of the reasons for my indebtedness is because I read Barth my way."[433]

Praise of Barth for emphasizing that the "knowledge of God and the way we should live are inextricably bound together"

Hauerwas's most well known criticisms of Barth's ecclesiology are made in his Gifford Lectures published as the book *With the Grain of the Universe.* But Hauerwas says

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[430] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145.
[431] Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs," 93. Reno does not mention this criticism in his review. Russell R. Reno, "Taking Responsibility. Review: *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* by Stanley Hauerwas," *First Things*, no. 119 (2002).
[432] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 108. Hütter, *Evangelische Ethik als kirchliches Zeugnis: Interpretationen zu Schlüsselfragen theologischer Ethik in der Gegenwart*, 22.
[433] Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs," 93.

that Barth is "the hero of my story."[434] Hauerwas argues Barth's description of natural theology (as unintelligible without revelation) is superior to those of William James and Reinhold Niebuhr.[435] Hauerwas thinks that Barth shows how knowledge of God leads to knowledge of the world and then further to how to live. "Barth kept faith with Lord Gifford's trust just to the extent that he provided the account necessary to understand how our knowledge of God and the way we should live are inextricably bound together."[436]

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[434] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 206. Cf. "Barth's theology is an unfaltering display of truthful Christian speech and, as such, is a resource that we literally cannot live without, if we are to be faithful to the God we worship." Ibid., 140. And again later, "his life and work provides those of us who have come after him a resource, a witness, that we literally cannot live without." Ibid., 147.

[435] Barth helps us identify what in the world is of God. "As I have intimated, I will argue that the great natural theologian of the Gifford Lectures is Karl Barth, for Barth, in contrast to James and Niebuhr, provides a robust theological description of existence." Ibid., 39. "I am a theologian who has been profoundly influenced by the work of another Gifford lecturer, Karl Barth . . . . I will try to convince you that Karl Barth is the greatest natural theologian of the Gifford Lectures—at least he is so if you remember that natural theology is the attempt to witness to the nongodforsakenness of the world even under the conditions of sin." Ibid., 20. Barth however does not do this by beginning with arguments from physics or philosophy but rather revelation. He famously adamantly denounced "natural theology." But Hauerwas points out that for Barth the results of the "theology proper" can lead to a proper understanding of the world and in this sense "natural theology." Ibid., 31. In his memoir *Hannah's Child*, Hauerwas reflects back about *With the Grain of the Universe* which he had written nine years earlier, "Barth exemplified a way of doing theology in which theological speech makes possible a world and a time that grant none of the assumptions of James and Niebuhr. In *With the Grain of the Universe*, I was able to articulate the way in which Barth's recovery of the apocalyptic character of Christian convictions was a rational acknowledgement that we cannot divorce our descriptions of the way the world is from how we are to live and what we must be if we are to describe the world rightly." Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*, 263-264.

[436] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 39. In the Gifford lectures, Hauerwas tries to respect the conditions of Lord Gifford's will written in 1887 in so far as: "Teaching . . . the Knowledge of God . . . the Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him, the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics and Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising." Stanley L. Jaki, *Lord Gifford and His Lectures: A Centenary Retrospect* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 72-73. Hauerwas writes, "I take . . . Gifford's concern [to be] that those who

Hauerwas's common concern with Barth about liberal Protestantism

As we noted above, Barth granted Erik Peterson's point that Protestant theologians are often not sufficiently explicitly connected to the church. Like Barth and Peterson in this regard, Hauerwas worries about theology professors picking and choosing what they deem to be authoritative. Hauerwas thinks that in this respect Aristotelian ethics rings true—that a community thrives when it builds upon what has been passed down, instilling its values through masters or mentors, having virtue further developed in friendship as traditional practices are undertaken.[437] For Christians,

give the Gifford Lectures should attempt to help us understand how any account of the moral life cannot be divorced from our understanding of the way things are." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 19. Despite Barth's famous *Nein* regarding natural theology, Hauerwas's argument here is not dubious. John Webster similarly insists that Barth's theology of God results in knowledge of the world and ethical guidance. "Moral theology" (which is similar to the notion of "natural theology") cannot be separated from theology proper. "Barth structures his account of ethics around the familiar three 'moments' of the act of God: creation, reconciliation and redemption. What these concepts afford is . . . simply an indication of the *way* which theological ethics is to take in correspondence to the movement of God's own being." Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought*, 48. Rather than making inferences based on sociological, psychological, or physiological phenomena, the internal logic of the world is determined by the creation, reconciliation, and redemption of God and can only be understood by attending to the Triune God. Guidance for the moral life should flow from that. Webster stresses that Barth uses the concept of "correspondence" (*Entsprechung*) to Jesus Christ as a shorthand way for conveying how human lives should decide how to live (i.e., moral theology). "Barth's dogmatics can be construed as an extended inquiry into the moral field—into the space within which moral agents act, and into the shape of their action, a shape given above all by the fact that their acts take place in the history of encounter between God as prime agent and themselves as those called to act in correspondence to the grace of God." Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 4. Eberhard Busch notes the language of "act-response" translated also as "active answer" in IV/4. Busch, "Karl Barth's Understanding of the Church as Witness," 91; Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, ix.

[437] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations With Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

this means the good life has to do with being an attentive, obedient student toward the Christian tradition, learning from Christian teachers and wise Christians, being encouraged forward in the Christian life by Christian friends, and participating in Christian practices. Hauerwas, like Peterson and Barth, opposes, the disdain, dismissal, reduction, and gutting of tradition because someone claims to have found something newer that surpasses the old—in Barth's words: "the contamination from the left, that is from Rationalism and Pietism which have so successfully infiltrated us . . . To speak specifically: the evolutionary historicity, moralism, and idealism which rule our present-day theology."[438] Hauerwas has long observed how the field of ethics, the university, the state, and liberal churches have attempted to retain elements of the Christian faith they find convenient while triumphantly claiming they have moved beyond other "outdated" or "intolerant" aspects. Hauerwas points out how intellectually incoherent and thus institutionally doomed such arrangements are.

Hauerwas's concerns with the sufficiency and catholicity of Barth's ecclesiology

However, as we saw above, Hauerwas suspected that Barth did not adequately respond to Peterson. Hauerwas qualifies his praise of Barth at the end of the introduction—introducing a cloud of suspicion of Barth that hangs over the rest of the book. "It remains an open question whether or not Barth's ecclesiology is sufficient to

[438] Barth, "Church and Theology," 288.

sustain the witness that he thought was intrinsic to Christianity."[439] Hauerwas's question is whether Barth envisions a church with sufficient infrastructure (mentors, peers, practices) to have formational capability. Hauerwas later briefly expands upon what he has foreshadowed here. In a few paragraphs on pages 144 and 145, Hauerwas asserts his independence from Barth; that though Hauerwas is on Barth's side of the natural theology discussion vis-à-vis William James and Reinhold Niebuhr, he is not unaware of Barth's possible "shortcomings."[440] Hauerwas cites the analysis of Nicholas Healy (1994), Joseph Mangina, and Reinhard Hütter.

Along the same lines as his concern about whether Barth's ecclesiology is sufficient, Hauerwas phrases the concern in terms of Barth's lack of regard for the catholicity of the church. Stanley Hauerwas writes, "Put simply, and no doubt too simply, the question is whether, when all is said and done, Barth is sufficiently catholic."[441]

Barth addresses the catholicity of the church in his first mature ecclesiology section.[442] The affirmation in the Nicene Creed that the church is "catholic" seeks to counter the mistaken notion that each local church may believe and do anything it wants ignoring the insights and perspectives of others churches. The apostle Paul makes this

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[439] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 39.
[440] Ibid., 145.
[441] Ibid.
[442] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 701-712.

point sarcastically to the church in Corinth: "Did the word of God originate with you? Are you the only people it has reached?" (1 Cor 14:26). The church in Corinth are definitely not the only people of God. Paul says they should therefore be aware of and learn from what other churches are doing and believing. "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor 14:33). Hauerwas worries that Barth does not sketch the organizational practices that would facilitate the drawing upon the received wisdom of "all the churches."

But early in the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth addresses the claim that being "catholic" means holding to that which has been believed *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus* (in all places, at all times, by all).[443] Barth finds this means that not only does tradition trump Scripture, but the interpretation of Scripture is wholly ceded to the Pope. The idea is that "It had always been the case everywhere, and as revealed truth, that the Church speaking by the mouth of the Pope was the revelation of truth."[444] Barth finds this assertion about the Papacy's record dubious and the concentration of Scriptural interpretation in the hands of the few and the clerical to be without biblical support.[445]

[443] Ibid., I/2, 550.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid., I/2, 560-572.

Instead, the church listens in the present to God speaking through the Scriptures. But this means we might say learning the craft of reading the Scriptures in community, with peers, and mentors. Barth writes,

> If Holy Scripture alone is the divine teacher in the school in which we find ourselves when we find ourselves in the Church, we will not want to find ourselves in this school of the Church without fellow-pupils, without cooperation with them, without the readiness to be instructed by older and more experienced fellow-pupils: as fellow-pupils, but to be instructed. And basically the older and more experienced fellow-pupil is simply the Church teacher. He is, in fact, older and more experienced in a qualified sense of the words. He is not only a son but a father in the Church. We have to be instructed by him.[446]

There is here an unconscious whiff of Aristotelian virtue ethics with fellow Christians fellow-pupils spelling peers and teachers spelling masters. The Christian trusts their parents and siblings in the faith. They willingly apprentice themselves to those who have gone before.

> And this means that I have not primarily to criticise the confession of the Church as it confronts me as the confession of those who were before me in the Church and are with me in the Church. There will always be time and occasion for criticism. My first duty is to love and respect it as the witness of my fathers and brethren. And it is in the superiority posited by this fact that I shall hear it. And as I do so, as I recognise the superiority of the Church before and beside me, it is to me an authority.[447]

Barth envisions sitting under the Scriptures with fellow Christians as the practice that ensures catholicity.[448] It is the way of making sure we are not like the Corinthians

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[446] Ibid., I/2, 606-607.

[447] Ibid., I/2, 590.

[448] "Our starting point in replying is that the Church is constituted as the Church by a common hearing and receiving of the Word of God. The common action of hearing and receiving is partly contemporary: it takes place among those who belong to the same age and period of the Church. But to a much greater extent it is

(who acted as if they were the only ones the Word of God had reached and rejected the best practices of all the other congregations). Barth rejects "biblicism" which implies the views of Christians in other times and places are unnecessary.[449]

Criticism about Barth saying the church is not necessary

Hauerwas refers to Barth's assertion that "the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no Church."[450] It was argued above in the section on Healy's 1994 article that this is an infelicitious speculative moment for Barth that is not indicative of the immediate or larger context of Barth's ecclesiology. Recall that Barth was making the point that the world needs Jesus more than it needs the church. Hauerwas asks the epistemological question of how anything might be known about Jesus except through the church. "Given this understanding of the church, Barth cannot account for why and how the church is necessary for our knowledge of the world."[451] For Hauerwas, the church is the community that embodies God's revelation and thus shows the world its confusion.[452] God does not typically just unload truth from heaven directly but rather

non-contemporary: it takes place among those who belonged to an earlier and those who belonged to a later age in the Church, between the present age and those which preceded it. A common hearing and receiving is necessarily involved either way where the Church is the Church." Ibid., I/2, 588.

[449] Ibid., I/2, 607-609.

[450] Ibid., IV/3.2, 826.

[451] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 192.

[452] "The first task of the church is to make the world the world." Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*, 158.

uses the church. Rather it has been God's plan "before the creation of the world" (Eph 1:4) to use a people, the church to make God's wisdom known (Eph 4:10). "And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14).

But in fact Barth agrees with all of this. "The world does not know itself . . . It is blind to its own reality . . . The community of Jesus Christ exists for and is sent into the world . . . [that] the world may know itself in truth and reality."[453] Still, Barth wants to make clear that the world primarily needs Jesus and only secondarily needs the church. This does not mean the church is not necessary but it means the church is relatively necessary. "This does not set aside the necessity with which humanity does actually belong together with the community [the church] and has to co-exist with it. But it relativises this necessity."[454]

Criticism that Barth's skepticism about the sacraments implies ethics are unimportant

Hauerwas argues that Barth's rejection of the sacramental is an indication of his low view of human agency. "Barth's Zwinglian view of the sacraments at least mirrors

[453] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 769.
[454] Ibid., IV/3.2, 826.

his hesitancy concerning Christian sanctification."[455] As the practices are merely symbolic (i.e. Zwinglian), so ethics (sanctification) is merely symbolic rather than significant.[456]

However, Barth's distancing of himself from the "sacramental" nature of baptism and the Lord's Supper is not intended by Barth to eviscerate ethics or the practices[457] but rather to reemphasize the ethical emphases in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Barth worries that the popular idea of automatic spiritual results of the sacraments *ex opere operato* enables a creeping ethical passivity.[458] Barth argues that baptism should be kept

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[455] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 199.

[456] Hauerwas alludes to Alan Torrance's footnote on the issue. "Alasdair Heron rightly points to a Zwinglian strain in Barth's doctrine of the sacraments . . . This emphasis on our activity rather than our being brought by the Spirit to participate in Christ's continuing and vicarious activity would seem to lie behind Barth's slightly one-sided emphasis on the preaching of the Word and our responding to the Word in worship."Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation, With Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 118. Torrance for his part draws upon Alasdair Heron. "Behind Barth . . . lies a somewhat zwinglian rejection of 'sacramentalism,' sharpened up by Barth's own insistence that the so-called 'sacraments' of Baptism and the Eucharist are not to be looked upon as vehicles of God's action, but of ours: they are witness and sign and response to the one response to the one sacrament which is Jesus Christ himself." Alasdair I. C. Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 157. Barth claims the label "Neo-Zwinglian" because he denies the sacramental nature of baptism but he is different from Zwingli who zealously promoted infant baptism. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 129-130.

[457] "it should be made clear that our earlier criticism of the view that water baptism is a sacrament was not designed to disparage, weaken, or demean the true and proper dignity of this baptism, but rather to enhance it." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 107. Furthermore, Barth still commends the practice of the practices; for example, he recommends that the Lord's Supper be celebrated each week. Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 21-22.

[458] "If baptism were a mystery, if at root God were acting in the place of men and men in the place of God, this ethical significance could be ascribed to it only incidentally, more or less artificially, and fundamentally not at all." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, 107.

to believing adults so as to emphasize that God's action entails obedience. An infant cannot respond.[459]

> As it [the baptism with the Holy Ghost] comes to him [the Christian], obedience is effectively demanded of him. The problem of ethics is thus raised for him, or, more exactly, the problem of the ethos corresponding to it, of the response of his own being, action and conduct.[460]

There is no doubt for Barth that infant baptism is associated with a Christendom understanding of the church as indistinguishable from the state.[461]

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[459] "There has been no place at which there could even be any question of thinking that the candidate to whom we have constantly referred as a partner of the community in baptism might be an infant, an unconscious child, who is qualified for the position by his Christian parents." Ibid., IV/4, 165-166.

[460] Ibid., IV/4, 35. Cf. "On the one side is the Word and command of God expressed in His gift, on the other man's obedience of faith required of him and to be rendered by him as a recipient of the divine gift. Without this unity of the two in their distinction there could be no Christian ethics." Ibid., IV/4, 41. Barth points out that, besides the narrative depiction of the practice of John the Baptist, baptism always occurs in the New Testament in the context of moral exhortation. "If in the New Testament (apart from the account of the Baptist) baptism normally occurs in an ethical context, this rather unusual fact offers provisional justification for our own handling of it here in the context of Christian ethics." Ibid., IV/4, 48. But also in the context of John the Baptist, Barth sees ethical response. Reflecting on Luke 7:29f, Barth says, "Baptism is conversion to the One who is entitled not merely to be called the only Lord but above all to be the only Lord." Ibid., IV/4, 141-142.

[461] Infant baptism "became the general rule . . . only in the course of the greatest historical transformation which Christianity had thus far undergone, namely, that associated with the name of Constantine I, when the Church entered into an ontological unity with people, society, state and empire . . . There are some who think that this form of the Church must be maintained in all circumstances and at all costs. They fear that the eventual disappearance of this form will mean the destruction of the Church and of so-called Christendom. They cannot accustom themselves to the idea that it might be better for the cause and ministry of the Church in or to the world if one day, without being able to rejoice in any acknowledged position or guaranteed continuity, it had to exist again in people, society and state as a small and unassuming group of aliens, though also, freed of much ballast, as a mobile brotherhood. To those who think thus, infant baptism is necessarily an inviolable and unchallengeable dogma." Ibid., IV/4, 168.

Criticism about Barth not spelling out the material conditions related to the church for living the Christian life

Hauerwas's criticisms of Barth are most often phrased in terms of a lacuna in Barth's work. Hauerwas writes, "Barth never quite brings himself to explain how our human agency is involved in the Spirit's work."[462]

Barth however sees this "ecclesiological Docetism"[463] in Emil Brunner, whose theology we looked at earlier. Barth criticizes Brunner for emphasizing the Holy Spirit's ephemeral nature as a reason not to carefully delineate what faithfulness looks like.[464]

But though Barth may theoretically believe in the human aspects of the church, Hauerwas criticizes him for not giving a more detailed account of the church's practices. "Barth was hesitant to provide a fulsome account . . . of the practices necessary for the witness the church is—the practices, that is, that make the world as Christians describe it habitable."[465]

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[462] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145.
[463] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 712.
[464] "'What we need is the Holy Ghost' (p. 115). Of course we do. But a community which does not ask concerning law and order, inevitably abandoning its life to chance and caprice and confusion, will be just as much in contradiction to the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ as one which sets its answers to this question above or in place of the Holy Spirit." Ibid., IV/2, 681. The quotations in the block quote are Barth quoting Brunner. English translation of the Latin in brackets. "They [Christians] can and must venture these provisional insights and conclusions. Where there is the genuine dynamic from above, the power of the Holy Spirit (who is obviously no sceptic), the community cannot refuse this venture." Ibid., 711.
[465] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 215.

At one point, Hauerwas makes this argument from a subsection of *The Christian Life*.[466] In this subsection, Barth lays out two dangers for the individual Christian: on the one hand, monastic withdrawal; and on the other hand, unfaithful conformity with the world. Hauerwas writes,

> Barth fails to specify the material conditions that would sustain his 'middle way.' Of course, Barth intentionally depicts the 'middle way' as unstable, but instability is as likely to lead to unfaithfulness as faithfulness. Barth's attempt to steer a 'middle course' between monasticism and the liberal embrace of the secular is but the other side of his overly cautious account of the role of the church in the economy of God's salvation.[467]

Indeed, Barth agrees. Regarding the organization of this section, he writes that

> there are three concentric circles in which God is known and unknown in different ways . . . The *world* is the outer circle; the *church* [*Kirche*] . . . is the middle circle; and the inner and outer personal life of the *Christian* is the inner circle.[468]

In the subsection Hauerwas reflected on, Barth was talking about the Christian in the world. In the previous subsection, Barth discusses the Christian in the church.[469]

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[466] The opening sentence in this subsection by Barth in *The Christian Life* is: "3. The Christian is finally a child and citizen of the world." Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 194-204.
[467] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 202.
[468] Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 116. Karl Barth, *Das christliche Leben: Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/4, Fragmente aus dem Nachlaß, Vorlesung 1959-1961 (GA II.7)*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976), 188-189. Italics are in the original German. Barth writes "and it is better to speak of the 'church' [*Kirche*] here rather than the more strictly theological 'community' [*Gemeinde]*" Quotation marks added. Barth's use of *Kirche* as compared with *Gemeinde* is discussed earlier in the section on Yoder in the dissertation.
[469] Barth begins the previous subsection this way, "2. Yet we cannot stop here . . . [with] the life of the individual Christian. The Christian is in the church. He is not just in it externally, accidentally, or incidentally. He is not in it merely in the sense that he might first be a more or less good Christian by his personal choice and calling and on his own responsibility as a lonely hearer of God's Word, and only later, perhaps optionally and only at his own pleasure, he might take into account his membership in the church.

In this subsection, like Hauerwas, Barth stresses that formation in the church is crucial for potent engagement with the world. Those who would jump from God's work in the individual to God's work in the world and skip over God's work in the church[470] underestimate the importance of the church's formative work. These critics of the church may make some valid points but are blind to the fact that both their insights have been made possible by their formation in the church and that they themselves are part of the church they criticize.[471] Followers of these critics eventually realize the importance of the church and—with what Barth regards as overcompensation—feel compelled to join the Roman Catholic Church.[472]

If he were not in the church, he would not be in Christ." Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 188, Cf. 188-194.

[470]"It was an historically understandable and not unjustifiable reaction, but it led to a distortion of the whole complex of problems, when in the steps of Kierkegaard —and even further back, Pascal—an existential character was ascribed to Christian being and action only in the innermost circle of the encounter of the Christian with himself, or it was recognized again only with reference to the Christian relation to the world, a leap being made over the middle circle to the outermost of the three." Ibid., 189. Recall Barth's criticism of Kierkegaard in the *Römerbrief* in regards to his being ostensibly against religion Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 136. but unconsciously propagating a new form of it. Ibid., 276.

[471] "First, in allowing the Christian to set himself at a distance from the church, this failure evokes a type of criticism of it which, even though its reproaches and complaints may be very largely correct, will necessarily be sterile because those who make it have either never accepted or have thrown off with a sharp jerk the burden of personal responsibility for what the church is or is not, for what it does or refrains from doing, for what it does well or badly. Thus they now speak about the church and against it, perhaps with sharp cuts and dazzling light, yet externally, without serious engagement, without having made, its cause their own, in an inward or outward detachment. They speak as though it were a matter for other folks, the pastors, or boards, or the mass of perdition of much scolded churchly Christians, they themselves being isolated and playing no practical part . . . Again, the failure creates a vacuum in the middle circle that no amount of witty and supposedly prophetic and reforming criticism of the church can fill." Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 189. Recall Barth's emphasis on the Christian being in solidarity with the church in the Römerbrief. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 334.

[472] "It plainly evokes a correct longing for the church which sooner or later will result in a strong susceptibility to a conception in which what is missed will express itself all the more strongly, uncontrolled

Instead, Barth urges Christians to engage in the practices of the church—especially listening together to the Scriptures. The Christian

> will in any event be found among those for whom the issue in the sphere of the church, in its proclamation, pastoral care, and instruction, in the shaping of its liturgy, in its proper inner and outer order, in its evangelizing and mission, and finally in its theology, is simply but very definitely that of giving precedence to the Word of God and not to any tradition or ancient custom or modern fashion, not to the dogma and confession of the fathers, not to the claims of any contemporary (philosophical or nonphilosophical) movement, and certainly not to the wishes and demands that might be presented by political rulers or majorities . . . they will quietly and tenaciously take the position that the Word of God must be heard first in the church . . . It must hear first the original declaration of his Holy Spirit. It must hear first, if not exclusively, Holy Scripture.[473]

Barth believes listening to the Scriptures with the church is what helps the church navigate between withdrawal and unfaithful accomodation.

> When the Word that may be perceived in Holy Scripture has the precedence, then for the time being one can no longer dream either the bad dream of a church that is merely unholy or the all too beautiful dream of one that is merely holy. At least for a time the swing of the pendulum between the church in excess and the church in defect is also halted.[474]

In this way, Barth does "specify the material conditions that would sustain" the path between monasticism and liberalism.

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because of that failure. Was it not a fact that an existentialism that bitterly and arrogantly bypassed the problem of the church opened up more than once some very interesting ways to Rome?" Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 189.

[473] Ibid., 193.

[474] Ibid.

Criticism about Barth's lack of attention to faithful examples

Hauerwas has been criticized for asserting so emphatically the importance of the church. Hauerwas writes, "Does the truth of Christian convictions depend on the faithfulness of the church? . . . Yes! On every count the answer is 'Yes.'"[475] He also writes, "Christianity is unintelligible without witnesses"[476] and "the truth of Christian convictions requires witnesses."[477]

The "the truth of Christian convictions requires witnesses"[478] assertion is similar to the one we addressed in our section on Mangina regarding the church being part of gospel proclamation. "What he [Barth] cannot acknowledge is that the community called the church is constitutive of the gospel proclamation."[479] In this case, witnesses are constitutive of the truth of Christian convictions.

Paul Griffith and Healy worry about these kind of statements as they are open to misunderstanding. Griffith says Hauerwas can be interpreted here as merely making a pedagogical claim that outsiders need to see Christianity lived out in order to understand it and accept it. Or, Hauerwas may be making a more dubious epistemological or ontological claim that no truth/gospel exists apart from

[475] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 231.
[476] Ibid., 214.
[477] Ibid., 211.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid., 145.

witnesses/church.[480] Healy too grants that Hauerwas may merely be claiming "such practices are the usual means by which the Holy Spirit works within us and the church."[481] Healy writes that, "I suspect, though, that while Barth might have approved [of Hauerwas's work], he [Barth] would say that the difference God makes to the church needs to be made clearer."[482]

Despite the importance of the church doing its duty in witnesses, Barth makes clear the church's witness is wholly dependent on God's initiative and empowering (and not vice-versa).

> It [the church] transgresses the limits of its mission and task, is guilty of culpable arrogance and engages in a futile undertaking if it makes this the goal and end of

[480] Griffiths writes, "he says that the truth of Christian conviction 'depends on' the faithfulness of the church (p. 231). This seems to say not only that the church's faithfulness—the continuation of witness through time—is necessary in order that Christian conviction may be understood and passed on; not only that the church's faithfulness is necessary in order that Christian conviction may rightly be held; but also that the church's faithfulness is necessary in order that Christian conviction be true. If this is the correct reading, Hauerwas ascends from a pedagogical claim (witness is necessary for understanding) to an epistemological claim (you shouldn't have Christian conviction if there are no witnesses), and then to a strictly ontological claim (witness is among the conditions for the truth of Christian conviction). There might be some confusion here . . . I think there is a more consistent Hauerwasianism available." Griffiths, "Witness and Conviction in *With the Grain of the Universe*," 73.

[481] It seems to Healy that Hauerwas in his zeal to promote the inseparability of Christian belief from Christian practice overstates the reliability of Christian practice producing Christian faithfulness. Healy admits that the church may indeed produce exemplary witnesses but it also produces rather lousy ones who hardly point well to Jesus Christ. "Now it may well be that Hauerwas would broadly agree with these remarks, and respond by pointing out that all he is doing (like Hütter, but in a somewhat different way) is trying to recover and promote Christian practices because such practices are the usual means by which the Holy Spirit works within us and the church. They are the ordinary vehicle, so to speak, by which the Holy Spirit achieves our sanctification. But if this is indeed his view, to avoid confusion and to address directly the sociological and theological issues that pertain to practices in so far as they are concretely mis-performed, a more substantial account of how the Spirit works in the church and how the church is related to its Lord is needed." Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?," 301.

[482] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 295.

> its activity, assuming responsibility both for the going out of the Word of God and its coming to man.[483]

In that sense, the truth does not depend on human response; and the gospel is not limited by the church.

In *With the Grain of the Universe,* Hauerwas does seem to qualify his ideas by saying implying Christian witness is ontologically responsive to God—the witnesses attempt to "embody" what they have received and in doing so "make claims" to the world of what they think they have received.

> That such witnesses exist, however, cannot and should not be sufficient to compel others to believe what Christians believe. Witnesses are not evidence; rather, they are people whose lives embody a totality of beliefs and, accordingly, make claims about 'how the world is arranged.'[484]

Furthermore, Hauerwas later reiterates that he does not mean to say that human beings should depend definitively on the church's faithfulness for truth—as if the church provides irrefutable evidence that Christian claims are true.[485]

Instead, Hauerwas is simply saying the Christian life is to be lived. "Faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20). "Every good tree bears good fruit" (Matt 7:17). It is utterly intelligible to have "faith" without action. An unlived Christian life is

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[483] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 833.

[484] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 214.

[485] "My best response to Paul's worry that I may at times present Christian witness as a basis for or, worse, evidence for the truth of Christian convictions, is—'See Ochs's response!' Ochs, I think, re-presents what I was trying to do in *With the Grain of the Universe* in a manner that makes clear that whatever else I am doing I am not engaging, or attempting to engage in, any evidentiary apologetics." Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs," 91. Cf. Griffiths, "Witness and Conviction in *With the Grain of the Universe*."; Ochs, "On Hauerwas' *With the Grain of the Universe*."

not the Christian life. Hauerwas writes, "the Christian faith, cannot be known (or, more forcefully, 'does not exist') unless it is embodied in faithful lives."[486] This living out is part of God's plan—to have witnesses on his behalf—a people. The church exists to show the world that it is the world[487] which, as we saw, Barth also affirms.[488] Lives lived in way that reflects Christ are interesting evidence to a confused world—at least as interesting as other forms of "natural theology" such as arguments that the Big Bang is similar to the creation account.

Though Barth is clear that the church is dependent on God, he writes that the church does not merely admire or assent to truth or the gospel but rather must embody it.[489] The task of witness is required for Christians: "his ministry of witness . . . it is this essentially which makes him a Christian."[490] Because the church is the church of Jesus Christ, it will be a church for the world.[491]

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[486] Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs," 92.
[487] Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*, 158.
[488] "The world does not know itself . . . It is blind to its own reality . . . The community of Jesus Christ exists for and is sent into the world . . . [that] the world may know itself in truth and reality." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 769.
[489] "They do not do so absolutely conclusively or unequivocally. What the community can say and do in relation to the decision taken in Jesus Christ and in attestation of this decision, will always be relative. It can never consist in more than the erection of a sign. But the point at issue is that there should be this relative alteration of world history by the erection of signs. The community cannot and must not evade this if its faith is not an indolent or dead faith, if it is faithful with the little possibilities entrusted to it in relation to the new reality of history. No more than this is demanded. But this is unconditionally demanded." Ibid., IV/3.2, 719-720.
[490] Ibid., IV/3.2, 682.
[491] "For in it [the church] there rules the One who, verily distinct from the whole world as the eternal Son of the eternal Father, unreservedly gives Himself to it to reconcile it in His person to God, making common cause with it, not avoiding its sin but bearing it and making it His own. How can the particularity of the

Furthermore, Barth affirms that the church's life attests to God's truth.

> It is called the house or community of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15) . . . It can be said of it (Eph. 3:10) that by it the manifold truth of God will be declared to heavenly powers and forces . . . This is how it can and should understand itself. This is the high point on which it finds itself placed and where it can and should maintain itself.[492]

Christian convictions may not be merely assented to as if they were mere concepts. "Jesus Christ is not a concept."[493] Instead, the task of witness means the gospel of Jesus Christ need not only be declared and explained, but also applied.[494]

> The [church] community has to set up this sign by not merely presenting to men its declaration and explanation of the Gospel but by laying it right in front of them, addressing them on the assumption that it is valid and effective for them too, on the assumption of the truth of the Gospel.[495]

Barth too affirms that the church will always have examples.

> To the active witness of the community there belong the production and existence of definite personal examples of Christian life and action . . . The life of the community would not be healthy, nor its witness eloquent, if it did not have such proponents.[496]

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human fellowship established and ruled by Him fail to manifest itself in the fact that, without being able to do for it what He has done, it follows Him in this attitude of His to the world?"
Ibid., IV/3.2, 776.

[492] Ibid., IV/3.2, 733.

[493] Ibid., IV/3.2, 706.

[494] "But what is meant by witness as the sum of what the Christian community has to render? We may first answer in a word that witness as the sum of what must always take place in Christian ministry is declaration, exposition and address, or the proclamation, explication and application of the Gospel as the Word of God entrusted to it." Ibid., IV/3.2, 843.

[495] Ibid., IV/3.2, 852.

[496] Ibid., IV/3.2, 887-888.

Arguably then, there is significant continuity here between Hauerwas and Barth.[497] Even if Hauerwas's comments only graze Barth rather than pinpointing a major flaw, they squarely strike some of Barth's interpreters who denigrate and ignore the church—rightly pressing them about the coherence and biblical integrity of their anti-ecclesiocentric belligerence. Even if Barth does not discount the role of the church in gospel proclamation and the wonderful news that the revelation of Jesus Christ tells us how best to live, some of Barth's actualistic critics do.

[497] Will Willimon is sympathetic to many of the critiques of Barth's ecclesiology suggested by Hütter, Hauerwas, and Healy (1994)—all of whom he cites. Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching*, 249-264. But Willimon also describes how useful Barth's work is—concluding: "I also predict that Barth will be wonderfully helpful to us preaching in the present context . . . Anyone who is concerned about the present state of the church and who prays for a better, more faithful church, will find empowerment in Barth's belief that faithful preaching constitutes the church, fresh, new, and alive in each generation." Ibid., 263.

Nicholas Healy's 2004 article "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered"

Ten years after his first highly critical 1994 article on Barth's ecclesiology,[498] Healy reconsiders Barth's ecclesiology.[499] He does not make explicit retractions of what he had earlier touted as the logic of Barth's ecclesiology in 1994 but the purpose of the 2004 article is the polar opposite of the previous one. Healy is at this point troubled by the growing criticism of Barth's ecclesiology, which he himself had fanned in 1994. Whereas he had previously lamented Barth's lack of attention to practices, now he criticizes Hauerwas, Hütter, and Mangina (who drew upon Healy's 1994 article appreciatively) for overemphasizing practices.

Instead of being a pernicious influence on ecclesiology, now Healy suggests Barth's ecclesiology is the antidote to much contemporary ecclesiology which has deluded itself that the reclamation of church practices will invariably lead to greater faithfulness. In between the two articles, Healy, a Roman Catholic, wrote a book on ecclesiology.[500]

In his 2014 book, Healy affirms this article so we can assume his position has not radically changed with regard to Barth though his criticism of Hauerwas has become

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[498] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications."
[499] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered."
[500] Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*.

sharper. "I discuss Hauerwas's take on Barth, defending the latter, in my "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered."[501]

In the 1994 article, Healy was adamant about avoiding the pitfalls of liberal theology. In this 2004 article, Healy criticizes overbearing stifling ecclesiologies. It is argued in this chapter that there are three aspects of Barth's ecclesiology, which Healy does not emphasize, that are not rigid but check the drift of liberal theology. Those aspects are: the development of local canon law or "special ethics," the potential of church practices to testify to the outside world, and listening to the world through the filter of Scripture.

Healy reconsiders his earlier critical assessment of Barth's ecclesiology

Healy gives an superbly nuanced and sympathetic summary of Barth's ecclesiology—carefully probing areas that Hauerwas (and he in his earlier 1994 article) had pointed to as being weak and undeveloped.

Healy concludes that Barth's ecclesiology is not as woefully deficient and incoherent as he had suggested in his previous article. "I would want to say that Barth has at least an adequate notion of the way Christians are enabled by grace to 'see things

[501] Nicholas M. Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, Interventions (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 38.

differently in practice, and participate in world history very differently in [both] attitude and action' (*CD* 4/3, p. 716)."[502] Still, Healy claims that "my aim, to repeat, is not to defend Barth or to decide whether or where Barth gets his anthropology or pneumatology wrong; it is to see where he and his critics diverge in their answers to . . . ecclesiological questions."[503] But it is hard to not see his conclusion as a ringing endorsement of Barth's ecclesiology. At a minimum, Barth's ecclesiology is a highly useful framework upon which a theologian could develop all important points of emphasis in ecclesiology.

> Perhaps if we retrieve something like Barth's approach to the doctrine of the church, we, too, might be able to retrain ourselves to overcome some of our cultural anxiety about the church, improve our witness, and still talk about the configurations of practices that make us who we are.[504]

Barth includes the prioritization of God's dynamic role, a missionary direction, and affirms the importance of practices. Healy does not explicitly retract what he had written earlier or even engage with it but his reconsideration is very nearly implicitly a full retraction of his criticism of 1994 and in his dissertation.

In point after point, Healy reconsiders his early understanding of Barth's ecclesiology. Healy in his previous article had wondered whether Barth's emphasis on the church having "knowledge" makes it smug and passive. He explores that charge

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[502] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 294.
[503] Ibid., 295.
[504] Ibid., 298.

here and presents Barth's view as nuanced and defensible and explicitly opposed to passivity. Knowledge for Barth, according to Healy, involves responsive action.[505]

Healy had also in the previous article questioned to what degree for Barth the church had distinctive power. Here Healy, who wrote a book on Thomas Aquinas, affirms that Barth like Thomas is not opposed to action, intentionality, and effort if it is properly understood as the empowering of the Holy Spirit.[506]

Previously Healy had been concerned about Barth's denigrating of the church but here notes Barth's denunciation of a private Christianity which would make the church optional or expendable.[507]

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[505] "According to Barth, 'the catholic, the ecumenical, the universal church [is] a community which is destined to be a shining light to the whole cosmos, knowing what the world does not know, and looking forward to the culminating revelation of the king and therefore to the end of all his ways' (*Church Dogmatics,* III/3, 181). This might suggest that, other than waiting, the church's 'ways' are limited to merely knowing the way things really are and leaving everything else up to God, whose 'ways' alone achieve everything. And indeed, Barth comes close to saying something like that at times (e.g. *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 727). But the key word here, 'knowledge', is heavily freighted for Barth, for whom it necessarily involves acknowledgement, confession, and therefore obedient action (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 765f.), action in contrast to 'ignorance', which is active or passive rejection of God (*Christian Life*, 136, 146)." Ibid., 290.

[506] "Through the 'gifts and operation of the Holy Spirit' (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, 261) our 'direct participation in Jesus Christ' (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, 257) is brought about so that we live within the life of God (cf. *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 15; III/3, 8), as Barth says, sounding for all the world like Thomas Aquinas." Ibid.

[507] "I become a 'friend of God' (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, p. 286) only in Christ, and therefore only as I am called into his body (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, 287; IV/3, 681), so there can be 'no legitimate private Christianity' (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 689)." Ibid.

Healy had also worried that Barth's stark emphasis on God's work as event had ruled out any need for human action. Now in the 2004 article, Healy acknowledges that Barth's emphasis on grace is not antithetical to action.[508]

Healy had argued that Barth would be served well by emphasizing the narrative of Jesus' life-story. In this article, Healy asserts that Barth was cognizant of that and did that.[509] Furthermore, Healy connects that narrative approach to what he had extensively criticized in his previous article, Barth's use of the Pauline "body of Christ" metaphor.[510] Barth's use of the metaphor is not as one-dimensional, as formal, and abstract, as Healy had previously worried.

Healy then affirms that Barth understands that the church has a significant role in history. While Barth does not affirm (as a Roman Catholic might) that the church is the continuation of the incarnation, Healy implies Barth has good reason for being hesitant to do so—wanting to make clear that the church is no mere legacy that unfurls mechanistically.

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[508] "If we take into account the effect of grace – of God's action upon our action – then in spite of the feebleness of our efforts, we can say that the church and its membership actually 'co-operate' with the 'divine work' (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, 92, 254), and join God as God's 'partners' (*Church Dogmatics* III/3, 280)." Ibid., 291. However, it should be noted that despite what Healy suggests here Barth uses the language of "co-operation" only sparingly, repudiates it often, and always uses it with qualification.

[509] "Our partnership is confirmed by the gospels' descriptions of Jesus Christ, according to which the appointment, calling and commissioning or sending of the apostles is integral to the identity of Jesus Christ himself as narrated in the Gospels." Ibid.

[510] "The relation between Christ and the apostles is thus the Gospel narrative version of the Pauline concept of the body of Christ." Ibid.

> And while Barth rules out any notion of a continuing incarnation in the church, the church's action is not to be understood merely as a response to a 'legacy or endowment' set up by Jesus 2,000 years ago. It is a genuine and ongoing history of action in and for the world 'in correspondence' to Christ's own 'hidden being' (*CD* 4/2, p. 696).[511]

In noting "in correspondence" Healy also identities the important technical vocabulary of "correspondence" which is Barth's preferred way of describing ethics.

Healy had also worried that Barth's ecclesiology did not provide for the necessary means for developing Christians who might withstand the pressures of modernism. But here Healy acknowledges that Barth has at least given some attention to matters of formation.

> Our 'schooling in active righteousness' is achieved by means of these and other practices, principles and institutions. Twelve such practices or tasks are discussed in *CD* 4/3 (pp. 865ff.), among which, not incidentally, is number nine, 'the production and existence of definite personal examples of Christian life and action' (*CD* 4/3, p. 887), of 'special Christians' (*CD* 4/3, p. 889). Through the church, then, which, though more than a school, is indeed a school (*CD* 4/3, p. 870), we are taught to 'accustom' ourselves to obedience (*CD* 3/3, p. 257), to 'the doing of the Word of God' (*CD* 3/3, p. 253), and are sanctified.[512]

Note that Healy notices the 12 ministries in IV/3.2 and specifically "personal examples' which we noted is similar to Hauerwas's emphasis on Yoder, Day, and Pope John Paul II as exemplary witnesses.

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[511] Ibid.
[512] Ibid.

Healy also affirms Barth's understanding of sanctification that Hauerwas had questioned.[513] Healy says Barth does not just emphasize God's action contrasted with human passivity; but also affirms the need for response, obedience, and submission to God's initiative.

> We participate as genuine and free subjects in God's providential rule, acquiring a 'share in the universal lordship of God' (CD 3/3, p. 285), 'living and ruling and reigning with him' (CD 3/3, p. 286), so that God's lordship is 'actualized' not only in heaven but also here and now, in 'the attitude of the Christian' (CD 3/3, p. 285).[514]

Healy now recognizes that for Barth, not all action by Christians is futile, useless, and paltry. Moreover, Barth's actualism does not mean God's presence is occasionalistic or punctilear.

> Barth is not talking about an occasionally realized ideal here, a kind of punctilear obedience. We really are obedient, if only a little bit (CD 3/3, p. 258), and only a little bit is enough.[515]

Barth will not affirm apostolic succession and his description of the church as an institution may still appear to the Roman Catholic as sparse, but Healy points out that his notion of "event" may not be a skittishly discontinuous, random, or unpredictable as the caricatures suggest. "So 'in faith' one can see in the church's 'history something persistent and persisting – a continuity' (CD 3/3, p. 208; see 4/1, p. 691)."[516]

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[513] Barth's "hesitancy concerning Christian sanctification." Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 199.
[514] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 292.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.

Healy is critical of what he deems to be Hauerwas's overblown rhetoric about the necessity of the church's witness. But Healy finds and affirms in Barth some phrasing that arguably is just as strong.

> Occasionally, Barth puts the church's function within the economy of salvation remarkably forcefully, as for example when he says that our conduct as Christians justifies 'the decision which was made in the death of Jesus Christ' (*CD* 3/3, p. 256). It is in our sanctification that 'the divine majesty, truth and power' of God's command are 'revealed' (*CD* 3/4, p. 5).We present to the world 'a modest but clear analogue' to God's actions (*ChrL*, p. 173) and so participate actively in the hallowing of God's name (*ChrL*, p. 170).[517]

Healy again affirms Barth's emphasis on the necessity of foregrounding in theological description the initiating nature of God's work. Barth in this way affirms the work of the Spirit and thus should not be seen as deficient in his pneumatology, says Healy.

> Our active cooperation with God's redemptive work clearly depends upon the prevenient and accompanying action of the Holy Spirit. Barth's pneumatology is less exhaustively elaborated than his Christology, in part because of his concern to counter what he called the 'massive theological structures' of the modern period (*CD* 4/1, p. 740).[518]

Barth worries that a focus on the subjective pneumatology has been used by liberal theology as a disguise for anthropology; so Barth has emphasized more objective Christology.[519]

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[517] Ibid.

[518] Ibid.

[519] In mentioning "massive theological structures" Barth is not referring to church forms but rather something like Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith,* which launches from subjective presuppositions. "In the modern period there have been massive theological structures which have begun at the very point where we now end. They started with the presupposition that, whatever may be the attitude to it, Christian faith as such is a fact and phenomenon which is generally known and which can, as such, be explained to everybody; or rather more cautiously, that a generally plausible account can be given of it because the

Along these lines, Healy had previously criticized Barth's approach to sociology as characterized by a deficient attention to the doctrine of creation and the fall but now defends Barth's prioritizing of description about God. Healy now appreciates the danger Barth was worried about—a reductive view of the church in liberal theology that came about as a result of accepting the sociological description of the church as a gathering of religious people.

> By their confusion of Christian faith with those aspects of Christianity which can be talked about non-theologically, apart from language drawn from the scriptural witness to Jesus Christ, and thus apart from talk of divine action, these 'structures' more or less reduce the Spirit to a function of human religious consciousness (*CD* 4/1, pp. 741f.).[520]

Barth's theology of "event" is precisely designed to carve out critical distance between what the Holy Spirit is really doing and the self-described church's claims.

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possibility of it can be demonstrated and explained in the light of general anthropology. According to this type of structure the task of dogmatics is the description of Christian faith as such . . . But for that very reason the basic presupposition of these modern structures is called in question. Christian faith is not in any sense a fact and phenomenon which is generally known and which can as such be explained to everybody." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 740-741. Healy writes, "Gene Rogers draws upon Florensky and others to suggest that criticisms of Barth for not sufficiently developing his doctrine of the Holy Spirit may ride on a (mistaken) desire to know too much about the Spirit." Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293. Rogers focuses on Barth's pneumatology, which is the move Barth was worried about. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., "The Mystery of the Spirit in Three Traditions: Calvin, Rahner, Florensky or, You *Keep* Wondering Where the Spirit Went," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 2 (2003). Rogers is responding to: Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went." Rogers is aware of Barth's wariness. "So among those who regard Schleiermacher's attention to the Spirit's immanent work as opening the door to anthropocentrism, the Spirit attracts suspicion as a covertly anthropocentric principle . . . Put another way, the Spirit attracts suspicion as as all-too-subjective rival to the objectivity of the Son. Barth both overturns and succumbs to that suspicion." Eugene F. Rogers, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology From Resources Outside the Modern West*, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 34.

[519] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293.

[520] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 292.

Church practices cannot be engaged in uncritically. Even church practices should be interrogated to see if they are keeping in step with the Spirit.

> On this account of Christian obedience, then, while it is true that we are schooled in obedience by means of the rules, principles and practices established by the church, these cannot themselves be 'the Holy Spirit in the Word of God' (*CD* 3/3, p. 257). It would thus be a 'terrible misunderstanding' of Christianity if the 'Christian ethos' – the configuration of social practices and beliefs – became 'an end in itself' (*ChrL*, p. 96).[521]

Healy had previously in the first article lamented Barth's lack of attention to a Christian "ethos"[522] whereas here he commends Barth's concern not to overemphasize it.

Healy carefully traces Barth's description of the church so that he clearly grasps Barth's concern that the church not be presumptuous about its own actions. People should not be given false comfort that they are faithful if they are baptized, do some churchly behavior, or even gauge themselves to have pure motives.

> That would be to fail to understand that Christians are not guaranteed to be truly such by their baptism, nor by the display of certain behavior patterns that are

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[521] Ibid., 293. Healy is implicitly referring here to Mangina and Hauerwas in his use of the phrase "configuration of practices." Mangina had written: "To be more precise, while Barth emphasizes the church's task as a witness to Christ, it is not clear that the church *as a configuration of human practices* makes much difference to this task." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 278. cited in Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 192. But recall that despite Hütter's advocacy for "practices," he too qualified it as Healy does here. Hütter uses a similar phrase to Healy's "end in itself"—making clear that church activities are not "core church practices" if they exist "in and for themselves." "Without their sociological telos, however, these core church practices become utterly meaningless; that is taken, 'in and for themselves,' they lose precisely that which constitutes them." Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 249.

[522] Cf. "By ruling out a sociohistorically concrete treatment of the (real) church Barth thus proscribes the development of a set of institutions that could contribute to a distinctive Christian ethos." Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 264-265.

> more or less distinctively Christian, nor even by their distinctively Christian intentions.[523]

Healy affirms Barth's insistence that it is important to maintain a critical distance between God and the church.

Healy describes the Trinitarian foundations of Barth's view of the church. "They are true Christians if and only if they are 'elected by the Lord, called by his Word, and constituted by his Spirit' (*CD* 4/1, p. 696)."[524] Barth does not want human beings to presume that God is at their whim in predictable fashion.

Critique of Healy 2004 (#1 of 3): Healy does not note that special ethics is to be done locally

According to Barth, says Healy, God distributes his grace primarily through the church but not only through the church. "Thus although the church remains under the 'special care of [God's] free grace', grace has not been committed 'into the hand of his community' (*CD* 4/1, p. 694)."[525] It is important for the Christian to be attentive to the church but the Word and the Spirit of God take precedence.

> To be sure, the church is to teach us and direct our thought and action, and it is the task of special ethics to point out 'certain lines' and 'directives' that the church must instill in us (*ChrL*, p. 7). But neither the Word nor the Spirit is bound

[523] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293.
[524] Ibid. One should not be distracted by Healy's jarring wording here ("if and only if they are elected") which might suggest Barth thinks humans are merely passive. Healy has been attempting to correct that misconception throughout the article. Healy is here affirming Barth's proper disciplined trinitarian situating of ecclesiology.
[525] Ibid.

> to the church (*CD* 4/3, p. 790); the church, and thus the Christian, are bound to them.[526]

Note the mention here of "special ethics" (which was treated earlier in the dissertation in our discussion of Bonhoeffer). Healy recognizes the problem of the church being too specific and rigid in "special ethics" (i.e., instructing Christians what to do in every situation); this may squelch, stifle, or obscure the Spirit's speaking through Scripture.

What Healy does not clarify is that for Barth the local church can help individual Christians discern. For Barth, "special ethics" has to do with the most specific kind of ethical instruction, similar in its specificity to "practical theology" or "canon law"—all of which Barth, as a dogmatician (systematic theologian), is reticent to delve into with too much detail because of his conviction that local circumstances are indeed significant. Barth is not saying that the Spirit's freedom must never take concrete specific form but that neither dogmaticians nor central church hierarchy should be overly specific.

Healy's praise and criticism of Hauerwas

Again, it should be said that Healy has now written a book length "very critical" book about Hauerwas's theology.[527] But in this 2004 article Healy emphasizes that Hauerwas's positions are only slightly different from those of Barth, yet Healy chooses to be sharply critical of Hauerwas because Healy worries that these subtle differences

[526] Ibid.
[527] Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction*.

can be developed in very troubling ways that lead to quashing of dissent by church authorities.

Healy begins the article by praising Hauerwas's reading of Barth's ecclesiology. "In his Gifford lectures, entitled *With the Grain of the Universe*, Stanley Hauerwas presents a wonderfully nuanced and largely favorable picture of Barth's ecclesiology."[528] Healy also acknowledges that Barth and Hauerwas agree on the macro-level about what they are trying to communicate about the church. "He [Barth] and Hauerwas agree, then, that witness is the primary function of the church."[529]

But Healy argues that there is indeed a difference between Barth and who we are calling Barth's "Sacamental interpreters"—Hauerwas, Hütter, and Mangina: "they disagree with him in significant ways . . . their disagreement over the church is 'fundamental'"[530]—their disagreements regarding ecclesiology are more decisive than their differences with Barth over anthropology and pneumatology.[531]

On the other hand, Healy notes that Hauerwas's difference with Barth on these matters is subtle.

> One might argue, with some justification in some cases, that different responses to these questions are more a matter of emphasis than substantive disagreement.

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[528] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 287.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Ibid., 289.
[531] Recall that Buckley also thought the Jenson-Hunsinger debate was more about ecclesiology than pneumatology. "I will begin by summarizing one form of the debate over Barth's pneumatology. I will propose that this debate is an argument over how important a Catholic strand there is to Barth's Evangelical theology." Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church," 81.

> I argue here, though, that the disagreement between Barth and Hauerwas, at least, is more than a matter of emphasis, though I confess I am not sure quite how much more.[532]

It is only in the implications section at the end of the article that the reader learns that Healy is worried about an overemphasis on getting the church practices correct which could lead to an institutional hierarchy exploiting this emphasis to justify imposing its will on legitimate prophetic dissent; and that Hauerwas reinforces this idea. And for that reason Healy thinks it is necessary to criticize Hauerwas thoroughly even though he only differs slightly from Barth.

Because of the subtlety of their differences, Healy predominantly focuses on distinctions Hauerwas himself says separate he and Barth. Healy argues Hauerwas's amendments to Barth's ecclesiology undermine its inherent strengths. Healy writes, "As he [Hauerwas] develops his own constructive proposal, however, Hauerwas makes some significant criticisms of Barth. Barth's ecclesiology, it seems, does not consistently follow through the logic of Christian witness."[533] Healy quotes Hauerwas, "It remains an open question whether or not Barth's ecclesiology is sufficient to sustain the witness that he thought was intrinsic to Christianity."[534]

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[532] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 289, Cf. 295.
[533] Ibid., 287.
[534] Ibid. Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 39. This is also quoted above in our section on Hauerwas.

What should not be missed is that Hauerwas in this quote is making almost the exact same criticism of Barth that Healy made in the 1994 article.

> Barth relativizes the visible institution to the extent that it becomes in itself no more than one among a large number of other religious groups that compete for people's allegiance on the basis of a set of beliefs about the way things really are. It is not a qualitatively distinct entity, for it has neither unique powers nor a distinctive ethos that would give its members the opportunity to engage in the most adequate way of life or response and witness to Jesus Christ.[535]

Hauerwas draws on Healy's earlier article as do Reinhard Hütter and Joseph Mangina (who Hauerwas also draws upon).[536] Healy now avers that Hauerwas's appropriation of his criticism overdoes it. Healy reports that "Hauerwas argues that the problem with Barth's ecclesiology can be traced to his inadequate theological anthropology and pneumatology, and, more specifically, to his conception of human action and divine action and the relation between the two."[537] Again, Hauerwas's argument is scarcely distinguishable from the one Healy himself proffered in the 1994 article in which he denounces Barth's bifurcating of the church into its human and divine elements. "Barth bifurcates the church into two separate entities, the human church and its spiritual counterpart."[538]

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[535] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.
[536] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145, 192. Cf. Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non* (Journal Article)," 149, 151; Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 185; Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 273, 278; Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 90-91, 93.
[537] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 287.
[538] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 263.

Healy's specific criticism of Sacramental critics of Barth's ecclesiology

Healy criticizes Sacramental interpreters for underemphasizing God because they overemphasize the church

Healy then moves into differentiating Barth from what he understands Hauerwas to be saying. Healy appreciates Hauerwas's emphasis on the church embodying the gospel for effective witness. Healy understands that Hauerwas emphasizes the ethical implications of the gospel that the world might see the way of the cross is the way the universe (at a profound level) runs. But Healy worries that Hauerwas disregards Barth's disciplined sense of irreversibility—that God initiates and humans respond.

> So although Barth might agree that there is a sense in which we 'show' the truth in our witness, what we show is God justifying God's actions in Christ by sanctifying us in the Spirit. This is substantially different from producing people whose success as Christians demonstrates the habitability of the Christian way of life.[539]

We have noted above that Hauerwas's strong statements about the importance of the church can be construed in weaker and stronger ways. Healy here contrasts (a) the church witnessing to Christ (Barth's vision)[540] against (b) the church producing people who commend the Christian life with their lives (Hauerwas's vision).[541] Healy can affirm

[539] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293.
[540] Griffith called this the pedagogical claim. Griffiths, "Witness and Conviction in *With the Grain of the Universe*," 73.
[541] Griffth called this the epistemological and ontological claims.

the former but thinks the latter is worrisome. Healy worries that Hauerwas conveys that the church's ethical faithfulness is more crucial than God's sustaining empowerment.

As Healy understands him, Hauerwas places the fate of the world in the church's hands; if the church fails, the world is destroyed.[542] Healy questions whether Hauerwas's claim does not overstate and overdramatize the responsibility of the church.[543] Healy cites Barth saying that human representatives of Christ are not invariably faithful.

> Nothing much, Barth says, can be shown from 'the soundness of the majority of Christians, or from particularly Christ-like personalities, or from the dogmas and institutions of Christianity, or from the Christian cultus'. Such things are only 'equivocal' (*CD* 3/3, p. 208).[544]

Though Hauerwas's exhortation has the potential to spur faithfulness, it may also lead to desperate flailing angry anxious attempts to meet this challenge. Healy maintains that this type of rhetoric—the church needs to be the church because the world depends on it[545]—diminishes the providential work of God.

Healy cites the example of Hauerwas proffering Pope John Paul II, John Howard Yoder, and Dorothy Day as examples. Healy summarizes Hauerwas's use of these figures this way, "Each shows that the church is not just an ideal but 'an undeniable

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[542] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 288.
[543] See also on this point: Griffiths, "Witness and Conviction in *With the Grain of the Universe*," 73.
[544] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293.
[545] Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 145, 192-193, 231.

reality' (*WGU*, p. 230). The church's faithfulness is reflected in their lives, for it is the church's configuration of practices that produces them."[546] For Healy this gives a bit too much credit to the church and does not sufficiently emphasize that these witnesses are only effective by God's grace.

If ethics or theology become ends in themselves, they cease to do what they are supposed to do—point to Jesus Christ, not themselves. Healy summarizes it this way,

> To focus on them ['the soundness of the majority of Christians, or from particularly Christ-like personalities, or from the dogmas and institutions of Christianity, or from the Christian cultus' (*CD* 3/3, p. 208)] is to misplace the center of theology and the heart of the gospel, which is 'the activity of God to and in and of Jesus Christ' (*CD* 3/3, p. 185). Accordingly, the witness of the church is truthful witness just to the extent that it points to the truth that is not itself, or not in the first place at least. Christians are to live 'ec-centrically' (*ChrL*, p. 94), looking beyond themselves (*CD* 4/3, p. 854).[547]

Healy commends Barth for making clear that Christianity is first and foremost about God. The church responds to and points to God. God is primary. The church is secondary.

> Christianity is . . . fundamentally about God's actions for us in Word and Spirit. Only consequently is it about our necessary response and 'cooperation' as God's 'partners'. . . . it is God's church, the work of Word and Spirit; all else is secondary, though indeed vital, both consequently and in itself.[548]

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[546] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 289. Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 230.
[547] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293.
[548] Ibid., 294.

Healy is concerned that an overemphasis on the church can ultimately lead to reductive views of the church: that God has set it in motion and leaves it be; that the earthly institution of the church is all that the church is.

> And when one writes of the church and human action with little or no reference to divine action, is it not all too easy to end up supporting a view of the church that will be reductive and thereby in some aspects in effect anti-Christian, in spite of good intentions to the contrary? For to omit or de-emphasize the primary constitutive element of the church – God's action in Word and Spirit – is, Barth would say, to construct an abstract ecclesiology. It is to talk about the *Scheinkirche*, the church in its non-theological appearance, rather than what is truly the church (*KD* 4/2, p. 698; *CD* 4/2, p. 617).[549]

Again, these comments are particularly stark in comparison to Healy's exasperation with Barth's concept of the *Scheinkirche* in the earlier article. Healy had in his first article criticized Barth's lack of attention to the church's institutional structure and practices. Now it is a virtue and Healy criticizes Hauerwas, et al. for the opposite excess emphasis on practices. Note also that Healy correctly refers to the *Scheinkirche* only in terms of IV/2 and does not here conflate with notions of the false church in IV/1.[550] But Healy's point here is that Hauerwas and others are not as careful as they should be about talking about the Spirit's role in the church's practices.

Healy worries that Hauerwas, Mangina, and Hütter overemphasize the church's practices without attending to more primary doctrines. It seems to Healy that

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[549] Ibid., 296.

[550] Still his word "non-theological" appearance is unfortunate as Barth thinks that the visible, sociological form of the church does deserve theological reflection even if it is not all that the "real" church is.

> accounts of the concrete church and the activities of its members developed in varying degrees of independence from well-rounded accounts of more central doctrines seem in recent years have come to be more the rule than the exception.[551]

Healy asserts that "The greatest danger, I think Barth would say, is that the church will fail to be the church, that it will fail to be faithful and, above all, to hope and trust in God as it calls upon the Spirit in prayerful obedience to the Word."[552] At first glance, Healy comment may seem confusing if not downright contradictory from what he has been saying in this piece as "the church should be the church" is a well-known refrain of Hauerwas's (as we have noted above). But Healy's emphasis is on this latter half of the statement in which he emphasizes the church's attentiveness to the Word and Spirit—impulses that he argues often get downplayed by an emphasis on church practices.

Healy concludes by summarizing Barth's basic demeanor or attitude toward ecclesiology which Healy finds refreshing. It is difficult to say whether this indeed adequately encompasses Barth's intricate severe exacting demanding theology but Healy surely does grasp correctly Barth's glorying in the sovereignty of God.

> In sum, perhaps Barth's greatest legacy in the area of ecclesiology was his massive awareness of the providential rule of God, and thus of the fundamental joyfulness of the gospel. He understood Christianity to be adventurous, to be

[551] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 296.
[552] Ibid., 297.

> about letting God lead us, work in and with us, the church, so that we may enjoy partnership with God.[553]

Healy is of the opinion that this trust in God is the proper basis for human work. "We can trust God to act to preserve the body of Christ in its historical and Spirit-filled form until the eschaton. And this leaves us free to concentrate on the important work assigned to us."[554] This work has to do with not just perpetuating church practices but listening to the Word and the Spirit of God. "It is work that requires us, in faithful and prayerful obedience, to turn cheerfully away from ourselves, away from earnest and anxious attempts at self-preservation, towards the God who alone preserves us."[555]

Healy criticicizes Sacramental interpreters for underemphasizing witness to outsiders because of their overemphasis on the church's internal life

Healy then attempts to describe the symptoms in Hauerwas's work that suggest an improper emphasis on the church's internal practices. Healy sees in theologians like Hauerwas a pedantic worried posture.

> Stanley Hauerwas once called the Christian life an adventure, and so does Barth in *CD* 3/3 (p. 243). My guess is that Barth would say that the kind of ecclesiology that Hauerwas has so well and rightly promoted has been – with some exceptions, often his own – a bit less adventurous than it should be or could be; less theologically adventurous, anyway. Much contemporary ecclesiology and ecclesial ethics is earnest, methodical and educational in tone. The church is described as if it must have a priestly or pedagogical character, rather than the 'prophetic character' Barth thinks is more appropriate (*CD* 4/3, p. 794), and this

[553] Ibid., 299.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.

> pedagogical character often persists even when theologians go on the offensive against the evils of the age.[556]

Healy suggests something of a nagging "tsk, tsk, tsk" finger-wagging schoolmarm-like tone present in those who write on ecclesial ethics. Healy wonders whether this tone is not a symptom of anxiety—that theologians or at least their churches believe that indeed the future of the world does depend on the church heeding their warnings.

> The prevailing earnestness and the focus on the church may be symptoms of anxiety. I don't mean that any theologians feel anxious, of course, Stanley Hauerwas least of all. I mean rather that the church may embody a kind of cultural anxiety as it faces the seeming triumph of modernity. From contemporary ecclesiology one gets the impression that the church needs to be especially concerned these days about itself and its self-preservation, rather more perhaps than it need be about the task and cause of God (two things that, though closely related, should not be conflated).[557]

This may be a bit of an *ad hominem* attack by Healy—discerning (or perhaps projecting) that some theologians have picked up a widespread anxiety about "the seeming triumph of modernity," creeping secularism, etc. Healy thinks perhaps that Christians are worried about their declining cultural power and thus get fixated on behavior issues.

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[556] Ibid., 297. Healy suggests Barth's ecclesiology should have a "prophetic character." Mangina wrote something similar and we have not yet commented on this. Mangina writes that Barth ties "the community to the exercise of Christ's prophetic office;" "the church properly belongs to the prophetic office of Christ," and "Recall that the church is the community of persons who God has called to share in Christ's prophetic work." Mangina, "Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas," 270, 274, 277. While this is be true that the church for Barth should have prophetic character, recall that Barth organizes volume IV of the *Church Dogmatics* along the lines of the *munus triplex*: IV/1 priest, IV/2 king, and IV/3 prophet, and there are ecclesiological sections in each one of these. The church has priestly (gathers itself), kingly (upbuilds itself), and prophetic role (witnesses).

[557] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 297.

In particular, Healy sees this fueling rationalization for siphoning energy and resources away from evangelism. "It is rather as if the church must put itself in good order before it can preach the gospel."[558] Instead of proclaiming the good news, the church is building up defenses against the world.

> Much contemporary ecclesiology and ecclesial ethics is geared towards thwarting what are seen as the detrimental effects upon the church of individualism in its various forms, including theological constructivism, doctrinal and practical consumerism and the pervasive failure to obey the church authorities. The concern to distinguish and separate, protect and defend, is widespread. It surfaces not only in Hauerwas and those he has influenced, but in Radical Orthodoxy, communion ecclesiology, and in some forms of postliberalism, too.[559]

Healy here extends his critique beyond Hauerwas to "Radical Orthodoxy, communion ecclesiology, and some forms of postliberalism."[560]

Healy accuses Hauerwas of having an ecclesiology not oriented for the world, of not attempting to witnesses to something greater than itself but instead pointing to the "righteousness" of the church. The church should focus on outsiders—having compassion on them and seeking to serve them. "The church is ec-centric, too, in that it

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[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid.

[560] Rowan Williams worries about George Lindbeck, as a key figure in postliberalism, withdrawing into an overly defensive posture. "Professor Lindbeck suggests that those who give primacy to the question of how the Gospel is preached in a post-Christian environment 'regularly become liberal foundationalists', preoccupied with translating the Gospel into alien terms, or at least redefining it in response to secular questions. I am not so sure. For one thing, as I have argued, preaching is not something extraneous to the identity and integrity of the Church; we are not allowed to sidestep the question. But equally, it is not clear that the only alternative to intensive in-house catechesis is translation into a foreign language in a way that sacrifices the distinctiveness of the Gospel." Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 38.

'exists for the world' (CD 4/3, p. 768) in visible form (CD 4/3, p. 772)."[561] For Barth it is more about the proclamation of the gospel to outsiders and for Hauerwas it is more about a particular kind of church life for insiders.

> Barth's understanding of Christianity and the church's task of witness is, I think, more different from Hauerwas's than may at first appear, and requires a substantially different kind of ecclesiology. For Barth, witness is the 'declaration, explication and application of the Gospel' which is Jesus Christ (*CD* 4/3, p. 843). It is not, or not in the first instance, a particular kind of life. It is as it points away from itself to the 'divine Nevertheless' amid the confusions of history – the church's history as well as the world's – that the church is truly a 'sign and witness' (*CD* 3/3, p. 199), not, or not in the first instance, as it embodies a particular configuration of practices.[562]

Healy associates Barth's "ecclesiology" with witness that "points away," while he associates Hauerwas's "ecclesiology" with "a particular kind of life" that "embodies a particular configuration of practices."

Healy is worried about the emphasis on practices overpowering the larger purpose of the church: to witness.

> Barth might ask of Hauerwas and of those who follow his lead whether in their laudable – and quite reasonable – effort to recover an ecclesial politics, they have not veered a bit too far towards presenting – and, in some cases, maybe even thinking of? – the church, the Christian life and its forms and institutions, as an 'end in itself'?[563]

A central question in dogmatic ecclesiology is to further explain what Healy means by the phrase: "It is centrally important for world history, but it is not itself the

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[561] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 293-294.
[562] Ibid., 296-297.
[563] Ibid., 296.

center. Its 'existence is not an end in itself' (*CD* 3/3, p. 196)."[564] Virtually every Christian theologian would grant that this is the case, the question is how to describe this more precisely. Healy argues in the first article that the church is not central enough for Barth while he argues in the second article that Hauerwas makes the church too central. After Healy commends Barth for making clear that the church is not the center, Healy instantly clarifies that this does not mean the church is superfluous. No, says, Healy, it is "indeed vital" (but "is not itself the center").

Healy reiterates that the church's role is not self-preservation but rather witness—pointing to God. "And, as Barth would insist, thereby we turn, too, *towards the world* which the Father so loved that he sent his only Son to be its Savior, and sent the church, the body of the Son, to be his partner in the Spirit, and witness to that Savior."[565]

Critique of Healy 2004 (#2 of 3): Healy sketches a false choice between witness to outsiders and the church's practices

It is refreshing to see a Roman Catholic theologian wrestling with what it might mean for ecclesiology to be formed by the notion that "the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" as *Ad Gentes* put it[566] but it is not clear that practices need to fall by

[564] Ibid., 293-294.
[565] Ibid., 299. Emphasis added as this seems to be the focus of the sentence.
[566] Second Vatican Council, "Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," chapter 1, article 2.

the wayside. Witness and church practices are not mutually exclusive. Barth does not pit these against each other. Healy apparently does not see how the practices could testify to Jesus Christ, that they could "point away" from themselves. As we will see, this is what John Howard Yoder finds so useful about the Barth's language of the church's practices (listening to the Word, baptism, the Lord's supper, and prayer in §67 of IV/2) being "exemplary;" that the church's life together can indeed testify to the world of Jesus Christ.

Healy's two articles represent the swinging back and forth that occur when this exemplarity is not sufficiently recognized. Healy senses that neither practice-less theological descriptions of church (1994) nor practice-heavy bureaucracies (2004) get ecclesiology right. But Healy has difficulty articulating that the church engaged in its internal practices may thereby witness to the gospel.

Healy praises Barth's ecclesiology for its room for criticism of the church

For Healy, the payoff of attending to the Word and Spirit as Barth teaches, opposed to slavishly mindlessly following our church institutions is that there may be fresh insight from the Word by the Spirit that challenges institutional habits that are no longer faithful. Healy seems particularly concerned about the squelching of dialogue and dissent. Healy worries about self-appointed heresy (or perhaps better "practice") police flushing out the non-compliant and outliers. Healy worries that the focus on

practices sometimes leads to the casting of suspicious light on legitimate grievances. Those who criticize are dismissed as people not being properly schooled in the institution's practices when in fact the institution's practices may have become brittle, impersonal, and oppressive.

> If our theology begins and ends with God's actions rather than with our practices and institutions, and if we recall that the church is primarily God's church, then we may come to see that dissension within the church may on occasion be a good thing rather than something we have to explain as, say, the intrusion of alien principles, practices or beliefs into the established Christian configuration.[567]

There is such a thing as division and dissension—such as that condemned by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1. But some criticism may actually be something more akin to the "open meeting" described in 1 Corinthians 14. There may be a healthy leveling of status that communication lines may be opened.

> A change in a practice may need to be discerned as a movement of the Holy Spirit rather than as a distortion of that practice through lack of skill in inhabiting Christianity. That a dissident group of church people is inadequately trained or has not acquired the requisite virtues may have little direct bearing upon the merits of their cause. Independently of the depth of enculturation and of any other similar criterion, some dissent – not all, of course – may in reality be the Word active in our midst.[568]

Healy is concerned that there is an inertia of conservatism that will perpetuate the status quo if it is not disturbed. Institutions have little to restrain them from acting as an aristocracy—socially conservative, head in the sand, stifling, intolerant of conflict,

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[567] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 298.
[568] Ibid.

dialogue, and conversation. Reinhard Hütter writes in 2004 (the same year as Healy's article being reflected on here) about the perception that the current Roman Catholic Church was recoiling from the "morning breeze and optimism right after Vatican II" with a time of "historical reassertion and doctrinal retrenchment, as some might describe the Roman Catholic Church in the later years of John Paul II's pontificate."[569] Hütter later converted to Roman Catholicism. The point is merely that it is possible that Healy shared something of the sentiment that Hütter speaks of here. Regardless, Healy issues a plea for leniency or at least tolerance of disagreement in the church.

> If we acknowledge that the church is primarily God's work and serves God's cause, our churches may be more willing to give themselves adequate time to sort out their disagreements over practices and doctrines. Hearing the Word of God and discerning the Spirit may take time, as it has often done in the past. We may need to live together in Christ and with our disagreements for a while, rather than move too quickly and self-confidently to raise up divisions within God's church.[570]

Critique of Healy 2004 (#3 of 3): Healy does not note that dissent needs to be oriented by Scripture

Healy mentions in passing Barth's idea that the world may have things to teach the church. Recall that in the 1994 article, Healy had criticized this idea.

> However, [for Barth] even its [the church's] knowledge is relative. There are "true words spoken in the secular world and addressed to the community" to

[569] Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*. (Chapter)," 80.
[570] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 299. Cf. "Archbishop Rowan Williams wrote recently of the pressing need to make better sense of dissension within the church." Ibid., 298. citing Rowan Williams, "Review of Eugene F. Rogers's *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way Into the Triune God*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 1 (2003).

> which the church must listen if it is to be an adequate witness to its own knowledge (CD IV/3.1, 116).[571]

Now in 2004 Healy affirms the concept.

> And if we recall that the world as well as the church is under God's providential rule, and that the church lives in, with and for the world, we can acknowledge with him that sometimes the 'world actually understands [the church] better than [the church] does itself' (*CD* 4/3, p. 817).[572]

Healy wants to make space for listening to the insights of ethics and practical theology methods which utilize "localized thick descriptions" to explore "how specific theological images, doctrines, or linguistic forms function in different communities."[573] Here Healy returns to the text that he questioned in the earlier article.

> Even the kind of theological constructivism produced according to Kantian principles may be worth listening to since, according to Barth, there are secular parables of the kingdom (*CD* 4/3, pp. 110ff.). God may speak the Word to the church through anyone, nudging it through their criticism or complaint to reconsider its true basis, cause and task.[574]

Healy feels there must be room made for the prophetic disrupting and throwing off balance established norms even if the source of such movement is not necessarily qualified or reputable. Insight can come from unexpected and unusual places.

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[571] Healy, "The Logic of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: Analysis, Assessment and Proposed Modifications," 265.
[572] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 298. Healy's point would have been better made had he cited the passage he cited in the 1994 article and that he cites later in the article (IV/3.1, 116) than this one (IV/3.2, 817). The context of this quotation in IV/3.2, 817 is that occasionally it dawns on the world what a threat the church is to it and that this phenomenon can be good for the church. The church sometimes forgets how threatening it really is to the world and angry reactions from the world can help the church "remember . . . its living Lord and his living Word." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 817.
[573] Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 53.
[574] Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," 299.

This is indeed consistent with what Barth says except that Healy does not include the significant qualifier that Barth does, namely Scripture as the arbiter of these insights. "It must test them by the witness of Scripture."[575] As we explained above in our analysis of Healy's 1994 article, Barth sharply delimits the value of insights from secular sources, the "parables of the kingdom." They are for Barth merely illustrations or reminders of what is said in Scripture that have somehow been overlooked but having been prompted by the parable, the church can affirm that indeed the insight is in Scripture and needs to be reclaimed.[576]

In summary, Healy worries in the 1994 article about Barth's ecclesiology being used as a rationale to neglect institutional structures that might develop Christian character. But in his 2004 article, Healy is concerned about the anxious turn inward which is fixated on perfecting liturgy and procedures. He worries that this results in the neglecting of witness. However, we have noted three things that Healy still does not note in this second 2004 article that are crucial for distinguishing Barth's ecclesiology from liberal theology: (1) that "special ethics" or practical theology still needs to be done but it is at the local level; (2) that church practices may be "exemplary" and thus

[575] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 115.

[576] "Words of this kind cannot be such as overlook or even lead away from the Bible. They can only be those which, in material agreement with it, illumine, accentuate or explain the biblical witness in a particular time and situation, thus confirming it in the deepest sense by helping to make it sure and concretely evident and certain. They can only be words which will lead the community more truly and profoundly than ever before to Scripture." Ibid.

simultaneously minister to insiders and outsiders; and (3) that listening to the insights of the world must be delimited by listening to Scripture.

Conclusion regarding Sacramental criticism of Barth's ecclesiology

One might say that Healy, Hauerwas and Hütter each backpedal from their earlier claims about Barth's ecclesiology. Healy has this second article. Hauerwas clarifies his position in his response to Griffiths and Ochs.[577] Hütter does not just reject Barth but all of Protestantism by becoming Roman Catholic.

The dissertation demonstrates that Barth's ecclesiology arguably passes the catholicity test or that at least Sacramental criticisms of his ecclesiology have not been consistent. The dissertation also serves as valuable training ground for the discipline of ecclesiology. A master has done his work and a number of others have probed it.

[577] Hauerwas, "Hooks: Random Thoughts by Way of a Response to Griffiths and Ochs."

Chapter 7: 2005-2011: Dogmatic interpretation of Barth's ecclesiology (Kimlyn Bender, Nathan Kerr, Keith L. Johnson, John Flett)

These dogmatic interpreters of Barth argue that Barth's ecclesiology is illuminated when its foundations are examined. On the one hand, we have what we are calling Architectonic interpreters of Barth's ecclesiology: Kimlyn Bender, Keith L. Johnson, and John Flett argue that precise elegant Christological and Trinitarian formulations are the secret to understanding Barth's ecclesiology.

On the other hand, we have what we are calling an Actualistic interpreter: Nathan Kerr who argues Barth is fundamentally critical of the church. Eberhard Jüngel speaks for the Actualistic interpreters when he says that Barth's greatest contribution to church leadership was his discipline, his refusal to compromise.

> A proper theology makes no compromises. That is what distinguishes it from church administration and leadership. And to the extent that it makes no compromises, theology performs a critical function in church leadership. As a theologian, Karl Barth performed this function in many ways.[1]

An Actualistic interpreter believes that fundamentally theology should be critical of the church. It needs to be the conscience. This is a Protestant impulse to protest institutional selfish tendencies that naturally develop in organizations.

[1] Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, 127.

Architectonic readers of Barth, who are also Protestant dogmaticians, try to discover dogmatic connections that the genius Barth hinted at or hid in his vast theological castle. They find architectonics not just in the organization of the volumes of the *Church Dogmatics* but also hypothesize that ancient theological formulae may apply in different areas of theology than where they were originally crafted.

Kimlyn Bender is in some ways like a Sacramental interpreter as well as being an Architectonic interpreter. He is sympathetic to the mediation of the church rather than a strict actualism. He is not frustrated with the Sacramental critics. The next three are.

Nathan Kerr is the opposite of Bender—mostly drawing upon Barth's writing about the church in the Römerbrief in the 1920's. This is an apocalyptic anti-religion prophetic Jesus who calls down judgment on the staid church. Kerr is an Actualistic interpreter.

Keith L. Johnson studies divine and human agency in Barth and thinks Barth has arrives at some elegant solutions. In this way, he is an Architectonic interpreter. Johnson also claims Roman Catholics are neglecting evangelism so he also has a bit of a Missionary interpreter emphasis.

John Flett suggests better Trinitarian theology might lead to churches who value mission. Most strongly is Flett's Architectonic argument that the error in dogmatic construal is the key to the failure of the church. But Flett too is interested in the

missionary nature of the church so might possible be construed as a Missionary interpreter in our schema.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that "Barth is better than his books."[2] Here it will be argued that Barth is better than his dogmatics. On further investigation, a number of leaps suggested by these Architectonic interpreters are projected onto Barth. Barth himself objects to the move. Moreover, with regard to the Actualistic interpreters, Barth is not as uncompromising as Jüngel suggests. Barth thinks the activities of the people of God are the usual location of God's inbreaking Spirit.

Much of Barth's ecclesiology in its details is rather *ad hoc*—trying to make sense of the different ideas found in the Scriptures. The criticism that the Sacramental critics hurl at Barth regarding foolish lack of catholicity should probably be hurled at these Architectonic writers for their problematically-original theological moves. And the Sacramental interpreter's dismay at a lack of concrete practices of life together should be directed not at Barth but at the Actualistic interpreter.

[2] Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 383. Cf. "it is important and surprising in the nicest way to see how Barth still stands beyond his books." Bonhoeffer, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work, 1931-1932*, 37, Cf. 32-43.

Kimlyn Bender

Introduction to Bender

Kimlyn Bender deserves much credit for taking on the difficult task of writing the first long treatment of Barth's ecclesiology in many years which began as a dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary completed in 2002[3] and published in 2005 as *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*.[4] Bender's book is for the most part an exposition of Barth's ecclesiology from his early writings through the *Church Dogmatics*. It serves as a mild defense of Barth's ecclesiology against O'Grady's[5] and Healy's (1994) criticisms. In conjunction with the publication of the book, Bender expanded on the book's conclusion with an article[6] that gave an overview of the secondary literature article. He slightly revised the article in 2014.[7] In his book and article, Bender engages briefly many of the key figures treated in this dissertation. He deals most with Hütter,[8] then Mangina, Healy, Hauerwas, O'Grady, Erik Peterson, Yoder—while mentioning Brunner and Bonhoeffer in other contexts. Bender's work is careful, serious, judicious, and comprehensive. In the substance and conclusions of what Bender says, his judgment is

[3] Kimlyn J. Bender, ""The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ": Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology" (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002). The book seems to be very similar to the dissertation.
[4] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*.
[5] Ibid., 158-159.
[6] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation."
[7] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today."
[8] Bender, "An Old Debate Revisted: Karl Barth and Catholic Substance."

generally sound. Bender rightly points out that Barth is doing dogmatics rather than practical theology and that Barth does indeed talk extensively about the ministries of the church. His observations about the connections between evangelicals and Barth;[9] Baptists and Barth,[10] and pietists and Barth[11] are solid. Bender is more of a teacher making connections than someone taking polemical positions. He rarely, cautiously, subtly mentions some minor quibbles with Barth that are similar to those mentioned by the Sacramental critics.[12] Again, scholars should be grateful for Bender's work. His work raises hundreds of points that are investigated further in this dissertation. Bender's *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology* has served as a model for this dissertation. But as Bender himself says, "a survey such as this one is best served not by focusing on agreement but in attempting to get to the heart of disagreement."[13]

[9] Bender, "The Church in Karl Barth and Evangelicalism: Conversations Across the Aisle." Reprinted in Bender, "The Church in Karl Barth and Evangelicalism: Conversations Across the Aisle."
[10] Bender, "Barth and Baptists: A Fellowship of Kindred Minds." He taught at the University of Sioux Falls and now Truett Seminary—both of which are institutions with Baptist connections.
[11] Kimlyn J. Bender, "Bringing and Elephant and a Whale into Conversation: Karl Barth and Pietism," in *Karl Barth and the Future of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn and John L. Drury (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
[12] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 221-224, 273, 280; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 112-113; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 59, 61.
[13] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 48; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 104.

Bender's thesis that Barth's ecclesiology is "Christological"

The problem with Bender's analysis are the original aspects of its thesis. In particular, it is important to investigate whether indeed Bender is correct that Barth's ecclesiology is "ruled by a Christological logic."[14] Particularly astray are Bender's arguments that Barth's ecclesiology is "Chalcedonian," oriented by "*enhypostasis* / *anhypostatis*" terminology, and the *extra Calvinisticum* formulation. It wil be argued below that none of these are prominent aspects of Barth's ecclesiology. (Bender is correct that "correspondence" –stressed by John Webster—is a key concept for Barth though it is hardly "Christological"). Though it will be argued strenuously below that these are mistaken avenues for interpreting Barth's ecclesiology, these missteps do not finally harm Bender's analysis of Barth's ecclesiology significantly. Bender himself does not read Barth as rigidly as his thesis suggests but it will be argued below that the Christological formulae Bender stresses as a lens for reading Barth's ecclesiology distort, more than clarify.

First we will look at a number of reasons why "Christological" is an unhelpful description of Barth's ecclesiology. Then we will look specifically at Bender's

[14] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28.

terminology related to "Chalcedonian," "*enhypostasis* / *anhypostasis*," and "*extra Calvinisticum*."

Bender's overall argument is that Barth's ecclesiology is oriented by his Christology. This is on the most general level true but Bender's thesis goes far beyond this arguing that Barth derives his ecclesiology from a "Christological logic." Bender writes that "Barth's mature ecclesiology is ruled by a Christological logic which governs its internal structure and gives shape to its content."[15] Bender's argument is presented in the first chapter of the book[16] as well as the subsequent articles under the subheading "The Formal Structure of Barth's Doctrine of the Church."[17] Again, much of the rest of Bender's analysis is solid and strong. It is just the Christological formulae lenses—that arguably Bender does not make substantial use of—that is the problem.

Bender notes that "a unity, a differentiation, and an asymetrical relation"[18] can be detected throughout Barth's ecclesiology.

> The first and most comprehensive element is what George Hunsinger has identified as the Chalcedonian pattern. This pattern serves first and definitively to describe the unique union of God and humanity in Christ as grounded in the

[15] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28.
[16] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 3-8.
[17] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89-95. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28-37.
[18] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 29.

> hypostatic union of the incarnation, but it is also applied by Barth as the regulative pattern and paradigm governing all divine and human relationships that exist in an analogical relation to the incarnation itself. The pattern is comprised of a unity, a differentiation and an asymmetrical relation between the divine and human natures in Christ, and by analogy between the members, or terms, of the other designated relations.[19]

Bender and Hunsinger argue this "Chaledonian" pattern can be detected not just in Christology but in other areas of Barth's theology.

> The Christological logic therefore holds not only *within* the terms themselves (Jesus Christ is both divine and human; the church as both invisible and visible; world-occurence as marked both by the providence of God and the confusion of humanity), but also *between* the terms (between Christ and the church, and between the church and the world).[20]

Bender is correct that it is appropriate to see how these pairs (a) are similar, (b) how they differ, and (c) if there is a subtle superiority between them. He suggests there is a similar pattern here for all the pairs: each has a unity, difference, and asymmetry.

From the quote above, Bender seem to identify five Christological pairs or dyads: (1) Christ's divine nature and Christ's human nature, (2) Christ and the church, (3) the invisibility and the visibility of the church, (4) the church and the world, (5) God's providence and human confusion.

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[19] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 29. Earlier version: Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89. Bender refers to Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, e.g. 185f where the section is titled: "Divine and Human Agency: The Chalcedonian Pattern." Hunsinger uses the words "unity, differentiation, and asymmetry" and the language of "intimacy, integrity, and asymmetry" in the main text. Ibid., 85, 286, 186.

[20] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 9.

Bender names some other pairs in Barth's ecclesiology which do not fit the same pattern as the five special Christological. Bender seems to be saying that there are some other pairs that are named by Barth that are extremes to avoid. "He regularly defines the church dialectically with reference to rejected and opposing dyads—the church is neither docetic nor ebionitic, neither idealized nor historicized, neither antinomian nor legalistic, neither sacralized nor secularized."[21] Bender's point seems to be that the "Christological pairs" help solve the extreme pairs. In the Christological pairs, both sides are worth affirming to some extent: e. g. Christ's divine nature and Christ's human nature. (They are unified, distinct, and asymmetric). But with the extreme pairs, there are heretical extremes to avoid: docetic and ebionitic. These extreme pairs are a result of poor understanding of the the Christological pairs. The two items are "distinctive" but not a unity or asymmetric.

Even before looking into whether these are "Chalcedonian" or related to the *enhypostasis* / *anhypostasis* terminology *or extra Calvinisticum* terminology, there are a number of objections that should be made about this supposed "Christological logic" in Barth's ecclesiology.

[21] Ibid., 8.

Response to Bender's thesis that Barth's ecclesiology is "Christological"

Not all the pairs in Barth's ecclesiology are either "Christological" or heretical

It is important to note that the reader of Barth's ecclesiology cannot assume that each pair Barth uses is either an extreme heretical pair or a specially-crafted Christological pair. For example, the true church and the false church.[22] One of the items is positive, the other is not. Here, with "true church" Barth is talking about the "catholic" in the Nicene Creed's "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church. One cannot just look for dyads and assume there is a "Christological" pattern. Of course, Bender would grant this point. But the reader of Barth's ecclesiology is not helped by the advice to look for dyads since there are all sorts of different pairings.

In his ecclesiology, Barth only addresses "Docetism" by name in terms of Christological heresies to avoid in ecclesiology

Bender writes that Barth is trying to work out technically how the church can avoid certain Christological heresies. Bender says "these mistaken ecclesiological positions are construed by Barth in terms of christological heresies."[23] Bender mentions Docetism, Ebionitism, Eutychianism, Nestorianism, and Adoptionism as Christological heresies that Barth thinks must be avoided in ecclesiology. Bender names three in this passage.

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[22] Ibid., 188.

[23] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 94; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 36.

> The close affiliation between Christology and ecclesiology in Barth's thought is made evident in that these mistaken ecclesiological positions are construed by Barth in terms of christological heresies. For Barth, to consider the true church to be an invisible reality behind the visible institution, and indeed opposed to and in contradiction with it, was to succumb to a docetic ecclesiology. On the opposite side, to conceive of the church solely and purely as a histotical phenomenon and as one human society among others without regard to its grounding in the activity of the Holy Spirit as an eschatological event, was to fall into an ebionitic heresy. While Barth explicitly identified these errors as docetic and ebionitic, he also speaks implicitly of a third error: that of confusing the historical institution, life, and practices of the church with revelation itself, what might be termed a Eutychian heresy.[24]

But the only Christological heresy to appear in Barth's ecclesiology is Docetism. Bender is suggesting that one can decipher that Barth is trying to address a number of other Christological heresies in his ecclesiology but Bender does not make clear that Barth is not explicitly doing this.

Certainly Barth regularly mentions that the church is both divine and human. All theologians have to work through this when thinking about any aspect of ecclesiology, ethics, or the sacraments.

Bender's best argument would be that Barth mentions "Docetism" a number of times in his ecclesiology with terms such as "ecclesiastical Docetism" relating it to "christological Docetism."[25] But this is just shorthand for Barth. This is Barth's way of

[24] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 94; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 36. Cf. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 171.
[25] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 653, 654, 695, IV/2, 618, 712, IV/3.2, 723, 724, 868.

referring to an ecclesiology that has its head in the clouds—that is disconnected from reality.[26] This is Barth illustrating rather than deducing from a Christological formula.

In the quote above, Bender suggests that Barth was trying to address a tendency to ebionitism in ecclesiology. Much earlier in the *Church Dogmatics,* in I/2 and I/2 in the 1930's, Barth frequently refers to the two extremes "Ebionite and Docetic" or "Ebionitism and Docetism" but after the first volume he only uses "Ebionite" or "Ebionitism" three other times in the *Church Dogmatics*[27] The only time he mentions Ebionitism in his mature ecclesiology, it is with regard to Rembrandt's paintings.[28]

Note too that Bender is going to call Barth's approach "Chalcedonian" but Docetism and Ebionitism were not the dueling views at Chalcedon in 451 but are simply names for the extreme positions that were denounced between 30 and 300 AD.[29]

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[26] Here is the first use of "Docetism" with regard to ecclesiology. "There is an ecclesiastical Docetism which will not accept this, which paradoxically tries to overlook the visibility of the Church, explaining away its earthly and historical form as something indifferent, or angrily negating it, or treating it only as a necessary evil, in order to magnify an invisible fellowship of the Spirit and of spirits. This view is just as impossible as christological Docetism, not only in point of history, but also in point of substance. For the work of the Holy Spirit as the awakening power of Jesus Christ would not take place at all if the invisible did not become visible, if the Christian community did not take on and have an earthly-historical form. The individual Christian can exist only in time and space as a doer of the Word (Jas. 122) and therefore in a concrete human form and basically visible to everyone. Similarly the Christian community as such cannot exist as an ideal commune or *universum*, but—also in time and space—only in the relationship of its individual members as they are fused together by the common action of the Word which they have heard into a definite human fellowship; in concrete form, therefore, and visible to everyone." Ibid., IV/1, 653.

[27] Ibid., I/1, 403, 404, 405, 412, 421, 422, 439, 445, I/2, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 39, 117, 127, 129, 163, 177, 375, 526, II/1, 489, IV/1, 136, IV/3.2, 868.

[28] Ibid., IV/3.2, 868.

[29] Philip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*, 1st HarperCollins pbk. ed. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 43, 48.

Bender also above suggests Barth was implicitly attempting to address the Eutychian heresy or Eutychianism but Barth only mentions Eutyches or the Eutychian heresy five times in all of the *Church Dogmatics* and never in the mature ecclesiology.[30]

Bender also names a few other heresies that he thinks Barth is addressing: Monophysitism,[31] Nestorianism,[32] and Adoptionism—none of which Barth mentions in his mature ecclesiology.[33]

Bender's thesis is original

It should also be noted that Bender's thesis that Barth is trying to address Christological heresies in his ecclesiology is unprecedented. No other interpreters have suggested that Barth is specifically trying to map Christological principles onto his ecclesiology. However, as we will see below, there are many, in the 1991-2002 era when this idea was in fashion, who argued that various aspects of Barth's theology besides his Christology are "Chalcedonian."

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[30] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 7, 8, 209, 217, 283; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 94; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 36. Eutychus, Eutychian, Eutychianism: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 356, I/2, 24, 161, IV/2, 67, 68.

[31] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 5, 159. Monophysite or Monophysitism: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 608, II/1, 488, IV/2, 67.

[32] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 159, 283. For Nestorius and Nestorian or Nestorianism: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 24, 139, 340, 608, 653, 654, II/1, 489, IV/1, 181, IV/2, 67, 71, IV/3.2, 23.

[33] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 5. Adoptionism or Adoptionist: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 353, IV/1, 524; Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV.4. Lecture Fragments*, 64.

Of the five "Christological" pairs, there is obviously significant variation among them. The analogies work at only the most general level.

The last pair (of God's providence and human confusion that together exist in the world) is quite obviously descriptive rather than something desirable. That is, the world is a mix of God's presence and human goodness and fallenness.

Later Bender repeats pairs 1, 2, 4 of the five listed above.

> Barth's Christological and ecclesiological thought is, on this account, shown to be marked by a chain of correspondences: as the Word is to the flesh in Christ, so it Christ to the church, and so also is the church with Christ, the *totus Christus*, to the world (or, when spoken of in political terms, the state).[34]

The analogies (this is to that, as this is to that) work on the most general level. The divine nature of Jesus and the human nature of Jesus form a unity; Jesus the head of the body and the church as the body of Christ form a unity—the *totus Christus*; and the *totus Christus* with the world form a unity—what Bender calls "the scope of redemption."[35] The first term always precedes the latter. The divine nature precedes the human nature of Christ; Christ precedes the church; *the totus Christus* precedes the world. Bender puts it this way, "The second term can never be confused with nor take the place of the first, for the first is the reality which gives the second term its existence."[36] But the similarities in the "chain of correspondences" end quickly. How the

[34] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 151. Cf. Ibid., 9.
[35] Ibid., 151.
[36] Ibid.

divine nature and human nature of Jesus relate together is surely different from how the church and world relate together.[37]

In another article, Bender argues that Barth's understanding of "the Bible was analogous to and predicated on Barth's Chalcedonian tendencies."[38] Again, there may be valuable insights here but the more things that are said to be "Chalcedonian" the more apparent it becomes that one is speaking generally and that depending on the object being compared, there will need to be more or less adjustments.

Tracey Stout too tries to apply the Chalcedonian logic to a different sphere of theology: baptism. "The Chalcedonian emphasis on distinction within unity needs to be retained in relating Spirit-baptism to water baptism, especially in light of Barth's emphasis on the distinction between them."[39]

One begins to wonders how many things are "Chalcedonian." Again, recall at Chalcedon that the final statement was highly technical and was not at all intended to

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[37] Paul Nimo too does not think that one can just apply Christology to other areas of theology. "The material problem with a 'Chalcedonian' interpretation of the concursus thus lies in jeopardizing the uniqueness and incomparability of the incarnation and therein undermining the identity and the fallibility of the creature. Use of the term 'Chalcedonian' brings with it a particular theological meaning which lies over and above the merely formal 'Chalcedonian' pattern of asymmetry, intimacy and integrity. In this respect, the problem with attaching it as a label is one of generalizing that which cannot be generalized." Paul T. Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (2007): 68.

[38] Bender, "Scripture and Canon in Karl Barth's Early Theology," 148.

[39] Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism*, 85.

apply to other relationships behind how the two natures of Christ might be distinguished.

There is a troubling flattening to apply the incarnation to all sorts of other theological dynamics

A huge concern is whether comparing various things to Jesus does not diminish Jesus. Bender anticipates this objection and acknowledges that Jesus was unique.

> Here an initial objection might be raised and should be addressed. Barth can state the hypostatic union has no analogies . . . Barth's insistence that the hypostatic union has no analogy means that there is no analogy for the incarnation in the created order such that it be construed as merely a type or exemplification of a more fundamental union of God and humanity. The hypostatic union of Christ is unique, singular, and irreplaceable . . . The incarnation is therefore not an illustration of a more fundamental union between God and humanity . . . In this sense, the hypostatic union can truly be said to have no analogy.[40]

He goes on to say, correctly, that for Barth people cannot look at something in the world and then learn what Jesus is like. That is natural revelation contributing to a natural theology. Bender is correct that it is certainly appropriate theologically to deduce what the world is like from what we know about Jesus Christ in the sense of the special revelation of Jesus Christ is the lens to understand the world. But as Bender also knows, one must also be careful of saying this or that thing in the world has the same mix of divine and human natures as Jesus. The theologian will want to be wary of downplaying

[40] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 11.

the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Bender is aware of the fine line he is walking here. Bender writes,

> While no analogy exists for the hypostatic union in the created order, Barth does believe that this unique union serves as the source, foundation, and paradigm for all of God's ways with the world, and therefore is reflected in those relations. Make no mistake—the union of God and humanity in Christ for Barth is *sui generis* and has no true parallel. Yet, precisely because this singular relation is God's self-elected means to establish a covenant with all of creation, the incarnation is the pattern on which all other divine-human relations are predicated, though they stand on a different plan and exist only in subservience to and as shadows of this unsubstitutable event.[41]

Bender's obvious concern here not to diminish the uniqueness of the incarnation keep him from going too far by suggesting similarities among the pairs. But this also undermines Bender's whole thesis that Barth applies "Christological logic" to develop his ecclesiology. Bender's point ends up being quite insignificant. Bender merely suggests there is a unity, distinction, and asymmetry among all these pairs. That is so general as to be harmless but also not very helpful.

"Christological ecclesiology" is unclear

"Christological ecclesiology" may sound like an emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ (a witnessing ecclesiology or apocalyptic ecclesiology) whereas Bender is emphasizing the work of Christ through the church (a sacramental ecclesiology). It is understandable that some would think that a "Christological" ecclesiology focuses on turning attention to

[41] Ibid., 11-12.

Jesus Christ—an ecclesiology that emphasizes Christ. Indeed, Barth says that is what the church is to do: to point to Jesus Christ as John the Baptist did. But Bender is not emphasizing by "Christological ecclesiology" that the church is primarily a witnessing church.

There are others who have an understanding of Barth's ecclesiology based on his *Römerbrief* from the 1920's rather than his mature ecclesiology of the 1950's. They stress the "infinite qualitative distinction" between Christ and the church. For them, in this way, Barth's ecclesiology is Christological. Christ overwhelms the ecclesiology. One cannot say ecclesiology before naming Christ first. But again, this is not what Bender is saying. Bender's ecclesiology is not an apocalyptic ecclesiology.

Instead, Bender is rather arguing that Barth's ecclesiology is almost a Catholic ecclesiology in the sense of attributing an extremely high view of the church to Barth—arguing that these dogmatic formulae resolve the concerns of the Sacramental interpreters. Bender is arguing that what can be said about Christ can also to some extent be said about the church.

Bender admits for Barth Christological logic is useful for grammar not ontology

Bender calls the "Christological logic" of unity, distinction and asymmetry the "underlying grammar" of Barth's ecclesiology.[42] Later, however, Bender mentions parenthetically that for Barth the ontology was not transferrable, just the grammar. "Barth's deep appreciation for Chalcedonian Christology witnessed to his conviction that it served as a unique norm for the church; it could be abandoned only at great peril (though here, too, what Barth found of lasting significance was not its ancient ontology but its grammar)."[43] Bender does not explain what he means here exactly about grammar not ontology but Bender himself admits that Barth is only using the Christological logic in a limited way.

In the revised version of this article, Bender cites here a footnote with Barth's very strong critique of the technical Christological language as reductionary. Barth insists that the Christological formulations are too colorless and formal to tell us what is most important about Jesus Christ. It is fine to use them as parameters but they are really only a starting point. Barth writes,

> The consequences of abstraction at this point can never be good. We must not forget that if in the doctrinal decisions of Nicaea and Constantinople and Ephesus and Chalcedon it was a matter of the being of Jesus Christ as such, these

[42] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28.
[43] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 108; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 54.

> decisions had a polemical and critical character, their purpose being to delimit and clarify at a specific point. They are to be regarded as guiding lines for an understanding of His existence and action, not to be used, as they have been used, as stones for the construction of an abstract doctrine of His "person." In Himself and as such the Christ of Nicaea and Chalcedon naturally was and is a being which even if we could consistently and helpfully explain His unique structure conceptually could not possibly be proclaimed and believed as One who acts historically because of the timelessness and historical remoteness of the concepts (person, nature, Godhead, manhood, etc.). He could not possibly be proclaimed and believed as the One whom in actual fact the Christian Church has always and everywhere proclaimed and believed under the name of Jesus Christ. An abstract doctrine of the person of Christ may have its own apparent importance, but it is always an empty form, in which what we have to say concerning Jesus Christ can never be said.[44]

As we will see, Bruce McCormack also cites this passage from Barth in his critique of the "Chalcedonian" pattern.[45] Even with regard to Christology, Barth thinks the formula from Chalcedon serve only a limited purpose and can give a problematically dry and abstract picture of Jesus.

Unity, distinction, and asymmetry can be pointed out about an infinite number of items

It is worth pointing out that there are an infinite number of items that could be paired and said to have a unity, be distinctive, and have an asymmetry. Cheese pizza and pepperoni? A head and legs? Plant and leaves? The Christological controversies were far far more technical in how the two natures of Christ related. George Hunsinger briefly associates his three word summary with the Chalcedonian formula.

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[44] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 127.
[45] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 202.

> The Chalcedonian pattern, formally speaking, is a pattern of unity ("without separation or division"), differentiation ("without confusion or change"), and asymmetry (the unqualified conceptual precedence of the divine over the human nature of Jesus Christ).[46]

But an understanding of this depends entirely on the heresies this was intended to preclude as well as biblical exegesis surrounding Jesus. The major argument at Chalcedon was whether there was indeed a distinction in the unity. The final wording hedged with something of a paradox rather than conceptual neatness: "two natures . . . without division."[47] This is not meant as a criticism of the Chalcedonian solution but it should make people wary of deducing further logical insights from this concept. The concept itself is not logical and clear. Language has enough difficulty trying to put into words the marvel of Jesus Christ. Paul Nimmo puts it this way in his criticism of the use of the phrase "Chalcedonian" by George Hunsinger and others.

> It seems to be at best historically unclear, particularly in the period immediately after the Symbol was promulgated, that there was ever a single recognizable or positively defined 'Chalcedonian' position after which a corresponding pattern might be named.[48]

Asymmetry was not what Chalcedon was addressing

Hunsinger says that one of the key aspects of the "Chalcedonian pattern" is "asymmetry (the unqualified conceptual precedence of the divine over the human

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[46] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, 85.
[47] Mark W. Elliott, "Chalcedon, Council of (451)," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 124-125; Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*, 214.
[48] Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," 64.

nature of Jesus Christ)."[49] While this may be a logic that is pervasive in Barth's ecclesiology, there is no clear reason why Hunsinger (and Bender following him) label it "Chalcedonian." Hunsinger (and Bender) repeatedly argue that the "Chalcedonian pattern" means to read the phrase "complete in deity and complete in humanity" in the Chalcedonian definition with the qualification "The relationship posited by 'and' in the latter formula is to be interpreted asymmetrically."[50] But this seems a dubious addition. Hunsinger similarly writes unconvincingly about the same phrase, "The Chalcedonian pattern . . . 'complete in deity and complete in humanity' means no symmetrical relationship can be posited between divine and human actions (or better, not that is not asymmetrical)."[51] The emphasis at Chalcedon was on the unity of the natures (and that they also could theoretically be distinguished) not the superiority of the divine nature.

It is true that Barth clearly operates with this "asymmetry" between God and human beings—recall the "infinite qualitative distinction between God and Man" in the *Römerbrief* but there is no reason to call this "Chalcedonian."

[49] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, 85.
[50] Ibid., 216.
[51] Ibid., 204.

Unity, distinction, and asymmetry are obviously ecclesiological than Christological

Bender rightly says that Barth's ecclesiology is characterized by "a unity, a differentiation, and an asymetrical relation."[52] The unity is between Christ and the church—though these remain separate (differentiated), and Christ is superior to the church (asymmetry). All theologians assert these things about the church. The Church Fathers had to do far more work to depict how Christ's natures are a unity, a differentiation, and asymmetrical.

Unity, distinction, and asymmetry are biblical rather than Christological

All of this could be deduced from just part of one verse: "Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Eph 5:23b). Christ is connected to the church. They are unified. But they are still different entities. And they are not equals. Christ is superior.

Unity, distinction, and asymmetry tell us only very generally about Barth's ecclesiology

These words give very general foundations but it is hard to see how these clarify hundreds of pages of Barth's ecclesiology, in which he deals with the church's global, sin-plagued, diverse, and changing aspects (§62); and what the people of God are to do

[52] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 29.

when they gather (§67); and how they are to interact with the world (§72). To understand Barth's ecclesiology, his mature ecclesiology sections have to be read. One cannot just boil it down to a few overarching concepts. Barth is trying to take into account the biblical depiction of what it means to be part of the people of God.

Barth does not reason "Christologically" from a creedal formula

Bender's thesis is best illustrated by his quoting Barth saying "All ecclesiology is grounded, critically limited, but also positively determined by Christology."[53] Bender elsewhere includes the whole paragraph where this quote is found.[54] It continues "and this applies in respect of the particular statement which here concerns us, namely, that the Church exists for the world."[55] Here Barth is informally referring to "Christology" rather than technically. Barth is referring to the fact that the church learns its purpose by looking at Jesus' purpose. Barth is saying that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and therefore the task of the church should also be "witness." Bender also sees this and comes close here to missionary emphasis of this dissertation. "Moreover, the church is defined not solely but its self-constituting practices (as its by the Augsburg Confession,

[53] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 786; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 162; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89.
[54] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 88; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 26.
[55] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 786.

for example), but by its missionary and evangelistic task."[56] But Bender does not make clear that Barth is not deducing from a creedal formulae about Christ to understand the church. This is a biblical exegetical insight by Barth, not a deduction from the Chalcedon solution.

Barth regularly does use the phrase the "christologico-ecclesiological" (concept of the community) but Barth merely means that because Christ is the Head of the church, the church should obey Jesus.[57]

Bender himself writes that Barth's Christology is not closely drawing on the creeds.

> Barth's Christology in the doctrine of reconciliation preserves both his classical Patristic and Chalcedonian commitments while also setting them within a dynamic and historically-grounded framework. This Christology is simultaneously traditional and radical, displaying both the deep continuity and ongoing development in Barth's thought. It respectfully adheres to the Christology of the creeds, yet it also criticizes Chalcedonian Christology for its emphasis upon "being" rather than upon the "work" of Christ and its proclivity toward abstraction when shorn from Christ's history and activity (*Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 127-128).[58]

When discussing the structure of dogmatics, Barth does make the point that it is a problem that typically Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology have been separated. Barth says that in the New Testament, Christology is not a separate topic but rather

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[56] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 87; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 27.
[57] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 679, 680, 681, 689, 695.
[58] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 160.

interspersed with other practical topics.[59] If Christology gets separated from these other doctrines, it is seen as irrelevant.[60] Christology is relevant to these other areas of theology.[61] But Barth is not here making the point that ecclesiology needs to be more determined by creedal formulae from Christology, but rather that dogmaticians have made Christology irrelevant by focusing on the makeup of Christ's person rather than his work.[62]

Barth's solution is not applying Christology to ecclesiology but instead novel integration. In volume IV with regard to the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth notes the earlier dogmatic tradition of treating the two natures of Christ (with regard to the person of Jesus Christ) and the *munus triplex* of king, priest, and prophet (with regard to

[59] "It is then customary to leave the Christology and to develop a special doctrine of the subjective application and appropriation of the salvation objectively accomplished by Jesus Christ, and finally a doctrine of the Church and the means of grace as the mediation between Christ and the Christian . . . In the New Testament there are many christological statements both direct and indirect. But where do we find a special Christology? . . . And at what point do the New Testament writers leave their Christology behind? At what point does it not constantly advance in the form of new insights concerning both God and man?" Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 124.

[60] "On the other hand, soteriology and ecclesiology either as a doctrine of the grace and justification and sanctification which comes to us or simply as a doctrine of Christian piety can never escape the tendency to commend itself in relation to Christology, and ultimately to free itself from it, as that which is true and essential, as that which is of practical importance and necessity, as that which is 'existentially relevant.' And at a pinch can we not omit and dispense with Christology altogether as a doctrine of the being and work of Christ as such?" Ibid.

[61] "What is said about Jesus Christ Himself, the christological propositions as such, are constitutive, essential, necessary and central in the Christian doctrine of reconciliation." Ibid., IV/1, 125.

[62] "it is our task not to separate what we have to say particularly about Jesus Christ but to bring it into immediate connexion with what He is not for Himself but for us." Ibid., IV/1, 125-126.

the work of Jesus Christ) but instead develops the framework of Jesus as Servant and Lord.[63]

Barth's ecclesiology is not constrained by dogmatic formulae

Barth never mentions Chalcedon with regard to ecclesiology.[64] Barth does not defend himself by appeals to what is orthodox but rather is interested in what is biblical. Barth is occasionally spurred to address questions posed to him by the history of dogmatics such as "the invisiblility and visibility of the church," the "communion of the saints," what "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" means. But this is not where Barth is most passionate. He often concludes these investigations with the conclusion that these are the wrong questions to ask and the wrong way to characterize the biblical material. Instead, he spends most of his space and enthusiasm expositing biblical topics: what it means to be the body of Christ, how Jesus gathers his disciples, how the church edifies one another, and how God's people are sent into the world.

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[63] "The correct titles for these first two sections will be 'Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant' and 'Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord.' We shall still follow the traditional path to the extent that in content and meaning this division corresponds exactly to what earlier dogmatics worked out as the doctrine of the high-priestly and kingly office of Christ (in the framework of that doctrine of the threefold office of Christ in which they used to picture His work). I prefer the first two titles [Lord and Servant] as more precise and also more comprehensive (since they also include the earlier doctrine of the person of Christ)." Ibid., IV/1, 135.

[6464] Nimmo makes the same point. "It should be noted from the outset that the term 'Chalcedonian' itself is never used by Barth in connection with the relationship between divine action and human action."Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," 68.

Barth is not deriving his ecclesiology from Christology but rather saying the Church is derivative of Christ.

Barth does not derive or deduce his ecclesiology from Christology. But Barth does say that the church cannot exist without Christ. In this sense, the church depends on Jesus. Barth says the church exists "in Jesus Christ from whom it [the church] derives."[65]

Christology is not decisive even for Bender

Bender does not often draw conclusions based on the Christological significance of Barth's ecclesiology. In the analysis of the secondary literature, Bender does not argue that Christological formulations sort out the different opinions. Bender does fine analytical work but he rarely claims to have found Christological solutions.

Bender's Christological logic

Bender argues there are three main elements of Barth's Christological logic: (1) Chalcedonian, (2a) *enhypostasia* / *anhypostasia* formula applied to ecclesiology), (b2) Reformed christo-ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum* interpretation, (3) correspondence related to *analogia fidei.* The final item "correspondence" certainly is a useful concept (emphasized by John Webster) in understanding Barth's ecclesiology though it is not particularly "Christological."

[65] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 721.

Christological ecclesiology Part 1: Chalcedonian

First, Bender notes that he is drawing upon what George Hunsinger calls the "basic Chalcedonian character" of Barth's Christology.[66] Hunsinger argues that not only is this Christological pattern present in Barth's Christology but it is also decipherable throughout Barth's theology.[67] Through his book *How to Read Karl Barth*, other articles, leadership in the Karl Barth Society of North America, and influence as a professor and advisor at Princeton Theological Seminary, George Hunsinger's suggestion that this "Chalcedonian" pattern is present throughout Barth's theology has been very influential on Barth studies.[68] The argument by Hunsinger is that this "Chalcedonian pattern" can be seen if one looks hard enough. "At times, 'the great pattern' of the Incarnation is invoked so explicitly that Barth's deliberate use of the terms cannot be missed (III/3, 247). At other times the use of the pattern is wholly implicit, but still discernible if one knows to watch for it."[69] Bender has in turn promoted this idea with regard to Barth's

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[66] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character."; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character."

[67] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 29. Earlier version: Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89.

[68] Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 103, 107, 110, 172; Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God*, 57-58.

[69] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*, 186. Paul Louis Metzger in a book published in 2003 draws heavily on a a similar passage from later in the book where Hunsinger says "both the Chalcedonian and trinitarian formal patterns . . . describes all relations more generally between God and the world." Ibid., 237-238. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 54-56. Metzger too though admits that strictly speaking this technical language only properly fits Jesus Christ. "This claim is reserved to the humanity of Christ alone. Following on from this, other humans are human persons. Technically speaking, Christ is not." Ibid., 57. A sentence later however

ecclesiology. However, as argued above, there is very little explicit evidence that Barth is applying Christology to ecclesiology and he certainly never says explicitly that his ecclesiology is "Chalcedonian."

Since Bender's original dissertation in 2002 there has been significant questioning whether "Chalcedonian" is the right term to use for Barth's Christology. This makes it even more doubtful that Barth is applying the Chalcedonian logic to other areas of theology. One wonders whether Bender's comments related to the "Chalcedonian pattern" in his 2002 dissertation—on which Bruce McCormack was a member—was part of the impetus that led McCormack in 2002 to begin to explore whether indeed this was the right terminology.[70] McCormack later published the article in English in 2008.[71] Bender quotes his advisor Daniel Migliore from 2000 regarding Barth's "regulative

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Metzger says "Having said this, it is maintained that for Barth, Christological and Trinitarian categories come to serve as the basis for understanding all other patterns of relation between God and the world and Christ and culture by means of analogical extensions." Ibid. But immediately Metzger also realizes again the problem with systematizing such dynamics. "Barth's doctrine of the dialectical Word confronts system." Ibid., 65. Rather than either dialectic or system is the conclusion from the exegesis of 1 Peter that the church is to respond to culture in a variety of ways. Miroslav Volf writes, "the 'world' does not seem a monolithic place in 1 Peter . . . there is no single proper way for Christians to relate to a given culture as a whole. Instead, there are numerous ways of accepting, rejecting, subverting or transforming various aspects of a culture which itself is a complex pattern of symbols, beliefs, values, practices and organizations that are partly congruent with one another and partly contradictory." Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex auditu* 10, (1994): 26, 27. Yes, Christ is the priority and lens for all this reflection on culture but Chalcedonian formula is not needed for such a conclusion. Barth himself does not use it.

[70] Bruce L. McCormack, "Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?," *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 18, no. 2 (2002).

[71] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?."

Chalcedonian Christology."[72] Hunsinger had pioneered the phrasing in 1991 in his *How to Read Karl Barth* and defended it further in an article published in 2000.[73] The title of his 2000 article "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian character" was specifically phrased to oppose the 1984 book, entitled *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character*.[74] The point is that from 1991 to 2002, this "Chalcedonian" pattern was popular to some extent in the study of Barth. Bender wrote his dissertation during this time. Nathan Kerr, publishing his book in 2008, also cites the "Chalcedonian Christology" of Barth as described by Hunsinger.[75]

McCormack grants that early in the *Church Dogmatics* in I/2 Barth is operating in a way that is more clearly along the lines of the Chalcedonian formula. The problem was not the content of Chalcedon but the kind of abstract, metaphysical, and philosophal reasoning that leaves the impression of Jesus as dissected into parts rather than being depicted with stories as we see in the Gospels. McCormack says in I/2

> the ontology which comes to expression in his treatment of the incarnation is, for the most part, the abstract metaphysical ontology which underwrote the Christology of the Chalcedonian Council. Granted, this lapse into metaphysical

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[72] Bender also quotes his advisor Daniel Migliore about Barth's "regulative Chalcedonian Christology" but Migliore references Hunsinger. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 205; Daniel L. Migliore, "Vinculum Pacis: Karl Barths Theologie des Heiligen Geistes," *Evangelische Theologie* 60, no. 2 (2000): 135.
[73] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character."; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character."
[74] Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin; New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984). cited by Hunsinger in Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 141; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 137. The Waldrop book is not mentioned in *How to Read Karl Barth* (1991).
[75] Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 73-74.

> thinking is exceptional in Barth's theology even at this time. Already there were strong indications that he would like to revise this ontology.[76]

Later Barth became more wary of this kind of reasoning so instead described divine and human natures of Jesus Jesus as Lord and Servant. Therefore, it is "misleading" to call Barth's mature Christology "Chalcedonian." McCormack says "we mislead ourselves and others where we speak simply of Barth's 'Chalcedonian' Christology or even only of Barth's 'basically Chalcedonian' Christology."[77] Hunsinger argues that there has been less change in Barth's Christology whereas McCormack argues there was something of a break in II/2. But this theological feud need not be resolved before the issue of "Chalcedonian" is addressed.

As McCormack points out, even Hunsinger is hardly rigorous in applying some sort of Christological logic. "Hunsinger effectively departs from the definition of 'any Chalcedonian Christology that is true to type' that he has been at pains to elaborate and leaves it out of [his] account."[78]

Instead, Hunsinger writes that Barth tends to use a variety of Scriptural images. "The proper way to be Chalcedonian in Christology, Barth believed, was to follow the lead of the New Testament itself by employing a definite diversity of idioms."[79] This

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[76] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 207.
[77] Ibid., 201, 222.
[78] Ibid., 222. citing Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 133.
[79] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 135. This phrasing is not in but is similar to that in: Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 128-132.

sentence seems to undermine Hunsinger's point that Barth is somehow employing the formulations of Chalcedon. Under close examination, Hunsinger's suggestion that Barth's Christology is "Chalcedonian" is quite modest. He is trying to say that Barth is not "non-Chalcedonian." And he repeatedly admits that he is making a technical case.

> No brief essay such as this could possibly sort through all the relevant texts and all the relevant issues, which are often finally quite technical, in order to demonstrate that the charges against Barth for being non-Chalcedonian do not stand up. Only some fairly general points of clarification and orientation can be offered. [80]

Paul Dafyyd Jones, who does delve into Barth's Christology, writes in 2008 that Hunsinger is correct that Barth regularly throughout his theology explores the problem of human and divine action. But Jones argues that Barth hardly uses the Chalcedonian solution to address this problem.

> Hunsinger is astute in identifying a 'Chalcedonian pattern' that pervades Barth's later work and informs Barth's sophisticated appreciation for the concurrence of divine and human action. However, Barth's attitude to the Definition is more complex than Hunsinger and other commentators have realized[81]

Instead of drawing on a Chalcedonian grammar, Barth addresses the divine human action problem with an actualistic framework and Scriptural considerations.

> Such circumspection vis-à-vis Chalcedon, which endures throughout the Dogmatics, highlights two of Barth's abiding concerns: ensuring that scripture,

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[80] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 130; Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," 135.
[81] Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 18.

> not abstract categories, funds christological reflection and conceptualizing Christ's person and work in actualistic terms.[82]

Barth's Christology is only in the most general sense "Chalcedonian."

> Hunsinger does not wrestle sufficiently with the fact that Barth, even as he makes positive use of Chalcedon, effectively discards the language of 'nature' in his mature Christology. For while Barth endorses the gist of a hallowed benchmark for christological reflection, his own Christology bears a more idiosyncratic character than the Chalcedonian label suggests, involving a quiet eschewal of a key element of the Definition's conceptual apparatus.[83]

Again, perhaps Hunsinger would be content with Jones's modest conclusion that Barth's Christology is not non-Chalcedonian. Hunsinger himself emphasizes that Barth's theology is actualistic and Scriptural. Needless to say however there are big question marks about Barth's ecclesiology being called "Chalcedonian" when not even his Christology is strikingly so.[84]

Christological ecclesiology Part 2a: *enhypostasia / anhypostasia* formula

Second, Bender says that Barth's ecclesiology is Christological because Barth is drawing on the *enhypostatsis* / *anhypostasis* terminology. "Barth's anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christological formula when applied to ecclesiology preserves both the

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 28.

[84] Paul Nimmo also thinks the "Chalcedonian" terminology is not helpful. "For the historical, material and methodological reservations articulated above, it is not clear that using the term 'Chalcedonian' to describe the relationship between divine action and human action in the Church Dogmatics is either fully justified or entirely helpful." Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," 72.

integrity of the church and its activity on the one hand, and the superiority and uniqueness of Christ on the other."[85] Bender explains that with regard to Christology "The negative assertion (expressed by the *anhypostasis*) is that the human nature of Christ has no independent existence apart from the Word in the incarnation."[86] In other words, Jesus Christ was not a human body that God adopted. Applied to ecclesiology, neither is the church a people that God belatedly claims. With regard to Christology, "The positive assertion (expressed by the *enhypostasis*) is that the human nature does have a real, true, and complete existence in the Word."[87] In other words, Jesus' flesh was not detrimental to his existence as God. Similarly, the church's humanness is not inherently disqualifying. Bender says that the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christological formula rules out "the church and its action . . . seen as a substitute for Christ."[88] In other words, Barth emphasizes that the church cannot exist without Christ.

Preview of the problems of applying enhypostasis / anhypostasis to ecclesiology.

However, there are a number of problems with this move. Here is a preview of these issues before a longer explanation of all of these points in detail. Note how elementary the points that are made if one applies the enhypostatis / anhypostasis to

[85] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 91.
[86] Ibid., 90.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

ecclesiology. With Christ, human beings can be the church. Without Christ's presence, the church does not exist. These points are important but they are absolutely foundational to any ecclesiology, not just Barth's. And no ecclesiological differences among denominations are resolved. This point can be pointed out through use of basic Scripture passages. "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Another point is that Barth does not himself make this move of applying the anhypostasis / enhypostasis to ecclesiology except for one off-hand comment. Furthermore, the *anhypostasis* is just a theoretical concept. Applied to ecclesiology, it means that without Christ, a people are a non-church. The emphasis is on the *enhypostasis*. The presence of Christ produces a church. Moreover, the problem is that the "enhypostatic" terminology in Christology implies the divine and human natures of Jesus operating in tandem reliably and permanently; whereas Barth has a more dynamic "actualistic" view of how the divine Spirit and the church operate. Therefore, stressing the church as "enhypostatic" distorts Barth's predominant description of the church's relationship to the divine. Finally, this is technical vocabulary that emerged mostly after Chalcedon and is not part of the Chalcedonian definition.

So why does Bender take up the terminology? As we will see, T. F. Torrance writes in 1990 that he urged Barth to do so and Torrance thinks Barth took the advice. Marquardt had suggested this direction much earlier. Bender's dissertation in 2002

coincided with Reinhard Hütter using this terminology between 1993-2004 and Paul Louis Metzger in 2003. Other people have followed Bender's lead and applied it to ecclesiology including Andy Alexis-Baker in 2011. Bender does not seem to have noticed the objections to this move by others prior to this time: Balthasar, Hermann Diem, Yoder. More opposition to this move has appeared after Bender's work: McCormack and Healy (2004). Below these points will be investigated more thoroughly.

Barth's use of the terms enhypostasis / anhypostasis in Christology

It should be said at the outset in defense of Bender and the others who use this move that the usage of the Greek word ἐνυπόστατος (*enhypostatos)* as an adjective has a complicated and incoherent history.[89] Many however have been led astray by Barth's comment that, "What we thereby express is a doctrine unanimously sponsored by early theology in its entirety, that of the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* of the human nature of Christ."[90] Historical theologians make two immediate observations about Barth's comment here. If Barth wanted to talk about the history of theology, he should have used the adjectives ἐνυπόστατος (*enhypostatos)* and ἀνυπόστατος (*anhypostatos*). He does use this form twice elsewhere.[91] But here Barth uses the noun forms *enhypostasis* /

[89] Benjamin Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus* (Boston: Brill, 2012).
[90] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 163.l
[91] Ibid., I/2, 163, IV/1, 59.

anhypostasis (Plural: *enhypostasia* / *anhypostasia*); (German: *Enhypostasie* / *Anhypostasie*) [92] which apparently were not used until 1618 and 1624.[93] So Barth's very first comment about the "*anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*" in "early theology in its entirety" is immediately incorrect.

Barth is probably drawing on some seventeenth century theologians who used the noun forms. But Barth is also not consistent in following the seventeenth century usuage. These seventeenth century theologians just talked about the *anhypostasis*.[94] They did not talk about *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* as a pair. So initially it appears that Barth does not know what he is talking about or is being original. Uwe M. Lang writes, "If there is indeed anything like a 'dual formula' anhypostasis-enhypostasis, it is Barth's own innovation rather than that of Protestant orthodoxy."[95] Most likely though Barth is drawing on seventeenth century Protestant writers who themselves were quite conversant in the Church Fathers and Barth was combining ideas from both.[96]

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[92] enhypostasis, enhypostasia ibid., I/2, 163, 164, 167, 170, 193, 194, III, 2, 270, IV/2, 49, 50, 53, 91. anhypostasis, anhypostsia ibid., I/2, 163, 164, 216, III/2, 70, IV/2, 49, 50, 53, 91. German: Enhypostasie Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, I/2, 178, 180, 182, 185, 211, 213, III/2, 81, IV/1, 53, 56, 100. Anhypostasie ibid., I/2, 178, 180, 236, III/2, 81, IV/1, 52, 53, 57, 100. Barth, The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion, 90, 157, 163.

[93] Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*, 3-4.

[94] "anhypostasis-enhypostasis as a christological formula cannot be found in any of the Church Fathers. It is noteworthy, however, that anhypostasis—enhypostasis as a 'dual formula' is not found in Protestant orthodoxy either." Uwe Michael Lang, "Anhypostatos-Enhypostatos: Church Fathers, Protestant Orthodoxy and Karl Barth," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1998): 630.

[95] Ibid., 632.

[96] Uwe M. Lang, however argues that Barth was fortunate to be drawing on some excellent resources. Ibid. Barth's source appears to be the Reformed theologian Heinrich Heppe. Heinrich Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche*, ed. Ernst Bizer, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958); Heinrich

But besides these grammatical inconsistencies about the adjective and noun, and singular and pair use, Barth does end up using the terminology in the two ways that it has been used historically. Benjamin Gleede discerns two main subtle ways ἐνυπόστατος has been used. Gleede associates the first way with the Trinitarian controversy about whether Jesus was always God or became God. The second way is used regarding the Christological controversy determining whether Jesus was one or two natures. Admittedly, there is some overlap here and that both have to do with Jesus and thus are generally "Christological."

The first way the terminology was used was in the Trinitarian debates of the fourth and fifth century, where ἐνυπόστατος means the "real" (divine/human nature of Christ)—as contrasted with the "nonexistent" (independent human nature of Christ). This stresses the divinity of Christ and downplays Adoptionism.[97] Barth seems to stress

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Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out and Illustrated From the Sources with Foreword by Karl Barth*, trans., G. T. Thomson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978); Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 164, IV/2, 49, 52, 68. Barth critically draw on Lutheran theologians Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688) and David Hollaz (1648-1713) who Lang says were conscientious about drawing upon John of Damascus ("Damascene") (675-749) who Barth also cites. Ibid., I/2, 163-165. Lang says Damascene was an accurate compiler of earlier Patristic resources. Therefore, Barth's reference to "earlier writers" and "earlier Christology" is not altogether inaccurate. LeRon Shults worries that Barth is drawing on flawed resources. F. LeRon Shults, "A Dubious Christological Formula from Leontius of Byzantium to Karl Barth," *Theological Studies* 57, no. 3 (1996); F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 140-162. But Gleede, Gockel, and Lang all argue that by reading John of Damascus, Barth is indeed getting a good sense of the terminology. Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*; Matthias Gockel, "A Dubious Christological Formula?: Leontius of Byzantium and the anhypostasis-enhypostasis Theory," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 51, no. 2 (2000). Paul Louis Metzger also explores this debate among Shults and Lang. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 38-39, Cf. 45-47, 88, 92.

[97] Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*, 183..

this point in IV/2, Jesus' human nature "is not 'a man,' i.e., one of many who existed."[98] The overall argument here is that Jesus is far more than some man who was adopted. Jesus is a person of the Trinity. This is part of the Trinitarian debate discussion. Barth later refers to Docetism (part of the Trinitarian controversy) that with this argument stressing Jesus' divinity, inevitably someone will think that the terminology diminishes Jesus' humanity.[99] Barth acknowledges this possibility but still thinks the terminology is useful.[100]

The second way the terminology was used was later in the Christological debates, where ἐνυπόστατος means the "hypostatically realized" (human nature of Christ) —as contrasted with (merely human) "hypostasis", which stresses the unity of the two natures and downplays Nestorianism.[101] Barth seems to stress this latter point in I/2. "the utter uniqueness of this unity . . . The aim of this doctrine, erected into dogma at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 . . . was to guard against the idea of a

[98] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 49.l; ibid.
[99] "The objection has often been raised against this theologoumenon [*anhypostasis*] that it seems perhaps, by what it questions, and with the *enhypostasis* indirectly maintained by it (the identity of the existence of the man Jesus with that of the Son of God), to involve at an important point a denial of His true humanity, a concealed or even blatant Docetism, since it must obviously belong to the true humanity of Jesus Christ that He should have an independent existence as a man like us." Ibid., IV/2, 49.
[100] "This [human] existence is not denied to the man Jesus, but ascribed to Him with the positive concept of *enhypostasis*. But it is hard to see how the full truth of the humanity of Jesus Christ is qualified or even destroyed by the fact that as distinct from us He is also a real man only as the Son of God, so that there can be no question of a peculiar and autonomous existence of His humanity." Ibid.
[101] Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*, 184.

double existence of Christ as Logos and as Man."[102] The overall argument here is that Jesus is not double-minded with a divine and human natures that struggle within him. Jesus is a unity. This is part of the Christological debate discussion.

Barth's use of the *enhypostasia* / *anhypostasia* language with regard to ecclesiology

The strongest argument in favor of Bender's reading of Barth's ecclesiology through the *enhypostasis* / *anhypostasis* language is that Barth himself twice mentions it.[103] But like his reference to ecclesiological Docetism, it is in passing as an illustration rather than as a deduction from Christology. In both cases, Barth seems to refer to the Trinitarian debates not the Christological controversies because in both cases Barth emphasizes the futility, even non-existence, of the church without Christ.

In I/2, Barth writes,

> We might say that it [the Church] corresponds to the *anhypostasis* of Christ's human nature. By its inmost nature the Church is forbidden to want independence of Jesus Christ, or sovereignty in thought or action. If it did, it would relapse into the unjustified and unsanctified nature from which it is withdrawn in Christ.[104]

[102] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 163.l

[103] Paul Nimmo is incorrect that Barth never does it. "A similar example would be the use of the technical terms *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* in the definition and description of matters non-christological, despite the fact that, in the *Church Dogmatics* at least, Barth himself never uses these terms outwith his Christology." Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," 71.

[104] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 216.

This seems to be the more Trinitarian interpretation rather than the Christological one. Barth is not so much arguing that the church and Christ have the same mind but rather than the church cannot exist without Christ.

Barth is illustrating, not deducing from a formula. Without Christ, you can do nothing. Barth is simply making the point that the Church does not exist apart from Christ—this is a point he never tires of making.

In the second case in IV/2, Barth uses the Greek adjectives ἀνυπόστατος [*anhypostatically*] and ἐνυπόστατος [*enhypostatically*] (which is more in keeping with the early Trinitarian tradition to use the adjectives together as pairs).

> It is of human essence—for the Church is not of divine essence like its Head. But it does not exist in independence of Him. It is not itself the Head, nor does it become such. But it exists (ἀνυπόστατος and ἐνυπόστατος) in and in virtue of His existence.[105]

This is another Trinitarian debate usage of the terminology. The negative statement (*anhypostatos)*: The church does not truly exist unless it is connected to Jesus Christ. But happily (*enhypostatos*), the church does indeed exist when it is filled with the Holy Spirit. Barth's emphasis is on the neediness of the church. Furthermore, these brief references are certainly not a major source of the content of Barth's ecclesiology.

[105] Ibid., IV/2, 59.

Han Urs von Balthasar rejects the resolution of ecclesiology via Christological categories

As we have seen, Balthasar considers whether Barth should resolve questions about the church by superimposing the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* categories on it[106] and he says Barth rightly chooses to resist this move because the same things about Jesus cannot be said about the church.[107]

Thomas F. Torrance

Kimlyn Bender draws his understanding of the formula from T. F. Torrance. Torrance sees that indeed Barth is using the formula with regard to Trinitarian and Christological debates and Torrance distinguishes these.

> As Barth used it . . . this was a technically precises way of speaking of the reality, wholeness and integrity of the human nature of Jesus Christ in the incarnation, without lapsing into adoptionism, and of speaking of its perfect oneness with the divine nature of Christ without lapsing into monophysitism.[108]

But Bender does not seem to have noticed this distinction.

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[106] "Some might see the urgency of these questions but hold that there is a way out: the distinction between the *anhypostasis* and the *enhypostasis* of the human nature in Christ. When we speak of the Church, does this distinction not prove its utility? Is this not the actual model for a 'body' whose head is another, namely, God? Is the notion of *anhypostasis* not precisely what we need to uncouple Catholic authority, papacy, sacraments that work *ex opere operato* and every other form of Catholic works-righteousness and attempt to lay hold of God?" Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation (Rev. Ed.)*, 106.
[107] "But to anticipate the answer, the *anhypostasis* remains the exclusive prerogative of the Redeemer, as Barth himself admits. This is so because Christ is precisely a divine subject and in no way a 'schema' according to which we may conceive the relation of creature to God. For Barth, an ecclesiology or theological ethic based on using the *anhypostasis* as an ideal for redeemed man would erase the distance that divides the divine subject from all human subjects." Ibid. Drawing on: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 162.
[108] Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 200. quoted by Bender Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 4-5.

As noted above, Bender notes that he is drawing on Thomas F. Torrance's understanding of the couplet. In the 1930's and 1940's, Torrance writes that he was fascinated by Barth's early comments from *Göttingen Dogmatics* (1927) and from *Church Dogmatics* I/2 (1938) about the *anhypostasia* / *enhypostasia* couplet. But Torrance's passion is to apply this beyond the incarnation to other areas of theology.

> In particular I was gripped by the way in which he [Barth] resurrected and deployed the theological couplet *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* to throw into sharp focus 'the inner logic of grace' (as I called it) embodied in the incarnation, with reference to which not least as it had taken paradigmatic shape in the Virgin Birth of Jesus, all the ways and works of God in his interaction with us in space and time may be given careful formulation.[109]

Torrance thinks the terminology "throws into sharp focus" other areas of theology. Torrance appropriates it and calls it a "a logic." It is "paradigmatic" for "all the ways and works of God in his interaction with us." Torrance himself goes on to do just this. "My own appropriation of this double concept confirmed and deepened my determination to work out more fully the scientific substructure of Christian dogmatics."[110]

Torrance reports that in correspondence with Barth while Barth was writing IV/2, he urged Barth apply the formula to ecclesiology.

> I recall him asking me, in the course of his work on the second half-volume, how I thought he should answer the Roman dogma of the Assumption of Mary. I suggested that he might work out more fully the implications especially of the

[109] Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 125.
[110] Ibid. T. F. Torrance in 1954, "we may seek cautiously to apply the conceptions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* to the Church." Torrance, "The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," 254.

> *enhypostasia* for the doctrine of the Church as the Body of the risen and ascended Christ, pointing out to him that unlike Calvin he had not yet given corresponding attention to a realist understanding of the Church in its union with Christ. Although he may have already planned it Barth certainly made room in subsequent sections of *Church Dogmatics* IV for a realist doctrine of the Church along these lines.[111]

Torrance notes that he is not certain it was because of his urging but Barth did use the terminology. As we have seen, Barth does mention the formula in IV/2. But it is very hard to argue that this was a significant part of his Christology, let alone his ecclesiology where only two brief references are made in all of the *Church Dogmatics*, and none in the mature ecclesiology sections. Torrance was projecting his own passion (which had been inspired by Barth) onto Barth.

John Howard Yoder's concern with Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt emphasizing the enhypostasis

In 1978 in his review of George Hunsinger's *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* which treats the controversial book *Theologie Und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barths* by Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Yoder specifically criticizes Marquardt'a overemphasis on the *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* language.

> As a snapshot of a chapter in systematic theological ethics, the book is flawed by a tendency to structural oversimplification of the theological task, as if all that is at stake in theology were resolved by a few foundational moves after the model of a railroad's switching yard or an opening chess game. Marquardt's effort to do this with the classic Christological notions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* (pp.

[111] Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 133.

> 127ff and 137-38) and Hunsinger's discussion of "what Barth learned from Anselm" (pp. 220ff.) partake of this over-evaluation of the seminal. Thus both Marquardt and Hunsinger can end the story where the *Church Dogmatics* begins.[112]

And in another piece in 1978 Yoder writes something very similar.

> Marquardt suffers from a frequent fault of German university theology, namely, an overvaluing of first principles. He seems to consider theology as like an inertial guidance system in which the entire course of a missile or even an airplane is determined by the data fed in at the take-off. Or perhaps the image should be that of a railroad switch between two tracks. Marquardt reads into abstruse debates about systematic theology implications for the total system of social ethics which certainly seem to be over-interpreted. This is the case of *anhypostasia/enhypostasia* or when Hunsinger tries to find all of the theology of Barth in his book on Anselm. So it is that Marquardt and Hunsinger can stop reading when Karl Barth just begins writing the *Church Dogmatics*, as if everything was decided when a few axioms were enunciated.[113]

Yoder says that ecclesiology cannot just be worked out by "structural oversimplification" that takes a Christological notion and resolves the rest of theology through that lens.

Bruce McCormack's stressing of this terminology and then also warning about it

Bruce McCormack bears some responsibility for encouraging the trend of stressing Barth's anhypostatic-enhypostatic theologizing. Many others also use the language of "enhypostatic." In 1989, he promoted the view that "Barth's adoption of the

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[112] Yoder, "Review of *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*," 338-339. reviewing Hunsinger's English translation and summary Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*. of Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: das Beispiel Karl Barths*.. Yoder here seems to be agreeing with Hermann Diem's vehement denouncement of Marquardt's notion that "The human species exists enhypostatically in Christ."Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, 130 Cf. 127-131. quoting Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: das Beispiel Karl Barths*, 271.

[113] Yoder, "The Basis of Barth's Social Ethics," 134.

anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology marked a watershed in his development."[114] "In May 1924 Barth made a momentous discovery. During the course of his first lectures in dogmatics, he came upon the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christological dogma of the ancient Church in a textbook of post-Reformation theology."[115] McCormack says this stage lasted from 1924 to 1936. Indeed, as we will see, there are three brief references in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* composed in 1924, which McCormack treats in detail in his dissertation.[116] After 1989, many, following McCormack, began interacting with the term.[117]

Later, after the burgeoning use of this terminology, McCormack attributes the popularity of the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* pair and "Chalcedonian" terminology (which he conflates) to T. F. Torrance and George Hunsinger. "It has become common in recent English-language Barth scholarship to describe Barth's Christology as 'Chalcedonian.' . . . Most unguardedly, Thomas F. Torrance . . . more critically, George Hunsinger."[118] McCormack stresses that he thinks Barth drifts into Nestorian tendencies and

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[114] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 366. "With the adoption of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic model of Christology, Barth had accomplished two things of fundamental importance." Ibid., 327-328.
[115] Ibid., 327.
[116] Bruce McCormack, "A Scholastic of a Higher Order: The Development of Karl Barth's Theology, 1921-1931" (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), 319-336.
[117] Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought*, 89, 91, 193.
[118] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 201. referring to Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 169, 198-201. and Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character."

metaphysical speculation with the use of this terminology and it is a good thing that Barth overcame this terminology. But McCormack does not note that the terminology is used in quite similar ways in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* in the *Church Dogmatics* in 1938 in I/2, as in 1948 in III/2, and in 1955 in IV/2. Nor does McCormack distinguish between Barth using the formula to address not only Trinitarian controversy arguments (adoptionism / Docetism) but also Christological controversy ones (monophysitism / Nestorianism). With regard to the *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, McCormack seems to think that Barth is addressing Trinitarian debate in using the terminology. "The net effect of this teaching is the rejection of every form of adoptionism. It is not as though the Logos chose to inhabit at some point an existing human being."[119] McCormack notes correctly that it is "in the context of his lecture on the Trinity" but then McCormack says that this is Barth's "Christology." "The relevance of this Christology for Barth's conception of revelation ought to be clear."[120]

Later, McCormack accuses Barth of wandering into the Nestorian Christological heresy. Barth "drifts unintentionally in that direction."[121] McCormack thinks the problem with the formulation is that it tends to emphasize that the divine Word, "the 'Person of the union' the *hypostasis* . . . is the Subject" without remainder. "This trend of

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[119] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*, 362.
[120] Ibid.
[121] McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," 212.

thought has the consequence of making it impossible to understand anything that happens in and through the human 'nature' as having any consequences."[122] In other words, the Divine Word's will is operative in a passive human nature. "In spite of his explicit rejection of Nestorianism, Barth drifts unintentionally in that direction."[123] Recall that in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* McCormack thinks Barth is addressing Adoptionism (which overemphasizes Jesus' humanity) so it is not surprising that one could think that Barth stays from the perfect median to the other extreme (though a different controversy) of a Nestorian view (which underemphasizes the unity between Jesus' divinity and humanity). However, as pointed out above, Barth does address both of those possible misinterpretations of his use of the terminology.

Another concern Bruce McCormack raises is that Barth has wandered into metaphysics through this move. "It is here that Barth slips most visibly into the substantialist form of ancient metaphysics where his Christology is concerned."[124] McCormack is correct that this is something to be concerned about. One side of the pair—the words *anhypostatic* or *anhypostasis*—are hypothetical formulations. Jesus Christ exists as a person (*hypostasis*) of the Trinity. The human flesh of Jesus is *enhypostatic*—"Personal" in the technical Trinitarian sense. This is the truth. This is the reality.

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[122] Ibid., 211.
[123] Ibid., 212.
[124] Ibid., 211.

However, hypothetically speaking, Jesus Christ would not be the person *(hypostasis*) of Jesus Christ without the Word (the divine nature). If Jesus was merely human, he would not exist as a person (*hypostasis*) of the Trinity and thus his human flesh would be *anhypostatic* (Non-Personal). Barth says that the *anhypostasis* means "that Christ's flesh in itself has no existence."[125] Why even get into hypotheticals like this? This did not happen. Jesus was not a human being who later was adopted by God and his human nature became divine. So why come up with a name for this theoretical non-divine human flesh?

Barth thinks that discussing this theoretical incorrect non-divine human flesh of Jesus is useful for clarifying what Christians do believe. It is a thought experiment so as to say the positive true point more forcefully. Barth says this hypothetical condition is to emphasize the "positive position that Christ's flesh has its existence through the Word."[126] The positive affirmation *enhypostatic* is biblical but the speculation about *anhypostic*—"what if" the flesh would have been without the Word—is more speculative. Still, Barth says it is still worth thinking about—"worth . . . giving it . . . very careful consideration."[127] Still, this is quite a circumscribed thought experiment. If Barth did apply this terminology as a paradigm throughout his theology, one would have to

[125] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 164.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., I/2, 165.

explore both all truths and non-truths. This type of reasoning is not common in Barth's Christology, let alone applied paradignmatically to the rest of this theology.

Paul Daffyd Jones

Paul Daffyd Jones does not dispute McCormack's point that this terminology was an important step in Barth's development. But Jones stresses that the terminology was not a significant part of the Barth's mature Christology. Instead, Barth turned to biblical phrases like saying Jesus is Lord and Servant.

> it is crucial not to overstate the importance of the *anhypostasis* / *enhypostasis* pairing. McCormack is quite right to claim that the terms play a vital role in 'christologizing' Barth's doctrine of revelation and theological epistemology, stabilizing and localizing the dialectic of veiling and unveiling. But this does not mean that Barth grants the terms a major role in his dogmatic description of Christ's person and act as such. He is more interested in formulating a description of Christ attentive and responsive to the biblical witness.[128]

The same biblical interest also applies to his ecclesiology.

Reinhard Hütter

As we have seen in the chapter on Reinhard Hütter, in 2000, he analyzes what he takes to be Barth's problematic move of applying "Chalecedonian logic"—specifically enhypostatic / anhypostatic terminology to ecclesiology. Hütter says the "problem is that Barth transfers the logic of Chalcedon to the entirety of theology. What doubtless

[128] Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, 51.

constituted a meaningful regulative in a substance-ontological context does not in an action-determined context automatically apply."[129] But instead of jettisoning the idea, Hütter attempts to do it better. Indeed, if one takes into account Hütter's multitude of disclaimers and nuances and cautions that this type of comparison can only be done in the most general way,[130] Hütter description of "enhypostatic" practices is acceptable. But his attempt and the storm of confusion caused by it reiterate what a bad idea it is in the first place to try to apply Christology to ecclesiology.

Andy Alexis-Baker

Andy Alexis-Baker also uses the phrase "enhypostatically" to refer to the church. "We cannot divinise individuals or the church, but the church exists enhypostatically."[131] Alexis-Baker's point here is that there is an irreversibility in the divine-human relation that carries over from Christology to ethics.

> There are similar problems here to those mentioned about Bender.
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> First, Barth himself does not make this move.

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[129] Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 106. Bender notices this, "Hütter contends that Barth's application of Chalcedonian Christological patterns to all areas of theology (and thus beyond the bounds of Christology proper) is mistaken." Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 99; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 42.

[130] "Two very good objections can be raised *against* using it to refer to the core church practices" Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, 248-249.

[131] Andy Alexis-Baker, "Theology Is Ethics: How Karl Barth Sees the Good Life," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 04 (2011): 425.

Second, it is not necessary to import the anhypostasis/enhypostasis language into ethics to make this point. It would be preferable to talk about the primary subjectivity of God and the secondary subjectivity of human beings—that this divine-human action is "irreversible" rather than saying "this anhypostatic-enhypostatic christological pattern orders our activities."[132]

Third, Alexis-Baker is extending this analogy even farther than Bender to construct an order of ethics. Alexis-Baker says that "Barth begins his ethical treatment in Church Dogmatics III/4 with acts of worship as ethical actions. Keeping the Sabbath, confession and prayer are the first ethical actions of this anhypostatic-enhypostatic pattern."[133] In other words, ethics should start with divine activities such as prayer before addressing human activities like stealing. This might be true at a general level with the Ten Commandments beginning with worship and Jesus summary to love God, and love others.

Fourth, unity and distinction in the Chalcedonian defintion are extremely difficult to sort out. Therefore, it is dubious to build upon this for other areas of theology.

[132] Ibid., 435.
[133] Ibid.

Fifth, Alexis-Baker is inexact in his comparisons and even if they are fixed, they take away from the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He writes, "Instead, the church exists enhypostatically because it finds its existence ordered with the Son of Man under the Son of God. The church (or the individuals within it) does not become divine anymore than Christ's humanity did (per Chalcedon)."[134] But Alexis-Baker here associates the "Son of Man" and the church. More precise would be the human nature of Jesus and the visible (or apparent or human) church. The Person of Jesus Christ (divine and human) would correspond to the the church (divine and human). But even if this comparison is more precise, it downplays the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ. Alexis-Baker points out that Jesus prayed in the garden "Thy will be done." "For Barth the anhypostatic-enhypostatic pattern is epitomised in Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane –'not as I will, but as you will'."[135] Indeed prayer is something that other human beings do as well. But this phrase does not capture how different Jesus was from other human beings. Nor does Barth use that technical terminology when he discusses this topic.

Sixth, by trying to address the Trinitarian controversy issue (to combat Docetism), this veers to the other extreme and sounds Nestorian. Alexis-Baker is

[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid. citing Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV,1, 295 (which probably should be p. 164).

separating too much the two natures of Jesus Christ, the two aspects of the church, and the two kinds of ethics.

Seventh, the church is "divine" in a way that is more dynamic (actualistic / temporary) than Jesus.

Christological ecclesiology Part 2b: Reformed christo-ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum* interpretation

Recall that Bender's argument is that Barth's ecclesiology is "Christological"—specifically, Chalcedonian, uses *anhypostatasis-enhypostasis* terminology, uses *extra Calvinisticum* move, and uses concept of correspondence.

With regard to the "Reformed Christo-ecclesiological" principle, Bender says that "For Barth, the church's doctrine and teaching, as well as its activities and practices, can never be *directly* identified as God's own work."[136] What Bender is trying to say is correct but, like Andy Alexis-Baker, this is phrased inaccurately. The *anhypostasia/enhypostasia* terminology does not say that Jesus' teaching and activities can never be directly

[136] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 91.

identified as God's own work or that the church's work can never be directly identified as God's own work.

Rather, more precisely, it is the human side of Jesus or the human side of the church never functions in its fullness without the divine side. As Barth says in his mature ecclesiology, a human, apparent church is a "real" church only with Christ's presence. This ecclesiology is not only Reformed, it is not only Protestant, but is affirmed across Christian traditions. It is meant to distinguish itself from the crassest notions of *ex opere operato* that suggest whatever human religious services are inacted, God endorses them. Even Roman Catholics acknowledge that God must act for a sacrament to be effective. And Barth, for his part, has a posture of openness that God is at work in the work of the apparent human church.

Bender, however, argues that Barth's posture toward the church is unusually critical. Bender attributes this to Barth's "firm commitment to an ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*."[137]

But a number of things should be said in response.

As we saw earlier in our treatment of Colm O'Grady's accusations of an *extra Calvinisticm*, even with regard to Christology, Barth distances himself from the phrase

[137] Ibid., 92. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33.

extra Calvinisticum because of how it has been misunderstood as Nestorian. This is hardly a clear concept on which to build an analogy to apply to ecclesiology.

Bender himself acknowledges that Barth is ambivalent about the concept.

> Barth believed and maintained the Reformed position to be superior, and held that the Lutheran position was in danger of sacrificing the irreversible relation between God and humanity. Yet, upon reflection, he could at least on one occasion concede the necessity of both.[138]

Paul Louis Metzger's main example of Barth's use of the *extra Calvinisticum* is in Barth's 1926 lecture, "Church and Culture" but Metzger also admits that "Barth would later express reservations about this essay, namely, that strands of natural theology could be detected in it."[139] This seems to strongly undermine Bender's thesis that Barth's "ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*"[140] is part of the "formal structure of Barth's doctrine of the church."[141] Barth never applies the *extra Calvinisticum* to his ecclesiology himself.

It is true that for Barth the church does not not have Jesus in a box. The church does not contain Jesus Christ in such a way that Jesus does not exist elsewhere (*asarkos*—the *extra Calvinisticum*): Jesus still reins at the right hand of God even if he is present

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[138] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 283.
[139] Barth, "Church and Culture," 344; Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 53-54; Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, 70.
[140] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 92. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33; Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 282.
[141] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 89, 92; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 28, 33.

with the church. The church is not all there is today of Jesus Christ, nor of the kingdom of God. But this is not disputed by other theologians. Even those who argue that it is appropriate to speak of the church as the "prolongation of the incarnation" (which Barth rejects as an overstatement and unhelpful confusion) do not mean that phrase to preclude Jesus Christ's reigning at the right hand of God.

But Bender suggests that others do not have this. "What Barth seems to have and what so many of his critics lack, is an ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*."[142] "What Barth has, and Hauerwas seems not to have, is an ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*."[143] The charge here is that Hauerwas and others are problematically church-centric—that God is only at work in the church. Bender seems to think that Hauerwas and company should recognize God's work in the world as well. The danger of this argument is seeing God's work through observing natural revelation and building up a natural theology from those observations. As noted above in the section analyzing Healy's 1994 article, Barth describes this carefully with regard to parables of the kingdom—that natural phenomenon does teach about God (as in the parables Jesus told) but these phenomena are understood in light of special revelation.[144]

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[142] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 282.
[143] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 62.
[144] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1, 115.

It is important to see why Bender makes the argument about the *extra Calvinisticum.*

> What Barth seems to have and what so many of his critics lack, is an ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*. In other words, Barth insists that while the Church is necessary for us because God has freely chosen this and freely joined himself to it, it is not necessary for God, nor is God's salvific activity limited to the church by some type of necessity (*Church Dogmatics* IV/3.2, 790).[145]

The passage Bender cites here is not a controversial one. Barth gives both sides without exaggeration or speculation. Barth's main point is that Jesus uses the church but Barth mentions that Jesus can speak in other ways as well. Still, Barth says the church is Jesus' special instrument.[146] Again, nothing controversial here. This is no controversial concept like the *extra Calvinisticum*.

What probably however is in the background here is the hypothetical musing by Barth 36 pages later about whether the church is theoretically necessary, which has come up many times in this dissertation.[147] As was argued earlier, this type of speculation about whether God had decided to not use the church, tends to produce unproductive arguments. God in fact did choose to use a church. What God could have done is not

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[145] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 282.
[146] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 690. "Now He certainly does this in other forms as well as in the existence and history of His community. He is not bound to it as it is bound to Him . . .Yet this does not alter the fact that His community, and alone so far as we can see it, has the promise, and may and should live by the truth of the promise, that it is the body of Jesus Christ which in the power of the Holy Spirit He as its Lord has personally called into existence and directs and sustains, so that in its existence it is the earthly-historical form and representation of His own."
[147] Ibid., IV/3.2, 826.

useful to speculate about. Many people are put off by Barth's comment that the church was not strictly necessary and Bender is put off by the opposite musing that Christ did need the church. Anders Nygren is quoted as saying "Christ is nothing without his Church."[148] Again, Barth and Nygren are both guilty of unhelpful speculation. Christ does have a church and there is no use arguing about whether he had to or not.

Bender makes an additional off-hand comment in the book regarding the *communicatio idiomatum*.

> The eschatological kingdom . . . is not exhausted by the community . . . Barth thus maintains the Reformed understanding of the *extra Calvinisticum* and the *communicatio idiomatum* not only in his Christological thought, but also, and analogously, in his ecclesiological thought as well.[149]

At first it seems that Bender is saying that Barth affirms the *communicatio idiomatum* but rather Bender is most likely emphasing that Barth affirms the Reformed understanding of this doctrine. To clarify, Barth rejects the *communication idiomatum.* Barth does not discuss this concept in terms of ecclesiology but deals with carefully with regard to Christology. Barth dislikes the term because it connotes that the divine and human natures are symmetric. "But instead of the one-sided relationship . . . does not this give us a kind of reciprocal relation between Creator and creature?"[150] Barth is reticent to

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[148] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33. quoting Anders Nygren, *Christ and His Church*, trans., Alan Carlsten (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 33.
[149] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 202.
[150] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, 164.

accept the *idiomatum* without qualification but will accept it as the *communicatio idiomatum et gratiarum et operationum* [communication of idioms and graces and operations].[151] Barth writes that if he is forced to choose the *idiomatum* without these qualifications, he would reject it as his Reformed predecessors did.

> the older Reformed . . . were staggered, not to say horrified, by the development of the mutual impartation of the divine and human essence in Jesus Christ which they found in the Lutheran doctrine of the *idiomata*. They were quite unwilling and unable to follow this line of development. And so they gave up the whole problem. They were content to point as zealously as they could to the fact of this impartation, to the person of the Mediator, the true Son of God and Son of Man, in whom it took place. And faced with a choice between the existing Lutheran answer and the existing Reformed rejection of the problem, we can only decide that the Reformed chose the better part.[152]

Christological ecclesiology Part 3: Correspondence is Christological?

Finally, Bender suggests that the language of "correspondence" (*Entsprechung)* is Christologically-derived.

It is useful to point out that "correspondence" is indeed Barth's preferred way of differentiating the primary initiating action of God and human response but it is questionable to what degree this has to do with Christology. John Webster says,

> It is important to underline the stress with Barth places on the proper "correspondence" between God's activity and human acts . . . the term "correspondence" bears a good deal of weight. It furnishes a way of affirming both the unique, incommunicable nature of God's action (of which there can

[151] Ibid., IV/2, 269, Cf. 88.
[152] Ibid., IV/2, 76-77. Metzger also explores Barth's understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth*, 48-51.

> never be any human continuation or supplementation or adornment), and the reality of the human "venture of action."[153]

But again this is not a Christological doctrine such that the human nature of Christ corresponds to the divine nature of Christ in the same way that humans correspond to God.

Correspondence has to do with ecclesiology and ethics. But Bender thinks correspondence is first a Christological doctrine.

> Correspondence . . . is a specifically Christological notion . . . for it is defined by and refers first and preeminently to the manner in which Christ's human life mirrors and indeed re-presents the divine life of God and reflects the divine will in history, and thus how his human nature reflects his divine nature in its own proper sphere of being and activity (*Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 166).[154]

But this is tenuous. It is true that Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) which is what Barth is expositing on page 166 of IV/2 which Bender cites but Barth does not further deduce that human beings should "correspond" similarly—becoming the "image of the invisible Jesus." It is correct to say Christians are "images"—they do bear the "image of God" and Christians are to be witnesses—but surely Jesus represents God in a way that is stronger than how human beings represent Jesus. Surely Jesus Christ is more than just a witness of God though he is that. There is a qualitative difference here. Bender compounds the error by formalizing it. Bender writes, "Once

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[153] Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 79-80.
[154] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 92-93.

again, correspondence is first and foremost a Christological principle before it is an ethical one in that the correspondence of the creature to the Creator finds its ultimate and normative example in the obedience of Jesus Christ to God."[155] Yes, human beings are to glorify God as Jesus glorified the Father but for Bender to call both phenomena "correspondence" (of the lesser to the greater) seems to go beyond Barth himself and Webster who Bender is drawing upon.

Clearly Barth calls the God-human relationship one of "correspondence." It is difficult however to imagine Barth calling both the God-Christ and Christ-human relationships "correspondence" and not emphasizing that massive inadequacy of human "correspondence" in comparison to that of Jesus. Instead, Barth primarily uses "correspondence" in terms of divine-human agency rather than Christologically. "Correspondence" does *not* mean, as Bender maintains, that the way human beings relate to God corresponds to how the divine natures interact in Jesus Christ.[156]

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[155] Ibid., 94.

[156] "The final element of the Christological logic follows from the two preceding. It further describes the nature of the human life of Christ in relation to his divine life, and thus describes the character of the real, true, and whole human existence that is established by the divine Word in material rather than purely formal terms. Barth answers the question as to the positive relation of the second term to the first, of Christ's human life to his divine life, by positing the notion of correspondence [*Entsprechung].*" Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 6. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 92; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33.

Webster has brought to the fore the concept of correspondence in Barth's ethics and Bender cites him in this regard.[157] Perhaps Webster, unwittingly prompted some of this deriving ecclesiology from the Trinity. Webster says that Hans Frei and George Lindbeck

> made the mistake of reading the *Church Dogmatics* backwards, starting with Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, and thereby missing the constitutive place of Barth's Trinitarian exposition of revelation . . . Accordingly, the centre of gravity in Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine* and of Frei's later writings tended to be ecclesial whereas for Barth it was always primarily trinitarian (and ecclesial, but only by derivation).[158]

Some might read this and vow to correct the error of an emphasis on the ecclesial and focus on the trinitarian—and then apply the trinitiarian insights to ecclesiology. But Webster disagrees strenuously with this move. Webster's urgent concern with communion ecclesiology and ecclesiology like Bender's is that the

> underlying ecclesiology is commonly set out in such a way that it threatens to distort the asymmetry of gospel and church . . . The most pressing questions to be asked concern the distinction between God and creatures.[159]

Webster is adamant that applying Christology to ecclesiology slights the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

> The incarnation is a wholly unique, utterly nonreversible divine act; in it the Son of God unites himself to the man Jesus. It is an instance of itself; it is not a figure in some more general union of divinity and humanity. Its origin lies wholly

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[157] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 92; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33; Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 279.
[158] John B. Webster, "Discovering Dogmatics," in *Shaping a Theological Mind* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 132.
[159] Webster, "The Church and the Perfection of God," 77, 84.

> outside creaturely capacity, and there is no preexisting creaturely coordinate of its occurrence . . . Moreover, because it is irreversible, the incarnation is not extensible. It is categorically dissimilar . . . Nothing can qualify its insistent singularity. It is for this reason that the incarnational union is a person or hypostatic union, not a union at the level of the natures in some general conjunction of deity and humanity.[160]

Bender is correct that correspondence is an appropriate concept as it relates to divine and human agency in ecclesiology or ethics.

> When applied by Barth to the church, the concept of correspondence . . . guards against any type of identification or conflation of divine and human activity, excluding any synergistic or cooperative understandings of salvation. Divine and human activity remain distinct and do not exist on the same plane.[161]

Again, correspondence works on the level of the theology of ethics and ecclesiology, but it would have to be massively revamped if it were used in conjunction with Christology. And vice-versa, the function of Christology is not to guard "against any type of identification or conflation of divine and human activity, excluding any synergistic or cooperative understandings of salvation." What Chalcedon works out is that there is a unity of the divine and human natures. The concept of correspondence which involves an imbalance or asymmetry is better understood in terms of divine-human agency, not Christology. There should be more effort not to blur the differences between Christology and ecclesiology.

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[160] Ibid., 93.

[161] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 93.

Criticisms by Bender of Barth's ecclesiology

Recall the overall thrust of Bender's argument is to demonstrate how closely Barth's ecclesiology is Christological—that Barth's language concerning the church is precisely regulated to avoid this error around unity, distinction, and asymmetry. As we will see, Bender concludes with three main criticisms of Barth's ecclesiology. First, Bender detects a lack of distinction between Christ and the church. Second, Bender worries about a lack of distinction between the church and the world. Third, Bender argues that there is a lack of unity with regard to divine agency and human agency.

First, a lack of distinction between Christ and the church: Prolongation of the incarnation

Bender wonders whether Barth is vulnerable to the charge that his theology allows room for a "prolongation of the incarnation." Bender agrees that O'Grady's criticism here of Barth may be valid. Bender writes that "it becomes difficult to see how Barth can consistently maintain that the church is not a second incarnation, or perhaps more accurately, an extension of the incarnation."[162] Bender worries that Barth is not sufficiently clear regarding this distinction between Christ and the church. Bender is

[162] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 221-222. referring also to O'Grady, *The Church in Catholic Theology: Dialogue with Karl Barth*, 74-78.

concerned that Barth does not adequately make clear that Jesus Christ is not just the church.

Bender is troubled by Barth's describing the church as the "earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ." This is Barth's rephrasing of the biblical description of the church as "the body of Christ." "Barth's refusal to consider this image to be a metaphor and his strict literal interpretation raises the question of whether he has adequately protected against viewing the church as a second incarnation."[163] Bender thinks the "earthly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ" is too exalted a description of the church and demeans the uniqueness of Jesus. Bender also think this emphasis on the body of Christ also crowds out language about the Holy Spirit: "overshadowing the third article [of the Apostles' Creed about the Holy Spirit] with the second [article about Jesus]."[164]

Bender admits that "Barth strongly and consistently asserts that this [the extension of the incarnation] is not the case."[165] Indeed, Barth makes clear that Jesus exists also as the "heavenly-historical form of existence of Jesus Christ" who is at the right hand of the Father. Elsewhere, Bender argues Barth has a "firm commitment to an

[163] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 221.
[164] Ibid., 224.
[165] Ibid., 222.

ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*"[166] which means Christ is not limited to the church but is also in heaven reigning.

This charge of a lack of distinction between Christ and the church is typically leveled against Roman Catholic ecclesiology that accepts the extension of the incarnation terminology.[167] Some Catholics would see in the Eucharist the repetition of Christ's sacrifice. The Protestant argument is typically that in this ecclesiology the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is diminished and the church is improperly inflated or reified. Here Bender chides Barth for connecting Christ and the church regarding "the body of Christ" which is the one metaphor in Scripture repeated a couple of times (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12) where

[166] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 92. Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 33.

[167] A related issue is Barth's affirmation of the *totus Christus* [the whole Christ], which Barth thinks is consistent with Scripture, as opposed to the "prolongation of the incarnation," which Barth rejects. Barth associates the Latin words *totus Christus* with the Greek words πλήρωμα in Eph 1:23 referring to the "fullness" of Christ after Christ as Head and his body have been spoken about in the preceding verse. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 624-625, 659. One of the two times Barth uses the *anhypostatic / enhypostatic* terminology with regard to ecclesiology, Barth warns against seeing the church as the prolongation of the incarnation and clearly delimits how the phrase the *totus Christus* should be employed. "But it [the church] exists (ἀνυπόστατος and ἐνυπόστατος) in and in virtue of His existence." Ibid., IV/2, 59. Barth is saying the church is utterly dependent on and distinguished from Christ. "We cannot speak, then, of a repetition or extension of the incarnation taking place in it [the church]." Ibid., IV/2, 60. The *totus Christus* refers to Christ the head of the body of Christ and the body of Christ together. Barth is very wary of the Creator / creature distinction. (Webster of course has this concern as well: "All this, then, amounts to a cumulative suggestion that the notion of *the totus Christus*—of Christ's completeness as inclusive of the church as his body—will be impermissible if it elides the distinction between Christ and the objects of his mercy." Webster, "The Church and the Perfection of God," 95.) Therefore, Barth will only affirm the corporate phrase *totus Christus* in the most limited sense. It is only in so far as the Body is raised with the Head. God "who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus" (2 Cor 4:14). In that sense, Christ and Christians (Jesus and his body) can be spoken of as one entity—the *totus Christus.* The corporate identity "is absolutely future." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 624-625, 659.

Christ and the church are connected. Bender thinks Barth's picking as his main metaphor the main metaphor in the New Testament leads him a bit too close to Roman Catholic tendencies.

Barth's reflection on the body of Christ is limited to two treatments in the *Church Dogmatics*—an earlier prior to his mature ecclesiology and a later one at the beginning of his mature ecclesiology. The frequency of the technical "definition" of the church as the "earthly-historical form of existence [*irdisch-geschichtliche Existenzform*] of Jesus Christ" (derived from his reflection on the body of Christ) is mostly confined to §62 in IV/1.[168] And Barth is not just fixated on the "body of Christ." He also draws upon other biblical images: the people of God, organic growth, the kingdom of God, and the disciples. Moreover, the Subject in the title of the three ecclesiological sections is the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the community. So it is hard to see how the Christological obviously crowds out the Pneumatological.

Bender's confusion with what Barth is doing here demonstrates the weakness of his thesis. Unity, distinction, and assymetrical are not specific enough to clarify subtle points such as this. Barth does not feel compelled to reason from the Chalcedonian

[168] For example, the occurrences of "*irdisch geschichtliche"* trail off from 34 in §62 of IV/1 to 15 occurrences in §67 of IV/2 and 5 in §72 of IV/3.2.

definition (which would not have helped Barth anyway because it applies to Christology and is so ambiguous).

Second, a lack of distinction between church and world: Universalism

Bender is also concerned that Barth does not properly distinguish the church and world. This leads inexorably toward universalism.

> Here we must frankly ask whether . . . Barth . . . is in danger of giving way to a . . . static conception . . . of election [with a]. . . universalistic . . . sense. At this point one might wonder if Barth has not slipped from a Christocentric interpretation into a a Christomonistic one.[169]

Bender is saying that it is unclear to him how Barth thinks divine and human agency operate. Bender wonders whether Barth overemphasizes the prior work of election in Christ so that the work of the Spirit is almost superfluous. "This seems to make the work of the Spirit purely noetic and the subjective aspect of salvation purely cognitive, and the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian solely one of knowledge."[170] Again, this is a restatement of O'Grady's claim that for Barth everything has already been accomplished except for human beings realizing that it is all done.

But in other parts of the book Bender frequently defends Barth from the criticism that there is little left to do after the election of Christ according to Barth—arguing that

[169] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 223.
[170] Ibid., 224, Cf. 222-224.

Barth rightly and carefully orders this in terms of "correspondence." Bender concludes his two page defense of human and ecclesial agency in Barth, "Barth's concept of correspondence allows him to provide a place for concrete and material obedience by the church in its very visible and historical existence, giving his ecclesiology, as his theology as a whole, an essential ethical character."[171]

Barth himself denies universalism but admits his logic leads towards it. Barth's core convictions on this issue can be summarized this way, "The Church will not then preach an *apokatastasis*, nor will it preach a powerless grace of Jesus Christ or a wickedness of men which is too powerful for it."[172] In other words, the church must not teach universalism but it also must not teach a humanity which is strong enough to resist God's grace. If Pharaoh opposes God it is because God hardens his heart. No human being thwarts God. God will not be bullied or repulsed by human insouciance.

The church has no right or reason to presume or reassure that God will save those who flaunt his grace. The apostle Paul retorts to the question of whether one sins so that grace may increase with "By no means!" (Rom 6:1-2). Barth says,

> To the man who persistently tries to change the truth into untruth, God does not owe eternal patience and therefore deliverance any more than He does those provisional manifestations. We should be denying or disarming that evil attempt and our own participation in it if, in relation to ourselves or others or all men, we were to permit ourselves to postulate a withdrawal of that threat and in this sense to expect or maintain an *apokatastasis* or universal reconciliation as the goal

[171] Ibid., 279.
[172] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 477.

> and end of all things. No such postulate can be made even though we appeal to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even though theological consistency might seem to lead our thoughts and utterances most clearly in this direction, we must not arrogate to ourselves that which can be given and received only as a free gift.[173]

Still, Barth argues that it is not inappropriate to hope that God's mercy will penetrate the darkness of human rebellion now and forever.

> If we are certainly forbidden to count on this as though we had a claim to it, as though it were not supremely the work of God to which man can have no possible claim, we are surely commanded the more definitely to hope and pray for it as we may do already on this side of this final possibility, i.e., to hope and pray cautiously and yet distinctly that, in spite of everything which may seem quite conclusively to proclaim the opposite, His compassion should not fail, and that in accordance with His mercy which is 'new every morning' He 'will not cast off for ever' (Lam 3:22f., 31).[174]

Bruce McCormack argues that some overstate Barth's tendency toward universalism because of a failure to understand the actualistic dynamic of election. The person and work of Jesus Christ is not just past and done but rather also has present and future dimensions. For example, "the resurrection has happened only to Jesus and not yet to us, the turn has taken place (past tense) only in Him. It takes place (present tense) for us individually only insofar as faith in that event is awakened in us, moment by moment."[175] In other words, though Christ said on the cross "it is finished," this is not to mean that God is altogether finished in his work with human beings as Jesus himself

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[173] Ibid., IV/3.2, 477-478.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Bruce L. McCormack, "So That He May Be Merciful to All: Karl Barth and the Problem of Universalism," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 243.

says, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20). It is therefore presumptuous to blithely assert that "all will be saved" and that God's ongoing action with human beings is mere formality. McCormack writes,

> What is at stake in Barth's rejection of an *apokatastasis panton* is ultimately his understanding of the *reality* of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not only the one who has come (in the incarnation); He is also the One who comes (in the power of the eschatological Spirit) and the One who will come (in His visible return). He is all three in a unity that is secure in Him but which will only be fully realized by us in the eschaton.[176]

Suzanne McDonald, from a "Reformed evangelical" perspective, writes in a similar vein that if Barth's flirtation with universalism may be tempered, it should be by pneumatological aspects of his theology. She writes that there are "only two 'logical' possibilities for a fully Reformed understandings of God's sovereign election of grace—universalism or individual double predestination."[177] McDonald argues for "limited atonement" though she does not use the phrase, and "double predestination"—that Christ has elected only those whom the Spirit has chosen. This is quite neat and straightforward. Barth on the other hand sees election in Christ as including all humanity while on the other hand the Spirit makes this known to some individuals but not all. In other words, for Barth, his Christology has a "universalist" tendency, while

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[176] Ibid., 247-248.

[177] Suzanne McDonald, "Evangelical Questioning of Election in Barth: a Pneumatological Perspective From the Reformed Heritage," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 266.

his pneumatology has a "double predestination" destiny. McDonald finds this incoherent.

> His desire to avoid the universalist implications of his election Christology leads to a lurch back toward individual double predestination through what is effectively an appeal to the gift and work of the Spirit . . . there are aspects of Barth's pneumatology that are pulling in such a different direction to his Christology that his doctrine of election is at risk of imploding.[178]

But McCormack points out that Barth is trying to make sense of a universalist strand in the apostle Paul's writings including:

> Rom 5:18-19
>
> 18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so
> also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as
> through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also
> through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.
>
> 1 Cor 15:21-22
>
> 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also
> through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.
>
> Rom 11:32
>
> 32 For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy
> on them all.

McCormack defends the ambiguity in Scripture as intentionally placed there by God.

> If God told us the answer to the problem in advance of the eschaton, we would harm ourselves on one side or the other . . . In short, I think it was a mistake for the Westminister Assembly to seek to resolve this question on the side of limited atonement in advance of the return of Christ in glory—just as I think that it would be a mistake for any church today to teach universalism.[179]

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[178] Ibid., 267.

[179] McCormack, "So That He May Be Merciful to All: Karl Barth and the Problem of Universalism," 240.

McCormack sees the tension in Barth's understanding of election (that McDonald thinks "is at risk of imploding") as reflecting the tension in Scripture. McCormack thinks given the verses above that it is not inappropriate to think that Christ died for all but that the Spirit only awakens some to faith and how many is not altogether clear. The point for our purposes is that Bender and O'Grady identify correctly a tension of logic in Barth's theology though it is doubtful that this constitutes a major flaw in his ecclesiology because it is only peripherally related to ecclesiology and no system neatly resolves all the biblical tensions (probably because as McCormack suggests God did not intend us to be able to do so).

Third, a lack of unity between divine and human agency in the church: No mediation

Bender worries that Barth's zeal for keeping distinct the divine and human aspects of the church causes him to fail to show how these are integrated. "At times Barth seems to set theological and sociological descriptions of the church against one another in competition and as mutually exclusive, rather than integrating the latter into the former."[180]

Bender repeatedly defends Barth against the charge that Barth does not talk about the social realities and practices of the church. "Reductive sociological

[180] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 274.

understandings of the church were prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and Barth justifiably reacted against them."[181] In other words, Barth was correct to push back on reductionist understandings of divine agency. Bender also defends Barth against the charge that his ecclesiology is not sufficiently filled out. "Any charge brought against Barth's ecclesiology on account of its lack of specificity must provide a place for the recognition of a number of facts that greatly qualify it."[182] Bender rightly draws attention to the twelve ministries of the church described by Barth in §72 of IV/3.2 and chides Healy's early article, Hütter, and Yocum for failing to mention them; while Mangina does. Bender also notes Barth's purposeful restraint regarding matters that may differ with regard to local circumstances.[183] Bender rightly notes that Barth is doing dogmatics not practical theology or canon law.

So, for Bender, it is not that Barth does not give appropriate attention to sociology, practices, and practical theology. Barth does this adequately. The problem is that divine agency and human agency are depicted as operating in parallel. This

[181] Ibid., 276.
[182] Ibid., 274, Cf. 274-277.
[183] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 859-860.

"parallelism of action" is not integrated.[184] Barth's "weakness is seen in his attempt to articulate how they are united and conjoined."[185]

Instead, Bender thinks Barth should at least affirm "weak notions of ecclesial mediation."[186] In other words, "witness and correspondence" are too weak.[187] Bender thinks that divine action occurs when certain human actions occur. The church does have the power of the keys (Matt 16:19). What the church does, Jesus sanctions. Barth's reluctance to affirm this downplays the church's powers. Bender is here echoing the Sacramental critics.[188]

Then again, Bender also raises again Barth's "ecclesiological *extra Calvinisticum*,"[189] which he had praised over against Hauerwas. Now Bender suggests this might be mitigated with more acknowledgement of the Lutheran position that

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[184] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 113; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 61.

[185] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 281. "Less successful, perhaps, is his attempt to articulate how they are united and conjoined." Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 61; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 113-114.

[186] Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 280.

[187] Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Contemporary Anglo-American Ecclesiological Conversation," 114; Bender, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church in Conversation with American Theology Today," 61.

[188] Bender wonders also whether more answers regarding practices and the sacraments might be found by looking at Barth's own Swiss Reformed heritage, which has been addressed above in the chapter on John Howard Yoder. "Future studies of Barth's ecclesiology may well need to address his critical yet undeniable retrieval of themes most generally associated with (though not in every case exclusive to) the free church tradition and shaped by his own Swiss Reformed context." Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, 284.

[189] Ibid., 282.

includes more of a sense of mediation, which Bender says Barth is open to,[190] though Bender has already said Barth rejects the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum.* Bender thinks a little more Lutheran sense of human action mediating divine action would fix Barth's overaly rigid Reformed correspondence of action. Bender accuses Barth of falling into a Nestorian ecclesiology. It should hastily be added that Christology and ecclesiology are different and so this move by Bender is dubious. If Barth or the Lutherans have a problem with their understanding of Eucharist or Baptism, this should be argued out on biblical grounds. It is counterproductive to argue whether the combination of human and divine agency match up with orthodox Christology. The unity in the Personhood of Christ is much much stronger than the unity between human action and God's action.

Bender has done a superb job of exploring Barth's ecclesiology and largely comes to conclusions echoed in this dissertation. However, it has been argued that the Christological framework he suggests clarifies Barth's ecclesiology does not produce the benefits Bender hopes. In fact, Barth does not draw from Chalcedonian formulae or other Christological formal phrasing to clarify his ecclesiology. At best, there are very general points that are more easily made without the terminology and are not specific to Barth's ecclesiology such as the church's need for Christ. At worst, the reader of Bender

[190] Ibid., 283.

tends to think of Barth as rigidly applying technical language developed during the Christological controversies to ecclesiology, which Barth does not do.

Nathan Kerr

Nathan Kerr compares Barth's ecclesiology to that of Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder who have also been treated in this dissertation. Kerr is one of the actualistic readers of Barth who emphasize Barth's *Römerbrief* from the 1920's as opposed to his mature ecclesiology in the 1950's.[191] Kerr largely applauds this deconstructive approach to the church.[192] Kerr reads Barth in some ways like the earliest Roman Catholic critics of Barth treated above in the chapter on Wendell Dietrich's dissertation. Those early Roman Catholic critics and to some extent also many of the Sacramental critics treated above thought Barth was teaching that God only occasionally strikes the church with his presence. Whereas they found this disconcerting and skeptical, Kerr thinks that the church having some uncertainty about whether God is present gives an apathetic church a healthy jolt. The church is hopelessly inept at

[191] "I shall be seeking to local and expound the 'foundations' for such an apocalyptic Christology in the theology of Karl Barth, by documenting the development of Barth's later Christocentric theology of history agains the 'apocalyptic' backdrop of his second *Epistle to the Romans*." Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 63.

[192] "God's action is an action by which God exposes all false conceptions of the God-human relationship and grounds the God-human relationship in God's otherness alone . . . As apocalyptic rupture, grace thus accomplishes a primarily *negative* work in relation to the world." Ibid., 66. Italics in original.

discerning what God is up to. Kerr is critical of what he perceives to be religiously-compromised churches; God's apocalyptic inbreaking disturbs the ecclesial-centric.[193] These actualistic readers call on the fire of the Spirit to create the indentation, the crater of movement by God—torching all that is presently conventional and established for the "singularity" of the inbreaking of slashing incinerating obliterating work and presence of Jesus Christ.

Kerr grants that this deconstruction was allayed slightly—citing George Hunsinger's description of Barth's "Chalcedonian Christology." It was this that helped Barth properly locate his apocalyptic impulses.[194] Though it has been shown that this conceptual language of Chalcedonian Christology is not from Barth himself and also does not clarify much. The concept was useful here in response to someone like Kerr who has a hard time seeing how the divine might intersect with history.

Still, Kerr agrees with the Sacramental critics who note the lack of concrete description of human reality by Barth. "And here . . . is where Barth fails us."[195] Barth only has pure apocalyptic idealism to offer.[196] "Barth's apocalyptic anti-historicism

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[193] Bruce Hamill, "Beyond Ecclesiocentricity: Navigating Between the Abstract and the Domesticated in Contemporary Ecclesiology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14, no. 3 (2012).
[194] Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 73-74.
[195] Ibid., 80.
[196] This is similar to what Reinhard Hütter said about Barth being all evangelical and not catholic; and Eberhard Jüngel saying Barth is wholly critical or Dietrich Bonhoeffer worrying about Barth's lack of concreteness.

succumbs ultimately to an idealism of historical abstraction in relation not only to Christology but also to ecclesiology."[197]

Instead, Kerr thinks that God injects his presence when human beings are involved in mission. In that sense, Kerr thinks Christians need to "push beyond" Barth's lack of concreteness. "If Barth's conceptualization of a lived apocalyptic historicality . . . is going to give way to the concreteness of subversive political *action*—then we will need to push beyond Barth's 'actualism.'"[198] Kerr under the theme of apocalyptic and mission argues that Barth's thoroughgoing insistence that God is for human beings is correct. Barth's only weakness is his failure of nerve to articulate what this mission looks like when it intersects with the world. Kerr inserts here "loving the poor."[199] The gathering is not important. The church only has value as mission.[200]

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[197] Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 100.

[198] Ibid., 66, 92. Emphasis original.

[199] Kyle Roberts is supportive of Kerr here. Roberts, "The Church as 'Witness': Karl Barth and the Missional Church."

[200] For Kerr, the function of the church (ethics and mission) dissolves the gathering of the church (ekklesia). This is not the position of Yoder, Barth, or Rowan Williams though Kerr uses them for his argument. Kerr concludes on the last pages of the book, "*A dispossessed sociality. A sociality of dispossession.* This is what the liturgy of Christian mission commits us to. And yet, there is no way theoretically to anticipate what this sociality will look like; as Yoder puts it, 'The only way to see how this will work will be to see how it will work.' Such a sociality is only discoverable as we are *bound* everanew to the world via that pneumatic gathering which constitutes our participation in that ongoing Christic inbreak that is God's apocalypse. Constituted by mission, 'church' is entirely the operation of God's apocalyptic *action* in Christ, and its 'peoplehood' the diasporic *work* of the Spirit." Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, 195-196. quoting John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 45. But Yoder does not say that we have no idea "what this . . . will look like." At a minimum, Yoder describes 5 sample practices. Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*. "Kerr's church is not a now-determined gathering of any sort, and exists only as 'mission,' that is, as sheer encounter between the powers that now rule 'real history' and Christians' destabilizing 'doxology' of Christ's ever-intrusive advent." Robert W. Jenson, "Review of

In the course of this dissertation, many of these claims by Kerr about Barth with regard to ecclesiology have been challenged. The *Römerbrief* is not as unrelentingly critical of the historical church as is often assumed. Barth's actualism is valuable in that it leads to the church's prayerful dependence on God but does not mean that Barth has little regard for the church, which Jesus himself established. Barth does describe four main practices of the church in worship and twelve ministries of the church and going into further detail would have intruded into the realm of what should be decided locally. Kerr is right to draw out apocalyptic and actualism in Barth, a witnessing church in Hauerwas, and a flexible missionary communal structures in Yoder but each of these is dealt with in a nuanced way by Barth himself as has been described throughout the dissertation.

Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission," *Pro Ecclesia* 20, no. 3 (2011): 312. "I confess I simply find it hard to understand, or better, to have a sense of what mission might look like for Kerr . . . surely mission so understood begs for exemplification." Hauerwas, "Beyond the Boundaries: The Church is Mission," 65. Knowing from personal correspondence that Kerr is interested in ministry to people in prison, this illuminates to some extent what Kerr would like to see "mission" and "church" look like. If Kerr is raising the question of what it means to "proclaim freedom for the prisoners" (Luke 4:18) and how this relates to "mission" and "ekklesia," this is certainly valid and needed. That there should be cognitive dissonance between Luke 4:18-19 (Isaiah 61:1,2; Isaiah 58:6) and many contemporary comfortable church worship services is emphatically true. However, it is not clear that "church" or "mission" is clarified by an appeal to "Jesus" isolated from the rest of Scriptural description of the church and its practices (which is what Kerr seems to do). Hence, Jenson's critique that Kerr's proposal is "the perfection of what Barth might have come to think if he had not been so concerned for Scripture." Jenson, "Review of *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*," 312. Instead, the church's practices should be practiced to their fullest extent and in this process the gap between comfortable church services and proclaiming freedom for the prisoners might be overcome.

Keith L. Johnson

Keith L. Johnson writes an article which includes reflection on many of the readers of Barth's ecclesiology that we have treated in this dissertation: Sacramental (Mangina, Hauerwas, Hütter, Healy), Actualistic (Paul Nimmo, John Webster), and Architectonic (George Hunsinger), and Missionary (John Flett) of Barth's ecclesiology. The question he seeks to answer is also similar to one main theme taken up in this dissertation—whether indeed the Sacramental readers are correct that Barth's ecclesiology is inadequate. Johnson also concludes that Barth's ecclesiology stresses the need for the church to be evangelistic—a point that this dissertation makes as well. Johnson's article is not full-length treatments of Barth's ecclesiology but Johnson's article does allow us to look at one early comment from Barth about his ecclesiology as well as the *concursus Dei* framework from elsewhere in the *Church Dogmatics* as applied to his controversial rejection of infant baptism. Johnson argues Barth takes care to treat carefully how human agency coexists with divine agency. Finally, a few of the points that Johnson makes are critiqued. As we will see, witness is both internal and external, sacralisation is a challenge for all kind of churches, and the Trinitarian gap between being and act is not Barth's way of describing ecclesiological problems.

Johnson cites *actus purus* from I/1 as a description of Barth's ecclesiology

Johnson draws on the first pages of the *Church Dogmatics* (I/1, 38-40) and Barth's desire to avoid the ecclesiological options in Neo-Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. On page 41 of *Church Dogmatics* I/1, Barth says that what is needed is *actus purus* [pure act].[201] The church should not be sullied by the Neo-Protestant tainting. It should be pure. On the other hand, the Church should not be presumptuous but consciously dependent on God's acting in it. This is indeed an interesting two sentences from Barth. However, despite Johnson's emphasis here, it is not a phrase Barth repeats with regard to the church and *actus purus* only occurs eight times total in the *Church Dogmatics*. Still, Johnson highlighting the *actus purus* concept reminds us to highlight once again the two extreme views which Barth is trying to navigate between. In the next section below, we will note that Johnson thinks Barth articulates this middle ground well.

The Neo-Protestant church is separated from Jesus' being

Barth says that Neo-Protestantism's fatal flaw is that it takes for granted human assumptions as the starting point for theology. Barth notes that Schleiermacher's understanding of the church is quite clear and troubling. Barth writes,

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[201] "On the one side we have to say that the being of the Church is *actus purus* [pure act], i.e., a divine action which is self-originating and which is to be understood only in terms of itself and not therefore in terms of a prior anthropology. And on the other side we have also to say that the being of the Church is *actus purus*, but with the accent now on *actus*, i.e., a free action and not a constantly available connexion, grace being the event of personal address and not a transmitted material condition." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 41.

> Schleiermacher's assertion that his introduction is not itself dogmatics is quite untenable . . . The assertion of Schleiermacher is to be judged in the light of the definitions of the Church which he gives a little later, namely, that it is 'a fellowship which arises and can continue only by free human actions,' and 'a fellowship in relation to piety' (*D. ch. Gl.*, § 2, 2; § 3, 1). These definitions, which are decisive for all that follows and which obviously characterise Modernism.[202]

According to Barth, Schleiermacher assumes that the task of theology is how to perfect these rudimentary understandings. He assumes that everyone understands the church as a religious association and so the responsibility of the theologian is to guide the church in fulfilling that potential. Barth complains that if the basic idea is wrong, the whole enterprise sets off on the wrong course. Barth argues that Schleiermacher's "anthropological" starting point—"something generally human" that might undergo "actualisation" is not an innocuous objective assumption but rather "dogmatically heretical statements."[203] This problem of trying to live untethered to Jesus Christ is Barth's greatest concern with Neo-Protestantism theology and ecclesiology.

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[202] Ibid., I/1, 38. Quoting Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 3, 5. Translated as: "a society which originates only through free human action and which can only through such continue to exist." and "That a Church is nothing but a communion or association relating to religion or piety." Cf. Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 204.

[203] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 37-38. In his mature ecclesiology, Barth says this understanding of the church easily leads to a "secularized" church which includes "secret respect for the fashion of the world . . . secret hankering after its glory . . . secret fear that the community cannot live solely by Jesus Christ and the free grace of God." Ibid., IV/2, 668.

The Roman Catholic church assumes its actions are the actions of God

On the other hand, as we have noted above and as Johnson notes, Barth wants to avoid Roman Catholic ecclesiology. Barth worries that this type of ecclesiology risks taking God's actions for granted—believing that God's actions are synonymous and indistinguishable from the machinations of the church. That is to say ecclesiologies like that of the Roman Catholic Church tend to fall into static thinking that God is only doing what the Church is doing; and all that the Church does, God endorses. Barth puts it this way in I/1.

> Their presupposition is that the being of the Church, Jesus Christ, is no longer the free Lord of its existence, but that He is incorporated into the existence of the Church, and is thus ultimately restricted and conditioned by certain concrete forms of the human understanding of His revelation and of the faith which grasps it.[204]

In the Roman Catholic faith,

> the action of God immediately disappears and is taken up into the action of the recipient of grace, that which is beyond all human possibilities changes at once into that which is enclosed within the reality of the Church, and the personal act of divine address becomes a constantly available relationship.[205]

In summary, Barth argues that counter to the Neo-Protestant view, there is no church without God's being and in contrast to the Roman Catholic view, this action is not a given static property which the church now exercises. Barth is reluctant to identify

[204] Ibid., I/1, 40.
[205] Ibid., I/1, 41. Barth expands upon this notion using the language of "sacralisation" in his ecclesiological sections.

God's action with the church's action without qualification. Barth emphasizes that God is free to act ("spontaneously" even).[206]

Barth's actualism: delight from "Actualistic" readers and dismay from "Sacramental" readers

To tie this comment from Barth at the beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* to the arguments in this dissertation, many have commented that Barth's "actualism" is pervasive, even in his ecclesiology. This insistence by Barth that God is free is the source of the constant criticism by Barth's critics on the "Sacramental" side of the spectrum with regard to his understanding of the church as "event" being punctiliar, or occasionalistic. The Sacramental critics find Barth unnecessarily nervous about attributing agency to the church. Meanwhile the Actualist readers definitively praise Barth for his uncompromising differentiation between divine empowering and human action. Barth's Actualistic defenders argue that the church is constantly in need for reform and has an amazing capacity for self-deception that needs regular exploding. They contend that the Reformation still needs fighting because the church in all its forms continues to arrogate to itself today's versions of indulgences. They find Barth articulates as well as anyone the mystery of how God works with human beings and

[206] Ibid., IV/3.1, 40. "That Jesus Christ lives also tell us, however, that His existence is act; that it is being in spontaneous actualisation. Primarily and supremely we have again to say *actus purus*, the actualisation of being in absolutely sovereign spontaneity, after the manner in which the Creator, God, actualises Himself, so that His life-action is identical with that of God Himself, His history with the divine history."

deny that Barth is just overreacting to the "German Christians" Nazi church. Barth's Sacramental critics find him to be an underminer of the church—throwing the baby out with the bathwater, throwing the church under the bus. The Sacramental critics point out the church is certainly intending to be on God's side so they do not understand Barth opening the door for anti-church screeds. The Sacramental critics are concerned about the post-Christian trendiness to be spiritual not religious—to look for God in the world rather than in the corrupt church.

concursus Dei

Johnson reminds us again that there are other parts in the *Church Dogmatics* where Barth describes how human agency and divine agency relate. In this article, draws most from Barth's description of the *concursus Dei* in the subsection of entitled "The Divine Accompanying" in §49 of III/3.[207] This is not from Barth's main ecclesiology sections but it is related because in this subsection Barth analyzes what it means that God is "with" human beings. God, in his relation to human beings, is not a despot, tyrant, or puppeteer, but neither is God just "a companion."[208] Johnson marshals this material from §49 to reflect on the relationship between divine and human agency.

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[207] Ibid., III/3, 90-154. Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 208-218.
[208] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/3, 92-93.

Johnson on Barth's understanding of baptism

Johnson then goes on to deal with Barth's most infamous "bifurcation" according to the Sacramental critics: Spirit baptism and water baptism.[209] Johnson's affirms Barth's precise understanding of the relationship between divine and human action.[210]

Johnson claims Sacramental interpreters need to recover mission to outsiders

Johnson concludes that Sacramental critics are overly "communitarian" and not "evangelistic" enough. Johnson, like Flett, goes on to criticize the fatal flaw of the Sacramental view as effectively conceiving of witness as exclusively internally directed rendering evangelism or mission superfluous. Johnson argues that if the church is seen to "mediate" God's grace, "the task of witnessing and proclaiming God's Word to those outside the church becomes secondary to the task of cultivating God's grace in the lives of those inside the church."[211]

Comments on Johnson

Though Johnson does not deal specifically with Barth's ecclesiology as described in §62, §67, and §72, much of what Johnson says here complements the analysis of this

[209] Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 218-223.
[210] Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision*, 84.
[211] Johnson, "The Being and Act of the Church: Barth and the Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 224.

dissertation. However, there are a couple qualifications to be made about Johnson's conclusions.

Barth does not see a lack of evangelism as a danger for just those with a more Sacramental ecclesiology that includes mediation.

Barth criticizes ecclesiologies of all different stripes of the temptation of "sacralisation" even though he acknowledges it is the typical Roman Catholic malady. And Barth has energetic warnings about the other side of the spectrum: "secularisation" that implicate not just Neo-Protestants but also evangelicals.

Being and act do not mean worship and witness for Barth

Furthermore, it is not clear that in Barth's use of the phrase "being and act" that Barth intends "act" to mean "witness" nor that "witness" means "witness to outsiders," as Johnson thinks. Johnson writes, "In short, the church's being is in its act—and its act is its proclamation of God's Word to the world . . . For Barth, then, Christ's reconciling work does not reside *in* the church; it propels, charges, and enlists the church as a partner in the proclamation of this work to the world."[212] But in Barth both "being and act" of the church are to manifest themselves in "witness." Barth writes, "But its whole being and action in every aspect and form has the sterling content of witness in the simple or varied proclamation: 'Jesus Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.'"[213] Barth does

[212] Ibid., 226.
[213] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 846.

not describe Christians this way, i.e. their status in terms of being and their task in terms of act. He is loath to make those distinctions. Instead, Barth's use of the phrase "being and act" is used as a way of describing "existence." Barth prefers "being and act" because one's actions are inseparable from one's existence. So Barth does not say that Roman Catholics have the "being" part down but not the "acting." Barth makes those type of claims in terms of Roman Catholic tendency to "sacralisation" but does not use the being-act phrasing for this issue.

Barth's understanding of "witness" is not only aimed at outsiders

Nor is for Barth "witness" to the world for the world meant to designate activities directed at non-Christians rather than internal churchly activity. And witness is first of all to outsiders but also to insiders. The

> true ministry of witness it will be addressed first and supremely to the men who do not share the knowledge of the community and are thus strangers to it, but then necessarily in this connexion to those who do share its knowledge and thus belong to it. It is thus a ministry both *ad extra* and *ad intra*, and the two in a very definite order . . . If its inward service is not to become an institution for private satisfaction in concert, or a work of sterile inbreeding, it must accept the priority of its sending to the world, of its task in relation to those without. Yet for the sake of the execution of this task, in order that the missionary community may be the living and authentic Christian community which is able and willing to execute it, its witness must also be directed inwards to its own members.[214]

For Barth, for example, out of the twelve of the ministries of the church he describes only one "foreign missions" is specifically directed to outsiders but all 12 are intended as

[214] Ibid., IV/3.2, 832-833.

"witness." Another of the twelve, "evangelization" is often to "cultural Christians."[215] Barth writes,

> We come to the speech and action of the community which are for the most part directed outwards to the world, and are therefore characteristically apostolic, when we turn (4) to the task which might be and usually is excellently summed up in the term "evangelisation." . . . It consists in the main of men who can be distinguished from the community in the more serious sense only by a shifting frontier, and strictly only by taking each case on its merits, since on the basis of the curious notion of a *corpus christianum* [Christian society] which includes both the Church and the world, and on the basis of the even more curious custom of infant baptism, they seem to belong to the community and yet do not really belong to it to the extent that they have no obvious part in either the knowledge or the resultant ministry of the community . . . Evangelisation was and is specifically addressed to men of this kind.[216]

In other words, by the words "witness" and "action" Barth means both the internal ministries of the church and the ministries directed outwards to the world. For Barth, both are necessary. The ministry of education is the same: "instruction which is to be given in the community, first to its own members, but also to the world at large."[217] Johnson is saying that the Roman Catholic church is far too involved in distributing Christ's benefits to take part in outreach to outsiders. But Barth himself is saying that virtually all churches tend toward this problem and the solution is doing the internal

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[215] Flett also says there is no firm line between insiders and outsiders because insiders have room to grow—"are frequently unconverted." Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 109-110.
[216] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 872-873.
[217] Ibid., IV/3.2, 870.

ministries for the sake of outsiders and with an eye toward them, not neglecting to do them altogether.[218]

Barth does not describe the church as keeping together its Being and Act

Johnson suggests that the Sacramental view revels in the pure "Being" of the church (insisting rightly that it can only be understood in relation to Jesus Christ) but neglects the appropriate "act" of the church (which Johnson equates with "witness.") A fully orbed understanding of the church is indeed awed by the presence of Jesus Christ in the church but also responds in witness. Above it is argued that Bender may be committing a category error by projecting "Christological" solutions to resolve critical issues in ecclesiology. Similarly here with Johnson and Flett, it is questionable whether "holding together the being and act of the church" is the apt one for describing Barth's ecclesiology.

It is language which is found in the history of doctrine primarily with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. The debate over whether "The immanent is the economic." Barth also wants to hold together the person and work of Christ. Formally, it is a truism that the being of the church should be congruous with the act of the church but it is difficult to see how this resolves the questions surrounding the church's focus. The task

[218] This misconception is exacerbated in Nathan Kerr's work where churchly ministry dissolves under the idea of mission as if the latter does not include and must transcend the former. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*.

of the church needs to be debated on biblical grounds rather than dropped from on high as a panacea or magic reified framework.

John Flett

Introduction

John Flett's 2010 book *The Witness of God: the Trinity,* Missio Dei*, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*[219] and his more detailed 492-page 2007 dissertation, which served as the basis for the book,[220] is a very important contribution to the study of Barth because it has alerted pastors and missiologists and theologians to Barth's theology as a rich resource. It is rich to see what was being espoused in the German missiology world when Barth first sketched his thoughts on mission. Flett's passion for understanding Barth comes through in his revised translations of the *Kirchlich Dogmatik* which he has worked through with his advisor Darrell Guder. The book also contains the well-researched detective tale through the ecumenical and German missionary theology from the 1930's through the 1950's looking for the origins of the *missio Dei*. Flett reveals that Barth had nothing to do with it. Like Bender's work, Flett's book was crucial for helping this dissertation develop. It would have been much more difficult to argue that Barth's ecclesiology has a strong missionary emphasis if Flett had not argued this first. Flett also connects the reader of Barth to the work of Darrell Guder and Lesslie

[219] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*.
[220] John G. Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity" (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2007).

Newbigin, who themselves did not write a lot about Barth but draw implicitly on Barth in their significant and influential work on missional ecclesiology.

Why did Flett pursue this method?

The quest for the missio Dei led him to look for a Trinitarian solution

It seems likely that Flett was initially interested in finding out what the *missio Dei* meant and where it came from and whether Barth was its source. *The Missional Church*, published in 1998, and edited by his advisor Darrell Guder along with David Bosch's 1991 *Transforming Mission* had brought the concept to popularity.[221] After investigating, Flett found Barth was not related to the *missio Dei* concept. Flett began his quest for the *missio Dei* with the belief that an adequate Trinitarian theology was crucial to an adequate missiology and ecclesiology.

Flett worries about the lack of a mission emphasis in many churches

More earnestly, Flett feels these other non-missiological churches are missing out on the importance of mission and he is trying to have them rethink this.

> The failure to include mission within dogmatic imagination stimulates a range of overemphases which most especially effect theological accounts of the church's external witness and her internal life, including the definition of 'worship.'[222]

[221] Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*; David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011).

[222] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 6, 479.

Flett seems to be worried about practical theology done absent rigorous theology

Flett worries about ecclesiology or missiology being done separate from Trinitarian theology. "Developing specific patterns of missionary action is a properly theological task."[223]

It seems Flett is concerned that no one has used a social Trinitarian approach to defend ecclesiology that is missionary

Flett mentions Miroslav Volf's book *After Our Likeness*, which defends a "Free Church ecclesiology."[224] Volf defends the Trinitarian basis of the Free Church model against John Zizioulas's defense of Orthodox ecclesiology and Joseph Ratzinger's defense of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. Flett senses that churches that have a missionary structure have not been defended at the theological level.

Pushback about his thesis that missional ecclesiology is a result of correct theology of Trinity

However, there is a problem with Flett's thesis. Flett hypothesizes that a correct theological idea about the Trinity affects a church's missiological understanding. "The breach between God's being and act . . . shapes a community with a corresponding breach."[225]

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[223] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 243.
[224] Ibid., 207. Cf. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 30.
[225] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 249. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 166."The problem of *missio Dei* is finally one of an undue breach between who God is in himself and who he is in his economy." Ibid., 17. But Flett also says, "The distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity is not itself the

Five years after Bender's dissertation in 2002,[226] in another dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2007,[227] Flett makes a similar move of attempting to correct ecclesiology by a better understanding of the Triune God. Bender and Flett both claim Barth as their resource. But, as we will see, Barth does not make this move of applying the theology of God to ecclesiology.

Flett too is influenced by Hunsinger's suggestion that the church should conform to the Chalcedonian pattern

Like Kimlyn Bender, Flett accepts Hunsinger's claim of what he calls the Chalcedonian pattern—that distinction, unity, and asymmetry are transferable from theology proper to ecclesiology. Flett writes,

> The fact of the incarnation—the proper **distinction** and **union** of the divine and the human, the unceasing exaltation of humanity to participation in the being of God, and the **asymmetrical** and indirect nature of this fellowship—indicates the manner of human participation.[228]

As argued above under the section on Kimlyn Bender, and will be argued below, these apparent parallels between God's existence and human existence are only true in the most general sense.

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problem. In what follows I will argue that such a distinction remains necessary for the missionary act." Ibid., 29.

[226] Bender, "'The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ': Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology".

[227] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity".

[228] Ibid., 339. Bold added. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 221.

Flett argues unconvincingly that understanding God without a breach fixes the church's poor relationship with missiology

Flett identifies correctly the two main extremes of missiology

A common way of looking at the history of missiology is to note two extremes. Lesslie Newbigin tells the story of the International Missions Council conferences in the twentieth century as swaying between two extremes: God's work in the secular world vs. church-centered.[229] David Bosch also tells the story of missiology that way.[230] Flett notes these have been called the "ecumenical" and "classical" approaches[231] or the "participatory" and "mediatory" approaches[232] or "liberal / orthodox" divide.[233] Barth himself sketches those two extremes which he labels as the temptations of secularisation and sacralisation.

Flett also mentions contemporary ecclesiological versions of these extremes. On the one hand, is an instrumentalist view of the church as having no value in itself but it

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[229] Newbigin writes about 1952. "My main job at Willingen was with the theological group. This was dominated by the attempt, led chiefly by Hans Hoekendijk and Paul Lehmann, to swing missionary thinking away from the 'church-centered' model which had dominated it since Tambaram (IMC Madras 1938) and to speak more of God's work in the secular world, in the political, cultural and scientific movements of the time." Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993), 130. See Flett on Hoekendijk and Lehmann. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 136-154. And 1959. "As General Secretary of the IMC I would be expected to give some kind of lead to missionary planning and policy. But in what direction? . . . the missionary agencies were in fact much more in the business of inter-church aid than in the business of missions as traditionally understood." Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography*, 158-159.
[230] "The first pattern, then, robs the gospel of its ethical thrusts; the second, however, robs it of its soteriological depth." Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 391.
[231] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 54-55.
[232] Ibid., 74.
[233] Ibid., 77.

is useful in what tasks are accomplished. It is merely an "apparatus" or tool.[234] On the other hand, are those who emphasize worship, communion with God, edification, and church practices (where mission is tacked on as a program, or supposedly implicit in all that they do but functionally absent).[235] This religious group unconsciously brings with them the baggage of "propaganda" ("confessions, hymnody, dress, church order, hierarchy, and so forth")[236] when it tries to communicate with the outside world. In one case, the key thing is the external effect of the church; in the other case, the external effect is an afterthought.

Flett argues missiological / ecclesiological errors are fixed by understanding that God's Being/Act is inseparable

Barth does not argue that these extreme missiological / ecclesiological errors are the result of a misunderstanding of the Trinity. But Flett does.[237] Flett notices Barth's point that the Holy Spirit coordinates divine and human action in the world. Flett transposes this dynamic onto the missiological extremes and proposes that in this way the missiological extremes are avoided.[238] Flett's theory is that the mistaken missiological

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[234] Ibid., 26.
[235] Ibid., 26-28.
[236] Ibid., 28.
[237] To some extent, Newbigin and Bosch also see a richer understanding of the Trinity as medicine for a sick missiology or ecclesiology. See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian faith and today's mission* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964). But Flett's emphasis is unique: the unity of the Being and Act of God are key to an inseparable missional ecclesiology.
[238] "The two points being made here—first, that this relationship determines the human into his or her true humanity, and second, that this takes a particular missionary form due to the ontological connection with

practices of the indigeneous culture enthusiasts and the tone-deaf evangelists is a result of their misunderstanding of this role of Jesus Christ / Holy Spirit (bridging the Being and Act of God).[239]

But it is not hard to imagine both extremes continuing to operate with the hope that their missiological practices were a phenomeon of the Holy Spirit, which bridges the Being and Act of God. Some suggest that mission means protests against police brutality; while others argue it is through a mass evangelistic rally on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Liberal churches will happily see the Holy Spirit at work in their bee hives in the community garden while conservative churches will see the Holy Spirit at work in their seeker-sensitive preaching messages delivered via video.

Flett says "God is a missionary God" had the benefit of encouraging on the most general level that God was active in love toward others. Those who had denounced missions entirely as colonialism and propaganda had to wrestle with the fact that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, which sounds like a missionary. However, this is

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Jesus Christ" Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 220; Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 343.

[239] Michael Stewart Robb agrees that surely the problem with someone's understanding of the church is not merely helped by understanding God's being/act as inseparable. "One gets the impression that the problem with the missiologists contributing to *Missio Dei* is that they did not read Barth, much less Flett's interpretation of him." Michael Stewart Robb, "Review: *The Witness of God: The Trinity,* Missio Dei, *Karl Barth and the Nature of Christian Community* - By John G. Flett," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 2 (2013): 218.

very general, which Flett recognizes.[240] The idea that the divine and human intersect by the Holy Spirit is a slight improvement in terms of theological description. But surely this does not resolve any issues in missiology.

Flett argues that God reveals himself without trickery and therefore so should missionaries

Flett argues that God does not deceive people. God holds nothing back. Therefore, Christians too should straightforwardly communicate the good news as they live their lives.[241] But do human beings know everything about God? Is God really so straightforward in his relationships with human beings? Does God not have tact and nuance? Does God not use a variety of methods in communicating to human beings? Surely Christians are to be honest rather than "duplicitious" or deceptive. But would not a real wrestingly with the way God relates to human beings result in a rather muddled missiological strategy?

The point is this move to learn missiology from the doctrine of God is not a good one. There is ample input from Scripture about how Christians are to reach out to fellow human beings. One does not need to derive missiology or ecclesiology from the Trinity.

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[240] "The resulting vacuity renders *missio Dei* an elastic concept capable of accommodating an ever-expanding range of meanings." Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 5.
[241] Ibid., 183.

Flett argues that there are not two movements in God from ecclesiology

Flett argues against John Webster's suggestion that there are two movements in the being of God: one inside and one outside.[242] But note that Flett criticizes Webster's theology on ecclesiological grounds. "The problem, which becomes evident with the introduction of missionary witness as a critical standard, lies in the ambiguity of how the second movement is 'not unrelated' to the first."[243] Here the tail wags the dog. Webster's theological reflection is dismissed for failing to encourage an ecclesiology that is sufficiently missional.

It is certainly appropriate to criticize a lack of missionary emphasis in an ecclesiology because for example the book of Acts and Paul's letters assume a church that is oriented toward reaching out to outsiders. But it is a major mistake to reason from what we know the church is to be to what the Trinity must be like.

Flett's problem is he assumes much too great a continuity between the Trinity and ecclesiology. "The nature of the church, and so how she acts, must indeed correspond to the life of the triune God."[244] This is incorrect and is Flett's flaw stated baldly. It is only in certain respect, as instructed by Scripture, that the church imitates

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[242] Ibid., 204. citing John B. Webster, *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 167.
[243] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 204-205.
[244] Ibid.

the triune God. And despite what Flett says, Flett is not following Barth, when Flett makes this error.

Flett accuses practices-ecclesiology advocates of demonstrating a lack of trust in God's sovereignty, selfishness, and a poor understanding of triune God

Flett criticizes those who emphasize practices or human agency or formation for failing to appreciate mission. Flett notes the lack of mention of mission in the ecclesiology of Sacramental critics like Stanley Hauerwas and Reinhard Hütter. Rather than selfish practices that merely build up Christians, these theologians should recall the importance of witness and mission to outsiders.

This error with regard to not considering mission leads them to a failure to appreciate the accomplished and ongoing work of Christ. Their "proposed solution lies in attributing some causal agency to the human, either in the practices which constitute the community, or in the person who results from these practices."[245]

Flett also characterizes these Sacramental critics as obsessed with getting a taste of the internal dance of the Trinity. They focus on the inner being of the Trinity. These Sacramental critics have forgotten that the Trinity is inseparable from its outreaching actions. It is this outreach by the Trinity that Christians are invited to participate in.

[245] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 285.

But it would have been better for Flett to grant the prevalence of practices in the New Testament, which do not seem to detract from God's agency, can be exemplary to outsiders and not just selfish, and that the Trinity is so different from human existence we need not quarrel whether one ecclesiology better matches it.

Excursus on being careful about deriving ecclesiology from the theology of the triune God

Instances where the Triune God is a pattern or example for the church

Bender and Flett both argue that because God is like so; God's people are to be like so. Bender argues that the church should be unified, distinct, and asymmetric like Christ. Flett argues that the church's being and act cannot be separated just like in the person of Christ. Flett says that there is a pattern and the Christian must try to understand that pattern. "Once the doctrine of the Trinity provided a 'pattern' of God's acting, it became a question of filling in the pattern."[246] Both Flett and Bender seem rightly to want to ground ecclesiology and missiology in something substantive.

Are there examples where the church is to follow the Triune God? Yes. Consider New Testament scholar Gordon Fee's comment about "Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Cor 13:4a).

[246] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 162.

> In Pauline theology, they represent the two sides of the divine attitude toward humankind (cf. Rom 2:4) . . . Thus Paul's description of love begins with this twofold description of God . . . The obvious implication, of course, is that this how God's people . . . are to be toward others.[247]

These traits of God are applicable to human beings. And there are many more examples: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2). Paul says, "I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

Instances where the Triune God is not a pattern or example for the church

There are some characteristics of God which Christians are not able to imitate. The Word became flesh. This was unique. Christians do not do this except in a very general way as described for example in Philippians 2:4-6 where Christians are told to "look to the interests of others" because Jesus "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage." There are also specific things that God does that human beings are told not to do. "It is mine to avenge" (Rom 12:19; Deut 32:35).

Finally, it seems all the more far-fetched to deduce ethics based on how the Persons of the Trinity interact with one another since we only have glimpses of this.

[247] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Revised ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 705-706.

So how does one know whether to imitate the Triune God?

Look at what the Scriptures specifically say about the Triune God and what they specifically say about Christians. Sometimes it is similar. Sometimes different. God is the invisible Creator. Jesus became flesh. The Spirit empowers. Christians are to love their neighbor as themselves. Christian ethics and ecclesiology must be cobbled together from texts of Scripture that indicate what the human response should be. They cannot be deduced or derived from what is known about God.

Admittedly, there is often a resemblance between what human beings are and do and who God is and does. As mentioned above with regard to Phil 2:4-6, Jesus becomes flesh, human beings act with compassion. Yes, there is a similarity but these are also hugely different. Similarly, because the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit so the church is to avoid sexual prostitutes (1 Cor 6:16-19). The church is not holy in the same way that the Holy Spirit is holy. The church is the body of Christ so it is to affirm the different abilities of others (1 Cor 12). The church is not the body of Christ in the sense that it gives itself for the forgiveness of sins. God is not a God of disorder but of peace so people in church should take turns while speaking (1 Cor 14:31-33). Certainly too the church is told to be characterized by peace and be peace-makers and so resemble God but there is a qualitative difference from the Prince of Peace. Jesus prays "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:22). Even this quite strong statement is typically

understood in the Christian tradition to involve some reflection on the context so the implication is that Christians should be wary of discord.

To be facetious, applying the Trinity to ecclesiology might lead someone to say that the church be divided into three equal groups or have three leaders or be organized into three branches of government. Christians do not make those deductions because the Scriptures do not.

Another problematic way of applying the Trinity to ecclesiology would be the church ignoring explicit commands given to the church in Scripture because the church is to be like the Trinity. Sometimes things like this have been done. Some have said the church need not worry about making disciples (which Jesus commands) because God is sovereign. Or, people have suggested the church can sin without restraint because God loves to forgive. Paul says "No!" (Rom 6:1-2).

Would practical theology be strengthened by imitation of the Trinity?

Consider pastoral care that is designed to primarily make the person feel better. How is this different from a non-Christian doing therapy or psychology? Consider development programs in the third world which endeavor to improve the lives of people. Is there something different if Christians (with solid theology) do them? Consider a church trying to raise its level of attendees. How is what it is doing different from corporate marketing?

The Triune God as example

Would these approaches change if the people attempted to imitate the triune God? Flett seems to think so. But consider whether one can observe the character and actions of the triune God and deduce how to do therapy, development, or communication. Much that the triune God does is not directly transferable as sample approaches.

However, there are two things that would substantially help the therapist, activist, and pastor.

Scripture's explicit guidance about practical theology

They could draw on what the Scriptures say about those practices of counseling, helping the poor, and communication of the good news. They need not read the Scriptures only looking at the what the triune God does but also about what the triune God explicitly reveals about how human beings are to live. Here the therapist learns about compassion, listening, lament, and community. The activist learns about justice, peace, compassion, and community. The pastor learns about truth, persuasion, and transparency. It is not clear that these can all be derived from the character and actions of God but they are certainly revealed to be the will of God. Flett seems to argue that this looking at what Scripture commands people to do is somehow inferior to deriving lesson from the triune God.

Awareness about the past, present, and future of what the triune God does

Furthermore, the reading of Scripture would also give the therapist, activist, and pastor a vision for what in fact the triune God has done and continues to do and will do in the world. Though this would not be as practical, it would certainly be encouraging and comforting. This may not finally disqualify certain approaches to missiology and ecclesiology convince the therapist to suggest God's wisdom rather than mere comfort, the activist to continue to despite discouragement, and the pastor to explain but not manipulate because the Spirit is at work. A practical theology is thin if it is not aware of God. But Flett seems to be emphasizing that the church imitate the Triune God—because the Triune God is in mission, so the church should be in mission. A practical theology informed by Trinitarian theology may focus not so much on imitating the Trinity as realizing what the Trinity has done and continues to do, while also drawing on the Scriptures regarding what human beings are to do to participate in that.

Pushback against the idea that Barth supports Flett's thesis

Barth's missiology was already developed in 1932 and did have an explicit Trinitarian basis

Flett depicts the context for Barth's lecture on missions in 1932. On the one side were Mainline German missiologists who stressed that a missionary must first see God's

work in the existing culture before sharing the gospel.[248] This was "Christianization." On the other side, were Anglo-American missionaries derided for their "imperialism" and "Americanism" who imposed not just the gospel on the receiving culture but also their culture and ways.[249] Barth thinks they are both guilty of syncretism—that is, a mixing of one's own culture with Christianity to the extent that Christianity is diluted.[250]

Flett finds that in Barth's 1932 address on missions,[251]

> this lecture does not encourage a trinitarian position simply because Barth does not himself draw upon the doctrine of the Trinity in any overt manner . . . this absence of any formal trinitarian grounding of mission . . . Barth does not himself ground missions in the doctrine of the Trinity.[252]

And much of what Barth says in that address is repeated later in the *Church Dogmatics* when Barth discusses missions. Barth says, "all activity of the church is mission, even if it is not expressly called that."[253] Later, he will say that *the* task of the church is witness. In 1932, Barth says "that no European theologian can prescribe what the missionary must do. This is missionary's responsibility, and only the missionary's theology can

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[248] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 83. "The proclamation of the gospel is itself 'dependent' on this [point of] contact." Ibid., 2.
[249] Ibid., 81-82.
[250] Ibid., 111.
[251] Karl Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart: Vortrag, gehalten an der Brandenburgischen Missionskonferenz in Berlin am 11. April 1932," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 10, no. 3 (1932).
[252] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 142, 151; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 107.
[253] Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart: Vortrag, gehalten an der Brandenburgischen Missionskonferenz in Berlin am 11. April 1932," 190. quoted by Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 147; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 109.

determine the content of her sermon. Translating the message for the sake of communication is a necessity."[254] Later Barth will say that explanation must be done so the listener can understand. Here Barth says, "The issue is that one translates the gospel, and that one does not identify the gospel with some partial and derivative version."[255] Again, later, Barth will emphasize strongly that the church must not drift into secularisation—that is losing its nerve.

Barth's encounter with Emil Brunner, natural theology, Nazi ideology, and German missiology leads to Barth's denouncing syncretism, not a missionary ecclesiology

Flett links Emil Brunner's writing in 1935 about natural theology to be in continuity with the German missiology literature of the time.[256] Flett reflects on the lessons of Brunner, natural theology, and the German missiologists by alluding to §26 The Knowability of God in II/1 composed by Barth in 1940. Flett suggests that his thesis about the incorrect understanding of a breach in God and a corresponding poor ecclesiology finds confirmation in this section by Barth.

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[254] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 150; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 112. paraphrasing Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart: Vortrag, gehalten an der Brandenburgischen Missionskonferenz in Berlin am 11. April 1932," 214.

[255] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 151; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 112. paraphrasing Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart: Vortrag, gehalten an der Brandenburgischen Missionskonferenz in Berlin am 11. April 1932," 214.

[256] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 168.

Barth worries about those that tout "natural revelation" as crucial for missiology (though he does not specifically talk about "missiology"). Barth worries about their assumption that one can learn about God by observing the world. If they continue in this, they cobble together enough observations about what God is like that they accumulate a natural theology. As we will see, the pertinent cautionary lesson in Barth's mind is the lesson of Nazi ideology infiltrating the church in 1933. Barth also saw it in 1914 where German nationalism and aggression was supported by many of theological professors Barth had respected.[257] It began with the "natural revelation" that Germany has superb culture. The people then deduced from this truth that God wants Germany to rule over other cultures.

Barth is criticizing the view that human observation of the world leads to truth about God.[258] "Natural revelation" tends to nudge aside what is more clear about God as revealed in "special revelation" (that is, God attested in Scripture). Instead of diluting the gospel to make it palatable or looking for an opening, the message is to be delivered straight-forwardly without apology.[259] Barth has in mind this phenomenon of Christians in Germany succumbing to Nazi ideology—just a little natural revelation at a time—

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[257] Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life From Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 81.

[258] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 241.
One day it may even be "German" being

[259] "they need that the true God should be preached to them . . . absolutely everything that Paul has to say to the Athenians is plainly focused upon them and applied to them as the knowledge of a Christian apostle concerning them." Ibid., II/1, 122, 123.

which Barth had warned about in 1932-1933.[260] In May 1934, the Confessing Church finally denounced this in the Barmen Declaration.

Flett is not persuasive in his claim that the problem of natural theology is a breach between God's being and act

Flett writes, "The issue of a point of connection is the issue of natural theology, the essential problem of which is its cleavage of God's *being* from his *act*."[261] But Barth certainly does not say that in the quote Flett provides. Barth writes,

> Natural theology is the doctrine of a union of man with God existing outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It works out the knowledge of God that is possible and real on the basis of this independent union with God, and its consequences for the whole relationship of God, world and man.[262]

Barth is saying this is the how people without Christ tend to operate. That atheist or unbeliever is stumbling along confused—trying to cobble together an understanding of life from the natural world. From a Christian perspective, this natural theology is a pooling together of true and false observations. They are trying to learn about the world without the owner's manual.

Barth does not use the language of a breach but Barth does say that there is no "empty space" outside of special revelation.

> But we must conduct this further enquiry in such a way that it eliminates the conjecture that behind or above the fact of the real knowledge of God there is a kind of empty space which can be filled up by the assertions of an overlapping

[260] Ibid., Preface, I/1, xiv. Barth, "The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom." Barth, *Theological Existence To-day! A Plea for Theological Freedom*.
[261] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 172-173.
[262] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 168.

> doctrine of being and knowledge in general. The temptation which necessitates this idea of an empty space must be attacked at its roots.[263]

Christians have accurate knowledge of God through the revelation in Scripture. They need not speculate about what else can be learned about God through other means.

Barth does use the "being / act" terminology but it has to do with this idea that God communicates to human beings accurately. "The knowledge of God is wholly and utterly His own readiness to be known by us, grounded in His being and activity."[264] Christians need not work hard to decipher where God is at work in hidden ways in the world. They need not strain to find a "point of connection." God is revealed clearly in Scripture.[265]

Nor is this breach also in the church though the church can get distracted by "natural revelation."

Flett then suggests that Barth applies this "breach" to the church but it is not clear that Barth is doing so in the section Flett quotes from Barth. Barth writes,

> Again, it is certain that the conception of another knowability of God of this kind—beyond every serious objection that may be levelled against it—is grounded mischievously deep and firm even in the sphere of the Church, and therefore particularly in its form as a Christian natural theology.[266]

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[263] Ibid., II/1, 65.
[264] Ibid., II/1, 66.
[265] The other side which Barth does not address here is that Christians can also see the world clearly when they have these lenses of special revelation. Christians can see where God is at work in hidden ways but this is because they are seeing the world as God does. They are not scrounging to understand what God is like by first observing the world. See the three-pages that begin: "We may begin by stating that the true community of Jesus Christ is (1) the fellowship in which it is given to men to know the world as it is." Ibid., IV/3.2, 769-772.
[266] Ibid., II/1, 135.

Barth is saying that functional atheist thinking can easily seep into the thinking of Christians. They begin to live based on what seems to work in the world rather than what they have learned from Jesus. Indeed, missiologists might call this the temptation of "syncretism"—the unfaithful (often unconscious) warping of Christianity by mixing in other assumptions from the culture.[267]

Forty pages later in this §26 in II/1 on natural theology Barth brings up the example of Christians hoping Hitler was God's gift to the German people.[268] Barth is saying it is very easy for Christians to lose their focus on learning about life through special revelation. So when Nazism in 1933,

> the representative of a new trend and movement of the human spirit knocked at the door of the Church. Its petition was very understandable in the light of every precedent. It asked simply that its ideas and ideals should be allowed into the Church like those of all earlier times and phases.[269]

Instead, Barth quotes the Barmen Declaration.

> Jesus Christ, as He is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we have to hear and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

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[267] Barth specifically returns to this in his mature ecclesiology—calling it a "secret respect for the fashion of the world . . . secret hankering after its glory . . . secret fear that the community cannot live solely by Jesus Christ and the free grace of God." Ibid., IV/2, 668.

[268] "The question became a burning one at the moment when the Evangelical Church in Germany was unambiguously and consistently confronted by a definite and new form of natural theology, namely, by the demand to recognise in the political events of the year 1933, and especially in the form of the God-sent Adolf Hitler, a source of specific new revelation of God, which, demanding obedience and trust, took its place beside the revelation attested in Holy Scripture, claiming that it should be acknowledged by Christian proclamation and theology as equally binding and obligatory." Ibid., II/1, 173.

[269] Ibid., II/1, 174.

> We condemn the false doctrine that the Church can and must recognise as God's revelation other events and powers, forms and truths, apart from and alongside this one Word of God.[270]

Barth's emphasis here that the church listen to Jesus Christ alone.

Perhaps there is evidence that natural theology is a result of a "breached God" but Flett does not seem to have provided it here. What Barth says is that cobbling together a "natural theology" is like doing theology with one's eyes closed and hands tied behind one's back. It is fueled by unbelief that God has revealed himself through Jesus Christ. Instead, the person is hoping they can collect crumbs and clues of other revelation that a deistic or pantheistic but silent God has left. This atheist or pagan view denies God reveals himself through special revelation. This view does not seem to posit a breached God but rather a deistic or pantheistic detached God.

And with regard to ecclesiology, it is true that the rejection of natural theology spelled out in the Barmen Declaration would do wonders to squeeze syncretism out of any ecclesiology or missiology. The church or missionary is to limit itself to communicating Jesus Christ. But it is not clear that here Barth is talking about how the church must be missionary as God is missionary. The implication in this section has more to do with the church turning inward in purification than the church turning outward in a missionary impulse.

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[270] Ibid., II/1, 172.

Flett claims that because God loves the world, Christians should love the world but Barth is drawing on John 17 not a concept

The point Flett makes over and over can be seen in citing Barth "Christ exists for the world . . . so the Christian community exists for it."[271] This is a profound point and a correct one. Indeed, it precludes a selfish understanding of Christianity where one just thinks about what they get out of it.

What Flett is arguing against is an idea of God who infrequently but occasionally does loving things. Flett worries about a corresponding church that infrequently but occasionally does loving things. Sending is inherent in God and the church, not "merely anomalous events."[272]

Flett is arguing that God is love and that therefore Christians are to love. It is not optional or peripheral but inseparable.

But Barth does not just deduce that Christians should be loving because God is loving.[273] It is not just from observing Jesus that Christians learn this. Jesus connects the dots. Jesus says Christians are to: "Love your neighbor . . . make disciples . . . so send I you . . . be my witnesses."

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[271] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 341; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 218. quoting Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 786.

[272] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 29.

[273] David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw are correct that Flett is claiming to draw insight about the inner life of God and applying that to ecclesiology. "Flett affirms the same analogical move between God and the church that the social trinitarians do, albeit in a different way." David E. Fitch and Geoffrey Holsclaw, "Mission Amid Empire: Relating Trinity, Mission and Political Formation," *Missiology* 41, no. 4 (2013): 393.

Barth cites John 17 regarding the comment above God and the church existing for others:

> it is twice emphasized in John 17 that the goal of the sending both of Jesus and of His disciples is the cosmos. The world is the third party to which they are sent, Jesus by the Father and the community by Jesus.[274]

The transferable principle is not that Christians can derive principles from the Trinity but that they should listen to what Jesus says.

Barth is explicitly wary of social Trinitarianism regarding God and the church being for others

David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw chide Flett and others who make the the social Trinitarian move for trying to derive their ecclesiology from the Trinity. They write "a strict analogy between the immanent Trinity and the church quickly projects over-idealized forms of ecclesial life."[275] Barth himself specifically addresses that. "How do we ourselves know that when we begin with the statement that the Christian community exists for the world we are not just idealising its reality?"[276]

Barth will eventually agree that the church can in some sense imitate Jesus Christ.

> The Christian community can and should understand itself (4) in the full New Testament sense of the term as a likeness. As such it is a subsequent and provisional representation of the divine-human reality distinct from itself.[277]

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[274] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 768-769.
[275] Fitch and Holsclaw, "Mission Amid Empire: Relating Trinity, Mission and Political Formation," 393.
[276] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 785.
[277] Ibid., IV/3.2, 792.

But this is only after Barth has made quite clear that (1) the church is absolutely dependent on the Holy Spirit;[278] (2) the church's actions should always take the form of confessing Jesus Christ;[279] (3) the church recalls its actions are mere response.[280] Barth is saying church should try to imitate Jesus Christ by being for the world as He was. But they should realize that they are not going to be able to do what Jesus did in the same way. They are (1) completely dependent on the Holy Spirit, (2) can only really point to Jesus Christ, and (3) must realize that their actions are responses. In this way, Barth severely delimits notions of learning ethics from how the Trinity interacts. Still, yes, in some sense Christians imitate Christ. "In the light of its [the church's] basis in Him, it [the church] is sent in the same direction as He is, i.e., into the world, in order that it [the church] may exist, not for [the church] itself, but for the world as He did."[281] Jesus is moral examplar in this respect. But it is only after Barth has insisted that (1) Jesus is present by the Spirit empowering, (2) the church's message is Jesus, and (3) the church functions out of gratitude to Jesus. Jesus is not just exemplar but also healer, reconciler,

[278] "The Christian community knows (1) that it owes its origin and continuation to a very definite power, to the constant working of which it is totally directed for its own future . . . the Word of the God . . . the Holy Spirit." Ibid., IV/3.2, 786-787.
[279] "The Christian community knows (2) that what it can do and effect and accomplish of itself in its human and creaturely spontaneity, as empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit, can consist only in its confession of Jesus Christ. To confess Him is its business." Ibid., IV/3.2, 787.
[280] "The Christian community knows (3) that its confession of Jesus Christ as the distinctive action for which it is empowered by the Holy Spirit can only be, in all its human and natural spontaneity, a grateful response to the fact that first and supremely Jesus Christ has confessed it, does confess it, and will continually do so." Ibid., IV/3.2, 790.
[281] Ibid., IV/3.2, 791.

savior. It is only with all of these clarifications that it can be said: as Christ; so the church. "The Christian community can and should understand itself as a likeness in this specific sense."[282] Trying to be like Jesus is not a general pattern. That is too liable to be misunderstood. Barth notes that there are some things the church does not do. The church is not the king of the Kingdom of God.

> it does not belong to it [the church] to set up the kingdom of God in the creation of God, as though it were not already set up, . . . to manifest this kingdom, as though it had any power of manifestation and as though its manifestation were not the work of the One in whom it is set up[283]

Flett suggests that because Christians are "in Christ" they should fit his pattern but often the Scriptures suggest being "in Christ" means quite different actions should be taken than those taken by Jesus

Flett does note the major differences between Christ and the church but responding to the objections of McCormack and Nimmo who question the application of the "Chalcedonian pattern"[284] to the realm of human agency, Flett cites as evidence a passage from Barth not in his ecclesiology about Christians "abiding" "in Christ" so therefore they are ontologically part of Christ.[285]

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[282] Ibid., IV/3.2, 792.
[283] Ibid., IV/3.2, 793.
[284] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 340. quotes objections of McCormack, "Barths grundsätzlicher Chalkedonismus?," 165. later in English McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?." and Nimmo, "Karl Barth and the *concursus Dei* - A Chalcedonianism Too Far?," 67.
[285] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 275-277. cited Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 340.

Barth is reveling in this section about the comfort of Christians being with Christ. Here is a sample of what Barth says.

> They are crucified with Him (Gal 2:19, 6:14), dead with Him (Rom. 6:8; Col. 2:20, 33), buried with Him (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), made alive with Him (in the bold anticipation of Col. 2:13 and Eph 2:5) and even made to sit together with Him in heavenly places (in the even bolder anticipation of Eph 2:6).[286]

All Barth says here is gloriously comforting and true. The church receives the rewards of being with Christ. But the theologian cannot deduce from this "ontological" unity "with Christ" clear ethical and ecclesiological implications.[287] The church does not try to get crucified or sit with Jesus in heavenly places.

Flett is arguing that the church has the same pattern as Christ but this pattern is hardly clear. Sometimes the church can do just what Jesus did: love your neighbor. But often the appropriate response to Christ by the church is not imitation but is gratitude or prayer or joy or some other action that is quite different from the initial pattern of Christ.

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[286] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, 277. For another passage full of exegesis on what it means for the Christian to be in Christ, see: ibid., IV/3.2, 545-547.

[287] Michael Stewart Robb concludes his review of Flett's book with the same critique. What Barth says about God and what he says about the church are likely only linked approximately or generally. "the main thesis of Flett's book is posited as a correspondence between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the church (as God . . . so church . . .) . . . Perhaps better readers than I will be able to find more than analogy and correspondence holding these two doctrines together, but I find it hard to believe that Barth, for one, would have seen the matter so symmetrically, even in his later years." Robb, "Review: *The Witness of God: The Trinity*, Missio Dei, *Karl Barth and the Nature of Christian Community* - By John G. Flett," 219. Jon Coutts also thinks that connection between the Trinity and ecclesiology is a rather loose one and so suggests reading the book with that hesitation despite Flett's stronger claim. "Those careful to avoid rendering the earthly mission constitutive of God can still benefit from considering the extent to which this mission is fitting for him and thus imperative for us." Jon Randall Coutts, "Review of *The Witness of God: The Trinity*, Missio Dei, *Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*," *Ecclesiology* 10, no. 1 (2014): 140.

Christians are not left with no guidance with regard to how to apply God's character to their own lives. The book of Acts describes the early church. Paul's letter to the Corinthians describes how the church should operate. What develops from the New Testament is a sense of what Christians' existence in Christ looks like. Christians are not just like Christ. They need not just derive ecclesiology from a dogmatic description of the triune God.

Flett is quite right that Christian existence is not just about receiving benefits but also giving but Flett uses the Being / Act theology to make this point and Barth does not

Flett is correct to be frustrated that too many Christians and too many churches are only interested in themselves—their own spiritual growth, religious experiences, warm feelings, Christian friendships.

Flett emphasizes that for Barth the "benefits" of being a Christian are not just to be savored but also shared.[288] But Flett does not need at that point to draw upon any technical theology. When Barth discusses "egoism" and *beneficia Christi* [benefits of

[288] Flett, "God Is a Missionary God: *Missio Dei,* Karl Barth, and the Doctrine of the Trinity", 151; Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 174-175. Flett is picking up here on his advisor Darrell Guder's sense of §72: "What I had, in rather naively instinctive ways, and many years before, begun to understand with my concern about the benefits-mission dichotomy, was developed here with a clarity and persuasiveness that still astonishes me." Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 174.

Christ] extensively in §71 The Vocation of Man, he does not link this explicitly to a flawed understanding of a breach between the Being / Act of God.[289]

Being a Christian means to love others—not just experience private religious inner moments. Flett's insistence that God is others-centered should inspire Christians to be others-centered as well. This is of course true. This is preaching. This is an illustration. But Flett transposes the theology of "being vs. act" theology onto the ecclesiology of "enjoying God ourselves vs. outreach to outsiders." Flett's point is that these cannot be separated.

Flett confusedly speaks of "diastasis" as the opposite of "breach"

Flett's terminology is confusing here.

> This is the breach between being and act manifested by natural theology. It is overcome by reestablishing the *diastasis* between God and humanity, for it

[289] Flett cites a number of passages on these pages from IV/3.2. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 174-175. Barth describes the classic (not witnessing) understanding of being a Christian. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 561, 562. Barth wonders if it is not a bit incongruous that some Christians belief in a basically selfish Christianity when Jesus gave of himself. "It gives us a very strange relationship if on the one side we have the selflessness and self-giving of God and Jesus Christ in which the salvation of the world is effected and revealed, and on the other the satisfaction with which Christians accept this and are thus content to make use of the very different being and action of their Lord." Ibid., IV/3.2, 567. Barth does use "being and action" language here but it is not technical. Barth is merely contrasting Christian selfish existence and actions with Jesus' unselfish existence and actions. Barth cites that God loves the world so Christians should too but this is not technical. Barth is chiding ecclesiologies that have very little interest in mission to the world—God loves the world! "What has become of the decisive New Testament saying in 2 Cor 5:19 that it was the world which God reconciled to Himself in Jesus Christ, or of the well-known Jn 3:16 that it was the world which He loved so much and in such a way that He gave for it His only begotten Son, or of the statement in Col. 1:16 (cf. Jn 1:3, Heb 1:3) that He created the world δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτόν [through him and for him]?" Barth, 1956-1969`, 1975`, 2009 #45@IV/3.2, 767}

> removes the responsibility to overcome the breach between God and creation from the creature and properly attributes it to God alone.[290]

Is Flett referring to Jesus as the "diastasis" (since Flett is contrasting the word with "breach?") It seems as if Flett is referring to Jesus as the one who has "overcome the breach between God and creation." Is Flett thinking about this verse? "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). Human beings do not need to scrounge looking for crumbs of God. That Jesus overcomes natural theology is correct.

What is odd is Flett's use of "diastasis" to describe Jesus. Flett must be referring to the *Römerbrief* here but he does not say so. *Diastasis* means "breach" or "gap." In the *Church Dogmatics,* Barth does not affirm the idea of "diastasis" [German: *Diastase*] in the *Church Dogmatics* in its eleven insignificant occurrences. When Barth uses it in the *Church Dogmatics*, he uses it to describe the post-Christendom crisis of the world: the perceived dramatic gap between God's way and the the world.

> since the 17th century are only too familiar. Each generation has repeated them as if it were the first to discover the great diastasis which is their theme . . . The *diastasis* between the Church and the world inaugurated or revealed with the dawn of the modern age has put an end to this state of balance . . . For in the developing *diastasis* inaugurated in the 16th century the Church.[291]

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[290] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 180, Cf. 181, 195.
[291] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 20-21.

But Barth writes that he does not prefer this description of the world. "This age—which I now prefer to call the age of 'becoming autonomous from Christian existence' rather than the age of *diastasis*—is no longer the modern age."[292]

Flett seems with "diastasis" to be referring to unity (because he uses it in opposition to breach) and the asymmetry or irreversibility (since Flett emphasizes that is an "ordered relationship") of the divine and human natures of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ.[293] Flett concludes that "The proper human act that corresponds to this exaltation is mission."[294] Again, it is just not clear that this follows. Unity and asymmetry might lead to all sorts of ethical implications. Christians too are to be unified with one another but also some are more important? Christians are to be unified with non-Christians but are more important? Divinity and nature are united but divinity is more important?

As we will see below, Barth draws from the explicit statements in Scripture about what the Incarnation means for Christians. Yes, one explicit implication specified by Jesus is that since Jesus is sent into the world; Jesus also sends his followers into the

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[292] Translation altered. Original translation: "This age—which I now prefer to call that of the self-understanding of the Christian rather than of diastasis—is no longer new." Ibid., IV/3.2, 525. «Diese Zeit – ich möchte statt: der Diastase, lieber sagen: der Verselbständigung der christlichen Existenz – ist uns zwar schon lange nicht mehr «Neuzeit».» Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 603.
[293] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 180-181, 195.
[294] Ibid., 195.

world. But Christians are also to rest in the Spirit's power, point to Jesus, be grateful for Jesus, resemble Jesus.[295] The Incarnation does not just imply mission.

Late in the book, we see where Flett is getting the concept "breach"

On page 199, Flett notes in passing what seems to be where his language of "breach" comes from.[296] Barth's main point right before this is that "God was truly and altogether in Christ." But, Barth says, for the sake of contrast, let us consider the alternative.[297] The wrong alternative goes like this. Since it is impossible for God to become human, God split himself in two. Barth says for a moment to posit "ontically the fact of a cleft or rift or gulf in God Himself, between His being and essence in Himself and His activity and work as the Reconciler of the world created by Him."[298] So God in "His being and essence" stayed in heaven unchanged and Jesus was charged with the "activity and work as the Reconciler of the world." But marvelously this is not what the Scriptures say. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19). Barth asks, "Of what value would His deity be to us if—instead of crossing in that deity the

[295] "Beginning with (1) its basis in the power of the Holy Spirit, we considered the work for which the Church is thereby empowered, namely, (2) the confession of Jesus Christ, then tried to see that (3) this can only be an answer to His confession of it, and (4) finally sought to interpret its existence as the subsequent and provisional likeness of the prophecy of Jesus Christ described under the first three heads." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 795, Cf. 785-795.
[296] Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 199.
[297] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, 183.
[298] Ibid., IV/1, 184.

very real gulf between Himself and us—He left that deity behind Him in His coming to us, if it came to be outside of Him as He became ours?"[299]

But is this move applicable to the church? Again, there is a faint resemblance between the church acting "with the same love" with Jesus not considering equality with God something to be grasped (Phil 2:2, 5). But there are also a multitude of dissimilarities. Is it as hard to imagine the church having both internal and external dynamics as the God of the universe reconciling the world to himself in Christ in Bethelem and Jerusalem?

Flett cites a text about Israel having a breach in its correspondence to God but this merely means disobedience

Barth is saying that God's people are to imitate God's character. When they do not, they do not reflect God.

> It is surely obvious that in the Old Testament as in the New obedience . . . involves a correspondence; that the whole Law . . . is the comprehensive direction to an attitude on the part of the people which will reflect that of Yahweh; . . . to the imitation of God in what is done and not done by the community and its individual members[300]

[299] Ibid., IV/1, 185.
[300] Ibid., IV/2, 781.

Barth says the commands given in Scripture for the people of God is designed to help them reflect the moral character of God. But Flett cites this because Barth mentions a breach. Barth says,

> the fact that Israel's declension from its God and His commandments consists concretely in the breach of fellowship between its own being and Himself, which means in practice the breaking of the analogy between its action and that of its God[301]

But this has nothing to do with mission nor the imagined "breach" within God.

Another quote that Flett cites from Barth that on the surface seems to be resemble his argument has to do with Barth saying diversity in the church is not something to be ashamed of but is a good gift of God.

> On the contrary, its activity would be not merely imperfect but basically corrupt, because irrelevant, if it lacked this multiplicity, if it did not really entail the use of different human means, if it did not lead it to present itself under different aspects. The primary reason for this is that God Himself, the Lord of the community as the people called to His service among men, is absolutely one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet not with an undifferentiated, lifeless and motionless unity, but as the eternally rich God who is the basis, source and Lord of an infinitude of different divine possibilities. The secondary reason is that the community called by Him and created by His call is also absolutely one, yet not as a monolithic block or a collective such as that of the ant-heap or bee-hive, but, in correspondence with the being and life of God, as a living people gathered and continually upbuilt and set in the service of God by the special callings and endowments of individuals.[302]

Barth says that God does not love bland uniform things but a beautiful diversity. Barth goes on to draw on Scripture such as:

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[301] Ibid.

[302] Ibid., IV/3.2, 854. quoted in part on Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 237.

> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph 4:16).

Barth writes,

> From Him! By this there stand or fall the right and necessity of all distinction and therefore particularity, and yet also of interrelationship and therefore harmony, in the ministry and witness of the community.[303]

The point is that Barth is not deriving things about ecclesiology from the Trinity. Barth is glorying in the privilege of the Christian life and the beauty of God as described in Scripture.

Moreover, understanding the Trinity does not necessarily lead to missionary implications. In this case, we are taught to enjoy the diversity within the church.

Barth's ecclesiology indeed has a missiological emphasis

Flett's great gift is to have emphasized Barth's comments about the church in mission particularly in section IV/3.2 but also throughout the *Church Dogmatics.* Indeed, Barth thinks the church should not merely be merely feeding the faithful but also reaching out to those far from God.

People in the world are confused without Christ

People without Christ are stumbling through life getting some things right and some things wrong. They are desperate for an alternative way to live. This does not

[303] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 859.

mean Christians patronize them but rather that they enter their worlds as equals but as people who have found life.

The task of the church is witness

Barth argues the task of the church is to witness to Jesus Christ. Barth says the church's task can be summarized in the words of Jesus as "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). This does not mean that the church is purely instrumental but it is a certainly a challenge to those who see church as those who hear a sermon and receive the sacraments within the church walls. Internal church life practices should also be exemplary in some respect.

Churches and missionaries must be wary of falling in the ditches of unfaithfulness or religious irrelevance

Churches and missionaries must navigate between the two dangers of overcontextualization and a failure to communicate, which he labels secularisation and sacralisation, and elsewhere the church of defect, and the church of excess. Barth makes clear that the gospel "should not be forced into any alien scheme" (that is, have its content perverted in the name of relevance) but he also says that explaining the Gospel involves doing so "in the constantly changing forms of human consideration, thought, and expression."[304] Churches should primarily pursue both holiness and witness to outsiders. It is indeed important for those who are Christians to grow in Christ and

[304] Ibid., IV/3.2, 850.

pursue holiness and to enjoy God and to gather for worship but these internal activities should not operate without attention to outsiders. It is impossible to talk about one without the other: holiness and witness. The potency of holiness is for witness. Proper witness cannot be mere words. Barth rejects shallow forms of evangelism which dilute the good news. Here recall secularisation. On the other hand, Barth also rejects forms of religiosity that are not serious about compassion for the world.

Basic intelligibility is a good goal for translation

Barth does not have the concerns about "translation" that some suggest. Yale theologian George Lindbeck worries that the drive for "intelligibility" in itself leads to a diminished theology. Lindbeck says Christians "should . . . resist the clamor of the religiously interested public for what is currently fashionable and immediately intelligible."[305] Lindbeck says the desire to "translate" Christian doctrines into language more "accessible" or "intelligible" is the hallmark of liberal theology and finally results in "accommodation to culture."[306] Lindbeck considers himself to be drawing principally on Karl Barth[307] but in fact Barth can talk about intelligibility positively. He writes that in

[305] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 134.
[306] Ibid., 129. "The postliberal method . . . is bound to be unpopular among those chiefly concerned to maintain or increase the membership and influence of the church. This method resembles ancient catechesis more than modern translation. Instead of redescribing the faith in new concepts, it seeks to teach the language and practices of the religion to potential adherents . . . Pagan converts . . . submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction . . . Only after they acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able . . . to be baptized." Ibid., 132.
[307] Ibid., 135.

addition to unashamedly "declaring" the Gospel, "The community's ministry of witness also consists directly in this explaining and unfolding of the Gospel, in making it intelligible."[308]

Barth says it is not the responsibility of the missionary to convert the pagan but it is the responsibility of the missionary to convey the basics of the gospel. It is not that everyone will come to receive the message—that is God's work—but outsiders can come to understand it generally. Barth says, "The Gospel is not generally knowable. But it is generally intelligible and explicable."[309] And if people are not at least grasping its basic aspects, "the church-commmunity is well advised . . . to seek the fault in itself rather than the 'wicked world.'"[310] Barth also says local considerations related to communicating the good news to outsiders can shape structure and leadership. This is the reason for Barth's ecclesiological agnosticism regarding forms of polity and

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[308] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 846.

[309] Ibid., IV/3.2, 849. Flett writes that Barth is not against seeking to communicate appropriately. "First, point of contact refers to the simple and necessary process of listening and responding to the questions of one's audience. . . . The second sense, which I will call the 'point of connection,' includes the more problematic element of establishing or massaging cultural conduits as a necessary precondition for receiving the gospel . . . Barth does not deny a point of connection. . . The issue of a point of connection is the issue of natural theology." Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, 90, 91, 172.

[310] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 848-849. Will Willimon similarly says that it is absurd to think that appropriate preparation of a sermon is inconsistent with trusting God for its effectiveness. "There is a great difference between saying the preacher ought not to attempt fully to control and predict the effects of a sermon . . . and say that the preacher is not responsible for the sermon." Willimon, *Conversations With Barth on Preaching*, 252. Barth's comments here validate Willimon's suspicion that Barth appreciated the importance of communication, preparation, and context despite Barth's stern calls to be wary of superficial aspects of preaching.

leadership functions. Leadership and church structure are to be determined by the church's task of witness.[311]

John Flett has done a great service in arguing for the centrality of mission for Barth. However, he has done so by arguing that there is an error in Trinitarian theology that has caused this error. Flett is right to criticize churches that lack external focus but this is not so much because they have an erroneous view of the Trinity that they unconsciously emulate in their ecclesology but rather because they are ecclesiologies that were birthed under Christendom where there were no outsiders to be concerned with. The church under Christendom came to see itself wholly as educating an already infant-baptized Christian population rather than "winning" outsiders (1 Cor 9:19-23).

[311] "There has never been anywhere . . . an intrinsically sacred sociology. Obviously there is no such thing, just as there is no absolutely distinctive or intrinsically sacred language . . . It is above all its [the Church's] wonderful freedom to recruit across the frontiers of nations, states and other natural or historical unions and societies . . . its invisible essence must always be made visible in the fact that it is a confessing and missionary Church which leaves those around in no doubt as to whom or what it has to represent among them." Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, 740, 741, 742.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: The mischaracterization and characterization of Karl Barth's ecclesiology

This dissertation on Barth's ecclesiology is a case study in ecclesiology. How do a range of Christian traditions respond to a certain ecclesiology? Barth's ecclesiology is something of a Rorschach blot—revealing something of the predilections of the interpreter's tradition from Roman Catholic to Reformed to Mennonite.

Some try to claim Barth. They see his work as admirable and want to claim him as a Baptist / Mennonite / Catholic / Presbyterian—implying he was on his way to coming around to their perspectives. Others want to discredit him. They know they disagree with Barth on one thing and so they attempt to demonstrate that his work has other flaws as well. Each have characterized Barth in a certain way.

The only way to test the validity of these interpretations is to test them as has been done in this dissertation. The attempt of this dissertation was to see if there were any traditions that could indeed claim Barth's ecclesiology as their own. It also sought to see if indeed the accusations of majors flaws were valid. The appreciation and criticism has been weighed and sorted through.

The basic contribution of this dissertation has been to identify the various interpretations of Barth's ecclesiology. This in itself is a contribution to the future

scholarship on Barth's ecclesiology. Five interpretations have been identified: Sacramental, Free Church, Architectonic, Actualistic, and Missionary. What has been primarily argued is that none of the five characterizations accurately summarizes Barth's ecclesiology but all contribute something important.

Sacramental interpreters

The Sacramental critics are put off that Barth criticizes the concept of "sacrament" and seems to downplay human agency. They wonder how Barth can affirm the catholity of the church without stressing a hierarchical polity to ensure global church unity. For these critics, Barth's ecclesiology is stimulating but dangerously unstable. We have worked through hundreds of pages of charges along these lines—from Erik Peterson, Wendell Dietrich, Colm O'Grady, the earlier work of Nicholas M. Healy, Reinhard Hütter, Joseph Mangina, and Stanley Hauerwas. Whether or not Barth's answers are adequate will have to be be decided by the reader though the reader should at least now be aware that Barth addresses the charges lobbed at him and was aware of the dangers his arguments raised. In short, Barth was very concerned with the institutional tradition of the church overshadowing listening to Jesus among the community of Christians. There is such a thing as clergy taking God's action through them for granted. That is what Barth opposed. Furthermore, he was concerned that the Sacramental emphasis on the inner life of the church downplayed the task of the church

to witness. The Sacramental critics point out helpfully the need for congregations to draw from the wisdom of church tradition. A local church endangers itself if it basks in its own autonomy. Morever, the analysis above has shown that Barth's understanding of the practices of the church is very close to that of Sacramental interpreters and his denouncement instead of reshaping the concept of sacrament have caused much confusion. Still, Barth's Protestant actualistic stubbornness on this point continues to provoke and teach in a salutary way. For their part, the Sacramental interpreters are right to stress the importance of the community of Jesus Christ—both congregational and global. It is crucial that the church be the church.

Free Church interpreters

The Free Church critics—Craig A. Carter, Tracey Mark Stout, Edward E. Blain, and especially John Howard Yoder—try to claim Barth as their own. But Barth himself denies that there was anything in the Free Church that could not also occur faithfully in a State Church. Moreover, Barth prefers congregationalist polity but is not opposed to other structures. The *Church Dogmatics* is a work that implicitly chides congregations not to go it alone without the Christian tradition's wisdom. Barth stresses the congregation because vibrant communal life together that reflects the way of Jesus testifies to outsiders what Jesus Christ is like. The problem of infant baptism for Barth is partly biblical and theological but also significantly because it contributes to a Christendom

mentality. If believer's baptism is a culturally inconsequential rite of passage, as perhaps it was in the American South in the last few decades, then it too badly needs to be reformed. The Free Church interpreters are correct to urge dynamic, lay-involved, active, practice-oriented local congregations that sit under the Word.

Architectonic interpreters

The Architectonic interpreters praise Barth for his theological elegance. We have suggested T. F. Torrance, George Hunsinger, Todd Cioffi, Paul Louis Metzger, Kimlyn Bender, and John Flett have these traits. They stress that theological concepts that relate to Jesus Christ and the Trinity can be applied to the church. And yet they offer little evidence that Barth makes this move. Barth himself is quite concerned not to make such a move of applying things that could only properly be said about the Trinity to the church. The overall organization of the *Church Dogmatics* is certainly elegant. But in the details of the ecclesiological sections when Barth is specifying exactly how to understand the church, these sweeping moves are chastened. Barth does not make deductions from Christology or the Trinity to ecclesiology. Often these interpreters make quite accurate comments about Barth's ecclesiology but they mislead in suggesting that the way to do ecclesiology is to deduce ecclesiology from Christology. Instead, ecclesiology should be done, as Barth does it, in conversation with Scripture texts about the particular topic. The Architectonic readers are correct that there is surprising coherence and balance and

health in good theology because of its source material in Jesus Christ as testified in Scripture. Barth is a master at making connections and seeing layers of meaning in Scripture. But Barth is also the first to cite exceptions to an elegant principle that on further examination is too simple. He is not a dogmatist in the sense of someone who wants their principles or ideas validated. Instead, theology should hew close to its source material—bending with the nuances in Scripture. The Architectonic readers are right that the Sacramental intepreters do not have the only elegant, beautiful, traditional theological solutions. The Architectonic interpreters want to draw from the Christian tradition but also rightly note that there is more texture and variety in the Christian tradition than the Sacramental interpreters have noticed in their concern for loyalty to it. Like the next group, these dogmatic interpreters often recognize that calcifying tradition needs constantly to be reformed. They are protesting ecclesial drift in the best sense of being Protestant.

Actualistic interpreters

The Actualistic interpreters are most often treated in the footnotes above because they are protesting the rather settled positions of the Sacramental interpreters and the overly simplistic metaphysical conclusions of the Architectonic interpreters. Their frustration with the church does not inspire them to write at length on Barth's ecclesiology. These include Eberhard Jüngel, John Webster, Bruce McCormack, Paul

Nimmo, and Nathan Kerr. They rely heavily on Barth's severe comments about religion from the 1920's and stress Barth's actualism in the *Church Dogmatics*. These interpreters rightly see that many churches do not witness to God but instead repulse people away from God because they do not give outsiders an accurate understanding of who God is. Barth felt this. One example is that after Barth became a professor in the 1920's, he may have preached in prisons more than in churches. His two books of sermons are from preaching in prisons. Even though the actualistic interpreters misunderstand Barth when they think he was against the church, they sense correctly that the delight of reading Barth's ecclesiology is he is so often exhorting the church to be like Jesus rather than continue with the status quo. These Actualistic interpreters sense that often the church functions as an institution that protects those who are already insiders and reinforces the status quo of society, rather than seeking justice for the marginalized. They rightly see the Holy Spirit as the one who convicts, encourages, heals, and speaks prophetically.

Missionary interpreters

The Missionary interpreters of Barth correctly emphasize that Barth articulated an ecclesiology suitable for mission. Indeed, Barth says the task of the church is witness. These interpreters include Eberhard Busch, Darrell Guder, Keith L. Johnson, Wessel Bentley, and John Flett. However, Barth also retains his deep wariness of the move to be

relevant which Emil Brunner had a hard time understanding. Though Barth is passionate about the need for the church to exist for others, Barth just as strongly argues for an inner congregational life of the church that is vibrant and rich. This dissertation has brought to the forefront of the conversations with Sacramental and Free Church interpreters, the Missionary interpretation. A key way to strengthen the Sacramental interpreter position would be to stress the church's inner life as testifying to outsiders about Jesus Christ. Often the sacraments are seen as food for those already inside, rather than as an impetus and vision of who Jesus Christ is to a watching hungry world. Similarly, it has been argued that the Free Church interpreters are wrong to stress the liberty of churches but would be right if they stressed that a congregation should be freed to be flexible to communicate the good news in its locale as a missionary.

Barth's ecclesiology characterized

The secondary underlying argument throughout the dissertation is that Karl Barth's ecclesiology is worthy of reflection and dialogue. It is rich with nuance and stimulation.

If we are to take an insight from each of the five interpretive schools above, we can characterize how Barth would want to have his ecclesiology characterized. First, he would want the church to not be sacramental but indeed to be *practicing*—energetically committed to being the church as it is supposed to be. Second, he would not want the

church to focus on being a Free Church but rather to be *local,* being the church in a particular place. Third, he would not want the church to be elegant and tidy but rather *catholic* in the sense of drawing on the whole of the wisdom of the Christian tradition. Fourth, he would not want the church to be actualistic, but *confessing*—asking Jesus Christ to be present in the here and now. Fifth, Barth would want the church to be missionary in the sense of carrying out the task of *witnessing*—to Jesus Christ—first to outsiders but also to people already inside.

The church should be be practicing, local, catholic, confessing, and witnessing. This dissertation concludes with a quotation from Barth that perhaps touches on all these aspects.

> The Church's invisible essence must always be made visible in the fact that it is a confessing and missionary Church which leaves those around in no doubt as to whom or what it has to represent among them.[1]

[1] Ibid., IV/3.2, 742. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV/3.2, 849.

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Biography

Andrew Dale Rowell was born September 9, 1975 and grew up in Wheaton, Illinois and was involved with sports and student government. He triple-majored at Taylor University in Christian Education, Biblical Studies, and Spanish--studying abroad twice and playing baseball. He then did a semester abroad at Jerusalem University College with his future wife Amy. After getting married, Amy and Andy lived for six years in Vancouver, Canada—both doing M.Div. degrees at Regent College and serving in pastoral ministry. Then Amy and Andy taught Christian ministry at Taylor University for two years. Next Andy did his doctoral work at Duke Divinity School, while Amy served on church staff at Blacknall Presbyterian Church in Durham, North Carolina. In his first three years at Bethel Seminary, Andy taught nine different courses: Missional Outreach and Evangelism, Discipleship in Community, Introduction to Transformational Leadership, Contemporary Models of the Church, Senior Seminar in Ministry Leadership, Leading Congregational Worship, The Global Church in Mission, Organizational Leadership and Church Governance, Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry. Andy and Amy have three children: Ryan, Jacob, and Alice. They live in Minneapolis where Amy is Pastor of Community Life at City Church.