

## Chapter 5

# Contriving Creation Eschatologically under Christological Control: The Doctrine of Election (*CD*, II-III)

### Tentatively Dispelling the Time-Eternity Problem

It is with II.2's move into an eternal perspective that Barth's critics feel that the legitimacy of their criticisms is pre-eminently displayed. Chapter 2 has illustrated an account of Barth's revelation that perceives temporality's having been pressed into a systematically realised and eternal trajectory. History's contingency is thereby overwhelmed and negated, and its 'openness' to the future, and with it the framework for hope, is emptied of its content.

However, it is not clear that Barth uses a time-eternity model that is simply, and parasitically, related to general philosophical conceptions. Roberts and Gunton, for instance, recognise Barth's Boethian language but fail to notice that he does not *identically repeat* the Boethian conceptuality.<sup>1</sup> Rather, Barth 'baptises' 'pre-theological' concepts for theological use, and in so doing questions their previous conceptualisation. Moreover, Barth's time-eternity model derives from his involvement in a much more modest intellectual project than that of advocating a philosophical resolution to an academic puzzle. As Ford comments, albeit in a different context, there can be no such intellectual settlement for Barth.<sup>2</sup> Without commenting on his model's success, Barth at least intends to maintain two *theological* maxims.

Firstly, he plans to prevent an *a priori* exclusion of God and contingency by arguing that God's freedom is not a freedom-nullifying straitjacket or "prison" that prevents his incarnational relating to creation [*CD*, IV.2, 84]. On the contrary, the gracious trinitarian God can *freely*

---

<sup>1</sup> *KBDT*, 116; *IR*, 173; Gunton, 1978, 180.

<sup>2</sup> Ford, 1979, 75.

identify with, transfigure, and lead creation to its redemptive rest through the Passioned existence of his incarnate Son [CD, II.1, 304]. Creation is presented as the consequence of the free “overflowing of His [inner-trinitarian] glory” *ad extra*, with ‘glory’ here being understood as “God Himself in the truth and capacity and act in which He makes Himself known as God”, at the core of which lies God’s “freedom to love”.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, this is the freedom of the trinitarian God who

does not will to live only for Himself but also for another distinct from Himself..., working and creating beneficently in this desire and love. He lives as the God who so loved man that He condescended to become man Himself in His only begotten Son [CD, III.1, 363].<sup>4</sup>

As such, divine freedom, and its relation to creation, is both carefully distinguished from models of “absolute freedom of choice” and potentially arbitrary (non-christologically controlled) accounts of freedom [CD, II.2, 25]. Barth is able to do this more consistently since, from CD, II.1 onwards, the *Extra Calvinisticum* begins to disappear as a consequence of the emphasis on the Word’s never being *Logos asarkos* but eternally *Logos ensarkos*. Barth would radically emphasise, then, that “it is precisely God’s *deity* which, rightly understood, includes his *humanity*”, presenting creation as the result of the inner-trinitarian love God freely flowing ‘outwards’. This, moreover, is a conception which suggests a more powerful concept of the *lovedness* of creation than does that of the *creative necessity* of God’s inner-trinitarian being in Moltmann’s theology, for example.

Eternity conceived as pure ‘timelessness’ renders this account problematic, and reduces God to a remote and impassible deity, although Barth does deny an *external* necessary passibility to God [CD, II.1, 370]. However, any concept of God (and also that of humanity) that does not begin from revelation, but imagines a deity without humanity (*Menschenlos*), is an idol of human creation [HG, 47]. Hence, Barth’s is a theological suggestion that *God has time for us*, that “True eternity includes this possibility ... [and] potentiality of time”, and that

without ceasing to be eternity, in its very power as eternity, eternity became time ... [i]n Jesus Christ ... submitting

---

<sup>3</sup> CD, II.2, 121; II.1, 643.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Moltmann, 1981, 53ff.; 1985, 75ff.

Himself to it, and permitting created time to become and be the form of His eternity [CD, II.1, 616].

Consequently, eternity is neither opposed to, nor is the negation of, temporality.<sup>5</sup> It does not abolish distinctions between past, present, and future, although it is not itself subject to these. Rather, in a move that Owen argues to be “sheer self-contradiction”, Barth paradoxically declares eternity to be “pure duration” (*reine Dauer*), albeit a duration of divine simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) in which beginning, succession and end are one and not three, without separation, distance, or contradiction [CD, III.2, 526f.].<sup>6</sup>

This is the hermeneutical context of Barth’s talk of eternity as “real time” (*wirkliche Zeit*), and therefore as prototypical of created time [CD, II.1, 611]. It is crucial, however, to notice that Barth does not lend prototypicality to eternity’s full range of conceptual content, but rather, and more particularly, to the triadic distinction of past-present-future. Roberts’ assertion that eternity’s prototypical basis had rendered created time as temporally problematic, thus mis-attributes temporality’s being patterned on eternity as *simultaneity*.

Moreover, Barth’s talk of the forty days of the resurrected Christ’s presence as the “new time” and “real time”, depicts the God-human reconciliation in Christ rather than the formal structure of temporality in itself [CD, I.2, 52; III.1, 76]. This renewed ‘time’, lived as fully reconciled human being, contrasts with our experience of time as “fallen” and “improper” by virtue of sin, since allotted and created time has been “lost” to creation [CD, I.2, 46ff., 66ff.]. In this “time of grace” created time has its meaning, purpose, and fulfilment [CD, III.1, 76].

Secondly, as in *2Ro*, God’s *aseity*, or freedom *from* external constraint, is served by distinguishing eternity from time, and therein Creator from creature [e.g., CD, II.1, 311, 614]. Divine perfections such as constancy (contrasted with *immutability*), unchangeableness, and therefore reliability in this *freedom from* time are located in this concept of *freedom from* time [CD, II.1, 609]. What derives from this theological topography is that Barth denies that this relational trinitarian God is lonely and in *need* of creating [ET, 16]. Temporality itself is a creature, Barth declares, and

---

<sup>5</sup> CD, II.1, 610, 611, 615; III.2, 526, 558.

<sup>6</sup> H.P. Owen (1971), *Concepts of Deity*, London, 107; cf. Gunton, 1978, 179.

where its difference from eternity is particularly evidenced is in the latter's simultaneity, or coinherence, of pre-, supra-, and post-temporality [*CD*, II.1, 619]. Thus "Time can have nothing to do with God" in the sense that God is not a prisoner, but rather Lord, of time [*CD*, II.2, 608]. Hence, although God does assume specific spatio-temporal co-ordinates in Christ, revelation remains veiled apart from the contemporaneous unveiling by the Spirit.

Barth's time-eternity model, therefore, functions to safeguard the dual nature of divine freedom, which is why the discussion of eternity is located within that of the perfections of divine freedom [*CD*, II.2, 608]. Indeed, not only does the discussion of 'eternity' parallel Barth's concept of 'God', it even occasionally appears as a synonym for it. "Eternity is God Himself", Barth insists, "His own dimension" [*CD*, III.2, 526].

As well as misconceiving Barth's *dipolar* categorisation of eternity, Roberts problematically presses Barth's model by identifying it as *CD*'s hermeneutical key, and thereby he surmounts the confines of its intended boundaries.<sup>7</sup> All overarching hermeneutical keys are suspect, and care must be taken not to overlook Barth's diverse and revisionistic forms of expression. His theology:

1. is an indication of the never fully textualised, but eternally rich, divine Subject [*ET*, 37];
2. is a self-consciously *provisional*, fallible and stumbling thinking of the theological *Gegenstand* (although Barth's tendency for confident verbosity could detract from this) [e.g., *CD*, I.2, 483, 861f.];
3. exhibits recapitulatory self-critique. Barth himself describes his theology as exhibiting a polyphonic, rather than monotonous, testimony to the divine act [*ET*, 36];
4. involves tension creating and never resolving dialectic and paradox (e.g., eternal 'dipolarity', and revelational veiling-unveiling).

Returning to material matters, it is noteworthy that while Roberts certainly notes he does not pursue Barth's connecting eternity and divine freedom [*IR*, 173]. Indeed, what he specifically fails to recognise, as Marshall indicates, is that this dual understanding of the nature of God's

---

<sup>7</sup> *KBDT*, 89,102; *IR*, 166.

freedom determines, and hence logically precedes, Barth's theological engagement with temporality.<sup>8</sup>

Barth's talk of eternity's threefold *distinctions* and potentiality for temporal becoming, raises questions as to the ease of *past-oriented* readings of Barth's eschatology. If Barth had presented a de-eschatologised revelation in *2Ro*, as Chapters 3 and 4 have already doubted anyway, then he certainly is moving beyond suggesting this with *CD*'s christologically determined eschatology. *2Ro* is de-eschatologised only in the sense that Barth found it difficult to portray the divine coming to creation, something that later led to him admitting that the problem was the result of over-emphasising *post*-temporality [*CD*, II.1, 635]. The mistake, in other words, is to understand this earlier work as overplaying *supra*-temporality, something implied by critics' readings emphasising revelation's eschatological Moment.

Apart from the misleading comment about Barth's pre-1940 eschatology, Willis correctly argues that in most clearly by II.1 in particular, "Barth begins to find a way to take eschatology and the temporal future more seriously".<sup>9</sup> Thus, at least in principle, Barth's account of eternity's openness for temporality comes to retain a highly important eschatological dimension. Hence, God "precedes its [creation's] beginning, He accompanies its duration, and He exists after its end" [*CD*, II.1, 619].

This chapter contends that in 1942 (*CD*, II.2) in particular, Barth discovers the tools to forge an eschatological understanding of creation and history through a dramatic christological perspective.<sup>10</sup> This, which further raises issues of evil and human autonomy, will be explicated below; and an explanation will be made of how Barth's discussions rule out certain models of eschatology: notably immortality of the soul, evolutionary eschatology, and 'predictive' eschatology. What emerges is an eschatology that views Christ as both creation's *Prótos* and *Eschatos*

---

<sup>8</sup> Bruce D. Marshall (1993), 'A Theology on its Way? Essays on Karl Barth'. By Richard H. Roberts [a Review]', *JTS* vol. 44, 453-458 (457).

<sup>9</sup> W. Waite Willis (1987), *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in response to protest Atheism*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 155.

<sup>10</sup> In his brief discussions of election and eschatology, Thompson never makes the connection between them [1978, chs. 8 and 10]. On II.2's importance, see *CD*, II.2, 3, 76f., 91; von Balthasar, 1972, 145.

who has realised reconciliation and redemption in our place. Chapter 6 will tackle the question of how this realisation relates to eschatological provisionality, with respect to *CD*, IV.3 and IV.4.

### Election as Creation in Eschatological Perspective

In 1936, Barth came under the impress of Pierre Maury's lecture on election's proper christological grounding.<sup>11</sup> This helped Barth achieve two things.

The first thing that this lecture helps Barth to achieve is that he is able to concretise and develop his focus on the Word into a burgeoning christocentrism. Christ has steadily become Barth's theology's methodological 'rule' and regulative 'principle'.<sup>12</sup> Comprehensively being unfolded is the 'systematic' (i.e., coherentist) significance of God's self-revelation in Christ Dogmatic Christ-centeredness, something that enables Barth to distinguish between an "unauthorised systematisation" and "authorised systematisation", although Sykes understands this to be unconvincing rhetoric ('in practice', one should add) [CD, I.2, 868f.].<sup>13</sup> In making this distinction Barth is concerned to avoid an unrevisable and monotonous dogmatic 'systematisation' attained through an impersonal Christ-*Prinzip*, or *a priori* first principles (*Grundanschauung*) [CD, I.2, 861]. Hence he comes to favour talk of "Christian truth" as "a globe, where every point points to the centre", over it as having an "architecture". The latter "connotes 'building' or 'system'".<sup>14</sup>

In the second place, the 'systematic' implications of his christological theology for election, and thereafter also creation and eschatology, are what this lecture enables him to pursue. In so doing, it takes him beyond the actualistic (*aktuellen*) presentation of election of *GD*, with the latter's focus on the recipient of revelation's situation in the *hic et nunc*.

As in *GD*, highly significantly election is located in the doctrine of God. Gunton, for example, comments that "It is failure to understand that election is about God that has led to fruitless arguments about Barth's alleged universalism".<sup>15</sup> However, this comment is misleading. God's self-election precisely functions to ground God's *election of creatures*, and

---

<sup>11</sup> Barth (1960), 'Foreword', in Pierre Maury, *Predestination and Other Papers*, trans. Edwin Hudson, SCM Press, London, 15-18 (16).

<sup>12</sup> *GD*, 131, 322; *CD*, II.2, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Sykes, 1979, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Barth, 1963, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Gunton (1974), 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election as Part of his Doctrine of God', *JTS* vol. 25, 381-392 (384 n.7).

therefore the question of *apokatastasis* cannot be so simply dismissed. God could *freely*, i.e. without any external necessity, elect and save *all* humankind.

The significance of Barth's *theo*-logical move with his discourse about election is rather to be sought in the fact that primarily, albeit not exclusively, election speaks of God, and of his primary act 'before' all others (logically, rather than temporally) which grounds and determines his consequent activity.<sup>16</sup> As is demonstrated in Christ, the electing God behind whom there can be no inscrutable divine figure untrinitarianly conceived, God, Barth's story unfolds, "did not remain satisfied with His own being in Himself" but elected another; although it is clear that this *free* activity is motivated solely by God himself and not by any necessity external to himself, hence the concept of God's free *self-election* [CD, II.2, 168].

Moreover, it is primarily through the image of Christ as *electing God* that Barth speaks of the revelation of God's eternal will, negating any unchristological and untrinitarian idea of an inscrutable decree of a hidden God [e.g., CD, II.2, 111]. God, and also the content of election, cannot be anyone other than the God incarnate in Christ [e.g., CD, II.2, 94].

However, Barth's discussion now comes to incorporate creation and anthropology within a christological perspective [CD, III.2, 390]. What it means to be human and creaturely has a christological basis since, originally and properly, God's election of *another* takes a particular christological form [CD, II.2, 107]. It is this *Other* who is the "Real man", the type and "prototype", and ground of others' election, since from, in, and for him everything else receives existence [CD, III.2, 132; 50]. Others "are what they are only in their confrontation and connexion with the fact of this one man" [CD, III.2, 161]. That is why Matheney can legitimately claim that "Christology does not dissolve anthropology, but complements and completes it".<sup>17</sup> As its origin it also shapes it.

By coming to reject the *Logos asarkos* in favour of the *Logos ensarkos*, Barth does not entertain the existence of a human being *temporally before* creation. Even his use of the Pauline image of Christ as creation's firstborn also has a logical, rather than temporal, *prius*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this eternal election does not undermine incarnational historicity

---

<sup>16</sup> See CD, II.2, 54, 84, 101f. Moltmann misrepresents this 'before' and 'after' talk as temporal [1981, 54; see GD, 466; Colwell, 1989, 228].

<sup>17</sup> Paul D. Matheney (1990), *Dogmatics and Ethics: The Theological Realism and Ethics of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, Verlag Peter Lang, 170.

<sup>18</sup> CD, II.2, 99; IV.1, 48; cf. Col. 1:15.



by promoting an *accomplishment of reconciliation* in a remote eternal past, as Brunner and others suggest.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, Barth's account of eternity's temporal simultaneity implies that God's eternal decision is an *anticipatory* determination for Christ's consequent temporal history.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Barth insists that this election necessitates the creation of a stage on which election is fulfilled [e.g., *CD*, II.2, 94]. "[T]he primal history [*Urgeschichte*]," Gunton proclaims, "is not the negation of the temporal story but its ground."<sup>21</sup>

Creation (and history, as creation's temporality) has its origin, centre, meaning and goal in Christ. History is, consequently, a salvation history which is hidden in general world-occurrence, and "reaches its goal in the appearance, death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus" [*CD*, III.1, 24]. For he is the eschatological Man, *des zweiten, erlöften Adam*, even though in election he also is the first Man.<sup>22</sup> In such an eschatological view Wisnefske's attempt to revive natural theology through Barth's theology, when presented as "knowledge of nature *without* God", should be viewed as being careless.<sup>23</sup> There simply cannot be any form of nature *without* God.

In opposition to his earlier writings [e.g., *GD*, 155], Barth does not here understand eschatology as the *reditus* to an original creation-order. Although it does include this, eschatology is now conceived as history's moving towards God in Christ, or rather his (Second) coming as the universal revelation of God's kingdom [e.g., *C*, 121; *DO*, 131]. Webster recognises that

Creation is wholly ordered towards its redemptive fulfilment:  
its meaning lies not in its original ordering *per se*, but in that  
ordering as the external condition for covenantal grace.<sup>24</sup>

One important function of this discourse in Barth is to rule out any suggestion that "we must laboriously build the road to" the goal [*DO*, 133]. The question of what this does to other (contingent) human hopes and

---

<sup>19</sup> Brunner, 1949, 347; Zahrnt, 107, 112f.; *TG*, 254; *SL*, 168.

<sup>20</sup> *CD*, II.2, 53, 94, 160f., 173, 184.

<sup>21</sup> Gunton, 1974, 388.

<sup>22</sup> *C*, German, 144; trans. 167.

<sup>23</sup> Wisnefske, 2 my emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> Webster, 1995, 64.

goals (what Rahner terms “intramundane futures”) is not discussed, although Barth does, in principle, clearly retain their legitimate place [*TI*, 6:59; cf. *DO*, 131]. His is not a ‘hope against all hope’, understood in any straightforward sense. What they are denied, as is perceivable in Barth’s earlier presentation of political activity and the kingdom-signs distinction, is ultimacy [*GD*, 413]. Ultimacy, and therefore the content of eschatological discourse, refers to God alone as

the absolute, unsurpassable future of all time and of all that is in time.... There is no history in time that can end except with Him, i.e., under the judgment which He holds over it, and the results which He gives it [*CD*, II.1, 630].

This theme negates any *purely* immanentistic and contingently constructed hope. Barth would, therefore, be able to agree with Pannenberg that the “hope against all hope” cliché makes sense in the context of contrasting Christian hope with hopes for salvation through intramundane planning and acting.<sup>25</sup> His rejection, for instance, of Liberal accounts of the Kingdom as a present reality in human love, on the basis of an Overbeckian-inspired eschatology, is well-known. Moreover, *CD*, I.2, volume II, and the early parts of volume III were composed at the time of National Socialism in Germany, and strongly suggest that Barth’s opposition to its religious-like claims to ultimacy and its shaping of the hopes of the German peoples was no less theologically generated and sustained than his earlier critiques of the *Kriegstheologie* and *völkisch* ideology. Writing in 1938 he argues that

When the State begins to claim ‘love’ it is in process of becoming a Church, the Church of false God, and thus an unjust State. The just State requires, not love, but simple, resolute, and responsible attitude on the part of its members.<sup>26</sup>

It was a sense that these boundaries between church and state, and the divine and human constructions were being blurred that made Barth suspicious also of North American politics and the preaching of the ‘American way of life’.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See Wolfhart Pannenberg (1998), *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 177.

<sup>26</sup> Barth, 1939, 77.

<sup>27</sup> See Barth, 1963, 24f.

Excluded also is Leibnizian optimism's 'evolutionary' style eschatology on the basis not only that it too comfortably undermines tragic conditions [CD, III.1, 406], although the fact that this is mentioned is important and suggestive in itself, but also, and more importantly, because it "does not really need ... God" since its "mode of entry is purely and simply an act of human self-confidence" [CD, III.1, 410]. So, for example, more recently Hick's evolutionary-eschatology has only had a 'need' for God in the sense that, as Creator, he sets the "soul-making or person-making process" in movement and 'guides' it through its multiple worlds to completion.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, Barth emphatically relates that a properly christologically configured eschatology, with Christ as the coming One, bars all such human attempts at self-divinisation [see *HGCL*, 74].

It also excludes the form of eschatology to which post-Enlightenment thinking had reduced eschatological-discourse to, at most: the soul's immortality. In *GD* Barth appears to understand this concept as referring to a continuing existence based on something *innate within human being*, or, in theological accounts, on the divine creation.<sup>29</sup>

Barth's critiques of 'natural theology' and Brunner's *Offenbarungsmächtigkeit*, however, deny that there is anything *inherent* within human beings that leads to knowledge of God. His rejection of 'natural' immortality parallels this. No guarantee for hope can be discovered in ourselves, since only God possesses immortal life, as if his granting us eternal life is an externally imposed necessity on him [CD, IV.3.1, 310f.]. Rather, that *God* is the One who elects asserts his freedom from external constraint, and generates the asymmetrical God-human relationality.

God does not owe us anything; either our existence, or that He should establish and maintain fellowship with us, or that He should lead us to a goal in this fellowship, to a hereafter which has a place in His own hereafter. ... For He could have done without it, because He is before it and without it [CD, II.1, 621f.].

Therefore,

---

<sup>28</sup> John Hick (1976), *Death and Eternal Life*, Collins, London, 408.

<sup>29</sup> See Migliore, lxiii.

it will depend on God's decision alone if, contrary to all appearances, there is for man an ascent above the dust. No immortality of the body or soul, no eternal destiny or expectation necessarily linked with man's existence as such, can guarantee it. God alone can give this guarantee [*CD*, III.1, 247].

Secondly, for Barth, body and soul are a unity, whereas immortality separates the latter from the former at death.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Barth claims that since the concept of the immortality of the soul implies that individual souls are indestructible, it denies death's rupturing of life.<sup>31</sup> Here, there can be no comfortless absurdity of death since

death ... is merely a passing privation, an unfortunate compression of life, the disintegration of a distinct and notable function of the living creature. Yet the creature survives this transformation both in soul and body, and thus attains to a new life. Hence even in death there is no real disruption or disintegration of the continuity of creaturely existence [*CD*, III.3, 317].

This conception of immortality, psychologically as well as conceptually, escapes finitude's limitations (knowing its future). Hence, Barth acclaims it to be

a typical thought inspired by fear. For it would be so consoling if things were different, if the frontier of dying towards which we are hurrying, the contradiction which awaits us, were not quite so dangerous but could somehow be overcome [*CD*, III.4, 590].<sup>32</sup>

Instead, Barth intends to be "loyal to the earth" by being true to humanity's permanent belonging-to-the-world and opposing both human conflicting with temporality's flux and any attempt to escape one's life-span's definite temporal allottedness, which is ended by death [*CD*, III.2, 6]. Barth even attributes temporality to humanity's eternal life [*CD*, III.2, 521]. So Kerr regards Barth as "celebrating our finitude", thereby taking seriously Wittgenstein's concern to acknowledge human limitation as non-

---

<sup>30</sup> See Migliore, lxix; *FC*, 136f. On body-soul unity, see *CD*, III.1, 243; III.2, 366-393.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *TI*, 13:177f.; Simon Tugwell (1990), *Human Immortality and the Redemption of Death*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 157.

<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Nicholas Lash (1979), *Theology on Dover Beach*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 164f.

affliction.<sup>33</sup> Createdness, that declared ‘good’ by the Creator, is life’s *proper* framework: “we are not in an empty or alien place” [CD, III.3, 48]. And those words are significantly written by Barth at a time when Europe is facing rebuilding after the horrors of Auschwitz and the war’s ravaging of the continent. Barth continues, both creatureliness and

the body formed by God’s fingers cannot be a disgrace or a prison or a threat to the soul. Man is what he is as this divinely willed and posited totality. ... Creatureliness can be regarded as humiliating only where the creature is thought to be in partial or total opposition to God [CD, III.1, 243].<sup>34</sup>

Barth is careful not to suggest any form of escape from these proper limitations of creaturehood since human being eschatologically becomes a person not *in flight from*, but only *in orientation to*, the world and history.

The Christian hope does not lead us away from this life; it is rather the uncovering of the truth in which God sees our life [DO, 154].

This is primarily why Barth utilises the image of bodily resurrection, although he does also imply a sense in which language of immortality could properly inhabit a context of describing the divinely given eternal life of the resurrected [CD, III.2, 624]. Redemption, Barth here argues, is *more than* the soul’s immortality, i.e. bodily resurrection, thus implying that he sees no need to dispense *completely* with the conceptually limited and potentially misleading immortality symbol.<sup>35</sup> As a possessing of a much fuller conceptuality, the theme of bodily resurrection maintains eternal life’s miraculous character as divine gift. Moreover, it suggests both a holistic sense of eternal life, and the continuity of person in the event of being resurrected.

---

<sup>33</sup> Fergus Kerr (1997), *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity*, SPCK, London, 24; cf. viif., 23.

<sup>34</sup> CD, III.2, 520ff., 524f., 526f.

<sup>35</sup> See Migliore, lix.

Resurrection of the flesh [*Auferstehung des fleisches*] does not mean that the man ceases to be a man [*aufhört, ein Mensch zu sein*] in order to become a god or an angel, but that he may, according to 1 Cor. xv. 42f., be a man in *incorruption, power and honour, redeemed* from that contradiction and so *redeemed* from the separation of body and soul [*Scheidung von Leib und Seele*] by which this contradiction is sealed, and so in the totality [*Totalität*] of his human existence *awakened* from the dead.<sup>36</sup>

Schmitt misunderstands this passage as suggesting a body-soul separation, whereas Barth claims the opposite. The redemption includes the healing from any temptation to separate body and soul. Another biblical metaphor, that of a new heaven and earth, functions in a similar fashion by indicating that creation is not eschatologically annihilated, but, rather, fulfilled and consummated.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, what Barth advocates is a theological anthropology of personal integrity, one that is to be read with an eye on a christologically shaped eschatology, and one that seeks to thematise the idea that people “become really human”, and not less human, as he expressed it in 1931.<sup>38</sup> Here, however, Barth uses the term “ideal” to describe this eschatological humanity in Christ, whereas he will later more consistently define it as the ‘real’.

Finally, eternal life is not a neutral endlessness or continuing life. As IV.3 later indicates, Barth understands eternal life in the positive sense of a divinely given life *lived for God* [*CD, IV.3.1, 310f.*]. Indeed, Barth focuses his eschatological discourse not primarily on *ta eschata*, a general *eschaton*, or any other neutral conception (e.g., Kingdom of God, eternal life, End), since such impersonal nouns are potentially abstractly fillable. Rather he emphasises that Christ is *Eschatos*, he who also is *Prótos*, something that Berkouwer, for example, fails to appreciate the significance of in his limiting of his discussion of Barth's eschatology to themes of death and the form of post-mortem life [*TG, ch. VI*].<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> C, 169; German, 145f. Keith Randall Schmitt (1985), *Death and After-Life in the Theologies of Karl Barth and John Hick: A Comparative Study*, Amsterdam, 46.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., C, 170; *DO*, 153f.

<sup>38</sup> Barth, 1959, 48.

<sup>39</sup> See *GD*, §7.Intro; *CD*, III.2, 490. On the *Eschaton-Eschatos* distinction, see Ingolf U. Dalferth (1995), ‘The Eschatological Roots of the Doctrine of the Trinity’, in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 147-170 (158).

Christian Eschatology ... is not primarily expectation [*Erwartung*] of something, even if this something were called resurrection of the flesh and eternal life, but expectation of the *Lord*.<sup>40</sup>

As Rahner claims, in similar fashion, and yet is something strangely missed by some of his critics, Christ is the hermeneutic principle “of all eschatological assertions”. Hence,

Anything that cannot be read and understood as a christological assertion is not a genuine eschatological assertion [*TI*, 4:342f.].<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, Barth’s thinking here negates those predictive-style eschatologies, mentioned in Chapter 1, that confidently blue-print world-history’s future. In these, eschatology becomes a sub-set of God’s historical providence, with Christ functioning, at most, as the divine Revealer of that plan. Such a family of models (e.g., Dispensationalism, Chiliasm, etc.) would infringe Barth’s christologically constructed ban against eschatological speculation. Eschatological discourse cannot be motivated by idle curiosity, or speculative knowledge [*GD*, §38.I]. Presumably Barth had just such eschatological models in mind when claiming that the older eschatologies were constantly in danger of this idle speculation: they tended to make the impersonal events at the end of history, rather than the *Person* of Christ, the theme of eschatological discourse. In contrast, Barth’s is a discourse which is conscious of Feuerbach’s theological reductionism, and therefore seeks firm and realistic grounding in Christ as the *Real*.<sup>42</sup>

Subsequently, Barth’s future-talk rings with a distinctly nescient sound. No one, he declares, has an idea of this life beyond, or the form of the passage to it.

---

<sup>40</sup> *C*, 166; German, 143.

<sup>41</sup> Adrio König (1989), *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach*, Marshall Morgan and Scott, London, 37; Peter C. Phan (1988), *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner’s Eschatology*, Associated University Press, London and Toronto, 206.

<sup>42</sup> See Ludwig Feuerbach (1989), *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, Prometheus Books, New York, 135f., 170ff.

We have only what came to pass in Jesus Christ, in his reign, which is present with us through faith, and which is declared to us. What we dare to believe, is that we participate in this change, in the effects of human sanctification that occurred in the resurrection of Jesus Christ [FC, 40].

Although Barth continues to use these neutral nouns, testifying to their biblical basis, they are christologically controlled. Hence, he identifies the kingdom with revelation and incarnation, and claims that Christ “is the kingdom of God in person”, i.e., God’s perfect lordship over human being [CD, III.2, 144].

[E]ternal life [*ewige Leben*] is the name given to this new form of our unity with Jesus Christ [C, 169; German, 146].

Outlining election’s meaning and purpose leads into the theme of covenant fellowship, a significant departure, Gunton thinks, from the ‘other-worldly’ descriptions of election in the Augustinian tradition.<sup>43</sup> Hence, when speaking of the elect community’s being ‘called’ to witness, he is not supplying a different conception of election’s *telos*, but rather intends the service of calling others into that fellowship [CD, II.2, 196f.]. In other words, creation is presented by Barth as the external basis of, and formal presupposition for, the covenant. The covenant (the asymmetrically ordered God-human relationship/fellowship/communion in reciprocal love) is the reason for, and therefore the inner ground of, God’s creative will. Pressing the “strikingly intimate and personal” [CD, III.1, 247] nature of the relational language further, Barth argues that, in imparting *himself* to his human creatures, God

promotes him to the indestructible position of His child and brother, His intimate and friend. What God is, He wills to be for man also. What He can do is meant for the benefit of man also. ... [A]nd in fellowship every need of man is to be met; he is to be refreshed, exalted and glorified far beyond all need [CD, II.2, 238].

Through this concept, one that gives weight to Webster’s rejection of any suggestion that Barth’s God stands at humanity’s expense, Barth rehearses the formula of divine promise (‘I will be your God’) and

---

<sup>43</sup> Gunton (1989), ‘The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature’, in Sykes, 1989, 46-68 (51).



imperative divine command for appropriate human ethical response ('You shall be my people') [CD, IV.1, 47].<sup>44</sup> Human freedom is herein presented positively, as freedom *for* obedience to God, rather than freedom as self-defining, self-initiated, and neutral *choice*. There is no neutral position from which to choose from equally appropriate and valid states of affairs. Hence, Barth opposes Brunner's account of human freedom since he feels that it promotes the notion of freedom as neutrality, freedom to choose God or withdraw from covenant-partnership [CD, III.2, 131]. Moreover, Barth emphasises, the attempt to live as one's own master lies at the heart of sin, the infantile delusion of exclusive self-motivation [CD, III.3, 305]. Instead, *proper, authentic and true* human life, that for which humanity is only free, is that lived in the *responsiveness* of free human obedience and thankfulness to God, with the concomitant expression of joy at the humanly unmerited grace. Following Augustine, Barth claims that even Christ's life was an offering of absolute gratitude, obedience, and submission before God [CD, II.2, 120f.]. In so freely living for God in this way, humanity exists as the covenant partner for which it was "destined and disposed" [CD, III.1, 97]. Humanity

can and actually does accept the self-giving of God. ... There is, then, a simple but comprehensive autonomy of the creature which is constituted originally by the act of eternal divine election and which has in this act its ultimate reality [CD, II.2, 177].

Language of 'autonomy', here, serves to insist that this response is a spontaneously free "self-determination", albeit Barth clearly demarcates it from much post-enlightenment use [CD, II.2, 510]. It is an 'autonomy' with the force of a 'theonomy', i.e., a 'situated freedom', or a freedom clearly placed within a divinely chosen and created space. It is this that Webster terms Barth's "moral ontology, an extensive account of the situation in which human agents act", and the space that they occupy.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Webster, 1995, 88f. On Barth's themes of 'Personalism' and 'Truth as Encounter', see Hunsinger, 1991, ch. 6. Hunsinger notes Barth's distinction between "external and casual" and "internal and essential" fellowship [CD, IV.1, 757], with Barth's favouring the latter as the act of the heart [1991, 174]. On the 'I-Thou' encounter between God and humanity, see CD, III.2, 245-8.

<sup>45</sup> Webster, 1995, 1.

Barth, however, emphatically rejects suspicions of divine coercion [CD, II.2, 510]. God created humanity distinct from himself, and continues to respect that human integrity and individuality [CD, II.2, 178]. In this context Barth attests, suggestively for the issue of *apokatastasis*, that God risked that humanity would not live by his Word but would rather reject the freedom that is proper to its nature, and therein conjure up the divinely rejected shadow of *das Nichtige* [CD, III.1, 109; cf. Genesis 1:2]. Human and divine freedoms are here presented in a *co-operative*, rather than *competitive*, manner.<sup>46</sup> In election, therefore, Barth presents humanity as receiving a specific determination, and therein he strenuously opposes passive and spectatorial models of human subjectivity, based on the neutrality of the thinking and ethical subject before God [CD, III.1, 35]. This determination is portrayed as entailing that true (i.e., eschatological) human being is a spontaneously responsive agent before God, one “confirming and glorifying” God’s sovereignty [CD, II.2, 178]. Language of *constraint to obey* therein functions not to signal the impersonal “compulsion of force”; but rather “the compelling power of divine love exerted in our favour” [CD, III.1, 387]. This sovereign love

did not will to exercise mechanical force, to move the immovable from without, to rule over puppets or slaves, but willed rather to triumph in faithful servants and friends, not in their overthrow, but in their obedience, in their own free decision for Him [CD, II.2, 178].

Human freedom is restricted by all other commands, “powers and dominions and authorities”, and obedience to them is servile [CD, II.2, 585]. But, obedience to the only true God is freedom because it is gospel, as the doctrine of election impresses. Only the Lordship of “The true God” is non-coercive and person-affirming, thus allowing humanity to fulfil its created purpose [CD, III.3, 87]. That is why, as early as 1927, Barth could argue that

---

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the reconcilability of divine sovereignty and human freedom in Barth in “the Chalcedonian pattern”, see Hunsinger, 1991, 177-180. Gunton shows that Barth predicates human freedom analogically from the inner-trinitarian relationality [1989, 50ff.]. Hence, Barth draws the analogy between the relations of God’s inner life, God’s relations with humanity, and inter-humanity relations [CD, III.2. 16, 50f., 219].

To join in the Creed should not be an obligation (which it cannot really be) but privilege, a freedom to profess what is both true and expedient, the wonder of Christmas.<sup>47</sup>

Consequently, in a statement that distinctly raises questions of theodicy, Barth rhetorically argues that humanity is free to obey and “never to sin” [CD, III.2, 196]. God compels humanity

with the compulsion which excludes all choice and gives him freedom for the only true choice, viz. the acceptance of his election [CD, III.1, 364].

Hence, there can be no *valid* or *divinely legitimated* and *approved*, choosing of disobedience and godlessness.

It is in this theological context that Barth uses axiological and theologically rich, albeit frequently misunderstood, paradoxical and negative terms to depict the nature and status of sin. So later he shows that, because of its absurdity, the godless forces could be spoken of “only in consciously mythological terms” [CL, 216]. Barth, given his christologically eschatological description of the *Real*, comes to consciously reverse 2Ro’s talk of faith as the (humanly) “impossible” by reapplying that negative term to sin and evil (in I.2 and II.2).<sup>48</sup> This then, in III.2, expands into the paradoxical “impossible possibility” (*unmögliche Möglichkeit*). Similarly it is also referred to as “the absurd (irrational) possibility of the absurd (irrational)”, and an “ontological impossibility” [CD, III.3, 178; III.2, 146]. The addition of this noun in this first citation from III.2 clarifies that Barth is not denying, or at least intending to deny (which may have a different result altogether), evil’s actuality. In fact, although Barth views it as an extremely foolish and irrational act,

the covenant-partner of God can break the covenant ... [and is] able to sin, and actually does so [CD, III.2, 205].

In II.2, Barth places his discussion of sin as “the impossible” within a specific framework of the divine ‘permission’, thereby avoiding any suggestion of Manichaean dualism and implicitly rejecting Marcionite

---

<sup>47</sup> Barth, 1959, 23.

<sup>48</sup> See CD, I.2, 370; II.2, 170; cf. 2R, 300.

dualism. Divine 'permission' may be the formal requirement for recognising sin's actuality, but Barth comes to speak more theologically and axiologically in volume III of the divine "non-willing" [CD, III.3, 73f.].

Several critics, most notably Hick, here claim that Barth is saying too much about sin, thereby infringing "his [own] ban against speculative theorizing".<sup>49</sup> In response to this idea of Barthian speculation through use of the theme of election, one should note on a general level that it is the recognition of grace in Christ that necessitates Barth's talk of the election of grace (*die Gnadenwahl*) and the sum of the Gospel [CD, II.2, 3]. Barth is pursuing the theological implications of the scriptural narratives, rather than any narrative overstraining or peering into the Trinity's script, as Zahrnt implies.<sup>50</sup> Whether Barth's reading of grace was overly-speculative cannot be discussed at this juncture.

Secondly, and more importantly for the issue of the nature of evil in Barth's discourse, this, however, fails to appreciate Barth's theologico-poetics of evil as a quasi-reality, and his rhetoric of its being extant only in negative relation to the divine willing. Such discourse functions to deny any possibility that evil/sin is either divinely created or necessary to creation [e.g., CD, III.3, 77]. After all, Barth rejects 'modern' theodicies in which evil and sin is worked into the whole system, and therein entail that they become necessary and even good [CD, IV.1, 374-387].

It is true, certainly, that on one occasion, however, Barth does unwittingly appear to imply sin's inevitability in creation when he declares that

God wills evil only because He wills not to keep to Himself  
the light of His glory but to let it shine outside Himself [CD,  
II.2, 170].

Hick tentatively claims that Barth maintains the *O felix culpa* in the sense that evil 'exists' in order "to make possible the supreme good of redemption".<sup>51</sup> But, for Barth it is *creation*, and not *evil*, that exists *in order to* make redemption possible. Moreover, Barth's theology does not

---

<sup>49</sup> John Hick (1977), *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, London, 135. Cf. Colin Brown (1961-2), 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Creation', *The Churchman* vols. 75-6 99-105 (102); Paul Ricoeur (1985), 'Evil, A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* vol. 53, 635-648 (644); George S. Hendry (1982-3), 'Nothing', *Theology Today* vol. 39, 274-289 (284).

<sup>50</sup> Zahrnt, 112.

<sup>51</sup> Hick, 1977, 139.

appear to be a ‘problem-oriented approach’ (i.e., postulating the incarnate history as a response to sin), although this statement must be qualified by noting that Barth *never* abstractly discusses the question of an incarnation in a sinless world since creation *is* sinful, and therefore the incarnation is always placed within that context in a manner reminiscent of Rev. 13:8 [CD, II.2, 122; IV.1, 36].<sup>52</sup> So Barth speaks of the world’s reconciliation, resolved in eternity and fulfilled on Calvary [CD, IV.2, 314].

Instead of suggesting that evil is an intrinsic necessity to creation, perhaps as the means to some ‘greater good’, Barth specifically rejects Schopenhauerian pessimism [CD, III.1, 335ff.] and emphasises that evil is an “alien” factor that is abhorrent to God, since God’s creating is wholly beneficent to creatures, and the result of that creating is wholly good [CD, III.3, 302]. As Barth explicates in II.2, there is no divine fore-ordination of humanity to sin, but rather to blessedness and eternal life [CD, II.2, 170, 171]. Humanity, as created good, has been

ordained and equipped ... only for what is good, ... [and therefore been] cut off from evil, i.e., from what He [God] Himself as Creator negated and rejected [CD, III.1, 263f.].

This is a possibility passed over and rejected as a *legitimate reality* by God. As *das Nichtige* it has no autonomous *being* like that of creaturehood, but rather receives its quasi-reality in a relation of negation or privation, following Augustine, of the ‘good’ [CD, II.2, 170f.].<sup>53</sup> Thus Barth argues that “when a man sins”, therein implying this to be an actual state of affairs,

he has renounced his freedom. Something takes place which does not flow from his creation by God, his creatureliness of his humanity as such, and cannot be explained on these grounds [CD, III.2, 197].

That is why one needs to note with Oden that disobedience in Barth’s thinking is not

---

<sup>52</sup> See J.L. Scott (1964), ‘The Covenant in the Theology of Karl Barth’, *SJT* vol. 17, 182-198 (184, 196); Thompson, 1978, 23f.; cf. CD, IV.1, 48.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of the logic and meaning of the theological and philosophical uses of the word ‘nothing’, see Hendry, 1982-3.

freedom being *misused*, since true freedom for God, self and for neighbour *cannot* be misused. It can only be put to use or nonuse. Disobedience consists simply in the neglect, ignorance and disregard of true human freedom.<sup>54</sup>

Barth is not here seeking to provide a theoretical *solution* to the theodicy question, by accounting for evil's origins, what an exasperated Hick calls a "leaving the problem hanging in the air, without presuming to settle it".<sup>55</sup> It is arguable that he is doing something similar to MacKinnon, when the latter calls for a "phenomenology of moral evil",

a descriptive study aimed at achieving a *Wesenschau* into the substance of the thing. Such an enterprise is not a contribution to the discussion of the so-called 'problem of evil'.<sup>56</sup>

As *CD*, IV.4 indicates, this description operates by way of focusing one's prayerful attentions on the immediate sources of evil in human affairs. Barth, as with MacKinnon's agnostic preference for paradox over synthesis, in view of the mystery of the paradox of the existence of evil alongside the sovereignty of God in the world, refuses to attempt to justify God. Rather God justifies himself in the event of encounter. Barth contents himself instead with seeing evil both as under the 'unwilling' of God and as having been overcome in Jesus Christ. The question of the reason for God's 'permission' of the existence of that which opposes is left an unresolved mystery, expressing its absurd existence in paradoxical terms.

Nor does he intend in any way to minimise sin's demonic power, as Wingren, Berkouwer, and others appear to imply [see *CD*, IV.3, 177].<sup>57</sup> Thus Hartwell speaks of *das Nichtige's* existence

in a most terrifying and menacing manner, as is clearly revealed in the reality of the Nihil which God faces in Jesus Christ, above all in the agony of the Cross.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Thomas C. Oden (1969), *The Promise of Barth: The Ethics of Freedom*, J.B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia and New York, 66.

<sup>55</sup> Hick, 1977, 143.

<sup>56</sup> MacKinnon, 1966, 176-7.

<sup>57</sup> Wingren, 110; *TG*, 232, 272.

<sup>58</sup> Herbert Hartwell (1964), *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction*, London, 120.

Barth recognises the “absurdity” of evil, and therefore refuses to capitulate to philosophical drives for conceptual systematisation in theodicy-projects. As Highfield recognises,

Barth’s point in using the term ‘nothingness’ to denote sin is to communicate its irrational, merely factual nature. In order to give sin a rationale one would have to show how it has a place in the will and plan of God.<sup>59</sup>

Rather, Barth intends to maintain creation’s blessedness and God’s gracious beneficence, that which Barth found so striking in his detection of Mozart’s pervading theme of creation’s praising of its Creator [CD, III.3, 298f.]; the sheer irrational and inexplicable actuality of this “surd element in the universe”, as MacKinnon describes, which menaces creation; and the ultimate divine control over it.<sup>60</sup>

If Barth’s discussion appears to involve over-generalised abstractions and ideals, one must recall that underlying his account is that of the covenant fulfilled by Christ in the actual appropriate human response to God’s electing grace. This is what *real* humanity is [CD, III.2, 32, 144, 147].<sup>61</sup> It is *he* who is the divine good pleasure and purpose for God’s creation, and he who has actually trodden the road of human covenant obedience to its very end.

Particularly, it is *he* who, through his obedience, has realised and accomplished glorification, the salvation from death, exaltation to fellowship with God and eternal life, and it is *he* who possesses, therefore, “the foretaste of blessedness” [CD, II.2, 173]. In so doing, he has destroyed humanity’s ‘old’ life and creation’s fallen time, and triumphantly inaugurated the gracious coming of the New in his resurrection. It is *he* who “is the beginning of a new, different time from that which we know, ... real time” [DO, 130].

---

<sup>59</sup> Ron Highfield (1989), *Barth and Rahner in Dialogue: Toward an Ecumenical Understanding of Sin and Evil*, Peter Lang, 158.

<sup>60</sup> Donald M. MacKinnon (1995), ‘Teleology and Redemption’, in *Justice the True and Only Mercy: Essays on the Life and Theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth*, ed. T.A. Hart, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 105-109 (109).

<sup>61</sup> See W.A. Whitehouse (1949), ‘The Christian View of Man: An Examination of Karl Barth’s Doctrine’, *SJT* vol. 2, 57-74 (62).

What is striking about Barth's soteriology is the pronounced emphasis on themes of Christ's vicarious life, suffering and death [CD, II.2, 441]. The precise nature and implications of this, in reading Barthian eschatology, will be discussed in the following chapter. For the moment, it is recognised that this is consequent on Barth's talk of election in Christ [CD, II.2, 51, 94]. Consequently,

In the One in whom they are elected, that is to say, in the death which the Son of God has died for them, they themselves have died as sinners. And that means their radical sanctification and purification for participation in a true creaturely independence, and more than that, for the divine sonship of the creature which is the grace for which from all eternity they are elected in the election of the man Jesus [CD, II.2, 125].

Present in II.2, but developed at length in IV.1, is the theme of the 'Judge judged in our place', with humanity being acquitted in this event [CD, II.2, 125]. Using an image that echoes several of the Greek Fathers, Barth declares that eternal life is "man's portion in the amazing exchange between God and man as it was realised in time in Jesus Christ" [CD, II.2, 173]. Hence, as our Representative, he is the cause and instrument of our exaltation into participation and sonship. These he realised for us while standing in our place so that we could have eternal life in fellowship with God [CD, II.2, 116f., 195].

This seeking and creating finds its crown and final confirmation in the future destiny of mankind as redeemed in Jesus Christ, in his destiny for eternal salvation and life [CD, II.1, 274].

Therefore, it is in Christ, and the eschatological existence that he has vicariously opened up for human beings, that Barth speaks of the ontological impossibility of godlessness [CD, III.2, 136]. There can be no justification for sin, whether that be the excuse of one's defencelessness or evil's inevitability. It is ontologically impossible because of both God's creation of good alone, and his subsequent rejection of chaos in the "triumph inaugurated" by Christ [CD, III.2, 146].

The freedom of his being in its responsibility before God includes the fact that man is kept from evil; *potest non peccare* and *non potest peccare* [CD, III.2, 196f.].



Consequently, humanity cannot evade, or be lost to, God. Even in sin, humanity still belongs to God, because of his original determination in Christ. Sin cannot destroy either that fact or subsequent human responsibility.

### Conclusion

Chapter 1 has imagined the predictive type of eschatology to be an optimistic disdain of the tragic and a foreclosure of the future through its esoteric revelation. Both the immortality of the soul and evolutionary or Utopian progressivisms similarly *know* their futures: through human powers of rationality, the power of history's evolutionary progress, or the Utopian potential of Marxist revolutions.

Barth rejects all of these options, since for him Christ alone is our hope [C, 120]. Does this imply that his hope can take the tragic seriously? Barth at least intends for eschatology to remain loyal to the world, and to endure nescience over the details of the Future, by speaking of Christ as *Eschatos*. Chapter 2, however, claimed that it is apparently precisely Barth's christological reading of eschatological assertions that creates the difficulties for hope's fragility. Zahrnt, for example, presents Barth "knowing too much".<sup>62</sup>

Roberts, the first section has argued, misunderstands Barth's account of eternity's openness for temporality, and thereafter misconceives Barth's eschatology of creation and history. Creation does have a temporal eschatological Future: that of the coming of its *telos*, Jesus Christ. Hence, Barth expands the claim that God (logically and, in a sense, temporally) precedes, accompanies, and succeeds created time, into the eschatologically significant statement, of being the One who was, and is, and is to come [CD, II.1, 619ff.].

Nevertheless, Barth declares that this *future* time of redemption is an unveiling (*Enthüllung*), "enforcing, emphasising and unfolding of truth already perceived and known" (*schon erkannter und bekannter*).<sup>63</sup> Creation and history may have a temporal Future, but how is this Future an

---

<sup>62</sup> Zahrnt, cited in Colwell, 1989, 202.

<sup>63</sup> C, 162; German, 140.

eschatological one when it has already been realised in Christ's election and eschatologically vicarious humanity? Does this recognition not necessitate the conclusion (in a tacit nod to Roberts' thesis) that Barth has de-temporalised eschatology?<sup>64</sup>

Barth's discussion of the absurdity of sin's actuality suggests a theology that has not forgotten what day it is, and promotes an eschatological sighing, and indeed crying, for coming of the divine consummation. Moreover, the discussion of election's *telos* through concepts of fellowship, covenant partnership, communion, obedience, etc., further implies that a reading of the eschatological Future as the mere cognitive comprehension of the christologically determined truth of our lives is seriously inadequate. Chapter 6 is the place for the exposition of these suggestions.

---

<sup>64</sup> So Migliore, Ixii.