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Karl Barth's View of War

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to contribute to scholarship on the great Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, and to the ongoing discussion of theology and politics by examining Barth's view of war.

There has so far been only one monograph on Barth's view of war: John Howard Yoder's *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (1970). Whereas Yoder's work is restricted to Barth's general discussion of war in his *Church Dogmatics*, and to a partial glance at his response to World War Two (WWII) and the Cold War, this thesis expands and completes the picture by examining Barth's overall theo-ethical framework, and his attitude to World War I.

Pushing a little further into Barth's theology, I start by re-evaluating the significance of Barth's key ethical concept of the *Grenzfall* ('extreme case')- particularly his use of it in relation to the problem of war. Briefly, rather than being a 'cop-out' clause (Yoder's thesis), the *Grenzfall* serves as a descriptive, conceptual short-hand for Barth's contextually-engaged, prophetic stance with regard to war. This is shown most clearly in his responses in word and deed to World War One (WWI- ignored by Yoder), WWII and the Cold War.

Following my examination of the *Grenzfall*, I chart Barth's path through these three situations. No substantial work has previously been done on Barth's response to WWI, largely because much of it is articulated in a series of sermons which have not yet been translated. Uncovering Barth's thought in these sermons- hitherto largely ignored in both dogmatic and ethical scholarship- I compare Barth's early, middle and later responses to concrete, historical wars, and relate these to his use of the *Grenzfall* in the ethical discussion of his *Dogmatics*.

ABSTRAIT

Cette thèse cherche à contribuer à la recherche sur le grand théologien suisse, Karl Barth, et à la discussion théologique et politique en cours, en examinant son opinion sur la guerre.

Jusqu'à maintenant, la seule étude de la pensée de Barth sur la guerre était *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (1970) de John Howard Yoder. Alors que cette étude se limitait à la position en général de Barth sur la guerre, telle que formulée dans ses fameux *Church Dogmatics*, et à un coup d'oeil partiel sur sa réaction face à la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et à la Guerre Froide, cette thèse agrandit et complète le tableau.

En vue d'aller un peu plus loin dans la théologie de Barth que Yoder ne l'a fait, j'amorce la thèse en réévaluant l'impact du concept éthique central de Barth, le *Grenzfall* ('cas extrême'), et surtout son emploi de cette idée en relation avec le problème de la guerre. En bref, au lieu d'être une excuse (ce qui est l'opinion de Yoder), le *Grenzfall* est un terme désignant la position prophétique et contextuelle de Barth concernant la guerre. Cela se reflète de façon concrète dans ses gestes et ses écrits au moment des deux Grandes Guerres et de la Guerre Froide.

Après cette discussion sur le *Grenzfall*, j'examine le cheminement suivi par Barth tout au long des deux Grandes Guerres et de la Guerre Froide. Aucune recherche substantielle n'a été faite jusqu'à maintenant sur la réaction de Barth face à la Première Guerre Mondiale, en grande partie parce qu'elle ne se trouve présentée que dans une série de sermons qui n'ont pas encore été traduits. Levant le voile sur la pensée de Barth dans ces sermons, je compare ses réactions antérieures, intermédiaires et ultérieures face à des guerres réelles et historiques, et j'établis un lien entre celles-ci et son emploi du *Grenzfall*.

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"Qu'il me connaisse à ce point est trop merveilleux pour moi, et dépasse tout ce que je peux comprendre." (Psaume 139)

I have also to thank my supervisor, Dr. William J. Klempa, for his guidance and help. I can hardly express how much I have appreciated his generosity in sharing his profound knowledge of Barth. His pastoral concern was also an invaluable support.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an *essay* in the etymological senses of the word: *essai*- (F) to attempt, *exagium*- (L) a weighing, and *exigere*- (L) to investigate. It is a journey toward the discovery of an answer to the question: How does Karl Barth's view of war develop from the First World War (WWI), to the period of the Cold War?

Most scholarship on Barth's thought tends to restrict itself to the period beginning in the 1930's, mainly because it was at this time that Barth began publishing his famous *Church Dogmatics*. Indeed, Barth's most prolific and coherent period of writing was from the early 1930's, until his death in 1968. Therefore, it has been much easier for scholars interested in his thought simply to look at the corpus of his writings during these years.

This is true for those interested in both his dogmatic theology, and his views on ethics and politics. Within this latter group, those concerned specifically with his view of war have done so largely because of his well-known support of the opposition to Hitler during World War Two (WWII), and the supposed contrast between this position and his subsequent utter rejection of the atomic arms race. While aspects of Barth's responses to war during this period often find their way into secondary material on his ethics, the only monograph which seriously addresses Barth's view of war is the late John Howard Yoder's *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (1970).

Although Yoder published his work 25 years after WWII, he thought that an examination of historical church responses to war was crucial to the development of a Christian understanding of war in the contemporary era. Moreover, observing how the church responds to the question 'what should we do?' in crises such as war can provide a key for understanding the content of Christian ethics in general. Yoder selected Karl Barth for his study, saying of him that "there is hardly another [theologian] whose thought has such rootedness and texture as to demand that the response be to his entire work".¹

In his book, Yoder analyzes Barth's use of the *Grenzfall* ('borderline'/'extreme case') concept in the *Church Dogmatics*, particularly as it is developed in relation to the problem of war in *Church Dogmatics* III.4. A dedicated pacifist, Yoder's main concern with the *Grenzfall* concept is that, in his view, Barth expressly uses it to justify his own advocacy of military opposition to Hitler. Further, Barth does so by integrating it as a tool of thought into the general scheme of his ethics, thereby leaving the possibility of war open for the Christian. Since Yoder sees Barth's use of the *Grenzfall* concept as anomalous in relation to what he characterises as Barth's otherwise pacifist leaning, Barth's use of it provokes Yoder into asking how Barth thinks about ethics in general, and its relation to dogmatics. Barth's stance on war

¹ John H. Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (KBPW), p.7.

serves as a red flag for Yoder in a deeper epistemological and hermeneutical question, which must be understood within the context of Barth's thought as a whole.

Since Barth's approach is systematic, Yoder points out that an investigation of Barth's view of war must commence by considering "the way in which [he] proceeds from the center of Christian faith, ie: from the revealing, reconciling, and redeeming work of God in Christ, to deal with the particular issue."² In other words, a discovery of Barth's ethics of war is properly approached through a preliminary discussion of Barth's dogmatic theology, because it is part of Barth's general ethical understanding which is shaped by his dogmatics.

Yet, rather than beginning with Barth's theology itself, Yoder starts his discussion with a cursory overview of the opening sections (36-38) of chapter VIII, in *CD* II.2 "The Command of God", where Barth discusses the way he sees the relationship of ethics to theology.

In this section, ethics, as distinguished from *ethos*, is described by Barth as the talk and consideration, critique and testing of Christian doing. It is how Christians describe the decisions they have and do make. The making of decision itself (*ethos*) is an action and responsibility which takes place before God in encounter with His command. Thus separate from actual decision, ethics must always admit the priority of *God's* speaking over human speech. Within this framework, Barth seems to intend the *Grenzfall* concept to signify the ultimate moral ambiguity of all ethical action, and the resulting need for humanity to listen for a situationally-specific 'command of God', rather than engage in casuistic application of clear ethical norms already available in the Bible.³

It is in Barth's methodological bottom-line ('listening to God') that Yoder discerns where he thinks Barth went wrong. Since Barth does not define 'hearing the Word of God' as either a 'bolt from the blue', 'Pentecostal experience' or intuition of 'revelation', Yoder concludes that the process can only be described as follows: As the Christian stands prayerfully before the possibilities, weighing alternatives, the Christian obtains insight which allows a choice of what appears to be the least evil. Essentially, this means taking a leap in the midst of ambiguities, and ascribing the result to God. Therefore Yoder states that "the language which portrays God as speaking in the situation must not be understood as in disjunction from sober pragmatic calculation"⁴ - by which he means that the Christian ascribes personal choice, 'in faith', to God.

For Yoder, the real meaning of the 'command of God' is plainly that Barth gives theological nomenclature to an essentially independent, anthropologically-grounded (ie: human) process. Yoder thinks that this loophole in Barth's methodology in an ethics which he had claimed to be scientifically theological (faithful to its own theological parameters), leads him to make a decision regarding Switzerland (military defence of Switzerland as a 'just' State

²ibid., p.21.

³ibid., pp.21-40.

⁴ibid., p.49.

against Hitler's unjust one) from within a hermeneutical framework built on a cross-pollination between theology and several alien political principles.⁵

Yoder lists three things as being most ethically significant about Barth's dogmatics: first, that the norm of theology is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ; secondly, that ethics is a part of dogmatics; and thirdly, that Christians must respect the concrete situation.⁶ He does not disagree with these, or with Barth's *general* rejection of war. (Since the *Grenzfall* is the extreme case, war is prohibited most of the time.) Yoder's disagreement is with the fact that Barth foresees "exceptions to the generally admitted wrongness of war."⁷ If there is an exception, either the first general statement is not valid by definition, or grounds exist on which it can be nullified. The question at hand is, does the *Grenzfall* provide ground for the concrete imperative that one go against what God has clearly said before?

According to Yoder's reading of Barth, the *Grenzfall* means three things: 1) the principle that every principle must have an exception; 2) a safeguard of human responsibility by virtue of being a guarantee of the sovereignty of God; and 3) a statement about the finitude of all human values.⁸

The basic problem with the 'sovereignty of God' argument is that it projects the anthropocentric view of freedom found in 'pagan existentialism' onto God. Since it is forbidden to make *any* absolute statements about what God will say the next time He speaks, because He must be unconditionally free, God becomes free from all commitment to humanity. The difficulty with positing such a capricious God for the sake of ethics is that this postulate has a direct effect on dogmatic statements, such that it now becomes impossible to say anything consistent in dogmatics. Yoder's conclusion is that the logic of Barth's ethics, when considered theologically, forces us to leave a door open for the extreme case where God may decide to change His revelation; to accept that in the 'extreme case' it may no longer be true that 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God'.

Such a horrible conclusion compels Yoder to assert that "we must claim the same degree of certainty and universality for ethics as we are accustomed to claiming in Christology."⁹ Since the concept of the *Grenzfall* thus denies the bindingness of the Incarnation, it must be rejected.

Furthermore, with regard to the ethical matter of *which* values are to be preferred over others, and on what grounds, Yoder questions Barth's absolutisation of the value of life. Because Barth argues that in the 'extreme case' life may need to be taken in order to preserve life, he appears to contradict his own statement about the finitude of all human values. Since

⁵ibid., p.50. Those principles are: 'democracy', 'people', 'justice', and 'life', which Yoder thinks Barth has raised to the level of absolutes.

⁶ibid., pp.55-56.

⁷ibid., p.57.

⁸ibid., pp.58-66.

⁹ibid., p.67.

Yoder does not see how it is possible that Barth could make ethical decisions on the basis of an ultimate value (life), he concludes that the *Grenzfall* "is simply the label which Barth has seen fit to attach to the fact that, in some situations, he considers himself obliged to make a choice which runs against what all the formal concepts of his own theology would seem to require."¹⁰

Furthermore, Yoder finds that Barth turns the State's *opus alienum* (use of force) into its currency of survival, or *opus proprium*. In doing so, Barth opts for the 'lesser evil', limiting God's capacity to provide a solution outside of the bitter either/or of annihilation/oppression vs. defence. The 'lesser evil' option is characterised by Yoder as Barth's operating 'slavery-is-worse-than-death' logic. For Yoder, this logic takes a fundamental position in Barth's thought, effectively displacing his dogmatic presuppositions and parameters. An essentially pragmatic statement, it is also a theological one. To say 'slavery is worse than death' (war) is to make a faithless eschatological statement which dissociates the kingdoms of God and humanity, leaving human beings to defend themselves according to the law of Nature (survival).¹¹

Bad eschatology betrays a bad ecclesiology which sees the Church's mission as survival. A bad ecclesiology and bad eschatology together only betray what is at root a more serious theological error: a bad Christology. The pragmatism which the *Grenzfall* argument amounts to is a flat denial of the Cross; a replacement of the "New Testament's normative answer for problems of survival" with something alien.¹² Yoder is clear: "if we have once understood God in Jesus Christ, we have no room for predicting exceptions, or even affirming the possibility of unpredictable exceptions."¹³ In contrast, Yoder understands the significance of Christ and the Cross to be "the Christian duty of loving and sacrificial [pacifistic] service."¹⁴

In his conclusion Yoder hints that if Barth's ethics had perhaps been developed from the standpoint of reconciliation, rather than being placed as they were in the context of the doctrine of creation, his ethics would have been more Christological.

According to Yoder's reading of Barth, the 'command of God' to man is a euphemism for a pragmatism which seems a-theological at first, but hints at an operative theology which is at odds with a professed, Christologically-centred one, the ethical conclusion of which is 'obviously' (for Yoder) pacifism. In short, Barth's use of the *Grenzfall* divorces his ethics from his dogmatics. The question for my *essai* is, has Yoder read Barth's *Dogmatics* correctly?

The second major shortcoming in Yoder's summary of Barth's 'view of war' is that Yoder neither refers to Barth's position regarding WWI, nor sets Barth's thought in the context of the historical developments from WWI, to the Cold War. Rather than closing the debate, Yoder's work provokes questions as to the link between Barth's early (WWI), middle (WWII), and late (Cold War) position regarding war, and the ways that the transformation of his context

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 91-93.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 99.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 99, 110.

from one period to the next may have informed the development of his theological ethics regarding war.

What in Barth's thought on war changes or is consistent from one war to the next? Was Barth's condemnation of WWI primarily an accident of his upbringing in the Swiss value of neutrality? Was his opposition to Hitler merely opportunistic? Or, were these reactions both an integral part of a consistently Christologically-focused and filtered reading of the changing world around him? Might not the *Grenzfall* concept be more nuanced, and better grounded theologically than Yoder allows? In light of this last question, Yoder rightly insists that the main concern for the *Christian* is Christology.

For a fuller picture of Barth's view of war, it is necessary to push both further back, and a little further afield in Barth's thought than Yoder has done. Therefore, I begin by looking at the theological underpinnings of the *Grenzfall* concept found throughout Barth's *Dogmatics* (Chapter 1), and by summarising Barth's particular use of it in his discussion of life and war in *Dogmatics* III.4 (Chapter 2). Then, from an epistemological and hermeneutical standpoint established inside Barth's theological framework, I move on to a contextually-embedded account of Barth's reactions to WWI, WWII, and the Cold War (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) as these are documented in Barth's sermons, letters, lectures and other writings and comments external to the *Dogmatics*, and in biographical sources.

CHAPTER 1

Groundwork of the *Grenzfall*: The Doctrines of God, Humanity, and the 'Command of God'

The *Grenzfall* as the 'extreme' or 'border-line' case in ethical considerations cannot be grasped properly without a preliminary understanding of the general discussion of ethics, of which it is a special part. A general discussion of ethics, for that matter, is impossible to approach outside of the framework of the doctrinal structure in which Barth sets it.¹

How are Barth's ethical statements- especially the *Grenzfall*- part of his dogmatic understanding? Admittedly, it is impossible to do Barth's *Church Dogmatics* full justice in the short space provided by this study. Nevertheless, some broad outlines must be drawn.

In its placement first within the distinctive talk of the Church about God (CD II.2, "Doctrine of God"), then within its equally distinctive talk about creation (CD III.4), ethics is to be understood at the most basic level as reflection on 'the command of God to 'man'². One direct way to understand what Barth means in ethics would be simply to examine the constitutive parts of this definition as they are explained in Barth's doctrinal theology. What does Barth mean by *God? Humanity? Command?*

Again, considering Yoder's accusation that Barth's ethics of the command of God is not supported by his theology, but in fact departs from it, the best way to see if Yoder is right or not is to look at Barth's ethics of war from within the framework established by his theological understanding of God and humanity. To bypass these cornerstones of Barth's thought in an attempt to proceed directly to his ethics, or his particular discussion of war, as Yoder has done, would be to risk completely misunderstanding these latter.

One can hardly grasp the *Grenzfall*, or 'exceptional case', if the general intention of ethics remains unknown. Given that the 'intention of ethics' is conceived of as an expression of the will or command of God, it is hard to imagine that really clear knowledge of this will is possible without knowledge of the natures of the Willer and 'willee'.

¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.2, p.509 ch.VIII 'The Command of God': III.4, p.3 ch.XII 'The Command of God the Creator': I.1, foreword, p.xiv "Ethics so-called I regard on the doctrine of God's command and do not consider it right to treat it otherwise than as an integral part of dogmatics, or to produce a dogmatics which does not include it": I.2, p.371 "For without ceasing to be dogmatics, reflection upon the Word of God, it is itself ethics.": I.2 pp.782-799 'Dogmatics as Ethics'. This is also the explicit operating assumption of such substantial and authoritative works as Robert E. Willis' *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (E.J. Brill, 1971), Paul D. Matheny's *Dogmatics and Ethics: The Theological Realism and Ethics of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Verlag Peter Lang, 1990), John Webster's *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Eberhard Jungel's *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy* (Westminster Press, 1986).

² A word must be said here about Barth's use of the word 'man'. In the German, he uses the gender-neutral term '*Mensch*'. In English, the lack of an equivalent term has meant that translators have traditionally used the word 'man' in its gender-inclusive sense. Thus, Barth's 'Doctrine of man' is a doctrine of humanity, male and female. In this paper, the term 'man' is restricted almost exclusively to direct quotations, where it is meant in the gender-inclusive sense intended by the word '*Mensch*' (except for in the obvious instances where a male human being is intended). For the most part, I have tried to reflect Barth's intended gender-inclusiveness by using such terms such as 'humanity', 'humankind', 'people', 'persons', and 'individuals' where earlier scholars have used 'man' or 'men'.

While no summary should replace an attentive reading of the *Dogmatics*, and while other summaries are perhaps more detailed,³ this one here is a sketch of most of the major points of these doctrines. It is important to review them because they describe Barth's epistemological and hermeneutical standpoint for viewing the problems of ethics- specifically war. To see where war falls into the overall structure of Barth's thought, we need a reminder of that structure.

Although Barth could hardly have resisted change over the three decades it took him to write the *Dogmatics*, those points discussed here seem to have been upheld from start to finish of that opus, evidencing a greater consistency in Barth's thought than Yoder acknowledged.⁴

In particular, this preliminary summary of Barth's theology seeks to illuminate the centrality of Christology in Barth's thought. While such a goal may seem to some to be a redundant attempt (and one less skilled than others) to say the obvious with regard to Barth's theology and ethics, it is in fact a step which is crucial and unprecedented in terms of the discussion of Barth's thought on war- in spite of Yoder's explicit warning that Barth's ethic of war directly affects the heart and substance of his Christology. (Remember, Yoder thought that the meaning of Barth's ethics for his Christology was such that the former completely undercut the latter- even though Yoder did not look at Barth's Christology in his work.)

Moreover, Robert Ericksen's singular and excellent work *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch*⁵ constitutes an undeniable challenge to take this step. In it, Ericksen convincingly explains the relationship of these three Nazi theologians' theologies to their socio-political contexts and biographies. His main question is, how can these people have such intellectual integrity and strength, and be so biblically pious- and yet be so wrong? He compares their integrity, strength, and piety throughout his work to that of Karl Barth. This comparison is the greatest in Ericksen's discussion of Hirsch because, in his mind, Hirsch is the most intellectually excellent and doctrinally thorough of the three, and therefore more comparable with Barth than the other two.

Ericksen's point with this question is to try and discover a way to discriminate between theologies that leads one into ghastly ethical consequences, and those that do not. After examining Kittel's, Althaus' and Hirsch's thought in context, he concludes that the only real difference between the three (especially Hirsch) and Barth is that they happened to fall psychologically onto opposite sides of the political fence. (Barth was against the Nazis.) That

³See esp. sections of: *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (G.C. Berkouwer, Eerdmans, 1956), *The Hastening That Waits* (Nigel Biggar, Clarendon, 1993), *Karl Barth et la Politique* (Daniel Cornu, Labor et Fides, 1967), *Foundations for Christian Social Ethics: Karl Barth's Christological Anthropology and the Social Sciences* (David Allen Fraser, UML, 1987), *How To Read Karl Barth* (George Hunsinger, Oxford University, 1991), *The Theological Responses of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Robert F. Koch, UML, 1989), Matheny op.cit., Webster op.cit., Willis op.cit., and *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Karl Barth* (David Mueller, Word Books, 1972). References to relevant and interesting sections of Barth's own *Dogmatics* are provided for the interested reader throughout this paper.

⁴If Barth's consistency is in doubt with regard to these points, note the number of references of different volumes from the length of the *Dogmatics* which support each one.

⁵New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Barth fell on the 'right', and they on the 'wrong' ethical side is, for Ericksen, merely an accident of birth, and not substantially theological.⁶ In other words, Ericksen concludes that there really is no way for a person to know whose theo-ethical influence to be wary of.

Since this is not a thesis on Hirsch, Kittel and Althaus, it is not my intention here to argue where there might be a place their theologies went wrong. Yet, Ericksen's analysis is greatly unsettling, and begs for precision in tracing the link between the heart of a theology, and its corresponding ethics. While he successfully outlines the major points of these three men's dogmatics, and shows their possible psychological and emotional motivations, Ericksen leaves a gaping hole in his experiment.

Somehow, he completely overlooks the inner logic of all four theologies. Thus, he fails to notice the profound differences between Barth's Christological presuppositions, and the others'. In fact, his comparison between Barth and Hirsch is so excellent that the attentive reader will notice that the only possible point of substantial difference between these two men must be one that Ericksen does *not* discuss. Such a reader will also notice that this point is Christology. Though Ericksen does not realise it, he effectively proves that the key to understanding Barth's ethics in World War II is his Christ-centred theology.

Therefore, given both Yoder's and Ericksen's discussions, this thesis will show that Barth's developing Christology is in fact at the centre of his thought on *all* war. We begin with a sketch of the fundamentals of Barth's theology of the command of God, since bypassing them and proceeding directly to their specific application to war would risk misunderstandings such as Ericksen's and Yoder's.

The Doctrine of God

The first thing that must be said about Barth's presentation of his understanding of God in the *CD* is the presupposition on which all else hangs. It is simply that God *is*.⁷ God is not the product of human speculation. That God *is*, is the presupposition of faith. The Church by definition is the community of those who hold this presupposition as their primary article of faith. The Church does not need to seek to prove God, but to *confess* in speech and life to this God who *lives*.⁸

Secondly, it follows from the fact that God *is* (ie., not created as humans are) that, in His presupposed being apart from human postulates, God is ontologically, radically other.⁹

⁶An 'accident of birth', of course, would affect everything from the psychologically-shaping early childhood environment to intellectually-formative educational influences.

⁷*CD* I.1, pp. 1-5; IV.1, p.4 "The Christian message is...primarily a statement about God."

⁸I.1, pp. 17, 1.

⁹This point about God's fully mature (non-developing) 'being' is especially important in relation to process theologies such as Wolfhard Pannenberg's. That God's immutable existence is independent of human speculation and identity can be contrasted with gnostic-leaning degree-theologies such as Jürgen Moltmann's (especially clear in *The Crucified God*, 1974, and *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, 1994.) In fact, it is worth noting that while Ericksen's conclusion can not be applied to Barth, it can be applied to Moltmann. Moltmann's presuppositions about God reflected in his Christology seem to cause him to employ a

Since He is so radically other, humanity cannot assume to possess full knowledge of Him, even though He reveals Himself in Scripture. God is *hidden*. His hiddenness is His *mystery*, and in it He is *free*.¹⁰ Furthermore, since He is hidden, knowledge of Him is indirect. It is by faith, not sight. Still, because we can speak of Him, this hidden God is also seen in a way and known.¹¹ The mysterious God has a corporeal form.¹²

God has reconciled humanity to Himself. He is not alien to humanity. That God's self-revelation is directed to humanity in Scripture means that He is who He is in His *Word*.¹³ Hence, He is radically present with humanity, as both the witness of His self-revelation (Scripture), and the *Revelation* itself: *Jesus Christ*.¹⁴

The fact that it is possible for humans to know God in Christ reveals God's *trustworthiness* and *generosity* toward humanity. Thus, knowledge of God includes and presupposes the knowledge that God is *gracious*. Since God is known to be the hidden, gracious, mysterious, trustworthy Word in the person of Jesus Christ, God also reveals Himself in Christ to be intensely *personal*.¹⁵

Since the beginning point of an understanding of God as all these things is Jesus Christ, Barth's Christology is seen to be the foundation of his doctrine of God. How, then, does Barth understand Jesus Christ?

The first thing that must be said about the being of Jesus Christ is that from beginning to end of his *Dogmatics*, Barth takes Him to be Himself in both His aspects: *fully God* and *fully Man* as the chalcedonian formula affirms.¹⁶ For the moment, substantial discussion of the being of Jesus Christ as Human will have to be passed over and left to the following section on humanity.

As the incarnation of the Word of God, Jesus Christ is the *eternal*¹⁷ Son of God.¹⁸ It is because He is the *Son* in His being from all eternity that He reveals God also to be eternally

hermeneutical methodology almost identical to Hirsch's, and in a manner similar to Tillich's. It might be said, then, that Moltmann's own landing on the 'right' side of the fence regarding the Nazi religious ethics has more to do with an accident of history than with Moltmann's theology. (Moltmann came of age once history had already proved the Nazi's wrong. In makes little difference to the substance of his theology that he [ironically] deliberately attempts to counter Nazi theology by moving in the opposite direction: replacing their triumphalist Christ with a Christ brought so close to the earth that he is effectively robbed of his deity and divine victory over death and sin. Since Moltmann makes the same movement from human speculation and the going *Zeitgeist* to theology that is made by 19th century theology from Schleiermacher onwards, and by Hirsch, Kittel and Althaus, he is one of their kind more than he is their enemy. In any case, his resulting ethics is flimsy and lacks theological ground: the Nazi's were 'bad' because everyone knows it, and not for a sound, thoroughly worked-out theological reason- in spite of Moltmann's biblically colourful and passionate rhetoric and pages of intellectually complex (typically obscurantist in the German way) sentences and paragraphs.

¹⁰ see 'The Limits of the Knowledge of God' II.2, pp.179-256, (in two sections 'The Hiddenness of God' and 'The Veracity of Man's Knowledge of God'); I.1 'The Knowability of the Word of God', pp.213-283.

¹¹ I.1, p.150.

¹² I.1, p.152: "The Word of God is primarily spiritual, and after that and in that form, in this its spirituality, for the sake of it and without prejudice to it, also a corporeal or natural event."

¹³ I.1, pp.260-1.

¹⁴ I.1, p.12: "Dogmatics as an enquiry presupposes that the true content of Christian talk about God can be known by man. It makes this assumption as in and with the Church it believes in Jesus Christ as the revealing and reconciling address of God to man. Talk about God has true content when it conforms to the being of the Church, i.e., when it conforms to Jesus Christ...(Rom. 12:6)".

¹⁵ I.1, p.155.

¹⁶ I.2, p.25 "The first and the last thing to be said about the bearer of this name is that He is very God and very Man."

¹⁷ II.1, pp.638,9- 'The Eternity and Glory of God'.

¹⁸ I.1, p.474: I.2, pp.1-13.

God the *Father*.¹⁹ As the Son of God, Jesus is the objective reality of revelation. He is the being-of-God-in-act— *this* act by which God draws close to humanity and becomes *Emmanuel*, 'God with us'.²⁰ Jesus the Son is eternally *One* with the Father. As *Emmanuel*, He is God the *Reconciler* who reconciles humanity to Himself.²¹ Furthermore, because He has risen and lives as the *Mediator*²² between God and people, His being means, or *is*, their *reconciliation*. Therefore, He is in His being-in-act humanity's *atonement*.²³

Jesus Christ is not the Son of God in an abstract, archetypal sense²⁴, but in the concrete sense in which He is part of the particular and limited time of humanity, even as He is eternal with the Father. Incarnated in human flesh, Jesus Christ is completely distinct in His divinity from humanity in the same manner that God Himself is distinct and free. In the concrete sense of His historical humanity, the Person Jesus Christ is also distinct from all other human persons. What the witnesses of the New Testament saw in Jesus, they saw nowhere else.²⁵

Jesus is uniquely *the Lord*. Since He experienced death and triumphed over it in the act of atonement, He reveals that the Lordship of God is that over life and death itself.²⁶ Also, because only the one who is the ultimate judge can truly forgive,²⁷ Jesus Christ paradoxically reveals God the Father's being as *Lawgiver* and *Judge*. He alone has the authority of One who deals with that which is His own: of a *Creator* with regard to His creation.²⁸ Because the Father is revealed as atonement and reconciliation, His righteousness is a *merciful* righteousness; and His freedom a freedom which is from and for all eternity the freedom of His *love*.²⁹ Thus, the Gospel of His act sets the standard of the law of God.

Since all of these things that are revealed in Jesus Christ about God's person are not known once-for-all, but continuously, Barth's doctrine of God is not only dependent upon his Christology, but further implies and necessitates pneumatology.³⁰

Although it is not explicit in the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity of God is seen by Barth to be implicitly there as the account of the reality of Revelation.³¹ It is by the Spirit of

¹⁹ Again, the relationship of the Father and Son (and later we will see, the Spirit also) that Barth draws can be contrasted with Moltmann's, for example. It is very important for God's eternal being as love, for Barth, that Father and Son have been in loving, covenanted relationship for all eternity. (Moltmann's view in *Crucified God* is that Christ only *becomes* the divine Son, and the Father a father, as the original Easter pageant is played out.)

²⁰ IV.1, pp.3-8, Isaiah 7:14, 8:8-10, Matt.1:21.

²¹ I.1, p.457- 'God the Son'.

²² IV.1, pp.122-128 'Jesus Christ the Mediator'.

²³ IV.1, p.34.

²⁴ This view can be contrasted with a good deal of neo-orthodox protestantism, as well as much liberation theology- though each has a different image of the imitable archetype.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.17.

²⁶ I.1, pp.465/6; IV.1, pp.6,7.

²⁷ *ibid.* pp.459/60. (John 1, 2 Cor. 5, Col 2, John 5, 14:9,8:58, 17:24, Rev.1:8, 22:13, Heb.13:8)

²⁸ II.1, pp.441-447: III.1, p.3.

²⁹ I.2, p.28; II.1, pp.297,322,351; I.1, p.448; IV.1, pp.211,283; III.3, p.155.

³⁰ see I.1, ch.2, part 1 'The Triune God', and 'paragraph' 8, 'God in His Revelation', section 1 'The place of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Dogmatics' (pp.339-348); also I.2 'The Problem of Christology', pp.122-3.

³¹ I.1, pp.356, 431- 'The Meaning of the Doctrine of the Trinity'; also I.1, p.358: "The doctrine of the Trinity is the basic presupposition of the doctrine of God, [such that] we cannot speak correctly of the nature and attributes of God without presupposing that it is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of whom we are speaking."

God that God in Christ works to make what He reveals seen by human beings as revealed.³² In Barth's language, God is the Spirit³³ as He effects the 'revealedness' of His revelation.³⁴ It is as the Holy Spirit that God is not only the objective reality and possibility of revelation as He is in Jesus Christ, but also its primary Subject.³⁵

The Spirit as God's subjective presence creates³⁶ out of objectively reconciled humanity a community which subjectively moves toward God,³⁷ in faith under the direction of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ The Holy Spirit does not impart divine freedom to humans by making this movement possible.³⁹ Human choice to move toward God is still human, but the belief such movement signifies is the work of the Spirit.

Moreover, God cannot be truly Creator, and then Reconciler unless He is also Redeemer; the Alpha unless also the Omega; the eternal God unless He is all that He is in eternity. Therefore, while the graciousness of the Lordship of the Creator and Father is revealed in the being-in-act of Christ in His birth, crucifixion and resurrection, it is sealed as the final reality of God for humanity in the eschatological pouring out of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's purposes until 'that day' when we shall see God face-to-face and without a veil. (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:14)

To draw some preliminary conclusions, then, all that is to be subsequently said presupposes 'God' to be defined (though, as stated, not completely) by the particular revelation discussed above: His own revelation of Himself in Christ's being-in-act. Because this knowledge depends on the work of the Holy Spirit, knowledge of this free God is never completely established, but is ongoing. The ongoing nature of the revelation of God does not detract from the fact that the parameters of this knowledge are set by the Gospel in Christ's historical person-and-act.

To know the meaning of God's command, we must have an accurate, even if partial, knowledge of the God who commands. In Barth's theology, we know God only as we recognise Jesus Christ. God's 'will', or intent is part of His nature, which is summed up in the Gospel of Christ. As with knowledge of God, knowledge of the 'will' of God is understood by Barth as ongoing.

³²IV.2, p.591.

³³I.1, pp.512-524 'God the Holy Spirit', 528,9.

³⁴I.2, pp.198-199; I.1, pp.513-515, Barth refers to 1 Cor.12:3.

³⁵I.2, pp.203,242; I.1, pp.515,517, (1 Cor 12:4; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Cor 6:11)

³⁶I.1, p.540 "The Holy Spirit is the Creator God along with the Father and the Son, so far as God, as Creator, creates no only existence but life. From this point of view we cannot avoid speaking of the presence of the Holy Spirit, presupposed in revelation, primary, universal, related as such to the creaturely existence of man and the world."

³⁷The Holy Spirit is God in man saying 'yes' to God: it is God in man creating faith in man: creating faith-ful man: and thereby sanctifying or redeeming men making them into obedient sons and daughters who know God the Father by faith. It is in becoming the house or temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor.6:16) that humans actually are subjectively taken into the reality of the revelation- of the completion of the covenant- and are therefore redeemed. In this action, God as Spirit draws human beings unto God, instructs them in the knowledge of God (2 Cor.1:3; John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13; 1 John 2:20) and makes of their language in obedience to this knowledge the real Word of God as proclamation of the Church.

³⁸ibid., also IV.1, p.643; IV.2, p.727; IV.3.2, p.902.

³⁹I.1, p.523; I.2, pp.204/5, 257.

Since God's self-revelation is to *humanity*, and since the effectiveness of that revelation involves an active engagement of human beings by the Holy Spirit, it becomes clear that discussion of the 'doctrine of God' implies a particular and corresponding 'doctrine of humanity'.

The Doctrine of Humanity

The first thing that must be said about human beings is that Barth sees them as truly defined and existent only in the One who is 'very God and very Man'.⁴⁰ As Barth frames the problem, "(it) is not whether God is a person, the problem is whether we are."⁴¹ God in His three-in-oneness is an axiom of faith, to be taken as He reveals Himself- hence, the basis of dogmatic theology in biblical narrative. Since it is talk about a wholly Other God as He comes to us, it seems reasonable that the doctrine of God should begin with its object: God in His Revelation witnessed to by Scripture.

But what about humanity? Humans do not fall into the same mysterious category as God. Is the epistemological question different for them then? For Barth, knowledge of humanity, if it is to be knowledge of *reality*⁴², must begin where knowledge of all other reality begins: with God.⁴³

For Barth, all anthropology is first a theological statement; a corollary of what is known about the being of God.⁴⁴ Specifically, anthropology begins with Christology. Humanity as it is revealed to be in Jesus Christ corresponds to God in the following way: to the Addresser, humans are the *addressed*⁴⁵; to the Reconciler, those *reconciled*; to the Creator, His *creation*; to the Redeemer, those who have the promise of being *redeemed*; to the One who, as Reconciler, Creator and Redeemer is alone Lord, they are the *servants* of their Lord; to the Lord who exercises His Lordship, their real being is an *obedient* one.

How does Barth understand these rather broad statements to be true?

⁴⁰I.2, pp.132-171 'Very God and Very Man'.

⁴¹I.1, p.157. also see p.183: "Because the Word of God means 'God with us', because it is the Word of the Lord, the Word of our Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer, it clearly pronounces our judgement upon ourselves. In it, it is decided who we are."

... also, Barth's understanding of the Christological basis of his doctrine of man is found summed up in 'The Humanity of God' (1956) in Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, pp.37-65, esp. p.46; and 'The Christian Message and the New Humanism' (1949), in Karl Barth, *Against the Stream*, pp.183-191.

⁴²Barth's concept of 'reality' is peculiar to him in the CD. It is definitional in that 'real' by definition is a correspondence to whatever has been posited by God. 'Real' therefore corresponds to faith. This concept of reality is very important, as we shall see, with regard to the hermeneutical process of perceiving concrete situations.; see I.1, pp.83/4; III.4, pp.41-44.

⁴³ibid, also p.217; III.2, pp.19-21; III.4, p.47- 'Freedom Before God'.

⁴⁴III.2, p.19.; also "We cannot speak of the being of man except from the standpoint of the Christian [of faith-within the parameters of what is taken as revealed about God] and in light of the particular being of man in Jesus Christ." (IV.1 p.92 "The being of man in Jesus Christ"), and (III.2 p.3, "Man as a Problem of Dogmatics"): "As the Man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God."

⁴⁵I.1, pp.183-85; II.2, p.94.: For example, at all points of human existence- present being and all future potentiality contained in that being- humans do not exist apart from God who addresses them. Whether a person decides to hear that address or not, they are as they are because God has first spoken to them.

That *the* Human, Jesus Christ, originated in the will of God (illustrated by the virgin birth) reveals that humans are utterly *dependent* for life on their true origin: God.⁴⁶ In the Reconciliation (Jesus Christ), we understand humanity to be the One created in the beginning *for* eternal fellowship with God. Humans are thus primarily defined as God's *covenant-partners*.⁴⁷ That the Son of 'Man'⁴⁸ is chosen, or elected by the gracious God for reconciled fellowship with Himself means that humanity's identity is that of the '*elect*' of God.⁴⁹

In becoming flesh 'in the time of Herod', the Son lives in the flux of time.⁵⁰ His temporality is not negated by, but based on God's eternity.⁵¹ In this temporality, He is most definitely corporeal and individual.⁵² Moreover, the Son *is* as a whole- as both soul and body, but in such a way that these are not separable 'natures'.⁵³ He is fully Human as 'embodied soul', or 'besouled body' from His birth, to His death, resurrection, seating beside God, and return to Earth. Eternally, then, humans are *individual*, and have both an outer (body) and inner (soul) form.⁵⁴ As such, they are beings-in-act.⁵⁵

Because Jesus lived and lives in relationship with God and fellow-humans, He defines human life as existence in relationship.⁵⁶ Since He is with and for God who comes to humanity to be with humans, Jesus Christ is also with and for His fellow human beings.⁵⁷

Though Christ is the one, perfect Head, Brother and Representative of all human persons,⁵⁸ His very historical particularity establishes the fact that in some way all other human persons are *unlike* Jesus Christ. Although what is to be known of the essence of *humanity* is known in Jesus, not *all* that is said of Jesus Christ can be said about *humans* generally.⁵⁹

⁴⁶II.2, pp.132-149 'Very God and Very Man'.

⁴⁷In II.1, the beginning of his doctrine of Creation, Barth explains this relationship between creation and covenant, creation and reconciliation, by showing the covenant to be the 'internal basis' of creation, and the creation to be the 'external basis' of the covenant. Put simply, the covenant is the *raison d'être* of the act of creation. Yet without creation, there would materially not be anyone with whom God could have fellowship. Therefore, as a preliminary condition, the creation happens for the sake of the covenant which is its presupposition.

⁴⁸Obviously, the name 'Son of Man' means 'Son of Humanity', since the One born by a virgin ought, in terms of human gender, would more accurately be called 'Son of Woman'. But theologically, His humanity cannot be gender-restricted by such nomenclature.

⁴⁹II.2, pp.94-101/18/24 'Jesus Christ, Elected and Electing'; III.2, pp.3-8, 17/9, 55.

⁵⁰One of the significant effects of time is that action is bound within moments. Since temporal life is not immutable, humans cannot appropriate the immutability of God's nature, or His definition of them, to their own actions.

⁵¹III.2, pp.437-39 'Jesus, Lord of Time'.

⁵²That humans are such as individuals, male or female, does not negate the fact that they are also individuals-in-fellowship with God and other humans (Barth elsewhere also includes animals, though in a different way.) Yet, they are individuals. This emphasis is reflected quite strongly in Barth's discussion of the command of God.

⁵³In other words, just as there is no dualism in the corporeal/spiritual being of Jesus, so the rest of humanity can not be divided. Thus, spiritual and bodily matters cannot be separated- a doctrine with significant ethical importance.

⁵⁴III.2, pp.325-32, 362-65.

⁵⁵Jesus Christ's being in act as Barth discusses it is to be differentiated from Moltmann's suggestion that He becomes the Son. By a corresponding human being-in-act, Barth does not mean that humans become creatures belonging to God- which would be the doctrine of humanity corresponding to Moltmann's discussion of Christ. On the contrary, humans are always God's. Being-in-act has to do with whether or not they correspond to their eternal reality by reflecting in their belief that this *is* their reality in their actions. Action is constitutive of human being, and unavoidable. That it can either correspond to God's intention expressed in the Gospel, or rebel against it is the main axiom of Barth's ethics- as we will see.

⁵⁶III.2, pp.111,160-3.

⁵⁷III.2, pp.203-9,69,62-5;IV.1, p.157;IV.2, p.156. Barth refers to the following: Gal.1:4;Matt.20:28, John 13:1, 20:24, and Luke 24:36.

⁵⁸IV.1, p.154;IV.3.3,p.4:12,pp.156/7.

⁵⁹III.2, p.71: "Our answer to the question of the nature of the man Jesus could not be more than a foundation. Anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology. We remember that between the man Jesus and ourselves as men there stands not only the mystery of our sin, but primarily and decisively the mystery of His identity with God." ; and p.150: " 'Jesus Christ very God and very Man' does not mean that in Jesus Christ God and a man were really side by side, but it means

Insofar as *this* Son of 'Man' was also the Son of God, and therefore the blameless Mediator between God and man, the rest of humanity is *not* like Him. He reveals the being, and therefore also the limit of human being.

Unlike Him, human existence in I/thou relationships is, between humans and God, and each other, imperfectly mutual. Moreover, the Son of Man was from eternity a Victor over death, which He faced by choice. Only He as God the Reconciler could suffer the rejection and wrath of God the Judge. Humans, however, cannot suffer anything near what He did, nor do they have the same choice about death. Even if they participate in His victory, it remains His. They may share it, but they do not acquire it of their own.

Whereas all human persons die because they are trapped by sin, Jesus remained free even as He chose to 'be sin for us'.⁶⁰ Jesus Christ is distinguished from all other human beings with regard to sin.⁶¹ The very fact that Jesus *humbles* Himself in assuming flesh, making Himself an *enemy* of God as He comes into solidarity with humanity, reveals that humans are over against God- not in their creaturely being as distinct from God, but in their rebellion against Him. Even though elect, humanity stands under God's wrath because of sin.⁶² Christ testifies to the difference between Him and all other human persons by the very bridge He places across that difference.⁶³ For Barth, the essence of human sin is pride, expressed in disbelief of God.⁶⁴

Humans are corrupt in their self-understanding.⁶⁵ They know neither who they really are, nor the true extent of the destruction they cause as a result of their sin. They can construct

that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and thus Himself true God, is also a true Man. But this Man exists inasmuch as the Son of God is the Man- not otherwise."

⁶⁰ IV.2, p.378: "The man with whom the royal man Jesus has to do in the act of His Lordship is the man of sin: the man who wills and commits sin; the man who is determined and burdened by it....It is the man who would not make use of his freedom, but was content with the low level of a self-enclosed being, thus being irremediably and radically and totally subject to his own stupidity, in humanity, dissipation and anxiety, and delivered up to his own death."

⁶¹ IV.1, pp.138-145.

⁶² Creaturely being is not to be thought of as the 'sinful nature' of man, since Christ is also this creature in every way, and yet is sinless.

⁶³ II.2, pp.122/3; IV.1, pp.358/; IV.3.1, pp.434/49.

⁶⁴ II.2, pp.122/3; III.3, pp.289-91, 302/49/50; IV.3.1, p.449; IV.1, pp.413/4, p.414: "Unbelief is...the original form and source of all sins, and in the last analysis the only sin, because it is the sin which produces and embraces all other sins. In all sins it is unbelief which transgresses God's command, which makes men lawless, which ignores and offends the divine majesty." (John 12:48, 16:9, 3:18, 36, 5:23; 1 John 5:10; Ex.32:6, 20:2)

⁶⁵ III.2, pp.43/4 "The nature of the man Jesus alone is the key to the problem of human nature. This man is man....He alone is primarily and properly man. If we were referred to a picture of human nature attained or attainable in any other way, we should always have to face the question whether what we think we see and know concerning it is not a delusion, because with our sinful eyes we cannot detect even the corruption of our nature, let alone its intrinsic character, and are therefore condemned to an unceasing confusion of the natural with the unnatural and vice-versa. We do not have to rely on these vague ideas, and we are not therefore condemned to this confusion, because true man, the true nature behind our corrupted nature, is not concealed but revealed in the person of Jesus, and in His nature we recognise our own, and that of every man. But we must keep to the human nature of Jesus. Thus we may not deviate from it, nor may we rely upon, nor take for granted, what we think we know about man from other sources....We have thus to formulate the theological enquiry into the nature of man in the following terms. What is the creaturely nature of man to the extent that, looking to the revealed grace of God and concretely to the man Jesus, we can see in it a continuum unbroken by sin, an essence which even sin does not and cannot change?....If we rightly consider the special difficulty of a theological anthropology, there can be no question of any other point of departure. But the choice of this departure means nothing more nor less than the founding of anthropology on Christology."--- Barth here acknowledges that human nature cannot be understood from the standpoint of *sinful* human nature, *because of sin*. Therefore, it can only be understood at the place it is revealed by God, and is sinless. see also III.2, p.54.

no concept of 'good and evil' on their own which tells them where they stand before God, or one another. This is true even if their concepts of 'good and evil' are biblically derived.⁶⁶

Far from being 'irreligious', unbelief is most manifest in humanity's religions, because it is there that they exalt themselves to the place of divinity by their invention of gods. The sin of pride, or self-help, utterly refuses the revelation of God in Christ by confusing the gracious, holy, merciful, righteous, patient, omnipresent, omnipotent, constant, omniscient and glorious, eternally *good* (in short, free and loving) God who is there revealed with some fabricated image of an untrustworthy despot.⁶⁷

In turning away from God, people turn away from their fellows, disrupting all of the relationships in which they were meant to be. In this profound contradiction with their self-with who they really are in relation to God, each other, creation (time), and in the relation of soul and body, humanity lives in exile described by all human suffering and misery. In their misery, humans are sinners before God- whether they are facing Him, or ignoring Him.⁶⁸

Human lives bear the mark of sin instead of the characteristics of their real humanity, which is glorious and exalted in Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ The fact of revelation is that God Himself has taken account of evil and sin, even if only to make them of no account. Jesus is the Witness that humanity is powerless against the overwhelmingly strong temptation of evil. So, though 'alien' to God's creation, evil wreaks havoc on the creation of God. Thus, the corollary to the activity of arrogance is the 'inactivity' of failure to *be* human.⁷⁰

In summary, both true and actualised false human identity are revealed in Christ. On the one hand, He is the paradigmatic (only complete) Human. On the other, He reveals just how much human identity is characterised by the distortion of sin.

There is a way out from the misery of sin: obedience to God's groundrules. Misery is not built into creation as though this God operated on the principles of yin and yang. It is a corruption which can be fought through humanity's turning toward God. When humans recognise God's identity as He has revealed it, they become freer to recognise and embrace their own corresponding identity. Because such harmonious accord between the being of God and that of His chosen humanity is the essence of God's will for humans and defines 'obedience', we are brought back to the heart of the doctrine of God's command.

In light of these doctrines of God and humanity, what does Barth mean by the 'command'?

⁶⁶IV.1, para.60; IV.2, para.65; IV.3.1, para's.70-73, esp.p.462.

⁶⁷I.2, pp.308/9; IV.3.1, p.449; IV.1, pp.423-29, 466/7.

⁶⁸III.2, pp.369,274-85,227; IV.2, pp.407/8,483-87.

⁶⁹IV.3.1, p.462; IV.2, p.408.

⁷⁰III.4, pp.470-483 'The Active Life'.

The 'Command of God' as part of the Doctrines of God and Creation

Not surprisingly, our discussion of 'command', in light of what we now understand by 'God' and humanity, begins with Jesus Christ. God's eschatological *decision*, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, is clearly recognised as the aim of God for, and therefore from, all eternity. In the act of reconciliation, God is revealed to be the One who truly has the first, last, and therefore all decisive words.⁷¹ Thus, the *Lordship* of God the Father is the first meaning of 'command', signifying God's being as the One who is absolutely free as Lord over all of His creation.

This Lordship is not to be confused with a despotic or arbitrary rule. In Jesus, the Lordship of *this* God over creation is clearly understood to be that of a merciful Lord. In the Son, the Lordship of God the Creator is that of the Father.⁷²

Since the free decision of Fatherly Lordship was such that God entered into a covenant with the humanity He had created, the 'command of God' is inseparable from His grace. God's decisive and ongoing rule is His claim on humanity to be His covenant-partner.⁷³

God's grace is eternal, continuing in His preservation and accompaniment of, or His taking *responsibility* for His purposed creation. In His omnipotence and goodness, God is not only initiating, but provident. Thus, God's responsibility for His creatures is a definite *directing* of the creature towards that which is God's aim: redemption.⁷⁴ God who preserves His creature also accompanies them by showing them, in Jesus, what it is to live under this claim.

The 'command' of this God is, then, is a decision which is made for humanity's being and future such that humans are deprived of making that decision autonomously. As the removal of condemnation to a responsibility that was impossible for humanity anyway, this deprivation or limit is the *Gospel* of humanity's *freedom*. Thus, the substance of God's command as decision concerning humanity, comes to humans in the form of the freedom from all claims and standards of value, duties and definitions of 'the good'. It is consequently, a freedom *for* accepting God's own free, or ongoing, decisions as right.⁷⁵

There is no independent human 'good'- only the 'good' of God Himself which is defined by His being-in-act in the event of Jesus Christ. Since the Atonement is humanity's whole knowledge of the 'good', God's command is also known as *judgement*. The command known in the Gospel is also *Law*. God does not merely suggest that humanity correspond to God's own decision. Thus, the indicative of God's being in Jesus Christ reveals a corresponding imperative directed to the human creature.

⁷¹IV.1, pp.157,122-29;IV.3,pp.165- 'Jesus is Victor':II.2, p.509;III.3,pp.4/5:I.2,p.680:III.1,pp.228-'The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation':III.4,p.24.

⁷²III.3,pp.58- 'God the Father as Lord of His Creature', pp.154- 'The Divine Ruling'.

⁷³II.2,pp.566/7:I.1,p.173.

⁷⁴*ibid.* also II.2,p.511;III.3,pp.3- 'The Concept of Divine Providence', II.2,p.543.

⁷⁵II.2,pp.580-83.

The nature of the imperative- what it requires- is defined by the obedience of Christ. Therefore, obedience is primarily constituted by faith in God in His self-revelation. Faith is not in the pattern of Jesus' obedience, but in the person of Jesus Christ. As God the Creator's command claims a person's whole being, it requires something of that person- not as a completion or replication of God's action of justification, but as the acknowledgement of it in word and deed.⁷⁶

As is demonstrated by Jesus Christ, human assent is not the obedience of faith unless it is visible in the obedience of one's whole life. Yet, whatever action is demanded of humanity is not and cannot replicate that of Christ. People do not repeat the obedience of Jesus Christ as though it were the archetypal path set before them which they had to appropriate to themselves according to their own circumstance and capability. The obedience of Christ which corresponds to the command of God the Father shows the very incapability of humanity to do precisely what Christ did. The person who would try to make of the obedience of Christ a pattern for himself would only deny the grace of God. Instead of obedience and freedom before God in faith, they would again experience the slavery and death of a law they could not fulfil. In their obedience to God's command, the life of the Son of God is not and cannot be repeated.⁷⁷

Christ did not give them the capacity to become a repetition of Himself (ie; to repeat the steps of His life as He lived it on earth), but as the 'Son of Man', He did go ahead of all humanity preparing the possibility of the obedience of faith. Thus, while the command of God has an absolute claim on a person because it is *this* God, it does not have one absolute form (ie: the life of Jesus), because it is a command to *this* (limited) creature.

In both respects as indicative of the action of an absolute God, and as His imperative which claims humanity absolutely, the 'command' is tied to the unchanging revelation of the being of God. Nevertheless, it is the living and free God who speaks to a humanity which is limited. God is not obligated to humanity to bind His concrete, ongoing (preserving and accompanying) commanding to any particular form. Since it is *God* who speaks, humans cannot know the totality of God's will at a given moment as though it were established clearly and once-for-all in their own terms. In God's revelation, humans are given to know and understand some definite things about God and His command. But this knowledge and understanding is limited.⁷⁸ Whether humanity *is* actually obedient or not is itself knowledge hidden in God.⁷⁹

⁷⁶IV.1, pp.96-101; IV.2, pp.499-; I.2, pp.363-368, 427/8,662; IV.4, pp.31, 5-10.; (Rom.2:6,13:1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:3; Eph. 2:8; James 1:21-25)

⁷⁷II.2, p.587;I.1, pp.522-24;III.4, pp.482/3.

⁷⁸I.2, p.683.: "we understand Scripture falsely...if we regard it as a fixed, inflexible, self-contained quantity. God is the living God. He is this from everlasting to everlasting...as the One who once revealed Himself to prophets and apostles...But this means that He is not buried in this 'once', in the writings of these men....And Jesus Christ is the living Lord of the Church and of the world. But if this is true, the form assumed by the word in the human word of prophets and apostles is not His grave..."

⁷⁹I.2, p.429;III.4, pp.479/80;IV.2, p.533.

The form of God's command respects the particular reality of the individual or group of persons to which it is directed, because it is defined by God's relationship with all human beings in Christ, and not in the abstract as 'universal' laws. For example, part of limited creaturely identity is bound up in the relationship of parents and children. While God's covenant provides direction for a certain mode of being in that relationship, it does not become a blueprint for a homogenous form of obedience applicable to all people, in all situations.

Insofar as every human is a child of parents, all participate in the relationship of parents and children to some degree. Yet, the meaning of this relationship is not an obvious, clearly defined 'order of creation', such that obedience to God's Lordship in it could be known for all time and individuals. The Decalogue is only understood through the Gospel of the freedom that human response to the Addresser entails.

The full meaning of the Decalogue itself is enveloped by the freedom of the Gospel, or Jesus' call to follow Him. Parents' obedience consists in modelling what it is to be a child of God to their children, as a kind of witness to the Gospel which is possible through the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Conversely, the obedience of childhood is just as much an acknowledgment of the Gospel as that of parenthood.⁸¹ Neither are good in themselves, but a passing and limited sign of the goodness of God which has been revealed and will be fully manifest.

In the parent-child relationship, the relationship of parents and children is limited, or 'bordered' by eternity, it is not divine. Both parents and children live in this relationship rightly only as they keep their ear open for the command of God that they live as though they were not bound in this relationship.⁸² Honouring parents, for example, may in the 'exceptional case' (*Grenzfall*) mean disobedience to them in order to honour their witness of the obedience which is due God. Conversely, God may call some to have children, and then later to live as though they had none, or to have no more.

Where such 'exceptional cases' arise, the command of God to children to honour their father and mother is not renounced or negated.⁸³ However, no form of this honouring is to become a universal rule. True obedience to God's command of human fellowship in the relationship of parent and child is fulfilled only in faith- in obedience to God Himself whose call is new every morning, and may come in a form that looks contradictory to the former command.

That forms of obedience are limited does not leave humanity to decide when the border of one form of obedience has been reached, or whether this or that one is better at any moment.

⁸⁰ III.4, pp.240/1/5-7,280-5.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp.241-45.; (Ex.20:12; Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:2; Prov. 1:8; Luke 11:27; 1 Cor. 4:15,17; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; Tit. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:2; Rom. 1:30; Matt. 23:9)

⁸² Barth draws on Gen 12:1; Luke 2:41-, 9:59, 14:26; Mark 3:31-, 10:29; and Matt. 10:34-7.

⁸³ *ibid.*, pp.262,281/3-5, p.262: "Thus the sayings (ie: Matt. 34-7 'He that loveth his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.'; Gen 12:1 'Leave thy father's house...') are not weakened when we say that they do no clash with the commandment: 'Honour thy father and thy mother', but only with the biological and sociological conventions of the framework within which this commandment is pronounced. They limit this framework by referring to another which is not only superior but alien to it..."

The form obedience must take is always the concrete call of God which has no proof or justification other than God Himself, and which is a requirement of complete, unhesitating obedience.

Another mode of limited human life which Barth discusses in relation to the command of God is the relationship between 'near and distant' neighbours.⁸⁴ Because of the politically consequential definitions of a 'people' which he makes in this discussion of this aspect of creaturely being, it is important to outline how he applies his concept of the command of God here. Whereas the general mode of the relationship of parents and children is described by the Decalogue, Barth sees the general mode of the relationship of near and distant neighbours to be described by the facts around him. His treatment of 'the facts' as a source of knowledge about the command of God, however, is filtered by the hermeneutic of the Gospel just as his treatment of the legal 'obviousness' of the Decalogue was.

Near neighbours are those who are more or less known to a person, ie: their family, or 'people'. Everyone else is related to them as a distant neighbour. As a fellow human being, they are bound to both distant and near neighbours. There is no priority of near and distant. Rather, the limit of the definition of 'near' becomes the occasion for acknowledgment of existence of 'distant' neighbours. For Barth, a person is concretely a member of a particular 'people', and is *therefore* engaged in connection with other peoples,⁸⁵ under God's Lordship in these relationships.⁸⁶ Because of Christ's individuality-in-relation, a member of a particular group is still also defined in relation to those 'foreign' to him or her.

Creaturely existence in the nexus of near and distant relationships is not independent from the Law of God which is heard in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though there is no observable 'order of creation' which becomes law, the command of God is always to a concrete person who is male or female, child and possibly parent, born in this or that place, and speaking this or that language.⁸⁷

Yet, creaturely identity is not static.⁸⁸ However they are defined, 'peoples' come and go, acquiring and losing a name, a language, or the State which gives them political and social

⁸⁴ Barth's discussion of near and distant neighbours is extremely important in light of the contemporary use of 'orders of creation' to argue for God-given racial/national difference, and the consequent divinely mandated conflict between these groups.

⁸⁵ III.4, p.305-. In a lengthy description and rejection of the racist arguments of German Romantic Nationalism, Barth refers to the modern elevation of the term 'people', refuting it as having no theological base insofar as it implies a sanctity of a people as such. Any 'people' can only develop in mutual interaction with others. God does not regard nationality as an incorruptible endowment, nor does he give nationality a divine task. God's disposition to place each person in the particular nexus of near and distant neighbours is *not* His command. His command is that in whatever way each man finds himself to be really in such a nexus, he is to obey God, and live in this nexus as a fellow-human. In other words, contrary to the views (particularly those of Abraham de Kuyper) popular among Barth's contemporaries, exclusiveness is not allowed in the relationship of near and distant neighbours as part of the command of God.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, pp.286-8.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp.288-95,302/3.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.293- "For when we speak of home, motherland and people, it is a matter of outlook, background and origin. we thus refer to the intiation and beginning of a movement. It is a matter of being faithful to this beginning. But this is possible only as we execute the movement, and not as we make the place where we begin its prison and stronghold. The movement leads us relentlessly...from the narrower sphere to a wider, from our own people to other human peoples....If mountain and valley do not meet, men do, and in so doing find that mountain and valley meet in them, merging almost imperceptibly into one another. Even North and South, and East and West are only relative concepts, and it is only artificially that they can be hypostatized and separated." For this reason (p.291) men raised into this or that language must learn the languages of the others they are called to

form. The particular relation of one people to another is always in flux, according to the ongoing determination of God. At one time it may be proper for some to be nearer and others distant. At another, it may be the command of God that all distinction disappear and the various peoples become merged.⁸⁹

In their relational limits, the command of God does not address human beings as though they had only one possibility for eternity, infinite time for an infinite number of possible actions, or neutral time in which any possibility was as appropriate as another. When God commands, He does so as One who knows and provides for human temporality in His commanding. We can see from the above examples that, although God's command includes defined dispositions explained in the Decalogue ('honour thy parents'), these dispositions become real obedience in response to directions made by God in specific, but always changing contexts.

Thus, obedience is always a time-specific, unique opportunity- not because God's possibilities are limited by human finitude, but because God the Lord in His freedom has chosen to give temporal limits to the being (and therefore also doing) of His creature. All that God calls humans to do begins and ends, and has its own time.⁹⁰ As temporal existence cannot be lived in the static repetition of moments, or of a command given in a particular moment, each is to obey as they are called today⁹¹- even though in the next 'today' that call of God who

be in communication with. "Therefore, if we are commanded to enter into communication with them, to hear them and speak with them and perhaps to read their books and newspapers, we must make a linguistic sacrifice. We shall then try to understand and speak this foreign language to the best of our ability, and as we do so in this respect at least a section of the barrier which seems at first invincibly to separate one nation from another will be removed, and even those who seem to be very distant will become relatively near. Where it is a matter of the command of God, this is necessary. Our own language must not be allowed to become a prison for ourselves and a stronghold against others... We thus see already that the concept of one's own people is not a fixed but a fluid concept." And again, (p.294) "In every land there are many active features, traditions and customs which would benefit greatly from superior foreign influences... One's own people and its location must not be a wall but a door." (p.296) "No people's history is so different from that of others that absolute uniqueness may be ascribed to it, that it can achieve an absolute independence, autonomy and autarchy, that it has not also to consider the presuppositions and tasks which it has in common with others." However, (p.299) "there is no such transitions (from own people to humanity) between the spheres of man and woman and parents and children. One thing is demanded of man and woman as such, quite another of parents and children as such. But here it is only the interrelated complex as a whole which can be considered... We have first to consider that very simple point that the confrontation of near and distant neighbours is reversible. This is not so in the sphere of man and woman, parents and children. But in that of the relationship of people and people, everything is reciprocal."

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 295-8, 301-5; pp. 296-8.: "Naturally, there must not be between man and the divine command any anticipating of what is right and good in this constraint. There must not be any inherited or self-invented interpretation of his people's history, or rigid programme of its future. Even in this respect he must obey God rather than man and his own habits of thought and ideas and fancies. In the share of responsibility accepted by him, only that will be right and good which the command of God in all its majesty requires of him day by day.... The command of God who is the Lord of all history and therefore the Lord of his life definitely points him to this situation, and brings him back to it if he tries to evade it. It wills that his action should always be relevant to it. Whatever his decision may be, in obedience to the divine command it must always be a step which he takes together with his people out of its past and into its future.... The command of God must be master, and all historical interpretation and notions, all other considerations, all economic, political, social and cultural and even religious evaluations of the situation must be mastered and not try to play the master... in all its particularity the history of each people points beyond itself.... In his own people man is on the way to humanity, and in humanity, on the way from his own people.... And so the command of God does not see and meet him either at the one point or the other, as a member of his own people and then perhaps as a participant in its relationship with other peoples, but always as the one who is on the way from the one to the other."

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.565-70,588/9.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.606.: "In its relation to the calling of God the vocation of man can never be understood, whether in respect of its previous form nor in prospect of that which it will take tomorrow, as a kind of prison in which he is shut off from new possibilities which today may seem to be unprecedented and therefore quite impossible. Only God, the Creator and Lord of man who also calls him, is the impossible frontier of his vocation.... God calls him to freedom and not to existence under an *a priori* law of subjective or objective determinations. Hence the vocation of man is not to be understood as a stronghold by whose thick walls man is protected from the varied and far too extensive demands of his divine calling, and being which he may defiantly argue that this or that cannot be demanded of him because it does not fall within his divinely foreordained vocation, or more exactly because he cannot see that it falls within his vocation."

has in mind a particular direction for a person may come to him or her in a completely different form.⁹²

The command of God to the creature is always the 'command of the hour'.⁹³ As such, it speaks to a particular person and situation, but is not dictated by the *Zeitgeist*. For Barth, "the command of God must be master, and all historical interpretations...all other considerations, all political, social, economic, cultural and religious evaluations of the situation must be mastered and not try to play the master."⁹⁴

The most important aspect of the command God to the limited creature for this thesis is found in Barth's discussion (CD III.4) of 'respect for life', and 'protection of life'. Since what has yet to be said about the respect and protection of life is the primary aim of this essay, we cannot proceed before setting forth clearly what we have so far discovered what the command of God means more generally.

Summary Analysis

Enlarging Yoder's concern with the epistemology and hermeneutics of the 'command', they can be understood as follows: epistemologically, the command is known in the same way as the Word is known (by revelation). This implies an encounter not only with the Word as it is written and proclaimed accordingly, but with Jesus Christ. Jesus' 'Follow Me' is known as the call to discipleship in the hearing, and not in the words as such. Words that are heard are tested against the written Word, but whether it is *the* Word which is heard is an absolute certainty only in God.⁹⁵

The hermeneutical question as it applies to Scripture is answered by observing that Scripture is 'read' (understood/given meaning) through the lens of the Revelation precisely as it is witnessed to in Scripture. For example, if one recalls the discussion of the doctrine of God above, the 'sovereignty' and 'freedom' of God had to be understood as defined a specific way according to God's self-revelation. All subsequent use of the word 'freedom' (in the doctrine of 'man' and of the 'command') was bound to this initial definition as it is found in the witnessed Revelation.

Likewise, true honouring of parents was seen to be a possibility only in response to the Gospel- that is, response to God's ongoing claim on one's life regardless of preconceived, legalistic definitions of obedience. Insofar as the Revelation does not become a lens for the

⁹²ibid., pp.600,605/6/9/11/15/28/32/44.: (1 Cor. 7:20, 12:11; Gal. 5:1,13)

⁹³ibid., pp.609/46.

⁹⁴ibid., p.296.: also p.646: "[I]n every case to abide in one's calling is to remain in it with a readiness to be called elsewhere. There is no law; whether outer or inner to bind a man to this place. His calling alone can be his law. In obedience to it, it is always possible to make a change, not on the basis of one's own ideas and opinions or those of others, nor under the pressure of external circumstances or one's own rambling fancies, but in obedience to one's calling. When this demands such a change, one is obliged to follow."

⁹⁵I.1, pp.184/6/7,213:IV.2,pp.533-53 'The Call to Discipleship'.

reader except through revelation by the Holy Spirit, Scripture is not understood except as it is read in an ongoing and open attitude of prayer.⁹⁶

In ethics, as dogmatics, something concrete can and must always be said about the acts of God. God will never go back on an eternal decision. This is the meaning and necessity of eschatology which is so closely linked to Barth's Christology. If God changed His mind about the atonement, He would either not be eternal since it is His being-in-act, or He would be a liar, which He is not as the sole criterion of 'truth' ('reality').

Yet, even God has a breadth of possibilities. The Bible itself attests to a God who declares the Sabbath a day of rest, and who, in Jesus Christ, later walks around doing works on the Sabbath. Obviously any knowledge of these incidences would preclude the conclusion that therefore God is a cloaked and arbitrary game-player; or a 'pagan existentialist' (Yoder's term).⁹⁷

At the human end, the first thing we are reminded of is that humanity is '*human*'. Since God's action in Christ defines 'right' and 'wrong'; and since humans are sinners even when they follow Christ, no human action is morally unambiguous from a human perspective. In Barth's language, human ethics which responds to this God is always a kind of "penultimate de-assurance"⁹⁸, however philosophically and moralistically unsatisfactory such incertitude may be to us.

By leaving God's command open to a changing form- admitting a *Grenzfall*- righteousness in ethics belongs to God. Because God *is*, He lives. Because He lives, He has something pertinent to say in His ongoing, active Lording or directing of His creatures. In Barth's thought, then, the command of God is both general (objective decision, and established guidelines) *and* specific. It could only be equated with written Scripture if God were not actually living.

The centrality of the idea of listening to God for directions that are 'new every morning' in Barth's thought points to the expectation he has that God actually communicates what He wants in concrete situations to specific human beings. Because humans are incomplete and do not know God completely, they in fact need to be constantly redirected by the only One who is not bound by their myopic epistemological and hermeneutical capacity.

Since Barth uses the *Grenzfall* to leave the door open for a living God to speak in a concretely understandable way to the shifting circumstances that changing and different human beings find themselves in, the process of prayerful decision cannot be misconstrued as human

⁹⁶III.4, pp.87-93.

⁹⁷Barth does not use these precise examples, but for his own explanation of the breadth of God in straddling what often appears to man to be mutually exclusive poles, see Barth's discussion of the reality of God's being Himself while yet being 'in contradiction' to Himself by becoming creature- in which He is yet *not* in contradiction. IV.1. 'The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country', esp. pp.185/6. p.186 "We begin with the insight that God is 'not a God of confusion, but of peace.' (1 Cor. 14:33) In Him there is no paradox, no antinomy, no division, no inconsistency, not even the possibility of it....What He is and does He is and does in full unity with Himself....If we think that this is impossible, it is because our concept of God is too narrow....Who God is...is something we have to learn where God has revealed Himself..."

⁹⁸I.1, p.187.

opportunism which uses God for an excuse- unless one does not take Barth's article of faith seriously: *Credo in Deum, Patrem, omnipotentem, creatorem coeli et terrae et in Jesum Christum, filium eius unicum, Dominum nostrum.*⁹⁹

In other words, it is not *in spite of* his Christology that Barth can include the *Grenzfall* in his ethical thought, but *because of* it. It is precisely because of his Scripturally derived knowledge of Christ (that He alone is both the 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man', and that He alone knew what real obedience entailed) that Barth has been the first to so thoroughly incorporate the acknowledgement of human ambiguity into his ethics.¹⁰⁰ Had Yoder perhaps looked more deeply into the interpretative meaning of Christ's being-in-act for all of Barth's dogmatics, he might not have missed its corresponding role as Barth's ethical basis and guideline.

⁹⁹*ibid.*, p. 685.

¹⁰⁰One does not have to range to far in his or her reading to notice that almost all Christian ethics presumes righteousness as a human possibility, on the condition that the right formula for action be derived or deduced from Scripture, tradition, or some combination of the two. In those instances where ethicists try to account for human moral ambiguity, they often wind up doing just what Yoder has accused Barth of doing: throwing their dogmatics overboard and opting for the Law of Pragmatism. Thus, ethics tends to be either legalistic, or completely liberal. Barth is unique in avoiding both.

CHAPTER 2

The *Grenzfall* in its Specific Application to Life and War, in CD III.4

General Outline

Barth's broader discussion of life and its more specific application to the problem of war are conducted within the theological and ethical framework outlined in the previous chapter. Within the parameters set by his definitions of God, humanity and the command of God to humanity, Barth begins his discussion of life with the presupposition that it is a *loan from God for the service of God*. Given this origin and end, its value is limited. "Life cannot be for us a supreme principle at all, though it can be a sphere in relation to which ethics has to investigate the content and consequences of God's command."¹

Since human life is not independent from the living God, human life can only be *lived*: "become constantly real".² Human beings are constantly making new beginnings in time because their reality is grounded in the Now of God's eternity. In this way, human existence is *freedom* which is always *bound to God*. Humanity cannot usurp God's control, or presume God's knowledge by deciding, what or when a 'new beginning' is. Whatever its form, human life in constant beginning consists in service of God. Each human being is responsible for his or her self with regard to their life, and their treatment of other lives, before God. No-one can live or judge another's life.

The indicative (that mankind lives) contains an imperative: 'Thou shalt will life'. Even so, this same God who begins humanity's life, also gives it an end. The Lord of life is also the Lord of death. Therefore, the command 'Thou shalt will life' cannot become a human absolute.³

Inside the framework of this understanding, Barth goes on to describe the command of God regarding life as two-fold. On one side, Barth discusses obedience to the command in the negative sense of not disregarding or trampling life, under the heading 'respect for life'. He draws this negative sense of the imperative of life from the command of the Decalogue,⁴ commonly phrased 'Do not kill', which he interprets to mean more accurately 'Do not murder'.

On the other side, the command has a positive implication: it requires action on behalf of life, which Barth explains under the heading 'protection of life'.

Obedience to God's command to live results first in a genuine respect for life. Respect then becomes the basis for the protection of life. To understand Barth's thought concerning the

¹ *ibid.*, pp.325/42.

² *ibid.*, p.329.: "This means that it is a being both in constancy and mutability. In a flux of moments man is always identical with himself, but as such he passes through the flux of moments."

³ *ibid.*, pp.333-5.

⁴ Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17.

protection of life, and especially with regard to the aspect of war, that thought needs to be set in the context of Barth's preliminary discussion of respect for life.

Respect for Life

Genuine respect for life as the basis for life entails several things. First, it means a recognition of the goodness of life. Because God gives life, and because He even took on human flesh, human life is good.⁵ Life is the gift of God's love and election. Short as it is, it is not a condemnation (Sartre), but a unique opportunity to praise God. Therefore, real respect for life is further known in its inclusion of a sense of mystery and holy awe, joy⁶ and faith. Yet, even though life is always good, none of the mystery, awesomeness, joy and faith comprising respect can become ethically absolute.

For example, *joy* appreciates and anticipates fulfilment in life.⁷ Joy is an expression of gratitude which comes from the expectation and realisation that God's grace is revealed in life. Yet, the command to enjoy life is limited. We cannot pursue or have joy endlessly, because it is only a reflection of the true fulfilment of the atonement, and not that end itself.⁸ *We* are not to limit joy. Such stoicism is not Christian. But we need to recognise that God limits it. Paradoxically therefore, a real obedience to the command regarding joy means that a person must be willing to live life even if such living requires that one patiently undergo suffering.

Suffering which is *God's* border on joy is not a commanded opposite of the command to be joyful, but joy itself "in an alien form".⁹ Obedience in the form of suffering does not undercut the original command of joy, because joy is still commanded even in suffering.

Likewise, respect for life also means *faith*. For example, capitulation before sickness exhibits a lack of faith because it honours sickness more than God by letting it be a Fate stronger than the Lord who gives life.¹⁰ In the face of the sickness which reminds of sin, faith cannot fail to "count on the saving reality of God in this world", because "the hand of the most High can change everything".¹¹ The will to live which includes faith is the "resistance and conflict of faith and prayer appealing to the grace and gracious power of God."¹²

Yet, since health is not an absolute any more than joy, faith in life for health also has its limit. God Himself sets the limit in allowing human life always to decline until death. As the concrete form of decline, sickness is a reminder that life is in God's hand. Therefore, the

⁵ *ibid.*, p.397.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp.335/6.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.372. : "It is the simplest form of gratitude. It is an internal stop in the life of man to appreciate the moments in that life which is externally always moving forward."

⁸ *ibid.*, p.383. Or, "the great fulfilment which has taken place in the darkness into which God Himself entered for us in His Son."

⁹ *ibid.*, p.384.: "The mystery and wonder of the life given to us by God, (in) its beauty and radiance, and the blessing, refreshment, consolation and encouragement which it radiates as the gift of God"

¹⁰ (Ex. 15:26; Jer. 33:6; Ps. 30:2; James 5:14)

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.370. This last phrase is Luther's translation of Psalm 77:10, which Barth drew on for this section of his discussion.

¹² *ibid.*

command of God to have faith in life about life may sometime have to be had in what appears to be its opposite. There may come a time when a person is commanded by God to fight the despair of sickness with patience and joy in faith in God, and yet not overcome the sickness itself.

Obedience in the respect for life does not mean avoiding the shadows of life (suffering, sickness, death), but serving God in the lights and shadows of this life which is entirely covered by the shadow of the Cross anyway.¹³ A humanly absolutised 'will to live', or 'will to power' grasps at things which are not needful for life before God, and results in the waste, "disorder and destruction of war and annihilation."¹⁴

At all points, then, it can be seen that the respect for life belongs to *this* side of death and is therefore provisional. Because meaning is given by the limit of eternity, "all ethics, particularly as the ethics of respect for life...can only be provisional or interim ethics."¹⁵

This provisionality of life, as well as the sometimes paradoxical nature of obedience in respect for life, do not undercut life's goodness or the meaning of the command because they point beyond.¹⁶ In affirming human life, God does not give humanity an ethical 'principle' of respect for life. God gives Himself. Therefore, humans respect life only as they continually receive God and His command anew.¹⁷ In other words, human beings are free in their obedient respect only as they are bound to God in ever renewed service to Him.

The Protection of Life

The command of 'protection of life' flows out of respect for life. Protection of life is active protection against destructions 'respect for life' abstained from. As with the command

¹³ibid., pp.391-7.: (Is. 40:29-Ps. 118:17, 33:16-; 1 Cor. 1:27, 16:13; 1 John 2:13; Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim 1:12)

¹⁴ibid., p.395.

¹⁵ibid., p.384.

¹⁶ibid., p.343. Respect for life is not good or meaningful until its limits are found, and then meaningless. "Hence it is not true that respect for life is alternately commanded and then not commanded of us....This inwardly necessary relativisation of what is required of us as respect for life, this recollection of the freedom of the controlling and commanding God and of eternal life as the limitation of this present life, must not be forgotten for a moment....Neither is it true that alongside the sphere of respect there is a sphere in which it is not normative, or only partially so. However much what we understand by this respect and therefore by the commanded will to live is limited and relativised by God's free will and man's determination for a future life, this relativisation never means that man is released from this respect. The one God, who is of course the Lord of life and death...will in all circumstances and in every conceivable modification demand respect for life. He will never give man liberty to take another view of life, whether his own or that of others....Even the way to...the frontiers where respect for life and the will to live can assume in practice very strange and very paradoxical forms, where in relation to one's own life and that of others it can only be a matter of that relativised, weakened, broken and even destroyed will to live, will always be a long one which we must take thoughtfully and conscientiously....The frontiers must not be arbitrarily advanced in any spirit of frivolity or pedantry: they can only be reached in obedience and respected as such. Recollection of this freedom and superior wisdom, goodness and controlling power of God, and recollection of the future life, cannot then form a pretext...for attitudes and modes of action in which man may actually evade what is commanded within these limits. They are frontiers which are necessarily set by God, and cannot be claimed as emancipations of man. This will be best understood by those who do not treat respect for life as a principle set up by man. Even on these frontiers they will not see a relaxation of the command or exception to the rule, but only a relaxation of that which they think they should understand and offer as obedience when they accept it as a summons to the will to live."

¹⁷ibid., p.385.: Respect for life "can only be the faith, sustained by hope, which clings to what has been accomplished as the future in every present, and therefore to God Himself."

for respect, the command of protection is limited. As with respect, protection is commanded absolutely, but it is not an absolute command.¹⁸

This fact gives rise to the main problem for the protection of life: the moment when the command may have to be obeyed in the paradoxical form of the 'exceptional case', or *Grenzfall*.¹⁹ Of course, the exceptional case is *highly* exceptional. It is never 'the norm', and does not mean God abandons His commands against destruction and for respect and protection. The *Grenzfall* can be considered "only with the greatest reserve on the exhaustion of all other possibilities."²⁰

Since deliberate aggression in hate against another person/group of people on the basis of humanity's own decision to be law-giver, judge and executioner is unambiguously murder²¹, the *Grenzfall* cases where killing which is not murder might be required are only possible in more ambiguous situations. Barth considers these to be suicide, mercy-killing (abortion and euthanasia) and self-defence (personal and social). Social self-defence is divided into the issue of capital punishment (defence against an internal aggressor) and war (defence against an external aggressor).

In each section of the discussion on killing, Barth's arguments fit into the framework above, the basic presupposition of which is God's prohibition on murder.

In remaining open to God's *Grenzfall* commands, humans are never allowed to cease willing life. The idea of the *Grenzfall* is that the possibility be left open for a paradoxical obedience, not a justified disobedience, on the basis that humans are so limited in their knowledge of God that they cannot understand the reality of situations as He sees them. With regard to killing, humans are not to leave themselves open to the possibility of killing itself

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.398.: "It is to be noted that it does not mean that there exists a standpoint from which a callous negation and destruction of human life may still be regarded as legitimate or even imperative. In no sense, then, does it imply a limitation of the commandment. It simply refers to the fact that human life has no absolute greatness or supreme value, that it is not a kind of second god, but that its proper protection must also be guided, limited and defined by the One who commands it....since human life is of relative greatness and limited value, its protection may also consist in its surrender and sacrifice. In certain circumstances, should the commanding God so will it, it may have to break and discontinue the defence of life in which it should present itself until this boundary is reached. This will be the case only, but then in all seriousness, when God as the Lord of life so wills it." also pp.398-400. Barth differentiates between murder and killing; pointing out that in the Old Testament, the command 'thou shalt not kill' is given, and yet, in the same Old Testament, reports and commands to kill are recorded. In the New Testament, Matt. 5:21- and 1 John 3:15 refer to *murder* and not killing as such in their prohibition. Also, in Matt. 26:52, Peter is told to 'put up his sword' because 'they who live by the sword shall die by the sword.' Yet, in Rom. 13:4, Paul explains that there are legitimate bearers of the sword who are instruments for God's wrath on those who do evil. Jesus likewise says that power was given by God to Pilate-- both instances legitimating use of the sword.(John 19:10-) Also in Acts 5:1-11, Peter killed Ananias and Sapphira with his words. So, in both the Old and New Testaments, the issue of killing is morally ambiguous (though that of murder is not: Gen. 9:6; Num. 35:12-33; Deut. 19:10-12,6)

However, where killing which is not prohibited does occur, it is the act of God's judgement- it is not 'blessed' or virtuous. The line between killing and murder is very unclear, and the person who too quickly takes himself to be God's instrument for the former, risks fitting the definition of murderer of Deut. 19:10-- someone who lies in wait, hates their neighbour, and sheds innocent blood. The murderer loses eternal life, and keeps company with the devil who 'was a murderer from the beginning' (John 8:44). Furthermore, since even commanded killing provides no real pleasure for God (Ezek. 18:23,32,33:11), and since the New Testament occasions of it are strikingly rare compared to the Old Testament, the border area where people might be commanded to kill must be considered *extremely* exceptional- the arguments against it cannot be overemphasised.

¹⁹ *ibid.*: "Its difficulty lies in the fact that it cannot be completely excluded, since we cannot deny the possibility that God as the Lord of life may further its protection even in the strange form of its conclusion and termination rather than its preservation and advancement."

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, p.414.

(which their sinful nature is all too eager to do),²² but to leave themselves open to God. This openness is signified by the humble knowledge that all human life is only a relative and dependant good, and by the faith that whatever God demands, it is always for the ultimate good of oneself and others. Faith is in the God who is "in command", or Lord. It is ultimately faith in Jesus Christ, because it is faith that the God who became flesh does not operate towards the humanity He loves by subjecting them to the demands of things-in-principle.

In summary, Barth's caution bears repeating: "Life cannot be for us a supreme principle at all, though it can be a sphere in relation to which ethics has to investigate the content and consequences of God's command."²³

Killing in Self-defence

The orientation of humility and faith required by obedience regarding protection of life is applied by Barth to problems of killing, beginning with self-killing and ending with the problem of war. Regardless of the scale of killing involved, Barth allows for the *Grenzfall* case. He does so by using his theological presuppositions and basic ethical framework as a general guide for delineating the extremities of the situations, beyond which the *Grenzfall* might occur. Such guidelines are not rules proving where the *Grenzfall* is certain. They merely explain where it is possible to hear it commanded. Precisely *how* the Christian hears is a mystery known to God who effects hearing by His Holy Spirit. That humanity *may*, and therefore *shall*, and therefore *does* hear *God* is an axiom of faith in the Triune who is Being-in-act.

Against human overhastiness, all situations where God's command to kill does not simultaneously command respect and protection of life can be recognised as merely human decisions. Of course, even where a situation seems clearly to invoke the balance of human life against human life, there is no guarantee that such a balance is indeed brought to bear. People cannot even begin to consider that a case is extreme until they have tried every possibility to obey the command in its most literal form.

All situations where killing is involved must take into account the fact that in every person there is an indwelling wolf. The wolf is not identical with the person, but a corruption of the full, real human nature visible in Jesus. Nevertheless, in humanity it is only all too ready to leap out and devour what does not belong to it: namely, life.²⁴ No matter the form of

²²ibid., p.413. Barth describes all humans as wolves- all have a 'Hitler within us'. In the case of a murderer, the murderer does not become possessed by some new wolfishness. it is merely that the wolf already in them 'slips the chain' -- in the rest of us, it has not yet done so.

²³ibid., pp.325/42.

²⁴ibid., pp.413-15.p. 415: "We have to realise that on every occasion on which even for what seem to be the best of reasons we count on the presence of the exceptional case, we move in the vicinity of the murderer and therefore in a very dangerous neighbourhood. Whenever we dare even think that the killing men by men is not only not forbidden but even necessary in certain circumstances, there is always the possibility of ...the same independent construction of the exceptional case on the ground of very dubious and quite arbitrary desires, of the same attempted self-justification by moral sophistry....The line which keeps us

obedience, it is always still the obedience of sinners the sinner who obeys. Thus, even when humans think they act under the command of God, they depend in faith on the grace of God to forgive them.²⁵

As mentioned, Barth divides the cases where humans kill others into the following: the person-to-person, or State-to-person cases of mercy killing: abortion and euthanasia, and the issues of self-defence²⁶ : person-to-person, State-to-person (capital punishment), and the collective issue of war.

All these situations are fraught with ambiguity. Do I save a person from condemnation by preventing them from committing the sin of murder? Or do I preserve myself, in obedience to God, from the same crime by refraining from murdering them and allowing myself to be murdered? Does the State have mercy on one and thereby become responsible for innocent bloodshed? Or does the State protect the innocent, and incur the bloodguilt of one? What about the more personal guilt of the few human beings who are given the task of carrying out the sentence of capital-punishment? Does a country stop the slaughter of its citizens by sending its citizens to get slaughtered and to slaughter the innocent citizens of a neighbour? Are any citizens innocent since all participate in the war machine? *Can* a political body make decisions which have such final, personal consequences?

Barth takes as his basic position that no positive or negative answer to any of these questions is an adequate justification for action, either for or against human life. To guard against irresponsible use of his guideline for the exceptional case, Barth sets out examples in each situation to show just how rare, particular, and yet ambiguous the case is where God *may* command killing. Again, no presumption that God *will* do so can ever be made.

Accordingly, Barth first asks carefully whether the command of self-defence is not so marginal that it ought not to be discussed at all. Are there not already so many voices advocating self-defence, that the Church is needed to raise hers strictly and only in protest? No, he concludes, whatever must be said about the New Testament command, it is "not a law but a direction for service".²⁷

In the area of killing in self-defence, the first thing the Christian meets is the sign of the New Testament which says quite frankly "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an

from falling under...condemnation will always be razor-sharp, and how near we shall sometimes be to crossing it! But if this is a warning to be most circumspect, it must not deter us from being prepared point by point even in this dangerous neighbourhood to stand by the truth that at some time or other, perhaps on the far frontier of all other possibilities, it may have to happen in obedience to the commandment that man must be killed by man."

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp.420-3/7.

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp.427/8. "self-defence" is defined as resistance to an unjustified assault, in the absence of police or other assistance, by using force. The one assaulted has no option but to defend himself...it may result that the aggressor is killed. The question at issue is obedience to the command of respect for life.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.433: "Hence, its wording should not be allowed to obscure the Commander....Tolstoy, Gandhi and others...are wrong in understanding it as a law rather than a direction for service, and in thus refusing to leave room for the living God to give man direct instructions as well, in the same sense and with the same intention as the direction, but not necessarily in the precise verbal form. To be sure, one can know the spirit of God's command only from the Scriptural letter. Hence in matters of the order and direction of what God wills or does not will as regards self-defence we should undoubtedly keep to what we are shown in the New Testament. Nevertheless, we are not to apply the letter in such a way as to stifle the spirit, but rather in order that we may seek from it the Spirit who is the freely commanding Spirit of the Lord."

eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say to you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5:38-42), and "Recompense no man evil for evil....Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord...Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:17-20)²⁸

For Barth, the above commands are not a product of pious idealism, nor recommendations restricted to interactions between 'Christian brethren'. They are practical directives for life at all times.²⁹ Except where it is divinely commanded, the *Grenzfall* has no justification before God, not only because human justifications are useless before God, but also because of the biblical directive above.

Even exceptions are not exceptions to the rule of God, but paradoxical fulfilments of that command. As much as it would be conscientiously and intellectually more satisfying to make an absolute out of the literal reading of those passages against self-protection, such resolution cannot be had without a denial of the living Lord in favour of static law. There can be no confusion of God's command with circumstance. Where a person may be called to resist another by force, it cannot be instinct which is decisive. Resistance can only be action corresponding to the divine resistance to human transgressions.³⁰ Even where human action becomes such a parable of God's action, it is not free from sin. Human resistance cannot be equated with God's, even if it is in service to God. Moreover, self-defence is only obedience if it is performed in an attitude of "genuine interest of, and a genuine love for, this troublesome fellow-man himself."³¹ When commanded self-defence results in killing, it is not murder.

The best way to understand how Barth delineates the *Grenzfall* without actually making it a law for special cases, is to look at an example. Because of its direct relation to his later discussion of war, Barth's illustration of what must be meant at the very least by 'extreme' case in the situation of capital punishment is one of the best examples.³²

Barth explains that in the case of treason, a person forfeits their right to live in their community by betraying it and endangering thousands of lives. Whether the traitor is a 'nobody' or the leader of the country, obedience to kill is not obedience if it includes anything less than a respect for the life of the traitor, who is a person created by God.

Barth notes that this question of the extreme case and defence against a traitor was faced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his friends in 1938-44. Even though Bonhoeffer and those

²⁸ibid., p.429.

²⁹ibid., p.430.: "They declare the simple command of God which is valid for all men in its basic and primary sense, and which is thus to be kept until further notice.... They give us the rule, whereas the rest of our discussion can only deal with exceptions."

³⁰ibid., p.435.

³¹ibid., pp.435/6.

³²The question might well be raised as to whether Barth should have gone on to suggest the form of the 'extreme case'. None of his suggestions are unassailable or self-evident. Yet, regardless of the opinion of his own conscience, the main point is not his opinion of when the *Grenzfall* has been reached, but his theological basis for it. Obviously, if he thinks he hears God in this or that instance, he cannot prove it to anyone, any more than God's existence can be proved. He can and must give a responsible account of his own thinking and hearing of the *Grenzfall* if he is to call others to be open to it.

with him were not all members of the State machine, they took up the cause of the State abandoned by those who had been appointed official guardians of its cause. In other words, for the sake of the protection of life, they considered a kind of capital punishment for a life-destroying and threatening traitor (Hitler). From their point of view, they had tried every other way they could think of by way of persuading Hitler from his course earlier in his career. The idea of killing Hitler for the sake of life was only a last resort.

All the external criteria of the 'extreme case' were met in this example.³³ Yet, Barth does *not* take the external factors as conclusive proof that killing Hitler as a traitor was the command of God. Several times an assassination attempt was not followed through, because none of the men wanted to carry it through at the risk of his own life.

Therefore, even though "there was no theoretical doubt that this was a case for the *ultima ratio* and must be treated as such..."³⁴, Barth suspected that God did not actually command the action. Had He done so, He would have given those involved the strength to overcome the instinct for self-preservation which blocked them. Thus, where the supposed command did not also effect obedience, Barth doubts that God actually gave the command.

So, even though Barth follows his discussion to its conclusion by providing the possible outline of the extreme case he argues must have a place, that outline clearly does not become in itself a justification for action. Because humanity's only justification has already been made in Jesus Christ, there is no law or principle which justifies action. Obedience is to the command of the living God, and not to principles or laws derived humanly from God's spoken commands.

The Problem of War

Barth concludes his discussion of protection of life with the problem of mass self-defence: war. Because of the ease with which it is possible to misunderstand or unfairly characterise Barth's thought on war in *CD III.4*, it is important for the moment to provide a summary of his thought, reserving synthesis and analysis for a later section of this thesis.

War is included in the section on self-defence because Barth does not consider any other war as legitimate. Thus, there can be no *Grenzfall* for any war but one in self-defence. In this section, Barth sets the parameters of the question by describing the nature of war, then considers the question of the *Grenzfall* itself.

As with other areas of self-defence, all *a priori* arguments justifying killing in war are to be rejected as false-justifications. Moreover, the conditions of modern war reveal that some justifications for war that had seemed self-evident previously, are in fact based on illusory

³³ibid., p.447.

³⁴ibid., p.449.

assumptions. For example, war is no longer a question of honour concerning princes and military-men. "Today everyone is a military person, either directly or indirectly,"³⁵ and there is nothing honourable about modern warfare.

The fact that everyone is a military person now means that the question of war effects everyone in a much more immediate way than before. Christians must consider the problem and be prepared to act in response to it, because they can no longer leave it up to others. In democracies especially, all citizens bear some responsibility for the actions of the State.

Because war involves the action of the whole society as a single machine, every individual in a State has a responsibility for the actions and decisions of the leaders of the State. That there are no longer any spectators in war does not mean that when war is called, every citizen has a duty to act on the military side of the State just because every citizen *is* the State, but that every citizen must ask himself about the justness of *this* war and seek God about what to do.

Secondly, the sheer massive brutality of war makes it obvious that wars are not fought (as was so often argued) for honour or any other virtue. Neither does war draw the best out of people, making them virtuous. War is not the glorious occasion by which people's formerly hidden courage is revealed. It is the revelation of "the basically chaotic character of the so-called peaceful will, efforts and achievements of man."³⁶

For Barth, war is like suicide in that it reveals when the will-to-life of a people has not been the commanded will to live, but the false self-assertion of the ego which leads to destruction and annihilation. It exposes humans as slaves of their rampant passions rather than masters. "It discloses the flagrant incapacity of man and the judgement he is always on the point of bringing on himself even in peacetime."³⁷ War exposes humanity's so-called stability and peace as corrupt. War is not the antithesis to human peace, but its ugly reality. As if the two world wars did not make this point clear enough to Barth, the atom bomb completes the picture for him.³⁸

Thus, war and peace are not dialectical opposites, but together two parts of the question about where humanity's life and hope are fixed and what humanity's priorities are. As long as people are driven by their own will to live, even their 'peacetime' is only a prelude to war. The real problem of war is how to make peace something other than war's prelude: how to live under the command to live, rather than in slavery to the will to live. The bottom-line issue is not arms or no arms, but obedience or rebellion. Where weapons are not being used, the rebellion is still a latent destruction which leads to arms. However, where peace consists in obedience, such destruction is not latent.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.451.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.452.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.452/5.

Yet, in a world where one lives obediently only in the midst of disobedience, the question of war does arise for the obedient, as a question of obedience- but only as such to the *obedient*. Where peace is not actively pursued, advocated and sought at all levels, the obedience which flows out of the reconciliation of God and humanity, and therefore of humans with self and others, is not present.

For the *Christian*, it cannot be that war is the norm, and peace the ideal and exception to be struggled for; only the negation of the positive; the 'anti-' to the rule of militarism. Since killing of war is far more serious in magnitude and brutality, and its inclusion of a host of other things forbidden by the command of God, the *Grenzfall* of commanded war is even rarer, and must be thought of with even more strictness as existing only on the furthest edges of God's command.

In war, more than any other situation, the Church must be careful not to let her interpretation of what is necessary and right be formed by the world and its self-justifications, but by the Gospel. This does not mean the Church can avoid the question of war, as though those who were the Church were not also citizens of this State in which the question of war has arisen. If it has arisen, then they bear responsibility for it, in bearing responsibility for a peace that is shown by the very question of war to have been a false peace. The Church which faces the question of war is the Church which faces the judgement of God. In humility she cannot avoid the question because it is part of the total judgement of the Creator against His creatures- which she is.

The Church cannot justify war as the natural necessity of the State, because it has been called to obedience, and therefore, to the recognition that there is no 'natural necessity'- only the necessity of obedience. The Church is not allowed any compromise with what could be described as Hobbesianism or Machiavellianism, because she knows there is a coming Lord, and that humans are not left to their own devices in the conflict of competing values and wills to life. She knows that all of these are limited and bordered by One who sustains, protects, provides and will redeem.

For Barth, such compromise with the 'laws of conflict' and 'will to life' were the basis on which "not merely the world, but Christianity itself stumbled into the First World War", and on which "new 'historical acts' were ventured in 1938 and the Second World War began. And only a few years after its termination the question of German remilitarisation has given rise to similar pernicious nonsense."³⁹

Only the Church which is 'horrified by war', and which refuses to believe 'self-evident' justifications for it can be a significant force for peace. Promotion of peace cannot be simplified into condemnation of the ways of the world, such as war itself. The Church is the *communio sanctorum*: the community of those for whom all action commanded by God has

³⁹ibid., p.457.

become a positive possibility again. For all its power, the judgement of God is not the basis of the Church's life. God's 'yes', the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ, is.

Therefore, the Church's task in face of the question of war which she is not allowed to avoid, is to call nations, States and citizens to the activity of peace which is the creation of order so that life can develop in a meaningful and just way.⁴⁰ When war looks imminent, the Church must maintain that it is not 'inevitable' and therefore justified. The Church is really only saying this if she is aware of what is going on and is advocating and working for concrete alternatives.

The Church cannot get caught up in any sort of 'war fever' however 'obviously evil' the enemy is made out to be. The Church must keep her head in this question above all, and not agitate, use the language of agitators, or fall victim to propaganda and hate-rhetoric. Peace is action for the neighbour- near and distant- who is only maligned and destroyed by such verbal murder of their character.⁴¹

Yet, because the Church's action for peace is to God, and not to peace as a principle, she cannot promote peace by any means or at all costs. While the Church's voice can never be a 'howling with the pack', the Church in its work for peace cannot preach pacifism/anti-militarism on principle. Even if war is to be declared the *opus alienum* of the State (hence every individual, Christian included) and *not* its *opus proprium*⁴², it may yet be an opus which the Church is called (by God, not 'circumstances') to support.

As with an individual, a State may be in a position where self-defence by war becomes God's command. While it is true that the leaders of the State who do not know God, are not obedient to Him because they cannot *hear* Him, it is also true that God uses their decisions and actions for His own purposes. The responsibility, or ethically right position of the Christian, is one of listening to God regardless of the inability/ability of others to listen.⁴³

In stating that the door must be left open for the *Grenzfall* in which war is commanded by God, Barth does not assume that the political leaders who actually wage it are Christians, nor does he state that they must be members of the Church for the war to be 'just'. For him, that type of thinking belongs to the Constantinian conception of 'Christian' rulership, and not to the model of obedience witnessed to in Scripture.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp.458-60.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.460. "In excitement and propaganda there lurks already the mass killing which can only be mass murder."

⁴² *ibid.*, pp.456/7.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.463.: "The Church which does not give an easy sanction to war, which constantly seeks to avert it, which is studious to avoid any general or institutional approval in principle, which proclaims peace alone as the will of God both internally and externally, which testifies to the very last against unjust reasons for war- this Church is able in a true emergency, or in the rare case of a just war, to tell men that, even though they now have to kill, they are not murderers, but may and must do the will of God in this *opus alienum* of the State."

"There can certainly be no question of howling with the pack...but only of preaching the Gospel of the Lordship of God's free grace and of direction to the prayer which will not consist in the invocation of a pagan god of history and battles, but which will always derive from, and return to, the *dona nobis pacem*. In this form, however, the message of the Church may and should be a call to martial resolution which can be righteous only as an act of obedience but which as such can be truly righteous, which can be powerful only as an act of faith, but which can be truly powerful."

When it is manifestly evident that a war is being fought for the sake of 'honour', or 'historical mission' or frank political/geographic/economic expansion, that war cannot be affirmed. But where it is a possible case of self-defence; where it is a deeply ambiguous tossup between affirming lives of near-neighbours, or those of distant-neighbours who are invading, the Church must listen to God.

Not every 'obvious' case of self-defence is what it is made out to be. If the Church affirms military action in self-defence, she cannot do so on the justifications provided by those conducting the war, but only as obedience. Each Christian person must seek God if their obedience is to be *to God*, and therefore sanctified. The same holds for the body of the Church as a whole.

Where the Christian hears God command their support of military defence of their nation, it cannot be but a paradoxical fulfilment of the command to love their neighbour—near and distant; to love their 'enemy' as his brother. It cannot be but a paradoxical form of the service to God which proclaims and builds the real peace of justice. For all of its brutal nature, it cannot be thought of as a justified counter-attack of the neighbour, but a service of the mercy of God toward them which seeks to arrest them in their flagrant transgression of the peace of God.⁴⁴

While it is certainly not true that peoples have a 'right' to independence; or that the individuals comprising a 'people' are necessarily better off (more alive, more free for God) if they live in an independent political entity, it might be that on some occasion the invasion of one people by another would so disrupt their physical, spiritual and intellectual life that it would seriously compromise and impair their relationship to God. In Barth's words, "it may well be that they are thus forbidden by God to renounce the independent status of their nation, and that they must therefore defend it without considering either their own lives or those who threaten it."⁴⁵ In Barth's opinion, the *Grenzfall* of commanded war would arise if Switzerland were to be attacked.

Similarly, defence might be required by a third party. For example, the case may arise where State A is attacking or about to attack State B, such that State C hears the command of God to go to war on behalf of the life of the people in the aggressed State (B).⁴⁶

And yet, whether a situation actually is what it appears to be is a matter of hermeneutical differences. Human assessments of the situation can only be limited and relative, and therefore never a source of justification. To be sure, the Christian-in-community is not exempt from critically regarding the situation. However, obedience is rendered to God

⁴⁴Barth does not see the distinction between the individual and society that Reinhold Niebuhr does (in *Moral Man in Immoral Society* for example). What is at stake in collective life just as much as in individual life is obedience to the One Lord whose rule is the same in all areas of life and whose rule is *His* rule in *all* areas, not leaving some subject to other rules. Humans cannot be moral in an individual way which is not also demanded of them in their community life, and vice-versa since a person is a person-in-community; the community of individuals. See also pp.464/7.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, p.462.

⁴⁶*ibid.*, p.pp.461/2.

on hearing His command, not to the apparent facts of a situation. Once God has been heard, the Christian (and the Church) cannot re-subject their action to the criterion of success/failure as though the decision were still to be made.

So, up to the very last moment the Church must concern herself with the fashioning of peace by means which seek to avert war. But if at some point there is no other road to peace except military action against those who disrupt it; if at some point it seems that it has come down to a question of life for life, even then the Church cannot presume, but must listen to the God. In doing so, the Christian must remember that it is this God who sometimes commanded His people to let themselves be made subjects that they might learn to repent and worship Him, and sometimes to resist subjugation that they might be free to worship Him.⁴⁷ Those who fight in a war should do so only as a reluctant, last step- not a 'last resort' under necessity, because God may yet command that a State allow itself to be defeated.

Just as the Christian cannot blindly follow the direction of political leaders with regard to war, neither can that person abdicate their own responsibility by blindly following leaders in the Church. Christ alone is Head of the Church. Even when the Church leaders, or some in the Church, have heard God's command to war, each of the other individuals in the Church are responsible before God for examining their own motives in this war.⁴⁸

For this reason, the individual who asks about this or that war is first the one who is asked by the command of God whether they personally act for peace in all areas of their life. It is not enough for the individual Christian to allow the institutional Church to be active in this or that capacity on behalf of peace. They are personally responsible for constructing peace that is peace and not "a rotten and unjust peace which contains the seeds of war."⁴⁹

Since the question of war is such a personal question, Barth leaves the door open for conscientious objection as an obedient response to God concerning this or that war. Yet, because objection is obedience only in listening to God, it cannot be a matter of absolute principle. Moreover, because it must be obedience to God, it must be undertaken in full acceptance of the consequences, and not as a societal 'right'. The conscientious objector must be ready to face the fact that to the State they will appear a traitor, and may be treated as such. Conscientious objection cannot be an objection to the State itself, but to this or that war for the sake of the real well-being of the State which the State itself has forgotten in its self-destructive haste.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ see Barth's reference to Jeremiah and Isaiah, p. 461.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 464-6.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 465. and 463: "We cannot separate the question of the just war from the two questions of faith on the one side and obedience on the other.... If war is to be ventured in obedience and therefore with a good conscience, it is also entered in faith and therefore with joyous and reckless determination. And if it is really ventured in the necessary faith, its basis is not found in mere enthusiasm but in the simple fact that, perhaps most unwillingly and certainly with a heavy heart, it has to be waged in obedience and certainly cannot be shirked for the sake of a worthless peace."

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 469/70.

While Barth does not approve of standing armies because they legitimate the false claim that war is inevitable, he does think that in a world where standing armies exist, conscription is a better policy than voluntary service because it forces individuals to realise the truly personal nature of the question of war. He finds that voluntary service is also particularly dubious since it encourages a voluntariness with regard to war which is not healthy.⁵¹

Summary

Barth's view of war itself, articulated in III.4, is that it is a horrible judgement of God against humanity's false peace. It is the revelation of the reality of the 'inner wolf' in human beings. It is one of the most reprehensible of all the questionable acts of humanity. All ideologically motivated warfare is arrogance because it is self-justification and self-assertion. Moreover, it is self-annihilating arrogance as well as other-annihilating, as the two collective 'suicides' (assertions of German Nationalism) of this century show.

Further, when Barth thinks about 'war' in this section, he does so with the fairly narrow framework of war between nation-states, where 'nation' may or may not mean a pluralism of races. Barth repudiates the concept of 'race' on the basis that all human beings are descended from migrant tribes and are therefore of mixed blood. He also repudiates the identification of political nation and race with the examples of Switzerland and the United States.

In this framework, 'defence' primarily means defence against attack from the outside, or aid of a State so attacked. For those inside Germany who acted against Hitler, defence was an internal question which Barth discusses with the issue of treason in his section on capital punishment. That all wars will have such an internal aspect is a given, since the people in the country overtaken by war-fever also need to be freed from the war.

Those outside the aggressor State can act only as they realise the judgement the war makes: that they too are guilty of the same unpeace of those inside, and have their own participation in the conditions that allow the whole international community to arrive at the point of war.

Barth considers war in general to mean the use of 'conventional' weapons, with the possible use of hydrogen or atomic bombs such as America dropped on Japan for questionable reasons. In *CD III.4*, Barth does not consider a nuclear 'WWIII', or the problem of civil war.

As a general statement, Barth views all war that is not outright sin as a work which is only possible as an alien work. The proper activity of people in society (the State) is not war, but peace. Yet, sometimes the only way out from the unpeace of false peace may be through its manifestation in war.⁵²

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp.460/66-9.

⁵² In IV.2, p.550. 'The Call to Discipleship'. Barth picks up this discussion of war in the context of that of 'force'. What he characterises as the basic call of Jesus to Christians is that they leave the 'gods' of this world: the expectations and demands of

Barth does not write much on what can be done concretely for peace, since this area of his discussion presumes action for peace as a general preoccupation, and is primarily concerned with the exceptional case where war occurs and is also commanded in order that life might be respected and protected as a service to God.

Pacifism in principle claims to be a witness to the Kingdom of God against the warlike 'reality' of the world. Barth agrees that such a 'reality' ought to be opposed, but he does not agree that 'warlikeness' is the basic reality for human beings. 'Reality' is defined for Barth by the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which means that of the peace of righteousness. The Christian acts for peace by refusing to get sucked into the all-too-apparent Machiavellian/Hobbesian rules of the game.

The most basic thing that Barth has to say about Christian ethics (the obedience of faith/the life of sanctification) in the face of war, is that it is never 'war' as a principle which is faced. Hence, it is not responded to in principle. Human beings are always faced by the particular situation of this or that war, about which they must wait to hear God. It is an article of faith that the living God has something pertinent to say in each and every new situation humans face.

Defence presumes attack has already been made. If standing armies are not justified for Barth because the Hobbesian and godless worldview of the necessity and inevitability of war must be rejected, then obviously 'threat of destruction' itself does not constitute a *justification* for war. 'Pre-emptive war measures are highly suspect in this regard.

Just, or obedient defence is not obedience because it is defence, but only by God's 'nevertheless' in spite of that fact. Clearly, where war is a form of *killing*, it is such only on the extreme margins of humanity's understanding of God's command to respect and protect life.

Barth uses the language 'a just war' when he speaks of a defensive one in which humanity has heard God call to defensive action. But such a war is not 'just' in the sense of a 'holy' war. It is not a *carte blanche* under the protection of divine whim.

Moreover, in war that is such a 'just war', there can be no 'demonising' of the 'enemy'. Where the other side is demonised, people are engaged in taking the well-being and justice of the world into their own hands. Such activity constitutes a faithless eschatological statement,

the friend/foe relationship cast by the world. In opposition to the structured demand of the world's kingdom of force, Christians are quite clearly called to a *practical* pacifism: to a practice of the activity of peace as though the friend/foe law were replaced by a new friend/friend structure, which it is indeed in the Kingdom of God. Yet, this calling out of the form of the world is not a new law given to Christians to apply on principle in counterdistinction to the law of the world. Christians are called to a freedom from laws. They do not continue, essentially, the 'old' person with a new name or direction. What Christ demands cannot become a general rule. Obedience is never a case of flopping back and forth between old laws and Jesus' laws. Even where force may be commanded, it is required by God. Humanity is still emancipated from the old rules of the 'friend/foe' relationship. (Even though a war may be 'just', every behaviour is not justified- even in the extreme case force must be used as though the 'enemy' were a good friend, and therefore ceased the moment the purpose has been accomplished. Even force is used with respect for the life it is used against. Thus, the mode of being in friend/friend structure as opposed to friend/foe is not self-evidently, or externally so different: just as the new man in Christ is still very much a creature on earth. However, the perception of what is happening, and motivations, are completely changed from the one structure of relationship to the other.)

because the operating assumption is that God is absent, and that He does not have the last word over creation.

When a person believes they have heard God command them to defend their own or another people by military means, they are not caving in where biblical eschatology is concerned. Rather, it is out of eschatological faith that it becomes possible for the Christian to accept the *penultimate* significance of human obedience in a world affected by sin. It is precisely the fact that God alone knows the ultimate significance of all things that makes it possible for humanity both to accept the ambiguity of their own righteousness, and act with confidence.

The paradoxical form of God's command is not its most obvious form, and never a second rule by which humanity could cleverly get around the most obvious sense of the sixth commandment according to human whim and convenience. Only by a serious misreading of Barth can it be construed as a 'pragmatic casuistry' in Yoder's sense.⁵³

The *Grenzfall* leaves room for the mystery and incomprehensibility of the commanding God. Far from constituting another articulation of the age-old escape '*grandes sont les mysteres de la foi*', the *Grenzfall* is unambiguously and rigorously grounded on a systematically approached, Trinitarian conception of God, which Barth derives from God's self-revelation in the New Testament, and which is therefore conceived in terms of a movement which goes out from, and points back to, God in Christ.

In this movement, Barth relentlessly pushes aside all false parallelisms between the calling of God on human lives, and God's specific call on the life of God the Son, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. As Barth's theology illustrates this movement, it is a position of life which rigorously refuses to 'cry with the wolves' that seem to be howling most pressingly in a particular moment. Where it appears to coincide with the general flow of things, it does so for different reasons, since the follower of the Word has radically different motivations.

Barth rejects the liberal, neo-protestant view that the 'life of Jesus' (all the things Jesus is documented to have done) can be cast as the paradigmatic life-story, according to which humanity must pattern their own as to a blueprint. Ethically, Jesus' pacifism is not an iron law for everyone else because of the theological realities of His being God the Son, and of human sin.

The witness of Jesus is to the Father. His 'follow me' is a following to God, not a false human divinisation. Human witness is not to a new achievement or option for holiness by patterning themselves after this model in a literalistic fashion. If it were, Jesus would have called the various centurions and Roman officials who were Christians out of their occupation

⁵³Yoder, op.cit., p.73.: "The label which Barth has seen fit to attach to the fact that, in some situations, he considers himself obliged to make a choice which goes against what all the formal concepts of his own ethics would seem to require."

since His particular mission involved passive *submission* (not even passive *resistance*) to the 'sword', rather than use of it.

Insofar as the command of God which includes the 'exceptional case' signifies the uniqueness of Christ's 'call to discipleship'⁵⁴, it entails a deep consistency with a constant, superficial shifting of position. One is always called by Christ; to obedience and witness to God. Yet, because it is a life in *freedom*, it is guided by the Holy Spirit whose immediate direction and aim is a mystery.

The *Grenzfall* does not rule out the possibility that God may call this or that person to a specific prophetic witness which is consistently againsts all wars. But where God does place this special vocation on a person, the *reason* is God, His call, and this prophetic vocation to which He has called this person. Such a call cannot be known ahead of time, on the basis of principles.⁵⁵

Thus, the idea of the *Grenzfall*, as an 'ethical tool', is a shorthand for submitting all of one's action in prayer to the living God who is Lord in all spheres of life, and has something direct and specific to say in those spheres at all times. That He is sought in prayer means that precisely what He has to say is not humanly known *a priori* because of humanity's inability to 'hear' or understand what is read of God, human inability to fully perceive their own situation, human lack of knowledge of 'good and evil', and the consequent ongoing dependence of humanity on the *living* Word of God.

Epistemologically and hermeneutically, humanity simply has to wait for God and seek Him. The *Grenzfall* is an acknowledgment that in all their knowing and understanding, and therefore, also their doing in that framework, humanity lives by the Word of God which they can never usurp or appropriate.

In concluding this part of the discussion of Barth's view of war, it is interesting to note that the *Grenzfall* concept articulated in CD III.4 (completed in 1951) was not developed in justification of a particular position in only one particular war (WWII), but in light of the century's two World Wars and the 'Cold War'. Of further significance is the fact that Barth nowhere retracts anything he has said in this section regarding war in his later writings. Even in the reference in IV.2 (completed three years later in 1954) to the 'practical pacifism'

⁵⁴IV.2, pp.546-51.

⁵⁵refer to IV.2, pp.545-7. Barth emphasises that the call of God concerning a person's vocation never 'conveniently' coincides with the majority viewpoint, but is almost always a protest against it. Each Christian can therefore expect to be misunderstood in their following of Jesus, and maligned, if not persecuted. The stance 'against' which the calling of God creates is only 'against' because it is really 'for' these same people whose illusion it is 'against' - because the God who radically opposes humanity is also for human beings. When God's call is a command to defensive war, it is not a call to defend the Kingdom of God in any direct way. The Kingdom of God is upheld by obedience to God, which is first, and never ceases to be peace. Barth's insistence that war be only an alien work in the greater service of peace should not be confused with the argument of natural law that justifies some wars as a necessary means to the greater, justifying end, of peace. Another extremely crucial point is the fact that there is no such thing as neutrality. One cannot be neutral before God: only obedient or faithless. Therefore, in all one's action and inaction, one can only exhibit faith, or unbelief. There is no such thing as neutrality in the midst of one's fellows. If one is not called to stop sinful aggression by force, one cannot have the illusion that quietism preserves one from guilt. All it does is participate in the rampant sin by giving it space.

required of all Christians, Barth continues to uphold his statements against pacifism in principle.

Thus, the *Grenzfall* position seems to be something Barth can uphold in the face of the very different wars he was responding to in CD III.4 (WWI, WWII and the Cold War), because it is not a pragmatism based on changeable external criteria. It is the considered implication of his biblically derived understanding of dogmatics. For him, it is an ethical correlate to what is revealed about God and 'man' in Jesus Christ.

With regard to the doctrine of the command of God to 'man', the corpus of the *Church Dogmatics*, begun in 1931 and left unfinished at the time of his death in 1968, exhibits a pronounced dogmatic and ethical consistency. The discussions of 'God', 'man', and the 'command' in the previous chapter of this thesis have drawn on the *Dogmatics* from Volume I.1 to IV.4, as the footnotes show, in order to make just this point. They are summaries of these doctrines as they appear in the *Dogmatics* as a whole, spanning 37-plus years of Barth's thought from the interwar period, into the heart of the Cold War.

Insofar as the *Grenzfall* idea can be seen to be a specific implication of Barth's dogmatics, it occupies a niche in the structure of Barth's thought as a whole, as it is presented in the *Dogmatics*. Thus, as it is applied to the situation of war in CD III.4, it shapes Barth's view of war in a way which is not anomalous to his systematic dogmatic and ethical work.

While Barth could not have had as developed a picture of the *Grenzfall* as in III.4 in the earlier stages of his life, one could suppose that if the theological ethics underpinning the *Grenzfall* were basic for him fairly early on, then a diversity-in-continuity characteristic of the *Grenzfall* logic itself can be suggested as Barth's overall 'view of war'.

Because of Barth's insistence on knowledge of the general being possible only through the particular, an understanding of 'Barth's view of war' requires at least a brief glance at his actual responses to the specific wars which faced him in his life.

How Barth's position in the contexts of WWI, WWII and the Cold War is one of diversity-in-consistency, or a 'prophetic'⁵⁶ response based on a particular theology which shifts so as to move against the stream of each context, will be shown in the following sections on Barth's reaction to these specific wars.

⁵⁶III.4, p.9.

CHAPTER 3

Barth's Reaction to the First World War

Having understood some of the basic outlines of Barth's theo-ethical epistemological and hermeneutical framework from the *Church Dogmatics*, the next step is to cast our glance back in time over his responses to World War One. How can Barth's view of war expressed in WWI be understood in relation to what has so far been discussed? Can nascent forms of Barth's matured thought be recognised? Examined on its own, what is Barth's first documented reaction to war? How can Barth's thought be understood in direct relation to his political/historical context?

For as full a picture as possible of Barth's view of the First World War, it will be necessary to proceed as follows: after a brief glance at some of the facts of the historical context of the War, I will look at Barth's reaction to it expressed in his sermons from July 26 to December 27, 1914¹, as well as his letters to his friend Eduard Thurneysen and colleague Martin Rade written between July 1914 and 1919.

In addition, Barth gave several important lectures during this period. These will be discussed as they help clarify the location of Barth's thought about this War within his general political/ethical framework as it was articulated at the time.

Next, Barth's commentary on Paul's *Letter to the Romans* (hereafter, *Romans*) is also of crucial importance. Though there are significant theological changes between the original (1918) and revised (1921) versions, there is no indication by either Barth, or in the secondary literature on his thought, that the basic structure of Barth's political thought contained in it had changed. In other words, the 1921 version of *Romans* can be understood to be Barth's first *systematic* description of his thought about the role of the Christian in a political world.

Finally, in addition to what Barth had to *say* about the First World War, biographical material provides for us some indication of what Barth also *did* (besides speaking), in response to the circumstances of the War.

Historical Context

The Sino-Soviet war of 1904 was a major factor in the preparation of the world for WWI because it helped prepare the conditions which made the war possible. Russia's defeat caused a significant shift in the balance of power in Europe. Previously, France had been allied with Russia in order to offset Prussian military strength under Bismarck (1892). Afraid of a

¹ As Barth's sermons of this period have not been translated into English, references to them here are extensive, in order to make Barth's thought in them more accessible.

renewed German military preponderance now that Russia was weakened, France allied herself with Britain. (German-French relations were still cold after the Franco-Prussian war of the mid 1800's.)

Strategic allegiances also meant economic ones, particularly at the turn of the century as it was a time of great industrial advance, especially in Germany where a later industrial revolution was beginning to outpace Britain's head start. In parallel with these developments, Britain was losing ground economically, and was in danger of doing so in terms of her navy as well. That Europe was divided into two groupings of competing alliances was an advantage to all concerned.

Of course, a balance of two power clusters did not mean inevitable war, but it would mean that when war came, countries would be more likely to fall like dominoes- tied as they were to each other by their various alliances.

Of significance is the fact that these alliances were *national* alliances. The Romanticism of the 19th Century which was the aftermath of the French Revolution, had produced a political ideal of the economic and military unit which was also composed of one, relatively homogenous 'people'. *Racial* theories of all sorts abounded, and patriotism towards the racially-defined state became intimately connected with ideas of moral duty to one's own family.² In Europe, where the framework of moral language was cast in terms of Christianity, that morality was defined in Christian terms, and in turn, came to define Christian moral duty to a large extent.³

This mix of Christian pietism, national militarism, and nationally chauvinist economic expansion was not confined to one country, or a few, but was part of the generally accepted intellectual and spiritual landscape of Europe, including Britain at the time. National ideology was not a direct cause of the First World War, any more than strategic alliances were.⁴ Rather, both of them together gave it its particular and utterly unprecedented shape.

In spite of Britain's waning global influence, and Germany's growing one, Britain and Germany had a very tightly knit trade relationship at the turn of the century. None thought it possible that the two would ever be at war. Yet, at the same time as Britain was benefitting

²Anti-semitism had flourished all over Europe for centuries, but it became progressively more institutionalised during the 19th Century as Jews who refused to assimilate were made the scape-goats for all sorts of national social ills. Jewish identity which maintained itself in the midst of a diversity of cultures in spite of the fact that Jewish people did not have a 'necessary' 'Fatherland', flew in the face of the ideologies surrounding the concept of the racially homogenous nation, and was therefore dangerous. see esp. Robert H. Lowie, *The German People: A Social Portrait to 1914*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), pp.39-110.

³The German Kaiser's (Wilhelm II) speech at the opening of a technical museum in 1906 is very enlightening in this respect. He said: "The powerful, surprising and almost incomprehensibly rapid progress of our newly united Fatherland in all domains, the astounding development of our trade and commerce, the magnificent inventions in the domain of science and technics, are a result of the reunion of the German races in one common Fatherland. The more we are able to wrest for ourselves a prominent position in all parts of the world, the more should our nation in every class and industry remember that the working of Divine Providence is here manifested. If our Lord God had not entrusted to us great tasks, He would not have conferred upon us great capacities." (Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770-1990*, New York: Routledge, 1989, pp.83/4.)

⁴Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty in Britain during the Great War, wrote the following very pithy comment afterwards that "To create the unfavourable conditions for herself in which Germany afterwards brought about the war, many acts of supreme unwisdom on the part of her rulers were nonetheless still necessary." see Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) pp.1/2

from an alliance with France and a profitable relationship with Germany, Germany was caught up in planning geographic expansion.

Prevented by circumstances from making any major colonial acquisitions in order to increase her supply of resources, and of land on which resources could be developed and the national population could expand, Germany had realised since the 1880's that military expansion in Europe was her only option to fulfil these goals. Coupled with the popular national idea that a people was truly 'born' only through a great struggle, the shifts of 1904 resulted in German belief in the possibility of mobilising the German 'nation' for military advance in Europe. As early as 1904, German military leaders had already drawn up the infamous 'Schlieffen Plan'.

As Germany was already allied with Austria and Italy, her most significant competitors on the continent of Europe were Russia and France. Moreover, German leaders nursed a grudge against France for her victory in the Franco-Prussian war in the 1870's. The 'Plan' was to transgress the European agreement on Belgian neutrality made by all countries, including Germany, by marching through Belgium to access France through her relatively defenceless border with Belgium. Due to Germany's recent enormous technological advances in products and production- especially in armaments, it was thought that Paris itself could be gained in a matter of a couple of weeks, and that Germany could then afford to turn toward Russia, whose internal weakness became plain in her defeat by Japan, to conquer her territories as well- Germany's alliance with Russia notwithstanding.

A war which sought to gain living space for the German nation was considered a war fought for purposes that were honourable and necessary to the life and development of the nation. The Schlieffen Plan and its justifications embodied the first national embrace of what the Germans termed '*Realpolitik*'- a modern industrial and national version of basic Machiavellianism/Hobbesianism.⁵ In 1912, Germany founded a 'Security League' to propagandise within Germany for militarism by stressing the danger of attack by Germany's neighbours.⁶

While the Schlieffen Plan of 1904 was then a secret, Germany's growing military might was not: hence the French/British alliance was signed in 1904. France was worried about invasion, and Britain was concerned about her waning naval might. Thus, the friendly and busy economic relations between Britain and Germany masked what was essentially a developing arms-race in a climate of increasing suspicion which divided Europe into two camps of strategic alliances nurtured as a military precaution, as much as a trade gain. It was

⁵ *Realpolitik* embodied in the Schlieffen Plan meant, basically, that whatever was 'necessary' for the attainment of German aims was a law sufficient to over-ride international law. re: '*Realpolitik*' see Baron Friedrich von Hügel's apologia for it in *The German Soul In Its Attitude Towards Ethics and Christianity the State and War*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1916, preface to p.15.: re: the Schlieffen Plan, see David Scott Daniell, *World War I. An Illustrated History*, London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1971, pp.14-16., also virtually any substantial history of the First World War.

⁶ D. F. Fleming. *The Origins and Legacies of WWI*. New York: Doubleday and Company. 1968, pp.28/9.

fairly widely acknowledged that war was brewing under the surface. A French journalist wrote in 1913: "All Europe, uncertain and troubled, prepares for an inevitable war, the immediate cause of which remains still unknown to her."⁷

Switzerland, like Belgium, was a militarily 'neutral' country. The geography of Europe was such that Switzerland had the good fortune not to find herself standing between Germany and German aims. Moreover, the Swiss did not have the same interest in the nationalist fervour infecting Europe because they had recently formed one whole nation out of four very distinctively different groups of people. Switzerland did not stand to gain as a country by allying herself with any national project, or using the national arguments then available.⁸ She did stand to gain by maintaining healthy economic relations with everyone if possible, and so she did not join either of the emerging 'sides'.

Germany's excuse for military expansion; her chance to implement the Schlieffen Plan (with a few modifications) finally came in July 1914, greatly facilitated by the European system of alliances. Russia was closely connected with Serbian nationals, unhappy about their domination by Austria-Hungary. When a Serbian assassinated the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophia on June 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia a month later (July 28), and Russia mobilised her armies for war on behalf of her ally, Serbia.

On July 30, Austria-Hungary bombarded Belgrade, and Germany cautioned France the next day to remain neutral (not to take advantage of Germany's possible weakness) if war broke out with Russia (when Germany's back would be to France fighting Russia). As a pledge, Germany demanded the French fortresses of Verdun and Toulouse. Understandably, France refused. On August 1 Germany declared war on Russia. The next day she demanded free passage through Belgium for her troops in the direction of France. Belgium refused. On August 3, Germany declared war on France and marched through Belgium by force August 4, transgressing international law regarding Belgian neutrality, and openly aggressing France.

On behalf of international order, and because of her alliance with France, Britain tried to end the threat by sending Germany an ultimatum demanding the removal of German troops from Belgium before they arrived in France. The ultimatum was ignored, and Britain declared war on Germany. Within roughly five weeks of the assassination of Ferdinand by a patriotic Serb, the whole of Europe was caught up in a war for the sake of the principle of national freedom, each soldier fighting a patriotic battle, whether in 'rightful' offense, or defence of

⁷Fleming, *op.cit.*, p. 138.: pp. 135-137 describes the configuration of the 'arms-race' noting some interesting figures: from 1908-1913, defence expenditures (in American dollars) increased in Great Britain from 295,000,000 to 375,000,000; in France from 220,000,000-410,000,000; and in Russia from 300,000,000-460,000,000.

⁸Encouraging French and German nationalist sentiments would have indeed been divisive in Switzerland since these nationalities composed the two largest people-groups. Switzerland tended instead to nourish a multi-national patriotism which emphasised Swiss uniqueness in being a multi-national 'nation', and was also very conducive to a concept of willingness to do business with anybody, regardless of uniform (or ethics).

national interest on foreign soil.⁹ Because of technical advances, almost everyone thought the war would be over within a couple of months.

Because those same advances were made by both sides, it became the bloodiest, most thorough battle the world had ever seen. Because of the nature of industrial production, a war between industrialised states was not only a war between two lines of soldiers holding weapons, but a total confrontation between entire populations. By the end of the war, the world had received a shock which changed its understanding and conduct of war forever.¹⁰

Biographical Details Relevant to Barth and the War

In order to situate Barth in the historical and political context of the War, a brief biographical word is needed. As a young boy, he apparently had quite a belligerent streak, which got him into frequent fisticuffs, inspired him to read historical accounts of wars avidly, and follow the Japanese-Chinese war of 1895 (when he was only nine- he was born in 1886).¹¹ As he said: "Until I was sixteen, I lived and dreamed of military exploits. My brothers and I would play with lead soldiers for hours on end, and did so with great seriousness."¹² While this activity can probably be explained by the natural tendencies of young boys, particularly in an era in which military prowess was considered the image of manhood and nobility, it does rule out the possibility that Barth's vehemence against the War in his sermons sprang from any passivity that might have come naturally to him.

In 1897, at age eleven, he became a cadet and underwent military training, eventually becoming a corporal. Again, while cadet service was most likely a normal experience similar to that of Boy Scouts for a Canadian, there is not indication that Barth disliked it. In 1905, he was exempt from military service because of short-sightedness- but wrote poems instead which were inspired by his historical reading of warfare.¹³

⁹For the mentioned dates, see D. Daniell, *op.cit.*, pp. 8/9, 24.; for the significance and role of nationalism/patriotism, and further discussion of national Romanticism see D. Fleming, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-34, 128-138; Egon Friedell, *A Cultural History of the Modern Age*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), pp. 1-67; Alexander W. Crawford, *Germany's Moral Downfall: The Tragedy of Academic Materialism*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1919), pp. 61-82, 147-171; Harold James, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-110; Franz Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee, *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), p. vii.; Robert Lowie, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-110; Rudolf Eucken, *The Main Currents of Modern Thought*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), chapter on 'The Religious Problem' pp. 462-475. He describes the present 'need' for a 'transforming spiritual culture' which would be a 'religion of the Volk'; also another interesting comment of Churchill's, *op.cit.*, p. 6.: "Far more than their vices, the virtues of nations, ill-directed or mis-directed by their rulers, became the cause of their own undoing and of the general catastrophe."

¹⁰see Coetzee and Shevin-Coetzee, *op.cit.*, introduction, and pp. 60-66, 223-244.; also another of Churchill's comments, *op.cit.*, pp. 3/4. "The Great War differed from all ancient wars in the immense power of the combatants and their fearful agencies of destruction, and from all modern wars in the utter ruthlessness with which it was fought. All the horrors of the ages were brought together, and not only armies but whole populations were thrust into the midst of them." As is well known now, poison gases, machine guns, and tanks were first used in WWI. At the beginning of the war, however, it would have been possible for someone with an eye on technological developments, and an ear for the national propaganda, to predict that the war would be particularly ferocious, and likely last a long time- if not for any other reason than the absolute refusal of anyone to give in until the last man, for the sake of national honour.

¹¹E. Busch, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-15.

¹²*ibid.*, p. 16.

¹³*ibid.*, pp. 20-6.

Barth's University years were spent in both Switzerland and Germany (Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg). When he began university in Berne in 1904, he joined the student association 'Zofingia'. Though it had a militant aspect to it, and was in the process of becoming heavily influenced by the growing 'student movement', Barth was apparently more interested in the beer, outings and social aspects.¹⁴ Most such organisations were heirs to the military tradition of the upper classes that had had a monopoly of access to education for centuries. Barth's father had also belonged, and so it was something of a family tradition, with as little real military seriousness for Barth as an undergraduate fraternity might have today.

A couple of years after Barth was ordained he was given a pastorate in Safenwil, a little Swiss industrial town. There he became involved in the workers' struggle which occupied his parishioners.¹⁵ Barth had sympathy for the needs socialism addressed, and sought to correct the church's irresponsibility in not paying attention to these needs herself. Yet, he kept a critical distance, both from the ideology, and the means of the socialist movement. In pre-Bolshevik Switzerland, the socialist movement expressed its internationalist hopes by preaching a rigorous pacifism, coupled with informed engagement in contemporary politics with the aim of conciliated change. While Barth rejected Socialist pacifism, he agreed with their emphasis on political engagement and helped the workers of Safenwil organise themselves politically.

In March 1913, Barth wrote an article entitled "A Dissenting View on Military Aircraft", in which he supported the use of planes by the army while rejecting the 'naive pacifism' of socialists. His argument was that once you had agreed that war was sometimes a necessary evil, you could not stop half-way, crippling your army by preventing the use of the new technology.¹⁶

When the War broke out, Barth began activities which he carried on for its duration: he helped farm families now deprived of their men with hard chores such as haymaking; spent nights on duty with the 'home guard'; and set up a reading room in his parsonage for soldiers stationed in Safenwil.¹⁷

When Barth was preaching to his congregation at the beginning of the War, the whole reality of this transformation the War would bring was of course not yet visible. Neither did any-one know how long the War would last. Further, most had no suspicion yet about either the arguments for its preceding arms-race, or the national justifications flung around by both sides. German national expansion as such was not even the primary issue that had bothered

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp.35/6.

¹⁵ Safenwil was dominated by the textile industry and a saw mill which paid notoriously low wages. Barth informed himself of the relevant issues by reading journals such as "The Trade Union Journal" and the "Textile Worker", and reading books on economics. He saw it as part of his duty of care of his parishioners to keep *them* informed about their rights, and the political possibilities open to them through weekly classes. Because of the poor conditions of the workers, Barth saw helping them organise as an integral part of his job of preaching the Gospel of Jesus to them. Yet, while he felt that socialist issues (economic injustice, harsh conditions, abuse of ignorance) could only really be met by the Gospel ultimately (and not by the social movement itself), and while he did preach active compassion for the lowly- as can be seen in the summary of his sermons above- he did not back *socialism* with religion, or preach it in the church.. *ibid.*, pp.68-79, 103/4.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp.71.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.81.

those who fought Germany- and certainly not those within Germany. Few questioned the principle of *Realpolitik*. When Germany not only marched through, but devastated Belgium in punishment for not opening its doors 'voluntarily', the German historian of Christianity, Adolf von Harnack (also Barth's professor), said: "I am unable to...even admit a formal wrong; for we were in a situation in which formulae no longer exist, but only ethical duties."¹⁸

Barth's Sermons, 26 July- 27 December, 1914

Barth's sermons concerned the War even before it broke out. In the tense climate three days after the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum had been issued to Serbia (July 23, 1914), Barth preached on Ephesians 2:4-6 ("But because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.").¹⁹ The sermon contrasted the 'heavenly realm' of God and Jesus, and the earthly realm of human nature and activity.

Barth wonders how it can possibly be said that we 'are set in the heavenly realm', which is a realm of peace, freedom, order, happiness and salvation, while we are quite evidently caught up in a mode of being where we hurt ourselves constantly through our passions, and lethargy; where we are in a world which is not our home. He questions whether Paul meant an ideal to be found on some far-off star. Barth then resolved the dilemma by concluding that 'heavenly realm' means a new way of being in the present world, made possible by action which comes out of a true and deep comprehension that God is love.

Barth's paradigmatic example of the wicked and selfish competitiveness of the world is the imminent war.²⁰

Amazed that 'Christian' nations could be so wild and determined, and in such varying stages of preparedness and lack of preparation, Barth added "How like an awful thunderstorm, the war hangs over them all...!"²¹ If it did not come immediately, he was certain it would break out soon, making a mockery of Paul's statement that we are 'in the heavenly realm' in Christ.²²

¹⁸Crawford, op.cit., p. 168.

¹⁹Karl Barth, *Predigten, 1914*, (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1974) pp.384-395.

²⁰ibid., pp.388/9: "And perhaps we stand today on the eve of a war, that could set the whole of Europe in flames. The heaps of rubble from the last war are still smoking, the tears of thousands of widows and orphans are still flowing, and now should- if a miracle doesn't happen- a new hundred thousand be let loose on top of one another like wild animals?- hundreds of thousands, who do not even know one another and who have no cause for grievance will now shoot and strike one another, and kill one another with every means of modern invention. One will speak of his Fatherland and of military honour- but what foundation is there for it? Why must Austrian and Serbian farmers and workers hate and kill one another? There is no need for the compulsion of ancient, human passions; for the old predator-principle: eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth (Ex. 21:24) The spectacle that rolls out before us is a bloody insanity- especially since limits are not accepted."

²¹ibid.

²²"We are not at the end, but at the beginning of this time of war. And this time is the most serious of all ever in the history of the world...What are all the wars that we have experienced beside the one that is now flared up? ...it is something quite incomprehensible, in how a few weeks our whole Europe, even the whole earth has put on a completely different face...All the scholarly, artistic and religious interests which...bind men together are suppressed...Everything else is forgotten for the propaganda: we must defend ourselves!...What has appeared until now is only a minor prelude...Never have any killers and vandals been as scheduled, as technical, and as precisely businesslike in their ambition as today. An enormous intellectual work

Barth acknowledges that such evils as war make one tremble, but he proceeds to urge his congregation toward the hope that is theirs as Christians: because God is really truth, God's Kingdom will ultimately interrupt all human kingdoms and orders, and establish what is good.

Thus, the Christian is given the capability to live now according to the truth that all human things pass away like fog. Christians can live as though God is their Master rather than the bad events they fear. Therefore they can live in confident, hopeful, love because God their Master is peace and love.

By the following week, Austria and Serbia were at war, and Switzerland had sent soldiers out to her own borders to discourage disregard of her own neutrality. Barth's choice of text on August 2 was Mark 13:⁷²³. Barth again comforts his congregation, telling them not to fear and reminding them that God's will and ways ultimately triumph. However, this time he adds a sober note: God's will may triumph, but it may do so only if sin is first allowed to ripen. If there is any 'necessity' of war, it has nothing to do with God's agenda coinciding with a nation's.

Although Barth is critical of patriotism, including Swiss patriotism, and rebukes his congregation for their eagerness to rush to Switzerland's military defence, he does not express disagreement with Switzerland's defence itself. He in fact closes the sermon praying for Swiss independence, and the safety of the soldiers on the Swiss borders.²⁴ The fact that Barth took the need for military defence of Switzerland for granted, does not mean that he was acquiescing before the 'necessities' of war.

In this sermon he tells the congregation that there is no 'necessity' but the will of God, which is revealed by the eschaton. Yet, God does not promise to spare Switzerland from the war- His instruction is only 'do not be afraid'. The war is 'necessary' only in the sense that Jesus also says 'so it must be', that is, it is necessary for people to see the fruit of sin²⁵, particularly selfishness and greed for money.

The war shakes the foundations of everything we believe. It forces us to ask "What are our acquisitions and possessions? What are our future plans?"²⁶, making us realise that everything we cherish is small and unimportant. It forces us to look at what we have hidden from ourselves²⁷: the fact that human sin existing in us is revealed as it is 'let off the chain'²⁸, and culture and religion no longer cover it.²⁹

is involved in the preparation and management of the huge armies....Death, like a harvest, becomes a possibility....Destruction becomes a ..work of art....What a terrible catastrophe it is that has overtaken us!" (ibid., pp.432-4.)

²³ sermon, ibid., pp.395-408: "When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be afraid. It must happen like this: but the end has not yet arrived."

²⁴ ibid., pp.400/8.

²⁵ Commenting on the "stifling, passionate hate we see suddenly blaze forth between the nations" and the "lust for fights and adventures" that has "cooked and bubbled for a long time in countless brains and now desires to blaze forth". Barth applies Galatians 6:7- men must reap what they sow. It 'must be so' that sin ripen so that it can be recognised as such, and be rejected by people.

²⁶ ibid., p.397.

²⁷ "There is so much than people and nations hide carefully from themselves and one another under the dense cloak of civilisation and culture, ...and even Christianity....in wartime, it becomes apparent that these cloaks have big holes, or else they fall off entirely. Humanity is forced to become honest." (ibid., pp.397/8)

The 'terrible storm' which is about to break loose around Switzerland is a "godly, good necessity"³⁰- even a blessing, insofar as it leads to repentance. What the Swiss must do is learn to turn to God as their only safety, pray for peace, and do their duty of encouraging the Swiss soldiers so that they can remain strong at their posts, and become strong in their hope in God's promise of the final collapse of evil and sin, and the triumph of God's peace and love.³¹ The Swiss may have to go through a 'dark road', but they must not be anxious or fearful, or adopt the zeal of their neighbours, because they are children of a loving Father who has better ultimate plans for the world, and also has ability to implement those plans- He is omnipotent.³²

The sermons Barth preached after the war broke out (August 9-December 27, 1914) continue in this vein. In a nutshell, Barth sees the War portrayed as a 'necessary' racial and power-struggle, in which the leaders are the law, and the citizens have a Christian duty to follow their leaders in punishing 'enemies' as an executioner punishes criminals because God wills order; and to facilitate the emergence of their nation whose maturity God must want, since He brought the nation into existence.

Over against this perspective, Barth says that the War is really an explosion of primal human sin, which God hates and does not will, hidden for centuries by the veneer of 'civilisation'. Yet, He does will that it ripen, so that people can repent and turn to God. So, since God is Lord over all the earth, the War must have broken out because God is allowing it-precisely because He ultimately does not will it, and therefore uses it as a tool to bring people to repentance; so they will obey Him; so human nature will change; so the world itself will finally be changed once for all and all people will live in God's international kingdom of peace. Thus, the War is God's judgement on human sin, and therefore also a special time of God's grace, since it constitutes God's wake-up call to humanity- which is not a call to national coming-of-age, but a call to international repentance, proved by a spirit and action of brotherliness toward all 'neighbours'.

In the present conflict, Swiss neutrality is an opportunity of freedom to recall this message, thank God for it, and preach it to the other nations who have lost sight of it; and to practice the brotherhood of nations as proof that peace is a real possibility given to humankind by God in Christ.³³ Since neutrality is a duty and opportunity of which the Swiss may yet be

²⁸"We all must...be penetratingly clear about it: the war is wrong, the war is sin, the war is not necessary, but stems from the evils of human nature." The sin of human nature, characterised by "the evil and sins of the war" "must become ripe, ripening under much...blood and tears..."(ibid., pp.403/7)

²⁹Later, Barth said: "The war is God's judgement over us. Every misfortune is such a judgement. But the larger a misfortune is, [the larger] the judgement is that God exercises with it....Now God comes and tells us harshly: No!....by sending us the war. It is not sent to us by the stars. It is not a surprise....It has come as the natural result of what we have done and been....So it is always how God judges." (23 Aug., pp.437/8)"Since this war came into the world....They notice that the devil and hell are hidden in human nature, if it is allowed to go its way unhindered..." (11 Oct., p.506)

³⁰ibid., p.405.

³¹ibid., pp.401/2/7/8.

³²ibid., pp.403/6.

³³Such a life in brotherliness is possible for all the nations now at war, but because Swiss neutrality has so far been respected, the Swiss must thank God especially for the special privilege, and necessary duty He has given them of holding up the word of brotherliness for the nations, just as Israel held the Law (knowledge and perspective) of God when she stood sandwiched between warring Assyria and Egypt., see 20 Sept., (afternoon sermon) pp.496-502.; also 23 Aug., p.447: "We do not understand that and

denied because they are no better than any others the War has touched more closely, they must pay attention to what God is saying.

Of course, this 'nutshell' is something of an over-simplification of Barth's statements preached in reaction to the War, and needs to be expanded.

Barth's choice of texts during this initial period of the War tended to include a fairly even mixture of consolations and exhortations- with more consoling passages in the beginning months (August, September, and October), and slightly more exhorting ones in the latter months (October, November, and December).

In the early confusion of the war, Barth preached on August 9, 1914 on Phil. 4:6³⁴. He also referred to Jeremiah 29:11, where the Lord tells the people of Israel who are in a similar state of confusion that the plans He has for them are for a good hope and future. Barth's point was that God is not an abstract deity to fear, but their loving Father.

On August 16, he assured his congregation that Jesus will not leave them without knowledge of God's will and purposes in all these events, because He has called them 'friends' and not slaves.³⁵ Therefore, they will not be harshly cut off. The following Sunday he reminded them that they have no need to fear those who kill the body³⁶; and a week later (August 30), that their strength is in 'quietness and hope'³⁷.

They are not to fear because the Lord is with them in the middle of it all- like the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea, Jesus will calm the storm if they believe Him and trust Him with themselves³⁸. Indeed, there is no need for them to get excited, because the Lord who has already redeemed them will fight for them, not against other nations, but against the temptation to fear, and anything that would drag them down and cause them to lose eternal life. God does not leave those who trust Him to their own devices in the world.³⁹

Nothing can separate them from the love of God⁴⁰, which is a real certainty in a transient and dying world because God, and the things of God are eternal⁴¹. The world may be full of sorrow and injustice at this time, but God's justice will triumph and endure.⁴²

we do not want to understand, we Swiss, that Germans and French now have to destroy one another. We can, if we are now German-Swiss, or French-Swiss, have only one thought: that this racial war is not necessary, but disgusting. Calvin and Rousseau are French, and I think also of the Russian writer Tolstoy. I think of the people Germany has given us: Goethe, Schiller, Kant and so many others, and all that humanity has to thank these men for. There is no ground, for the nations who have brought forth such men to hate or fight one another. Certainly...even we German-Swiss have...no ground even in thought for being against the people of Calvin and Tolstoy. We are there to love them, not to hate. It is the high privilege of our Swiss freedom and independence, that we see and recognise the good in all nations calmly and without partisanship, that we still are allowed to hold high the passion of the brotherliness of all nations in this time. We do not want to forfeit this privilege through foolish partisanship."

³⁴"Do not be anxious, but in everything...present your requests to God.."

³⁵ John 15:14-15

³⁶ Matt. 10:23

³⁷ Isaiah 30:15

³⁸ September 13: Matt. 8:23-26

³⁹ Ex. 14:14, 20 Sept.

⁴⁰ 18 Oct., Rom. 8:38-39; 20 Dec., Isaiah 54:9-10: "This is like the days of Noah...yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken...nor the covenant of my peace be removed."

⁴¹ 6 Sept., Psalm 102:26-28

⁴² 25 Oct., Psalm 119:142; 13 Dec., Isaiah 52:7-9: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news...who says to Zion 'your God is King'..." See also sermon Aug., 9, pp.414/15: "His power is not that of a capricious tyrant,

This comfort is the Gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Bible, which is our only real comfort in such turbulent times. But Barth must also exhort, because Europe, and the Swiss included, seem to hear the Gospel with only 'half an ear'- they do not hear its implications.⁴³

The Swiss, and indeed all Christians, cannot fall asleep in these words of comfort from God- much less human words of comfort.⁴⁴ The terribleness of the war showed just how much God was trying to get humanity to pay attention.⁴⁵ Yes, the War was a terrible storm which seemed to have broken as suddenly over Europe as the storm which had broken over the disciples' boat had done.⁴⁶ But Barth asks "Is there any wonder about how it must have come?"⁴⁷ The so-called Great Powers have been caught in a dynamic of mutual fear, and stockpiled weapons against each other for decades, and now the "over-full barrel has overflowed".⁴⁸

By September 6, Barth could take note that Germany's enormous successes to the East and West had been so sudden and devastating, such a display of "human intelligence and prudence, order and discipline, seriousness and energy...stamina and preparedness", sheer might and calculation that it all simply compelled admiration, and one was tempted to wonder if God was not behind this storm, helping the Germans as so many German pastors were saying.⁴⁹

Inside the churches, people were saying that this storm of German victories was the work of God, who was a God of victories.⁵⁰ Outside as well as inside the churches, the German offensive and the struggle it brought about was portrayed with a backward-looking social Darwinianism, and forward working Nietzscheanism: the War was a conflict of races, whose

His power is His goodness. What His will is, is holy, right and good, even if we do not see His purpose....He so lovingly smooths the way...So God is, God Himself: our holy Father, the Eternal, who has overcome every power."

⁴³ Sept., 13. *ibid.*, p.479: "These nations- and that means us-...have built churches and hired pastors for Jesus and founded institutions, and sent out missionaries to the poor pagans, but all that was words and coats of varnish.... The Gospel says: throw everything away in order to have God!...love your neighbour as yourself! (Matt. 22:39) We put money in the place of the neighbour. The Gospel says: whoever would follow me, must lose himself (Matt. 16:24), we say: in this world, the Gospel is worth power and boundless conflict. The Gospel says: you are all brothers! We say: everyone is his own neighbour. The Gospel says: the kingdom of God will come, wait for it and prepare yourselves to go into it. We answered that we would continue to raise the kingdoms of the earth as we always had- one as another founded by bayonets, canons, cunning and power."

⁴⁴ August 9, pp. 411/12: The Swiss had begun to become less anxious about the war, because it did not seem to be going to affect them, not because of their sudden increase in faith. Barth rebuked them, and reminded them that human consolations are no consolation. August 16, Barth said "The external danger is for now held back a bit, and now many openly think that now they have nothing more to fear. But I also have to remind you of something else: fear the one who can destroy body and soul in hell!" (p.422); also August 23 (pp.430-2) and 20 Sept., p.485, he told them that they could not selfishly pray for their own houses to be spared while others were destroyed. He said: "we are on the verge of sending ourselves to sleep with the thoughts: that it is not so dangerous! These thoughts are no safe refuge for us...And my friends, the page could still most certainly turn itself over. We are not at the end, but at the beginning of this time of war..." (p.432).

⁴⁵ 1 Nov., pp.544-553. Barth's sermon was on the Reformation. Apparently, parishioners had been asking him just to say something biblical instead of going on about the war. In response, he said that he felt sad for anyone who thought that he *could* just speak about the Bible without speaking about the war: obviously that person did not understand what a loud and urgent call of God the war was, for man to do just that: return to Him and the Bible- to *Christian* living.; also 23 Aug., p.433: "I repeat: I do not wish to make you anxious, I am pleased for every day with you that we can spend in peace and safety, but I dread a certain carelessness, that...would like to make its home among us. This carelessness is a foolishness and a crime....I wish we all understood the signs of the time. It is a time of God...of judgment without equal."; 20 Sept., Barth's text was Jeremiah 22:29, "O Land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!", which Barth directed to the Swiss saying: "O Switzerland, O Swiss nation!...God Himself has spoken with us. He always spoke with us, but we had difficulty understanding Him. He was often so far and unclear....This year, for almost two months, God has spoken to us so clearly, that it must be difficult...not to understand Him....What a fearful responsibility we have, if we do not listen to Him." (pp.482/3.)

⁴⁶ 13 Sept., p.470.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.480.

⁴⁸ 6 Sept., p.464.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp.456/7.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.459/60.

mutual hate was a natural result of their differences, and could only be resolved by violence. It was a power-struggle for a limited resource of life: a place in the limited space of the sun.⁵¹ Therefore the Germans thrust themselves forward, saying: "It is our people!...We will become Master!"⁵², and "Germany forward in the world!"⁵³ - and not only Germany, but France and England and the whole of Europe argued thus.

On October 25, Barth preached on Psalm 119:142 ("Your righteousness is everlasting."), contrasting all human laws to the law of God's righteousness, because it had become clear to him that the key to understanding all that was happening in Europe with the War was due to the fact that the whole of Europe was following the law of human nature, ie: 'necessity'.⁵⁴

In support of the argument of necessity, Luther's thesis that war was nothing other than the rightful bringing to death of criminals at the command of authority seemed to have become popular. Therefore, it was argued that God was on the side of victors, because He was on the side of order; that the cause of the victor was therefore a just cause; and that therefore, Christians had a duty to help the cause of God.⁵⁵

Barth responded, asking: "But what is the necessity which forces us so that we must [go to war]? The circumstances, we say, the situation....Right enough,...But where are they from? Do they fall from heaven like a meteor? Is the necessity, which produces evil, suddenly there and we could not help it? Was it for example written in the stars, that Germany in 1914 would have the world as an enemy and would have to fight its war out, at any cost?"⁵⁶

We cannot let comforting words, or these natural arguments beguile us into thinking that the War was an inevitable necessity of nature-alias-God. Even though the War seems to be bringing out so much good: so many good qualities in people, and even peace in Britain between the English and the Irish⁵⁷, the truth is that the War is like a magician. It is turning whatever may seem good into evil: it may be making people courageous, but it turns their

⁵¹ August 30, pp. 446-448. "This present war is for the most part a racial war....And the present war is....a battle of power. It has prepared itself for a decade....The nations each want a possibly greater and more beautiful 'place in the sun'...."

⁵² 6 Sept., p. 457.

⁵³ 30 Aug., p. 448.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 532-5. "At the start of the present war a strange thing was said. It was on the 4th of August, in the German parliament, and the Chancellor explained how it had all come about...that German troops invaded neutral Belgium as the quickest way to reach France: *Necessity knows no law!*, said the Chancellor... 'Belgium is right if it protests, but we cannot help it, and we will try to make up for our wrong, as soon as we have reached our aim.'...*Necessity knows no law!*...The Chancellor was speaking about the nature and the rules of war, indeed of human nature, of the unredeemed world. And hence his statement deserves our closest attention. Of all the other events out there, that have shaken us for three months, we have no revelation that explains them as clearly as that one that explains the German invasion of Belgium: *Necessity knows no law!* That is the greatest, the only enlightenment of all that appears in this war....[to protect themselves against the invader], the Belgians are engaged in a defensive battle that is degenerating into dreadful slaughter...Every horror becomes a necessity...We must! We must: be hard, cruel, inconsiderate, and cunning. For that is war..."

⁵⁵ Through August, Martin Rade had been publishing segments of Luther's treatise "Whether Soldiers Too Can be Saved" in his journal, the *Christliche Welt* (*Christian World*)--(see relevant issues of *Christliche Welt*. Barth discusses Luther's thesis (that war is when a lot of scoundrels are brought to death at the command of authority; therefore a soldier can fight with a good conscience.) in his sermon of 6 Sept., pp. 463/4.

⁵⁶ 25 Oct., p. 535/9 and 543: "My friends...It is not necessary, that our world be a world of wars.", also 30 Aug., 641.

⁵⁷ 18 Oct., p. 518-522. Barth spoke of the truly admiral bravery, love of fatherland, sense of sacrifice of soldiers, and willing-ness to forget private interests and to unite- even to the point of moving back from the edge of civil war in Ireland. See also 27 Dec., p. 648.

courage against one another. It bends good into evil. Each nation extols its own virtue and portrays its enemies as devils.⁵⁸

Thus, the War seems to be a good thing: but it is evil because it obscures the fact that there is no battle of 'angels vs. demons', but only people- masses of them- slaying one another⁵⁹ because of the evil that was in their own hearts, and has now got off its chain; broken out from under the disguise of 'culture and civilisation'.⁶⁰

People must recognise that the war is not a good thing, but dreadful.⁶¹ Once it was clear that Europe would not escape the War, Barth lost no time in relating its coming to the coming of the horsemen's plagues of Revelation⁶², which neither the solidarity of socialism, international trade, diplomatic ties- and even Christianity could not prevent.⁶³

In the midst of it all we may be tempted to ask where this God of love is. However, the pertinent question is not 'where is God', or 'is He really a God of love?', but 'where are *we*?'.⁶⁴

We simply cannot speak of 'Jesus *and* the nation'⁶⁵, as though God Himself spoke two languages simultaneously; as though God said 'war *and* peace'.⁶⁶ The terribleness of this war is a revelation of the terribleness of human sin. It is a 'spider's web' *we* have spun.⁶⁷ The war is God's judgement on human sin, because it is the product of sin. It is the judgement that we are

⁵⁸ibid.: also 30 Aug., p.450: "We especially want to permit ourselves...not to become deceived through what is asked and spoken of God on both sides. Especially from Germany....One reads over and over again: we are right, we are not guilty...God must be taking up our cause, and He also...has already helped us, so that we already have won many battles! So the German Kaiser speaks: so it is spoken openly in most of the German pulpits: so such Christian men themselves speak. A whole wave of religious enthusiasm goes through Germany. In an outstanding German leaflet it can be read that Germany has found her God again. And so the Germans are leading their war 'with God for the King and the Fatherland', as it is written on the helmets of their soldiers. And we hear that and think: that must be a pious people, these Germans...we must side with them- God certainly does!"

⁵⁹ibid., (13 Sept.), p.471: "War was always something terrible....what was a cozy bustle in old times...today has become a continuous mass-murder.... war itself is only more inhuman, because it has become more thorough."

⁶⁰ibid., pp. 524/5 "...we take the German newspaper, then we see how powerful the Germans are....but of Germany's enemies we hear that they are the world full of devils, of which Luther in his 'A Mighty Fortress' had sung...It is not angels against devils, but people against people. Unfortunately, the good in them that war brought out is turned against others...."

⁶¹13 Sept., pp.473/4."This picture is now everywhere the same, in Germany, in France, in Austria, in Russia....What a sea of wailing is in all these countries... Will it be made easier...that one does not say: 'death', but: 'fallen for King and Fatherland'?"

Still it all goes further, injustice piles itself up on injustice.... See also 20 Sept., p.485, and 25 Dec., p.637/40.

⁶²August 23, Barth preached on Revelation 6:4: "And a fiery-coloured horse came out, and its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, that men might massacre one another, and a large sword was given him."p.430.

⁶³23 Aug., pp.433/6/7.: "[The socialists] unfortunately could do nothing, other than place themselves under the flags of their nations, and draw up against one another in war like everyone else, and for some time now they have only been able to blush when the brotherhood of humanity is spoken of....Also Christianity...Where is the power of the Gospel?...Why are, 2000 years after Christ, these so-called Christian nations, who were meant to be the light of the world, opposed to each other, with the only thought of damaging each other....with all their strength- a people with so many deep, serious thinkers as the Germans, and such a puritanical, zealously missionary one as the English?...And the other Christians? The... French, Russian, English...? Thank God, that He sees what is hidden...now all pray- for what? For the victory of *their* people, *their* weapons, each for his own!" (pp.436/7.)

⁶⁴"Where are we with our faith in this God of love, and with the obedience we owe Him?...What does all this show us? That there is no God? No, that a God lives, who is holy and fair...[that] 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all godless ways and unrighteousness of mankind who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness' (Rom. 1:18)." (13 Sept., p.480.)

⁶⁵ibid., p.469.

⁶⁶20 Dec., pp.623/6/8/9/30.: "We seem to hear two languages of God. One of them is the language of war, the other, the language of the Christmas angel....And [even though we are not at war ourselves] we think like that anyway, if not about war, then about money: thou shall love the Lord thy God above all else! (Matt.22:37) [on one hand, and on the other]: scramble for what you can! Two worlds! Two languages! Yes, the question remains, whether it is true that God speaks two languages to us. That he says now: love! and now: hate!- now: peace! and now: ...cannons! Does God speak this double language to us so that we may or must reply with a double life?...respect those who believe in the two languages, but do not believe them. God does not speak two languages. If we hear [them]...it is our fault."

⁶⁷25 Dec., p.640.

even sinful in our 'peace'.⁶⁸ The war would not have come out of a peace-time that was a true peace-time, because true peace would have been obedience to God, and the war can only have come out of disobedience, even if secret.⁶⁹

Specifically, it is a judgement of the sinfulness of European culture and religion (Christianity), because they have allowed the bellicosity, selfishness, greed and deception of which it is a fruit, to grow up and ripen from the inside.⁷⁰

Those who think that God sides with the victor in this war have mistaken the God of the Bible who is Lord and Creator⁷¹; who will one day make of His creation a kingdom of peace; who loves all nations equally; and who is shown to us in Jesus, whose ways were not that of might and strategic allegiance, for the German pagan storm-god Wotan⁷², or some other such idol of war. The essence and inner being of the God of the Bible is far from the murderous way of humans; it is totally alien to their greed and ambition which they selfishly pursue at all costs in war.

Even though Barth clearly felt the War was willed by God insofar as it was judgement, he did not think its destruction was the heart of God's will.⁷³ God's anger is not vindictive.

⁶⁸ 23 Aug., p.440: "The peace that we had was not peace, it was a secret, hypocritical, veiled war. It could not have any continued existence...Now the hour of truth has come." ; also 25 Oct., p.538.

⁶⁹ see Nov., 15, pp.564-76; 6 Sept., p.464/5; and 6 Dec., p.604 and 11 Oct., p.517 where Barth says the war has sprung from the Russian hunger for power, German self-righteousness, French lust for vengeance, English cold bargaining, Belgian "bestial cruelty", Swiss petty-shopkeeper mentality, racial hatred, murderousness, lovelessness, basic unhappiness, ambition, jealousy, arrogance and blindness- all because of an overwhelming concern with 'I' and 'mine' which destroys friendship.

⁷⁰ "We took it for granted that we were the peak and pure blood of humanity. We were so carefully industrious about increasing our prosperity and health. We had devised as clever a system as man could bring to the world, much more advanced than our grandfathers. We were so proud of our education... We knew so many means and ways to use money usefully and pleasantly. We could understand so much more deeply than the brutish, uncivilised inhabitants of other continents- even our own forefathers. We were so sure. We were so convinced we were on the right track... We could have known it before, but now we have to face the consequences... Deeper looking people have said long ago: it cannot go on like this... So much... sin is hidden in our European culture, even in what is called Christian... These voices were not listened to. There was no time for that... People listened to those who presented everything as good and nice... God waited a long time. Now the judgement has come... It cannot be different at all in a world where the competition and struggle is built on the right of the stronger ones: such a world cannot end differently but with a war, with mutual murder... Now... like children who have broken a dish, we stand there and look for excuses. We should not complain: We have created the evil." (23 Aug., pp.438-40; also 25 Dec., p.637; 27 Dec., p.647; 1 Nov., p.549 "The present war is before everything a defeat of Christianity." ; 11 Oct., p.506 "The little Christianity and culture that we have is a thin garnish over our being, and we cannot rely on it... Idols have fallen which we worshipped."

⁷¹ 30 Aug., p.451/2: "It cannot be, that God 'helps' the Germans or the French or the English. God is also not 'helping' us Swiss. God helps right and love. God helps His kingdom, and it is international. ... The fantastic blend of love of Fatherland, war enthusiasm and Christian faith can only one day lead to the bitterest disappointment... We do not want to drink of this poison. We want to look straight to God, who is over all nations and loves all equally... who are all equally under the rule of his good and holy will..."; also Sept., 6, p.459: "Is it really so, that the victors can say as it appears today... a victory means that God helps a nation, a loss, that it has been thrust from him... Is it correct, if we think of the God who has offered us Jesus, of the God who in his righteousness does not favour one nation or another, who in his love and holiness does not will above all that nations hate and war and overcome one another? Can one really come to this God and call up to him: Lord God, we thank you, that we conquered the French and English and have taken 70,000 Russians prisoner, and we ask you, give us the power that we now soon can also conquer Paris?"; p.463: "What is war then? What is victory? Look on the battlefields... then you will know. Thousands upon thousands of people have massacred one another. This was only the beginning... Can one say in the face of these things; of the dreadfulness that is still to come... that God had willed it; that God now takes a side... the God of love, freedom and righteousness? What does God have to do with... the powerful guns with which they have won?"; 15 Nov., p.565/6: "The bells of the churches have forgotten their purpose, and their metal mouth sounds as a sign of jubilation over thousands of enemies struck dead."

⁷² 6 Sept., p.460/1/2: "But what should we say to that... that God is made into the old pagan German storm-god Wotan, whereas all that we know of God through Jesus Christ, gets stuck in the junk-room until a better time?... The picture of God must stay pure... clear and plain, unclouded by human partisanship... It does us well... to think of the unending sphere of God's power... of the eternity... of which our personal life and the life of the whole of humanity is only the tiniest portion... What does [this 'world war'] mean for the universe of the sun and stars of the skies, among whom our earth is one of the smallest...? All this is created by God, by this God who is love... It is not lasting, because nothing is... only God Himself is eternal."

⁷³ 23 Aug., p.441. "[It] is not God's judgement- that people die, towns and villages are destroyed, economic loss, hunger and misery threaten... The judgement is what God wants to say with all these things: your ways are not my ways, neither are your thoughts my thoughts." ; also 9 Aug., p.413, Barth tells a little parable of a woman who goes to a crossroads and prays for God to

Though God desires that people wake up because of it, it is disgusting to Him. He is not pleased with personal or national 'sacrifices' in it. Therefore, the War is also the great redemptive grace of God towards humanity. By letting us experience the consequences of slavish unwillingness to do His will (which is love), God allows us to see that He has given us a different possibility. That 'bad' takes on enormous proportions, means that its opposite becomes that much clearer and more compelling.

The fact that God lets us sink in our slavery to our passions, is also His announcement to us that He has called us 'friends'⁷⁴; that He is our Master whether we want it (are friends to Him), or not (are sullen and slavish before Him); our Father; and that therefore, we are all sisters and brothers. We must, and can, live as such; as His children together. The bitterness of the War is a curse, but if we listen to this cry of God, this very War will also be a blessing. In it, we become shocked and scared. If we go to God then, even in such a natural movement of 'little faith', we will hear God telling us that we are not condemned to human nature; to slavery. He gives us the choice to accept that He has called us friends, and to become friends and brothers of one another.

From our human perspective, this is impossible because we think there is only so much 'place in the sun'. Yet, if we allow God to speak to us, we see that that is not true: we can have the calm confidence Jesus had that there is more than enough place in the sun for everyone. We then see that fighting and greed for money are not necessary for us, just as they were not for Jesus, because God's kingdom that Jesus lived in becomes a reality for us here and now, even as we wait for God to complete it.⁷⁵ As God waits on us to hear Him, we must wait on Him to accomplish this: we cannot bring this perspective into the world by force or revolution, because it only comes by a change of the human heart, not circumstances.

When we recognise all of this, we need to be thankful for this time of war, because it is God's time- not only of judgement, but also grace.⁷⁶ While the War is undoubtedly bad news to us, and evil, what God says in it is essentially the great Christmas message: that everything in the world does have meaning and purpose because the one God we need comes to us in it, and offers us His peace instead of our human way- and waits for us to take it.

On October 11, Barth exhorted his congregation by explaining the meaning of the parable of the rich young man. Barth said that he could not enter the kingdom of God because he could not understand the two love commandments (love God, and your neighbour), and therefore could not really keep the original Ten. If the nations would only say 'God and neighbour' instead of 'each man is his own neighbour', weapons would be forgotten.⁷⁷

show her which road to take. Then she throws her stick up in the air until it falls down on the path she wants to take- then she goes her way. Barth's point is that we have been deliberately confusing our will with God's in the same way.

⁷⁴ 16 Aug., pp.421/9. Barth's text was John 1:14-15 "You are my friends if you do as I ask..."

⁷⁵ 20 Sept., (afternoon sermon) p.500.

⁷⁶ 1 Nov., pp.545/6: "What does God really want with us? Now He leaves us to experience this great, strange time...a time of trial, but also a time of grace, as perhaps no other..."

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp.505-18, text Mark 10:17-23

Two weeks later, in contrast to the German Chancellor's statement ('Necessity knows no law'), Barth reminded his listeners that *God's law* is always pertinent- it is everlasting (Psalm 119:142). Next to it, all human laws (e.g., the Chancellor's 'law' of necessity) meant nothing.⁷⁸ The following Sunday, Barth called for them to remember *in light of the war, not in spite of it, or instead of it*, that what the Bible had to say was John 17:20-21 (Jesus' prayer that *all His followers be one just as He and the Father were one*).⁷⁹

To drive his point home, Barth's text in his next sermon was Matt 23:8, "...you have only one Master, and you are all brothers."⁸⁰ The Swiss must "yearn after a higher community and brotherhood" than is evidenced by the war, yet not only yearn, but perform the great "community-task" given them: they must implement brotherliness in their lives- personal and public, and use their freedom to say clearly to the nations that they are sisters and brothers too. The Swiss are not allowed to enjoy their neutrality with an attitude of indifference towards what is going on around them.⁸¹

On the first and second Sundays of Advent (29 November and 6 December),⁸² Barth told the people not to look for peace in the ways of the world (revolution) which only brings more crime, but in God's ways, ie: Jesus' ways.⁸³ Jesus did not triumph over evil by consorting with diplomats, making strategic allegiances with kings- or the 'winning' side, amassing capital, or (since his congregation was made up largely of socialists) by revolution.⁸⁴

On December 20th, Barth told his congregation not to lead double lives (to think God spoke two languages), as though their Christianity and the Bible did not apply to their everyday and political lives. God's love and peace and kingdom were the only reality that counted. War and suffering were not 'real' in the same sense, but shadows, since they would ultimately be made impossible by the coming of God's kingdom.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ 25 Oct., pp.532-543.

⁷⁹ 1 Nov., pp.544-553. It was Reformation Sunday, and Barth said that we think of the Bible as 'an old devotional book', and the Reformation as a glorious time of righteous schism in Christendom because of heresy. He says "Perhaps such a time will come again... Today is not such a time. Today we stand before the gaping contradiction: war or peace? Selfishness or love? The world or God?" (p.549)

⁸⁰ 8 Nov., pp.553- 563.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp.560/1.

⁸² 29 Nov., and 6 Dec., pp.588-612.

⁸³ Barth's point here was not that 'pacifism' was the only way. We recall that he constantly prayed for the soldiers at the border, saying nothing against their being there. He further exhorted the Swiss inside to support the soldiers on the borders as one of the tasks they could do to make best use of their relatively peaceful neutrality- not to campaign for them to be called back. His point was that ultimately, peace is not attained by human means, or by the path of enmity.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.591, Barth referred to Matt 12:24, and asked whether the devil was exorcised by Beelzebub, saying: "Revolution in which many hope, would make things a little better than before, but would not bring redemption that we have need of, because it would wholly change the situation, but not the people, and because it would unleash a sea of bitterness and crime..." on p.592/3. Barth explains that Jesus was not a 'war power', did not start a political party, or amass guns for His purpose. : also, Dec., 27, p.647: "Now, when the nations must destroy themselves in violent collision, we sense why Jesus did not want to found such an empire. Now, when hunger for power and domination punishes people with death and ruin, we sense why He went the way of servitude. Now, when all powerful capital has put on its gold shackles and has yanked humanity into the hell of this war, now we sense why Jesus wanted to be poor, why He explained that you could not serve God and Mammon (Matt 6:24)."

⁸⁵ 20 Dec., pp.622-633., text: Isaiah 54:9-10, "To me this is like the days of Noah when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you.... Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, or the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.", p.632: "And war?.... And our great and small suffering?.... Yes, that certainly all exists, we could grasp it with our hands. But look, this is the secret, which Christmas wants to bring us- all *that* is fundamentally *not*. It exists only because we have misunderstood God. It only exists as shadow exists..... If we would hear God correctly, evil and sadness would be null and void."

Why doesn't this truth of God just tear the 'black spider's web' of war and suffering, then, if it is so strong?, Barth asked on Christmas. Because it is up to you to let that truth live in you. "Behave as though you believed and claimed 'I am the child of God- since the wonderful man from Nazereth has told me, I cannot doubt it.' What would become [then] of the sorrows of this time...?...If the truth that we are all brothers is strong in us, then we will be strong in the world. Then this wicked world would break up like a morning mist."⁸⁶

On the following Sunday (27 December)⁸⁷, Barth continued: we must look with the three wise men to the star- the guidance- of God. We must rejoice as they did, and thank Him that He has "let us experience this extraordinary year of 1914 and all these powerful events"⁸⁸, because we can now see that He wants us to let Him make a new person inside us. We must let ourselves become new people.

Barth's Letters to Martin Rade and Eduard Thurneysen

During the time that Barth was preaching these sermons, he wrote several significant letters which help further describe his reaction to the War. On August 31, a letter he had written to Martin Rade, editor of the German journal *Christliche Welt* (*Christian World*, hereafter, CW) was published without Barth's permission in another journal, *Neue Wege*.⁸⁹ Shortly after the War broke out, Rade had published an article "God's Will in the War" (August 15). Barth's response to it was his August 23 sermon, which had such a lengthy description of why the War was God's judgement on man, and European culture.

Rade had also, however, been publishing segments of Luther's article "Whether Soldiers Too Can be Saved" in *Christliche Welt*. Barth's sermon of September 6 responded to this article by mentioning it⁹⁰ and reminding his congregation that God does not take sides. Barth knew Rade personally and also evidently felt that he ought to say something to Rade himself about the 'war-theology' Rade was, in effect, publishing. In his letter to Rade, Barth made three main criticisms: that Rade assumed Germany had justice on its side; that he irresponsibly mixed patriotism and Christian faith, excusing the horrors practiced in the War by saying that God excused action undertaken in war; and that he had confused the absolute and the relative, by absolutising the relativity of the historical moment. Barth wrote:

"I have pondered for some time, and now I must tell you, how much a disappointment, and religiously speaking, a scandal the last three numbers of the *Christliche Welt* have been.... We do not understand you, dear honoured professor, we *cannot* and *will not* understand you in your adopted position with regard to the war.... All that you now say in CW proceeds from the implicit or explicit presupposition that Germany is...just in this war.... What puzzles me is that the CW, a religious Christian newspaper, and the spiritual culture of the Christian world simply go along with this popular...most sad presupposition- as if now...love of the Fatherland, militarism,

⁸⁶25 Dec., p.641.

⁸⁷27 Dec., pp.642-651.

⁸⁸ibid., p.643.

⁸⁹Busch, op.cit., p.82.

⁹⁰recall Barth's accusation that God was turned into the pagan god Wotan...see notes above.

and Christian faith [are] to be hopelessly intertwined; and that now the CW does what the whole of Germany is doing.... We see that in this decisive moment the Christian world must be *Christian* [ital. mine] rather than being like this world...[which would mean] an unconditional protest against the war and all that humanity has dragged along with it.... This grieves us.... It is not evident that Germany must pursue... with cannons and the violation of neutrality, machine guns and the destruction of cities. *A la guerre comme a la guerre*. But let us leave God out of this whole worldly, sinful 'necessity'.... as if the Germans with all their large cannons lacked an attorney; as if in this moment they may burn and shoot with a good conscience. No!! (*Das Nichts!!*)" ⁹¹

Barth also referred to Rade's publication of Luther's article in a letter (August 29) to his friend Edward Thurneysen, saying Rade "offers us as the last comfort the pitiful sophism of Luther's blessed soldiers". ⁹²

Barth made further comments to Thurneysen about the War on several occasions. On September 3, he wrote to him, describing the cause of the 'catastrophe' as selfishness and egoism⁹³, saying that he sympathised with the anti-militarist position of religious socialism, expressed by the Swiss religious socialist Leonhard Ragaz. ⁹⁴

Barth did not write any more directly about the War to Thurneysen until March 25, 1916, when he expressed regret for a recent German offensive, and described the use of Jesus in the British newspapers in support of the war effort of the British side as shameful. ⁹⁵ The following month, (April 25), he mentioned the American entry into the war, regretting its necessity, but feeling that it is the most reasonable thing that could be done at that time. ⁹⁶ On December 17, 1917, he said he couldn't understand why Herrmann Kutter (another Swiss socialist leader) has refused military service for three years. ⁹⁷ Finally, once the war had finished, Barth's relieved comment was that: "Now the devil has finally gone back home." ⁹⁸

As significant and strong as Barth's few comments are in this bare handful of letters, is the pronounced *silence* about the War in the rest of his letters to Thurneysen. ⁹⁹ Barth's silence

⁹¹ Christoph Schwobel, *Karl Barth- Martin Rade: Ein Briefwechsel*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1981. Einleitung, pp.95-98. quote from pp. 95/6.

⁹² E. Thurneysen, ed., *Karl Barth-Edward Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1973. p.7.

⁹³ "The spiritual condition of our German friends is now more comprehensible to me, even if it is not more congenial. I have issued a detailed, carefully edited manifesto against this condition to Rade. He seems to be so naive as to think that we must without question be pro-German (and not neutral) in our attitude. As Ragaz would say, it is of symptomatic significance that...Rade can lose his head so completely in this situation. The unconditional truths of the gospel are simply suspended for the time being and in the meantime a German war-theology is put to work, its Christian trimming consisting of a lot of talk about sacrifice and the like. Here is sufficient proof that the 'truths' were nothing more than a surface varnish.... It is truly sad!..... The formula 'God does not will the war' [Barth referred to a sermon of Thurneysen's] is perhaps misleading. God does not will egotism. But he does will that egotism should reveal itself in war and become itself the judgement. Thus, the will of God to judge is nothing other than love, the revelation of the divine righteousness. I would relate the wrath of God yet more strongly to the 'godless existence' itself and would think of social injustice and war as symptoms or consequences of [it]. This brings it into closer agreement with Romans 8:28 ["And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."], without slipping into Lutheran coziness..." (*Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence 1914-1925*. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964. pp.26/7.)

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.9.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.44.

⁹⁶ Thurneysen, *op.cit.*, p.131.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.251.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.305, letter 1 Dec., 1918.

⁹⁹ He barely kept correspondence with Rade- writing him another letter or two a few months after the first published one to apologize for the weight of his attack. Now that he could see there were much worse examples of 'war-theology' than Rade (e.g., Rudolf Eucken, Adolf von Harnack), he might have used his energy against them rather than with his old associate Rade. The rest of Barth's letters are filled with news of his growing family, discussion of his and Thurneysen's theological work, and the mention of various contemporaries and predecessors. Barth had begun to write his commentary on *Romans*, and he kept Thurneysen abreast of his progress.

with regard to further direct speech about the war (talk about it no longer filled his sermons either from the new year of 1915 onward) signifies a decision he had made about the enormous *theological* significance of the War. As he put it later:

"[WWI] brought concretely to light two aberrations: first in the teaching of my theological mentors in Germany, who seemed to me to be hopelessly compromised by their submission to the ideology of war, and second in socialism. I had credulously enough expected socialism, more than I had the Christian Church, to avoid the ideology of war, but to my horror, I saw it doing the very opposite in every land....beyond the problems of theological liberalism and religious socialism, the concept of the Kingdom of God in the real...sense of the Bible became more insistent....I had hitherto taken my textual basis [the Bible] for granted, now it became more and more of a problem."¹⁰⁰

Thus, Barth's relative silence with regard to further direct speech about the War, can be taken itself as a direct statement about the War: *the War itself was so much the result of bad theology, that he would do what he could to prevent another by concentrating on discovering better theology.*¹⁰¹ In other words, he saw theological re-construction as the corollary to his criticism of European Christianity and culture made in his sermons and letters, mentioned above. Therefore, Barth concentrated his energies for the duration of the war on his pastoral duties, some lectures, and his commentary on *Romans*.

That he did so is only mis-read if it is taken to mean that he reverted to quietism. On the contrary, Barth's theological activity during WWI constituted a form of indirect activism. After the failure of all the preaching of pacifism in the world on the part of socialists to change anything, Barth felt something else was required which would aim at the root of the War itself; at the sin which caused it, which was possible where God was disregarded or misrepresented.

Barth himself explained:

"[O]n a certain day in 1916, Thurneysen and I very naively agreed to go back to academic theology to clarify the situation. If we had known what was to happen, we would not have found the 'confident audacity' to do

¹⁰⁰Bernd Jaspert, ed. *Karl Barth- Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922-1966*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981, p. 154.. May 29, 1947 letter to Bishop Würm (Germany).

¹⁰¹At the outbreak of war, on 1 August 1914, a number of leading German intellectuals from various disciplines (but especially philosophy and theology) issued a public declaration in support of Kaiser Wilhelm's war policy. (*How I Changed My Mind*, pp.21/2) When Barth read it, he was shocked. Much later he wrote:

"The actual end of the 19th century as the 'good old days' falls for evangelical theology, as for other things, in the fateful year 1914....For me personally, one day at the beginning of August of that year stamped itself as the *dies ater*. It was that on which 93 German intellectuals came out with a manifesto supporting the war policy of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his counsellors, and among them I found to my horror the names of nearly all my theological teachers whom up to then I had religiously honoured. Disillusioned by their conduct, I perceived that I should not be able any longer to accept their ethics and dogmatics, their biblical exegesis, their interpretation of history, that at least for me the theology of the 19th century had no future." Karl Barth, "Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century" (lecture Jan., 8, 1957, Hanover, Germany) in James McNab, trans., *God, Grace and the Gospel*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959) pp.57/8.: Why it was so obvious to Barth that this action of his teachers in supporting the action of the Kaiser, signified the wrongness of the dogmatic path they were on is an interesting point. It has been suggested that Barth was highly influenced by Wilhelm Herrmann in his student years. Herrmann's principal contribution to theology was concept of an integral connection between ethics and dogmatics. (see William P. Anderson, *Aspects of the Theology of Karl Barth*, Washington: University Press of America, 1981, pp.4-8.) But 'influence' is not a reason Barth would have held on to this conviction of the implication for ethics of dogmatics, and the dogmatic meaning of ethical action, since he was influenced by others whom he staunchly rejected. Why not Herrmann too? Barth explains: "In my case, I let Herrmann say to me one essential truth. This truth, followed out to its consequences, later forced me to say almost everything else quite differently and finally led me even to an interpretation of the fundamental truth itself which was entirely different from his. And yet it was *he* that showed me." (that 'truth', found in the middle section of Herrmann's *Ethik*, was that the centre of ethics is identical in content with the principles of dogmatics.) Karl Barth, "The Principles of Dogmatics According to Wilhelm Herrmann", lecture given May 13 and 17, 1925, Hanover, in *Theology and Church*, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith, (London: SCM Press, 1962), p.239/40.; also Karl Barth, "The Need of Christian Preaching" (lecture given July 1922 in Switzerland) in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p.100. Barth explains that the theology he had when he got out of school, and while he was preaching in Safenwil, was "that of my forgotten teacher Wilhelm Herrmann, grafted upon the principles which I had learned, less consciously than unconsciously, in my native home- the principles of those Reformed Churches which today I represent."

this....The following morning, surrounded by a stack of commentaries, I found myself before the Romans of the apostle Paul with what seemed to me to be the newly put question of what was really in it. From the notes that I then made on Romans, there arose what became later the well-known controversial book."¹⁰²

The Lectures and *Romans*

From November 1915 to late 1919, Barth wrote one article and gave eight lectures which are significant in terms of an explanation of Barth's view of the political implications of the Christian faith, as it emerged in reaction to the crisis of politics, culture and Christianity which was represented by the War. In chronological order, they are: an un-named article written in April 1915, "Wartime and the Kingdom of God" (Nov. 15, 1915), "Religion and Christianity" (Dec., 4, 1915), "Religion and Socialism" (Dec., 7, 1915), "The Righteousness of God" (Jan., 1916), "One Thing Needful" (March 1916 sermon at Aarau Students' Conference), "The Strange New World Within the Bible" (Feb., 6, 1917), "The Christian's Place in Society" (Sept., 1919), "Unsettled Questions for Theology" (written in late 1919, given in early 1920.).

In April 1915, Barth wrote:

"It is not the war that disturbs our peace. The war is not even the cause of our unrest. It has merely brought to light the fact that our lives are all based on unrest. And where there is unrest there can be no peace."¹⁰³

God cannot be where we sin. Where there is unrest, it is proof of godlessness, because "God is peace."¹⁰⁴ The peace that God *is* was meant by Barth to mean the peace of righteousness which contrasts itself to our sin, and not the 'peace' of calm which is a false peace such as had preceded the War.

In "Wartime and the Kingdom of God", Barth's tone was decisively eschatological as he contrasted the 'secular circles' of the world sharply with 'new things' that should be expected from God. What was meant by 'secular circles' was the human way of doing things- whether in the State, or in ecclesiastical government and church affairs. 'Secular' meant human attempts at reform, and Barth cautioned that nothing could be expected of them which had any lasting significance, however pious their motivations, because God is not present in 'secular circles'. "The world is the world but God is God.", Barth said, therefore we must wait on God for real change.¹⁰⁵

Barth's December 1915 lectures, "Religion and Christianity" and "Religion and Socialism", make it clear that 'waiting for real change' does not mean pious quietism. In the earlier lecture, Barth explained that while "[he regards] the 'political pastor' in any form as a mistake, even if he is a socialist"¹⁰⁶, Barth himself nevertheless found that the implication of his work as a pastor compelled him to shoulder his responsibilities "as a man and as a citizen"

¹⁰²Jaspert. op.cit.. same May 29 letter to Bishop Würm. pp. 154/5.

¹⁰³E. Busch. op.cit.. p.85.

¹⁰⁴ibid.

¹⁰⁵ibid.. p.87.

¹⁰⁶ibid.. p.88.

by taking a place and having a voice in his political landscape. His personal choice was to "take the side of the Social Democrats."¹⁰⁷ So, although social programmes could not be mistaken to be identical with God's action to change the world, the reality of *God's* change necessarily inspired civil responsibility. Even though human change is not God's, God's change meant that humans must do whatever changing they can.

In the second December lecture, Barth explained that since the Kingdom of God was not "where money is thought to be more important than people, where possessions continue to be the standard for all values, where in anxiety and pettiness the fatherland is thought more important than humanity, and where people believe more and more strongly in the present than in the future."¹⁰⁸

Therefore, he was encouraged by socialism insofar as it pointed past these things, and he was willing to join socialists in Switzerland in their activity of trying to change the political reality in which he lived so that it would shift away from these things Barth found so contrary to his understanding of the Kingdom of God. Insofar as socialism acted on behalf of things Barth saw implied by the Kingdom of God (i.e., a reversal of Barth's negative formulation above: people over money, humanity over Fatherland, a standard of values other than possessions), Barth said that "despite its imperfections"¹⁰⁹, he saw in it an encouragement that God, through people, is at work in society on behalf of His Kingdom, and has not abandoned it.

A month later (Jan., 1916), Barth's lecture "The Righteousness of God" continued his contrast between the ways of God (God's righteousness), and human ways (what we call 'righteousness'). In situations where we feel compelled to ask 'What should we *do*?', we must begin our answer by looking at what God does and has done, rather than at what we do, or think we ought to do. Barth begins with God's action rather than our own conceptions of *our* action, because beginning with ourselves would mean tying ourselves to our own confusion.

He continued, saying that the War reveals that our towers of civilization are a 'tower of Babel'. The War reveals our internal chaos, or confusion, out of which we cannot move ourselves.¹¹⁰ Inside of it, there is nothing to tell us that there is any other way to be, and we are in fact tempted to resign ourselves to 'reality'. But we do not have to, since God informs us that a real righteousness does exist.

We must learn to let Him tell *us* about *His* righteousness. The War also reveals our tendency to confuse God's righteousness with our own. Our morality reflected in our justifications for it prevents us from seeing our deeper unrighteousness. Barth asks "Is it not remarkable that the greatest atrocities of life- I think of the...war- can justify themselves on

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ "We have before us the fiendishness of business competition, the World War, passion and wrong-doing, antagonism between the classes and moral depravity within them, economic tyranny above, and the slave-spirit below.... The unjust will which imbues and rules our life makes of it...a weltering inferno." "The Righteousness of God", in Horton, *op.cit.*, (*WGW*), p.12.

purely moral principles?"¹¹¹ We try and create righteousness by creating standards such as obedience and duty to the State and law, or even by withdrawing from it all- but the war unmasks our illusions.¹¹²

When we ask 'why does God permit all this' (the War), we deceive ourselves, because we prevent ourselves from seeing that we have backed our actions with morality; we have provided our own religious justification for ourselves, turning God into a false god who "cannot prevent his worshippers, all the distinguished Europeans and American apostles of civilization, welfare and progress, all zealous citizens and pious Christians, from falling upon one another with fire and sword..."¹¹³ The War does not place the living God in question, it places us in question. The moral arguments behind it *especially* (and behind all our other activities), show that we have made 'God's will' into a continuation of our own; we have exchanged God for idols- even if they are pious. The War is a "quaking of the tower of Babel" which calls us to faith.¹¹⁴

As we reject the idols and turn to the 'living God' (reject 'our righteousness' and accept God's prerogative on the definition of righteousness), we will shift from disbelief (faith in idols) to faith (in God). Then we will stand in the present world with its justifications for its own actions, such as war, and not be moved by those justifications. We will be moved by God's righteousness, which defines right action according to the action God has done and does. Hence, our own action will not be that old action of *our* will, but new and reflective of God's will. "Where faith is, in the midst of the old world of war and money and death, there is born a new spirit out of which grows a new world, the world of the righteousness of God."¹¹⁵

In other words, Barth explained in March 1916 ("One Thing Needful", sermon to Students' Conference) that the answer to the question 'what should we do?', is not to run around doing everything that comes to our own mind, and seems possible and right to us as a way to bring social improvement. Rather, the first action one must do in response to crises (situations presenting urgent need for change, i.e: the present war) is to "recognise God as God"¹¹⁶; to recognise that He *only* is righteous.

In his lecture on February 6, 1917, Barth developed his discussion of the contrast between God and God's righteousness and Kingdom, and us. He noted that in the midst of all sorts of 'wrong-doing', the prophets of the Bible persisted in seeking something that was different, and in telling us about it. The Bible seemed, then, to be a 'door' to a 'house' that was

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹² "the war again provides the striking illustration: were it really possible for the State to make men out of wild animals, would the State find it necessary by a thousand arts to make wild animals out of men?.....It is a wonderful illusion. if we can comfort ourselves that in the midst of...prostitution, the housing problem, alcoholism, tax-evasion and militarism- the church's preaching, morality and religious life go their uninterrupted way....a self-deception!" *ibid.*, pp. 19/20.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ Busch. *op.cit.*, p. 90.

very different from the one in which we lived. There was a 'strange new world' in the Bible which was not like the one we saw around us.

The Bible shows us Jesus saying 'follow Me'. If we let it, Jesus' command will move us from a concern with our own 'doing', to a concern with God's; from life within our own parameters, to a life within the parameters set by God in Creation and the Parousia; from doing according to one set of rules, to doing in accord with a direction performed by God.¹¹⁷ The Bible does not open a door to a new set of moral instructions or examples. It is not primarily concerned with our doing at all. It shows us a new world described by God's doing and sets us in it, where we must decide to accept or reject the sovereignty of God.¹¹⁸

In the middle of the War, Barth said "we live in a sick old world which cries out from its soul, out of deepest need: 'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed!' [Jeremiah 17:14] In all men...there is a longing for exactly this which is here in the Bible."¹¹⁹ If we stop trying to assert our thoughts about God according to the dimensions and necessities we see of our world in its history, and let Him tell us who He is in the Bible (Lord, Redeemer, Saviour, Comforter, fountain of life), seen in His history (that of Jesus which is the decisive connection between the beginning and end of God's history: creation and redemption), we will find out God's thoughts about humanity.¹²⁰

As we do, we will have the Holy Spirit, who will act in us. Our actions will be different because they will be according to the dimensions and necessities of the world of God's history, which has "its own distinct grounds possibilities and hypotheses"¹²¹. When we are willing to enter, in the middle of what we see as our world, into the world of the Bible, we will *now* be in a 'new world' of "incomparable peace of a life hid in Christ in God"¹²², which the faithful will enter one day for eternity.

Thus, the inner change of a new recognition of who God *is*, means a change of our perspective of the world, our place and identity in it, and, consequently, a change in the way we act *in our present situation, and not in isolation (illusory anyway) from it.*¹²³

By the time the War had ended, Barth had a clearer picture of what he thought this 'new place' the Bible set Christians (believers) in was. In September 1919, in his lecture "The Christian's Place in Society", Barth described the relation between service of God, and service

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.32/4.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp.39-41.: "...time and again the Bible gives us the impression that it contains no instructions or counsels or example...[it's] chief consideration is not the doings of man, but the doings of God...not ways to take if we are men of goodwill: but the power out of which good will must first be created...not industry, honesty and helpfulness as we may practice them in our old, ordinary worlds, but the establishment and growth of a new world...into which...the 'publicans and harlots' will go before your impeccably elegant and righteous folk of good society...if we read the Bible carefully, it makes straight for the point where one must decide to accept or reject the sovereignty of God."

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.50.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.43. Barth said: "It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us...not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us..."

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.37.

¹²² *ibid.*, p.46.

¹²³ "The Holy Spirit makes a new heaven and new earth, and therefore, new men, new families, new relationships, new politics....The Holy Spirit establishes the righteousness of heaven in the midst of the unrighteousness of the earth and will not stop nor stay until all that is dead has been brought to life..." *ibid.*, p.50.

of humanity. Rejecting the model of clericalisation of society- the idea that Christians were to try to use "the thought-forms of Jesus as the law for every economic, racial, national and international order"¹²⁴-, he likened Christian activity in society to activity on a particular foundation, within a framework that had openings on every side. Christ died for all, hence, Christian action did not mean an erection of walls between Christians and everyone else- it was for the benefit of all, even if its foundation must be completely particular. It was not the Christian's business to decide who was or wasn't a Christian, or to make everyone in society into one.

And yet, the particular foundation of biblical eschatology linked to Creation by Jesus had a particular meaning for the action of Christians. The truth that the ways we structure society and live in it are wrong has been brought "into devastating clearness" by "the catastrophe from which we are emerging but are not yet free."¹²⁵ We must see that God has given our life in society a different, eschatological significance from the very beginning.¹²⁶

God stands over against the whole world with the most radical criticism and acceptance of it. His word is the last word. All human criticism and action stands under God's absolutely critical position. Because of Christ, the Christian in society must act both in radical denial of the world (those things it claims are 'necessary' in face of God's will expressed in His Kingdom), and radical affirmation, always taking care not to fall into the false forms of either one (denial or affirmation). Only in Christ, only as Christ is in the Christian, can the Christian act in the political world 'honouring Caesar' in such a way as to honour God. In Christ, the Christian is compelled to take responsibility in daily life for the world God created.¹²⁷

The *Christian* who takes on civic responsibility will do so from within the framework of 'reality' set by Genesis 1:31 (where God saw everything He had made was good), and Colossians 1:13 (where Paul says "[God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of His Son."). Life in this framework is life in the *Regnum Dei*, which is not in parallel with any or every *regnum naturae*, but absorbs them all. There is no

¹²⁴Robert E. Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971, p.15.; see Barth, "The Christian's Place in Society", Horton, op.cit., pp.272-321.

¹²⁵Horton, op.cit., p.272.

¹²⁶"God in history is a *priori* victory in history. This is the banner under which we march. This is the presupposition of our being here. The real seriousness of our situation is not to be minimised: the tragic incompleteness in which we find ourselves is not to be glossed over. But it is certain that the last word upon the subject has been spoken. The last word is the Kingdom of God- creation, redemption and the perfection of the world through God and in God." *ibid.*, p.297.

¹²⁷*ibid.*, pp.289-300, : "We shall have to remember that the relation between God and the world is so thoroughly affected by the resurrection, and the place we have taken in Christ over against life is so unique and pre-eminent, that we cannot limit our conception of the Kingdom of God to reform movements and social revolutions in the usual, narrower sense. A protest against a particular social order, to be sure, is an integral moment in the Kingdom of God, and there have been dark, blundering, godless times when this moment of protest was suppressed and hidden. But it is also a blundering and godless time when Christ is thought of as a Saviour, or rather Judge, who up to that hour for some incomprehensible reason has kept himself concealed, and is now emerging into this sin-stricken world for the first time. The Kingdom of God does not begin with our protest.... God could not redeem the world if He were not its Creator. Only because it is his possession can it become his possession. Genuine eschatology casts a light backwards as well as forwards. Jesus Christ *yesterday*- and not for the first time today!" Barth went on to say that we commit ourselves to God in the world, not to the world without God. The condition, then, of both affirmation and denial is God. "Created 'by Him and for Him' means that by Christ and for Christ, lies our victory over a false denial of the world, and also our absolute surety against a false affirmation of the world."

natural world outside the rule of God's Lordship.¹²⁸ Christian action in society means acting as though this were true; it means turning over the idols that proclaim otherwise. This is its radical protest. Yet, while the Christian is compelled to reject confinement "to the world as it is"¹²⁹ by making decisions in the social and political life of the world from the perspective of *regnum gloriae Dei*, the Christian cannot presume that the perfect will of God is carried out.¹³⁰

The Christian is made free by the perspective of the *regnum gloriae* from the 'necessities' of the *regnum naturae*, and therefore says here 'yes' and there 'no' "not as a result of outward chance or inward caprice" (or these in the disguise of 'righteousness' and 'law!'), but as he/she is "moved by the will of God."¹³¹ which has been explained once for all, and is not suddenly 'revealed' in a historical moment as though it were not always clearly set forth in Christ's work of redemption.

The 'yes' and 'no'; affirmation and criticism of the Christian in society are not abstract. Therefore, even though they are always inwardly determined by 'the truth of Christ', they appear inconsistent. This apparent inconsistency does not disturb the Christian, however, because the Christian knows that both are in God. In fact, Barth cautions that the Christian should "be not righteous over much" (Eccl. 7:16)- try to force certainty about the timing of the 'yes' and the 'no' which each have their season appointed by God- because the will of God can only be done in humility, which is only possible where we realise that the eschatological certainty of God's will does not belong to our action. Even our most earnest attempts to live out the implications of the Kingdom of God are only a parable, not the thing itself, and ambiguous at best.¹³²

A few months later in the same year, Barth further described the unique position of the Christian in society as something like a 'sceptical world view'. The practical significance of eschatology was that Christians are given unique presuppositions for living which transcend all human ideologies because they are set by God. As "the impressions and experiences of the last years show us", the house of our own presuppositions, or ideologies, has been a "house built on sand"¹³³. Truly Christian action must come out of uniquely Christian hope, which is not the same as any hope offered by human ideology, whatever it is.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ibid., pp.305-8/13/18/25-27.

¹²⁹ibid.

¹³⁰"[We must] fortify ourselves against expecting that our criticising, protesting, reforming, organising, democratising, socialising and revolutionising- however fundamental and thoroughgoing they may be- will satisfy the ideal of the Kingdom of God." ibid., p.320.

¹³¹ibid., p.326.

¹³²ibid., pp.325/14-16.

¹³³Barth, "Unsettled Questions for Theology Today" (pp.55-73, in Barth, *Theology and Church*), p.57.

¹³⁴In this lecture, Barth draws on Franz Overbeck (colleague and friend of Nietzsche), saying that if we had listened to his critique of Christianity earlier, we wouldn't have needed the War to tell us what he had already said about its weak-willed dependence on the modern world, with its hopes, rather than Christianity's own, unique, eschatological hope.

The Epistle to the Romans

Though in retrospect it is relatively easy now to look back at the Great War and say that it finished on November 11, 1918, Barth's comment above about the 'catastrophe from which we are not yet free' indicates that for those living at the time, or at least for Barth, the world was not yet out of the context of the War in 1919. In a manner of speaking, it could perhaps be said that Barth's lectures of 1919 were written with the *echo* of the War still vividly present in his ears. Barth's commentary on *Romans*, which he wrote during the War itself, was published first in the time of this echo. Thus, as with these two other 1919 lectures, *Romans* was also written with the context of the War in mind, and in reaction to its event.

The most basic description of *Romans* is that it is a treatise on the fundamental distinction between God and His standpoint, righteousness and possibilities which set the framework for all 'reality', and man and his own relative and limited standpoints and possibilities, and ambiguous distinctions between right and wrong within that framework (which he is in whether he acknowledges it or not). Often referred to as the beginning of some special 'crisis theology', it is Barth's theological, and therefore ethical, response to the real 'crisis' that concerned him: God's wake-up call of judgement to humanity, *otherwise known as WWI*.

In this respect, *Romans* does not differ from Barth's sermons or lectures. It does differ, however, in the systematic thoroughness with which it attempts to *show* by extensive research, what Barth wanted to say, and was saying in his sermons and lectures, about the failure of 'Christian' European culture (his 'No' to false 'yes's' to the world) and the contrasting remedy of the real Gospel (his authentic 'Yes').

As with the stance of simultaneous affirmation and denial described in "The Christian's Place in Society" above, *Romans* points to a place at the crest of the paradox of this 'No' and 'Yes' which refuses both the 'to-ing' of the status quo, and the 'fro-ing' of protest movements, rejecting them equally as forms of the attempt of the world to help itself, however religious they might be. (In fact, the more religious they are, the further they are from God, since religious righteousness obscures human unrighteousness more than anything.) For example, while the nationalist militarism of the War forced Barth to acknowledge that human ways had gone seriously wrong, he also said in his early notes for *Romans* that "pacifism and social democracy do not represent the Kingdom of God, but the old kingdom of man in new forms. The criticisms and the protests...which they sling against the course of world history are of this world..."¹³⁵

The format of Barth's *Romans* is a systematic chapter-and-verse commentary on Paul's *Letter to the Romans*. It is organised into Barth's own chapters, determined by the major theme

¹³⁵E. Busch, *op.cit.*, p.101., these notes were written some time before July 1916.

he interprets in a given section of Paul's chapters and verses. For example, Barth's first chapter 'The Night' essentially describes the darkness into which humanity is plunged concerning its own righteousness, and salvation, by way of explaining the meaning and significance of Paul's *Letter*, chapter 1:18-32, verse by verse.

To any-one reading this first chapter in the context of the War, 'the Night' is an obvious metaphor for the hidden chaos and confusion (sin) of the world, now revealed in the War. Barth simply describes 'the Night', because he does not have to persuade his readers that it exists, and that humanity is in it. However, his listeners do need to hear him explain 'the Night' *through Paul*, so that they can know plainly that its meaning is 'the wrath of God', and not a blow of Fate. Furthermore, they need Paul explained *through Barth* so that they can understand that 'idolatry' (Rom. 1:23,24) means "that fetishism...in which God is experienced in 'bird and four-footed things', and ...'in the likeness of a corruptible man'- Personality, the Child, the Woman, and the half-spiritual, half-material creations, exhibitions and representations of his creative ability: Family, Nation, State, Church and Fatherland..."¹³⁶

As Barth explained the connection between daily life and reading *Romans*, "life is neither simple, nor straightforward, nor obvious". It must be interpreted. Yet, "if our thinking is not to be pseudo-thinking, we must think about life..."¹³⁷ Therefore, since "a clear apprehension of the disturbance of the equilibrium of human life is a *sine qua non* for any real understanding of the *Epistle* and of its message",¹³⁸ "a wide reading of contemporary secular literature- especially newspapers!- is recommended to anyone desirous of understanding the *Epistle to the Romans*."¹³⁹

As noted, Barth's first chapter, "The Night", is an assessment of the situation of humanity according to the Word of God in Paul's *Epistle*: humanity is in a situation of judgement, or of crisis. His last chapter, "The Great Disturbance" is a discussion of the action (ethics) which is implied by that crisis.¹⁴⁰ It is in this chapter that Barth places his understanding of militarism, pacifism and war in general within the framework of a thorough theological ethics for the first time.

In the first two sub-sections of "The Great Disturbance" ('The Problem of Ethics', and 'The Presupposition') explain Romans 12:1-8¹⁴¹ as an introduction to the nature and parameters

¹³⁶Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (hereafter *Romans*, Paul's letter will be referred to as *Epistle*, or 'Romans' when used as a biblical reference) trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns. 1963, p.50.

¹³⁷*ibid.*, p.425.

¹³⁸*ibid.*, p.462.

¹³⁹*ibid.*, p.425. In the context of the War, it is fairly obvious what Barth expected his readers to find in the papers.

¹⁴⁰The ten chapters in between these two are like extended commentaries on the various elements of Barth's arguments in the last chapter. "The Great Disturbance" is properly understood if its terms are defined according to the earlier chapters. The other ten chapters are: "The Righteousness of Men", "The Righteousness of God", "The Voice of History", "The Coming Day", "Grace", "Freedom", "The Spirit", "The Tribulation of the Church", "The Guilt of the Church", and "The Hope of the Church".

¹⁴¹Rom. 12:1-8: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will."

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body,

of ethics in general. That God is God, is the first presupposition of all ethics, because it establishes the fact that He alone thinks and acts purely. He does not delegate His purity. In relation to God, the person who acts, who is a 'living sacrifice' is the historical, observable-human- person. Everything human beings do, or abstain from doing, in their life as sacrifices to God is fraught with ambiguity.¹⁴²

God, whose peace is above all human cleavages, draws all individuals, in all their diversity, into one unified community by standing over them all equally as 'the Great Intolerance'.¹⁴³ God disturbs all of humanity, such that everything people think of as 'good' is made suspicious.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, Christian ethics is not about 'high places', or ideals.¹⁴⁵

What Christian ethics *is* about, is first the worship of God, which Barth calls the 'primary ethical behaviour'. Worship of God means repentance before His judgement. It means acknowledgement of the ambiguity of all things human. It also means recognition of an eternal 'Thou'. Confronted by the eternally consistent otherness of God, human beings recognise that they are in a community of others, different in gifting, and alike in weakness with them. Recognition of God as 'Thou' compels humans to recognise one another as 'thou'. The primary ethical action compels 'secondary' ethical behaviour. From the standpoint of humanity, both are ambiguous: both are only *parables* of righteousness, not righteousness itself.¹⁴⁶

Once it has been established that ethics is a requirement of the recognition of the identity of God, Barth finds that the rest of Romans 12 explains the relation of primary to secondary ethical behaviour, and some of the content of the latter. For Barth, Romans 12:9-15¹⁴⁷ shows how God's 'Great Intolerance' does not paralyse humanity, but rather compels people to accept their responsibility as agents of action.

The primary positive action of worship gets 'translated' into the first and most important secondary action ('positive possibility') of love (*agape*) of fellow men and women. This translation, or 'extension' of the primary action is not absolute: the love owed to God in worship is neither shifted, nor copied in the love of one's fellow. The proper action of the latter happens through, and is grounded in, the former. A clearer example is prayer. Prayer to God

and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (NIV)

¹⁴² Romans, pp.424-39.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.445.

¹⁴⁴ "Christianity is unhappy when men boast of the glories of marriage and of family life, of Church and State, and of Society. Christianity does not busy itself to support and underpin those many 'ideals' by which men are deeply moved- individualism, collectivism, nationalism, internationalism, humanitarianism, ecclesiasticism. Christianity is unmoved by Nordic enthusiasm or by devotion to Western Culture, by the visions of Youth or by the solid and mature wisdom of middle-age. Christianity sees no clear distinction between concrete and abstract idealism. It observes with a certain coldness the cult of both 'Nature' and 'Civilization', of both Romanticism and Realism. It watches with some discomfort the building of these eminent towers, and its comments always tend to slow down this busy activity, for it detects therein the menace of idolatry." *ibid.*, pp.462/3.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp.460-4.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp.440-9.

¹⁴⁷ Rom. 12:9-15: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

does not 'translate' into prayer to humanity. Prayer signifies honour of God in the expectation of help from Him. While God alone can be sought in need as a source, honour is 'translated' into a secondary action of blessing human beings, rather than cursing them.¹⁴⁸

The 'positive possibilities' of love and blessing human beings cannot become an absolute affirmation of the world, because Romans 12:16-20¹⁴⁹ signifies the necessity of a 'negative possibility' of protest. 'Negative possibilities' have to do with the transformation of the world that is, because they stand in 'positive relation' to the 'coming world'- they witness to the coming world against this one.¹⁵⁰ Since only God can truly act in absolute protest, according to the coming kingdom, human protest can only be a parable.

While Christians must bear witness to something new, over against sin, they cannot lose sight of the fact that they themselves are evil in all they do. Christians are deprived of behaving toward sin as though they had grounds to war against it, because they themselves do not 'have' The Truth God has. Yet, they do point to it, because God is bringing His Truth in the Coming World. Human (Christian) protest can only be a parable of God's protest, which is also His grace. When Christians try to witness to God's 'Intolerance' by 'rendering evil for evil', they forget God's grace.

Yet, protest which remembers God's grace, which is a protest of non-resistance, cannot become an absolute either because then it would give up on and lose sight of the Coming World. God does not allow humanity any 'high places', or absolute positions, in either 'Yes' or 'No'. If we do good at all, it is Christ in us: the 'impossible possibility of revelation'.¹⁵¹ From one side ('Yes'), to the other ('No'), and everywhere in between, human action is relative in relation to its secure base: the 'impossible possibility' of God's gracious righteousness in Christ. The secure base can never be usurped and made into human certitude, because the parabolic function of human ethical relativity is to witness to something else (God) as absolute righteousness.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸Romans, pp.450-60.

¹⁴⁹Rom. 12:16-20: "Live in harmony with one another. do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. do not take revenge, by friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay', says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'"

¹⁵⁰"The absolute character of Christian ethics lies in the fact that they are altogether problematical.... The power and earnestness of Christian ethics lie in its persistent asking of questions, and in its steady refusal to provide answers to these questions.

Christian ethics only demonstrate, only bear witness that there is an answer." *Romans*, pp.465/6.

¹⁵¹ibid., pp.445-8/67.

¹⁵²ibid., pp.463-5. Barth explains that Christianity always shifts from the prevalent 'high place' to a 'low' one: from the going self-justification to a protest against it. Yet, what the 'high place' is at any given moment is not self-evident- nor is the low place, for that matter. Therefore, what low places can become new high ones. Christianity always has an attitude of reservation.: (pp.464/5)"...Christianity dare not say more than 'in all probability': for it cannot be unmindful that the objects of its suspicion and of its approval, of its threatenings and promises, are after all concrete things whether they be high or lowly: and because they are concrete things, they can be no more than parables. Christianity is therefore at a loss to know what, in the concrete happenings of life, is at any given moment really high and what is really lowly, to what it ought at any given moment to extend its favour and from what it ought to turn away. This, however, is at any rate clear: Christianity is concerned with human exaltation on the one hand and with lowliness before God on the other. If this be applied to the particular situation...the last may be first and the first last. It may therefore be that those whom we think to be lowly have long ago become in fact exalted. It may be that their humility has been turned long ago to horrid pride.... and their brokenness into some new popular theology.... The busy activity of tower-building may long ago have passed from those who affirm to those who negate.... men may now...be finding security in 'positive negation'. If so, the time has come for Christianity to turn sadly away from all such negation.... We must never forget the

Precisely because it is so easy to slip into self-righteousness in the area of protest, Barth emphasises the particularly problematic nature of 'negative ethical possibilities' before he discusses his main example: the protest against the mode of enmity (war) in the world. Protest against the world does not mean that the Christian can treat the 'man of the world' as his enemy, because to do so would be to fall into the world's paradigm of enmity, denying the peace of Christ. Whether in 'Yes' or 'No', Christians must 'deny', or 'protest', the people of the world by not seeing them as they see themselves (enemies of one another), because of Christ.¹⁵³

So, war is 'impossible' for the Christian. And yet, Barth goes on to say that we "dare not say more than '*be at peace as much as in you lieth*'".¹⁵⁴ Although it is certain that we cannot preach "war-sermons in which men are encouraged to engage in war in a 'good conscience'"¹⁵⁵ because there is no such thing as a 'good conscience', we are reminded that nothing we call peace here is, or prepares for, eternal peace. We are always to hold on to peace by seeing our fellows as such, and not enemies. But we may have to do it *in war*.¹⁵⁶

If the fellow is perceived as an 'enemy', it is because he is doing things for which he already suffers the wrath of God. We are not to enter into that wrath ourselves by becoming 'enemies', and taking the preservation of God's 'right' into our own hands. I must recognise that the enemy's 'evil' is my own. And yet, I am to 'feed him', not as a martyr, but by way of participating in the purpose of God to 'heap burning coals on his head', so that he repents, is redeemed, and is no longer an 'enemy'.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the wrath of God, which is a "criticism of militarism", "is, in passing, a criticism of pacifism also."¹⁵⁸

freedom with which Christianity allots its 'Yes' and its 'No'. It sets up and it tears down; it recalls the emissary it has dispatched: it gives and takes away. Its purpose, however, remains always the same. It acts always in accordance with the same rule. Opposing what is high, it befriends what is lowly; loaning men certitudo, it permits them, for the honour of God, no securitas: measuring our time by the eternity of God, it allows us no established rights, gives us no rest, and preserves no strict continuity in its own action. Does it frighten us to discover how completely all that we are and domoves within the sphere of relativity? Perhaps it does, but this is precisely what we must discover.Relativity is our relationship to [God]... The function of Christianity...is to bring this to our notice. The absolute character of Christian ethics lies in the fact that they are altogether problematical. Their evolution consists simply in the fecundity with which it puts forth more and more questions to which God Himself alone can be the answer....*soli Deo gloria*."

¹⁵³ "What is more natural than war? War is, moreover, a parable of what lies beyond it, for in the end war is always directed toward the known man of this world. War is the concrete expression of our recognition of what men are, of their impossibility, and of our determination to be rid of them. But war is, nevertheless, a mistaken demonstration: for our conflict with our fellow men never does in fact bring about the denial of the known man of this world. He does not die, even though we continue to fight until we have exterminated all our enemies."

The denial of the known man of this world is evidently...Jesus Christ, the One in the 'All'. The moment this is apprehended, conflict must cease both within ourselves and with others, for it is clearly fruitless. In Christ, war seems impossible. He is our peace! It is not for us to impose an additional burden upon this or that man. It is not for us to make known to him that he too is - a man! It is not for us to add to God's right against every man the right of one man against another!" *ibid.*, p.470.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* NIV: "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.471.

¹⁵⁶ "When we assert that we behold Jesus Christ in our fellow men - when, that is, we behold peace in war - when we think that we can or ought to express this insight by the preservation of peace, we must remember that we are talking about God's perception and about His peace. But God is not known; He will be known. God therefore remains free. So the possibility that we must engage in conflict with ourselves remains; and the possibility that we must engage in conflict with our fellow men also remains, though it is somewhat more distant. The reservation that God can forbid us to see Jesus Christ in this or that fellow man remains." *ibid.*, p.470.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp.472-5. Barth really does mean 'feed' here, i.e. do good (definition of which may mean now 'yes', now 'no') - Barth is not speaking euphemistically in favour of martial punishment, as can be seen by citations above.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.473, 471. "Even the most sturdy defender of peace knows that we are always in the position of being unable to see the One [Christ/God] in the other [man]. He knows, too, that we must always abhor the evil which is in the other. (Rom. 12:9) The One in the other has no concrete, visible existence. In relation to the problem of war the knowledge of God means that we must descend from every warlike high place; but this does not mean that we must then proceed to ascend at once some high place of

This example of militarism and pacifism shows that the ethical question 'what shall we do?', "is capable of no material answer. It simply raises the question of the ground and purpose of all human action, and then the question, 'what shall I do?' is transformed into a question to which the action of God Himself provides the only answer."¹⁵⁹

Because human life is not a private affair, this statement is true in the life of groups, just as much as in that of individuals. The next two sub-sections of "The Great Disturbance" are called 'The Great Negative Possibility', and 'The Great Positive Possibility', because Barth wants to signify that Romans 13 is an explanation of how what has been discussed above further applies to social and political life.

Though the 'great' negative possibility of Romans 12:21-13:7¹⁶⁰ can be summed up in the word 'subjection', the reader must be careful to really understand Paul: subjection does not mean what we think (or have been taught to think!) it does at first glance.

For Barth, 'subjection to the authorities' does not make 'authority' an absolute principle, or give government absolute lordship in human politics, because subjection *means* the falsity of *all* human 'isms'. Subjection is parabolic abstention from action which is disrespectful of order, and seeks to overthrow those in authority, out of awareness that *all* human action and inaction is conducted within negated brackets. Since before God, all human activity and inactivity are unrighteous (they look like this: -- (+, -, +, +, -...).), the idea of 'subjection' disallows the false assumption that evil resides in bad leaders, and can be gotten rid of by revolutionary action.¹⁶¹

The revolutionary loses sight of his own sin when he confronts others with his supposed 'right', and makes 'right' into a thing in his own hands. By hating the authorities, he becomes enslaved by resentment; in seeing another as 'enemy'- however he justifies it- he is overcome by evil himself. He does not see that no man can usher in the truly 'new', because all the actions of men come out of the material of what is already- which stands inside the negated brackets. The revolutionary has no 'right' to respond with the 'sword' to a misuse of the sword by the authority, because he does not have God's right of vengeance, nor His right of punishment.

peace. The knowledge of God directs us to God: it does not direct us to some human position or to some human course of action either in time of war or peace. A church which knows its business well will, it is true, with a strong hand keep itself free from militarism; but it will also with a friendly gesture rebuff the attentions of pacifism. The earnestness of the command that we should be at peace lies in its capacity to illustrate the first commandment: it directs, that is, to God. We must, therefore, recognize that the commandment that we should be at peace is no absolute command: it has no final accuracy. And so, because it is a broken [relative] command, it bears witness to the peace of the Coming World."

¹⁵⁹ibid., p.475.

¹⁶⁰Rom. 12:21-13:7: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour."

¹⁶¹Romans, pp.483-5.

If the authorities have misused the sword, it is enough that they stand judged by God for doing so. Revolution happens in a framework where the paradigm of 'enmity' is accepted. But in the world of Jesus, that paradigm does not have to be accepted. In fact, it must be rejected. Jesus did not retaliate, because He knew that He did not need to revolt against men to protect Himself: God was His Lord and Protector. Jesus illustrates that revolution does not accomplish the purpose of overcoming evil, but only drives it back and forces it to take other forms. The more 'right' a revolutionary throwing down of idols is, the more likely it is that it is itself an idolatry, because it gives power to idols. Jesus did not live in a framework where idols had any power.¹⁶²

God, who is the End of all authorities and powers because He accomplishes the final, real revolution, is also their Beginning. He gives them the task of being witnesses to His kingdom, by giving to their order a similitude to the obedience required by His grace. Against the selfish egoism of individuals, they are a parable of the sovereignty of the One; against the 'splintered many', of the oneness of *human* difference (fellowship); against universal struggle, the dominion of peace. Because this positive ministerial role is given by *God*, man cannot use even God's negation against it, as though God's negation could correspond with man's, and as though the temporal significance of God's positive were at odds with the eternal significance of the negation, and of that of which the 'authorities' are a legitimate parable.¹⁶³

Yet, also because the positive role is given by *God*, the negative command, not to try and annihilate evil, does not delegate God's absolute authority or 'right' to the 'authorities'. Neither revolution, *nor* legitimism honour God. As for the revolutionary, the champion of order and 'the authorities' risks turning the kingdoms of men into those the Devil offered Jesus, the more he claims 'objective right' for them.¹⁶⁴ Revolution can be a minister of God as a corrective disturbance to those who mistake the witnessing role of 'authorities' for positive (absolute) authority. If God meets "the encroachments of revolution...with the sword of government", He also meets "the encroachments of government with the sword of revolution."¹⁶⁵

The meaning of this is not that the Christian must adopt a stance of moderation. Such a move would amount to setting up yet another idol. Rather, the Christian stands ready to act in either direction with a consistent respect for God's great minus over both, and in the knowledge and hope of the Revolution and Order of the Coming World.¹⁶⁶

The great negation does not deprive the Christian of positive action, because it commands Christians *to* love. It is *not* enough not to do what the world does: Christians must *do* something different. In 'The Great Positive Possibility', Barth adds to his description of

¹⁶² *ibid.*, pp.470-82/6/7.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, pp.484/5/8.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp.477/9.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.490.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.490.

Christian ethics by explaining that Romans 13:8-14¹⁶⁷ means that all positive Christian action is love, which happens in the miracle of the revelation of the moment *now*. Because it is positive reflection of action which belongs to God's eternal 'Moment', positive Christian action cannot be the same as that which happened in the moments before. Nor can it respond to the 'ifs' of the future.¹⁶⁸

In a paradoxical manner, positive action reflects eternity by refusing to subject the action of now to what has gone before. It respects what is truly lasting by refraining from trying to build something lasting out of the material of time: humanity and things. Like faith, it always begins anew. It is truly love only if it is not abstract, but incarnated in real moments in the flux of time as Jesus was. Real love- the positive action which is a *real* possibility for the Christian- is always appropriate to each new moment. It always means love of concrete, particular people. One cannot love ("think the thought of eternity") except in real moments (by "knowing the time").¹⁶⁹

As with the 'negative possibilities' of Christian ethics, this great 'positive possibility's' 'appropriateness to the moment' cannot be confused with a subjection to 'circumstantial necessities'. The revelational 'moment' of ethics has nothing to do with the (*kairos*) 'moments' of history men take to be particularly 'great'. Such humanly designated moments are themselves 'high places'. *Every* moment is a revelational- a 'new'- moment for the Christian, because all moments are confronted by the judgement and grace of God's eternity. Therefore, the Christian is free from all 'circumstantial necessity', because the only 'necessity' is God.

But, Barth cautions in 'The Crisis of Human Freedom and Detachment', Romans 14:1-15:13 reminds us that the freedom of Christian ethics is not a license to 'judge the servant of another'; for a person to set himself above all others. No one can define himself as the 'strong man' who may 'eat anything'. Rigorism, even in scepticism, only means an idol has come between a person and God.¹⁷⁰ Since "even saints have not rid themselves of the possibility of a Karamazov"¹⁷¹, 'right' (repentant) action is impossible. Christ is the 'crisis' of our freedom. And yet, it is the 'impossible possibility', insofar as "every man follows his own path [to God/towards the kingdom of God which is peace, before God now] to the end".¹⁷²

Thus, Barth ends as he began: with the ambiguity and relativity of human ethics underneath the absolute identity of God. At the same time as 'free detachment' cannot be lived

¹⁶⁷Rom. 13:8-14: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery', 'Do not murder', 'Do not steal', 'Do not covet', and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

¹⁶⁸Romans, pp.492-5.

¹⁶⁹ibid., p.501.

¹⁷⁰ibid., pp.502-11/21-26.

¹⁷¹ibid., p.501.

¹⁷²ibid., p.518.

in order to please self, to *'follow after the things which make for peace'*¹⁷³ does not mean easy adoption/obedience to what first seems to be peace- "the first peaceable thing we meet".¹⁷⁴ For "that would be to obey men rather than God. What is meant is the peace in the freedom of God which may involve us in war with the whole world."¹⁷⁵

Summary

In light of the above discussion, the view of war which Barth came to have in response to the event of the First World War can best be described as a complex combination of 'Yes' and 'No', where 'Yes' is not equal to militarism/ a pro-war stance, and 'No' is not equal to pacifism. Rather, Barth's 'Yes' and 'No' are directed to aspects of both pacifism and militarism, and are based on a fundamental 'No' to absolute human positions, which is itself grounded in a precedent 'Yes' to a primary orientation toward God in His position of absolute Lordship. Because of their specific content, the simultaneity of the 'Yes' and 'No' does not leave Barth sitting on the ethical fence.

On the one hand, Barth says a clear 'No', in speech and action to the popular nationalist enthusiasm; acceptance of the 'necessity' and 'inevitability' of military action; law of necessity/ dictates of circumstance, or historical 'moments'; the acceptance of the arms race as a given; the popular world-view which paints the world as a place of 'necessary' Promethean struggle for limited 'places in the sun'; nationalist ambition and the concept of 'sides'; egotistic military aggression; revolutionary violence; all the crime accompanying war; and use of the Bible to promote an image of a war-god who sides with the strong/victorious.

On the other hand, Barth *also* says 'No' to piously excused quietism and indifference: a false peace which keeps order but perpetuates the world-view just mentioned; false peace which shelters monetary structures which perpetuate injustice, or relations of 'enmity'; political disinterest/disengagement- especially accompanied by economic interests which take advantage of the situation; false assumptions that neutrality is a 'right' guaranteed by God; refusal to do the duty of a citizen: standing at the borders/ supporting those who do; unjust 'use of the sword' by government/forces of order; and a refusal to 'go through the waves', expressed in the selfish prayer: 'thank you God for sparing our house'.

Barth further says 'Yes' on one hand to the military defence of Swiss neutrality and independence for the sake of Switzerland and all the other nations so that they might hear the Gospel of the brotherhood of humanity. His 'Yes' is also to support of those who stand at the border/ willing participation in the war effort; revolutionary corrective to government; and

¹⁷³Rom. 14:19. NIV: "make every effort to do what leads to peace..."

¹⁷⁴*Romans*. p.521.

¹⁷⁵*ibid*.

regard of the war as the instrument of God to bring humanity to repentance, in judgement and grace.

On the other hand, Barth's 'Yes' is *simultaneously* directed to governmental use of force as a corrective to revolution; prayers for safety from the encroachment of war on Switzerland, and for its end in Europe; activity which seeks the peace of the brotherhood of nations, of people within Switzerland, within one's own family, and peace in oneself with God; making use of the opportunity for repentance offered by the war by turning to God in time of war to let Him redefine your identity, situation, and position and role in it; thankfulness to God for this opportunity; and full acceptance of each new moment, ie., active obedience to God in ways appropriate to the 'now', rejecting mere repeats of some earlier work.

At this point in the pursuit of our inquiry into Barth's developing view of war, we must turn to the following, still pressing question: What was Barth's reaction to World War Two (WWII)?

The greatness of Christianity did not lie in attempted negotiations for compromise with any similar philosophical opinions...but in its inexorable fanaticism in preaching and fighting for its own doctrine. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, p.351.

CHAPTER 4a

Barth's Reaction to World War Two: The Interwar Period and the Barmen Declaration

The Letter to Hromadka

On September 19, 1938, before German soldiers had fired a shot in Europe, and at the same time as Hitler was professing intentions of peace¹, Barth wrote a letter to his Czech colleague Professor Hromadka urging him to encourage his people to offer military resistance to Hitler's proposed 'peaceful' annexation of Czechoslovakian territory inhabited by Germans. Regardless of both Hitler's conciliatory approach, and the (im)probability of aid from the rest of Europe, he felt that armed resistance to Hitler was required of the Czechoslovakian people on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ everywhere, and therefore, on behalf of the whole of Europe. Barth wrote:

"The stream of lies and brutality that goes out from Hitler's Germany is not yet a frightful reality in England, France, America, or even Switzerland, but, we cannot forget, it is a possibility- with the freedom of your people that of Europe stands or falls from this moment until who knows when, and perhaps not only of Europe. Is the whole world guided by the spell of the evil gaze of the boa constrictor? And must it accept the post-war pacifism that we still hear from the Czech friends of Ragaz [socialists] advocate?....the worst...is still yet.... Will your government and your people nevertheless remain strong?.... Every Czech soldier who fights and leads does so also for us- and I say it today without reservation: he does so also for the Church of Jesus Christ, which in the fog of Hitler and Mussolini can now only fall into ridiculousness and be wiped out.... I cannot guarantee that if Prague remains strong, London and Paris will become strong. One cannot count much on Russian help (which can be as effective as an exorcism of demons by Beelzebub). But what do we know of the plans and intentions of the Providence of God, which in the midst of it all will be accomplished?....a good conscience depends on all one's trust being not in men, statesmen, artillery and rifles, but in the living God and Father of Jesus Christ. Not least, let your concern be to remind your people again and again in this difficult present and perhaps even more difficult future of the Word of God as the only hope in life and death. The German armies may be stronger, but I do not know how or from where they can have this important and lasting ultimate confidence...."²

Coming from the same man who earlier said that 'the war is sin, the war is judgement...God does not will the war', and who urged Swiss not to let themselves get caught up in the war-enthusiasm which whirled through Europe at the turn of the Century, Barth's letter to Hromadka is rather shocking. It seems strange that he would be so quick-to-the-trigger in his advice to Czechoslovaks. Moreover, in this letter the same man who abhorred British

¹The Munich agreement for peace was signed by Britain, France, Italy and Germany Sept. 30, 1938. Hitler had, at the same time promised not to interfere with Poland's territorial integrity.

²Barth, "Letter to Hromadka", in *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938-45*. (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945) pp.58/9.

use of Jesus to inspire the war effort against Kaiser Wilhelm, is here telling Czech soldiers that they can have a confidence in God denied the German soldiers.

Surely when 'Christian' Germany had not yet fired a shot, Barth's assessment that Hitler was a 'boa-constrictor' in disguise, whose intention was to hypnotise Europe so that he could attack the church and commit atrocities in Europe and perhaps the whole world showed more paranoia than it did a level-headed willingness to treat his 'enemy' as a friend?

Barth's letter to Hromadka is not technically a reaction to World War II, since it was written before the reality of a second 'world war' had become plain, at least for those outside Germany. The present tendency is to think that it is possible only in retrospect to see that Hitler's extension into Czechoslovakia was a beginning step in a broader plan. Yet, as Barth said once the war had broken out, "The present world crisis began when the National Socialists came to power in Germany in the year 1933."³ Thus, since the substantial reality which was 'World War II' for Barth pre-dated the start of the actual military war, his letter to Hromadka was not a sudden attribution of 'the sins of their fathers' to contemporary Germans.

Rather, he maintained the position he took in this letter for the duration of the war. With regard to military action, that position was the outcome of a progression of theological and political thought which began in the period before Hitler's party was elected. The things Barth said in this letter, and from 1938-45 in reaction to the Nazi *military* assault on the world, are one part at the tail end of his reaction to the *general* assault of German National Socialism on the world and the German people. While armed force was the most obvious characteristic of the Hitler's campaign inside and then outside Germany, force itself was only the outer shell on the inward nature of this campaign, which was spiritual (intellectual and theological).

Only after Barth had done what he could to oppose Nazi ideology and religion, did he consequently also support military opposition to Nazi Germany. In light of the historical background of World War II; Barth's reaction to the Nazis in the 'interwar' period; and his response during the military war, it becomes clear that Barth's letter to Hromadka is *not* an over-hasty example of the nationally-biased religious zeal he repudiated in 1914.

The Interwar Period

As a result of the success of *Romans*, Barth was invited in 1921 to a Professorship in Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen, Germany. In terms of his understanding of Germany, this shift of location placed him in the best possible position. He could now read German events from the inside.

³Barth, "The Churches of Europe in the Face of the War" in *The Church and the War*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1944) p.1. (a 1942 article for *Foreign Affairs*)

The Germany that Barth moved to at that time saw itself as a victim of the harsh Treaty of Versailles. In rebellion against the near-impossible demands of war-reparation⁴, Germany swirled into the roar of the twenties. The decade after the Great War saw not only a marked rise in a culture of personal rebellion against the failure of Wilhelmian mores (Berlin was the legendary capital of hedonism)⁵, but also one of national enthusiasm. The general atmosphere was not particularly rational. When German currency fell drastically in the first couple of years of the decade, scapegoats were needed: a Jewish member of the Reichstag (Walther Rathenau) was blamed. He was coincidentally assassinated the next day.⁶

As a result of the devalued currency, Germany was unable to make a reparation payment to France, so the French army marched into the German Ruhr valley- claiming its coal deposits as a sort of collateral on January 11, 1923. Germany lost 152 men, and the German Mark swung wildly in the opposite direction. Inflation sky-rocketed. The French aggression had the effect of petrol on smouldering tinder.

Although the Weimar Republic was democratic, parties to the left and right already found themselves having to appeal to the same nationalistic sentiments in order to gain votes. With the Ruhr provocation, the German nationalistic movement grew dramatically. Arguments for eliminating 'traitors' and Jews found an ever greater hearing as the nationalists' call for a complete national and social revolution resonated more strongly with a population that felt itself a victim of the whole European 'system'.⁷

At that time nationalistic sentiments were neither organised, nor did they necessarily indicate a pan-Germanic, unifying idea, nor had a single scapegoat been definitively labelled- even though cosmopolitans (Jews and Marxists) were widely suspect. The disordered confusion of the various German states was such that by the close of the same year (1923), it was broadly felt that Germany was on the edge of an abyss of civil war. Then in November, an emergency meeting of state leaders was held in one of Munich's largest beer halls, which was dramatically and rudely interrupted.

Adolf Hitler, then a leader of the 'Free Corps'- one of many militia-type 'parties' through which Germany got around the limit on military training- attempted a coup. He rushed in, fired a pistol into the ceiling, locked the statesmen in a room, and declared himself Chancellor.

⁴Henry Pachter, *Modern Germany*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978) pp.101-3. The Treaty of Versailles, signed May 8, 1919, was reportedly so harsh that the economist John Maynard Keynes felt that its consequences would be disastrous for Germany and the whole of Europe. Germany was deprived of 13% of its territory (although, that included all that had been gained in the war), which meant that 10% of its population was also lost. Germany also lost its few colonies, and a substantial part of its resources for rebuilding: half of its iron-ore, a quarter of its coal deposits, and 15% of its wheat and rye potential. In addition, Germany was forced to pay reparations of 28 billion (Marks) over a period of 42 years, which, with interest would amount to a total of 132 billion- at a time when Germany's entire GNP was only 15 billion. Furthermore, various clauses were included which severely affected German dignity: the army was restricted to a limit of 100,000 men, and Germany was forbidden to produce or own any tanks, battleships, or military aircraft. While demilitarisation is understandable in a post-war climate, it was unequally applied. The Allies too were required to participate in demilitarisation processes, which America in particular refused to have any part of. In an effort to remove the possibility of offensive military action from Germany, the Allies effectively made Germany feel defenseless and humiliated as well; see also Fleming op.cit., pp.276-8; James. op.cit., pp. 111-3.

⁵Pachter, op.cit., pp. 110/1.

⁶ibid., p.113.

⁷ibid., pp.113-5.

The next morning as he led the victory parade of the Free Corps, they were attacked by the police. Hitler was arrested and sent to prison for nine months where he wrote a 600-plus page treatise on the need for true Germans to eliminate the parasite that was killing them (Jews, who were behind all other cosmopolitan organisations of the world), and obey their destiny of Nature by acquiring 'soil' in Europe which would allow the superior German population to increase by providing resources and room.

Titled *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's treatise was also a programmatic description of the organisation of a National Socialist party, and a strategic discussion of how it would best achieve its above aims. In terms of organisation, Hitler outlined a 'leadership', or *Führer* principle: Since people need an identifiable saviour and hero, one man serves best. The optimal organisation of a National Socialist movement obstructs the implementation of that one man's ideas the least, hence a streamlined hierarchy, as little bureaucracy as possible, and an investment of the leader with unquestionable authority are requisite.

In terms of the movement's aims, Hitler operated on the thesis that the masses, like women, secretly like to be dominated. Therefore, it was necessary for National Socialism not to try and help its growth by forming allegiances. Allegiances would weaken its essential position and absolute nature. Like a mere meliorating 'influence' in existing structures, allegiances would only help in the short term. For a long term transformation of the German State itself which would give Germans a position of strength for centuries, National Socialism would have to be absolute and independent of other parties- until such time as it could be the *only* party.

Furthermore, it would have to operate as impressively and as systematically as possible. Only a thorough and systematic approach would remove the 'tumour' (Jews) from Europe for good. Only a show of spiritual, psychological and physical force would gain the confidence of the German masses. Although *Mein Kampf* was not taken too seriously by many outside those belonging to what became the National-Socialist party, it was widely read, and received little criticism.⁸ Its anti-Semitism, national chauvinism, anti-democratic themes, and arguments for the necessity of war were generally accepted in German society.

In the roar of the twenties, the assertion of 'authentic' being (Heidegger- life free from imposed strictures) was opposed to 'inauthentic' being, which was seen by many to be embodied politically in the 'democracy' it was felt Europe had imposed on the Reichstag ('parliament'). In the post-Versailles climate, especially when the Depression began, the

⁸ibid., pp.115-7.; also see A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943) pp.3-65, 134/40-5, 296-8, 336-53/83/4, 652/3/4/ 58/9/64. Hitler's description of his own 'conversion' to the objective truth of anti-Semitism has the tone of a religious experience. He likens the necessary struggle for the supremacy of the German mind and soul to a 'sacred sacrifice' for a 'sacred right' of physical space (p. 664), and his own role in an almost priestlike manner: "I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord." (p.65) His use of the names 'Creator' and 'Lord' here notwithstanding, Hitler's religious presuppositions expressed throughout this work are essentially pagan: Nature (aka. Fate/ Destiny) defines global reality and ethical necessity for him. Wagner's music, inspired by northern paganism, has almost a liturgical quality for him, as he finds it moves emotions in him which are consonant with his respect for the laws of Nature, and desire to obey them.

general instability of democratic governments in the Weimar Republic was seen as a sign of the crippling ineptitude of democracy itself, at least in terms of parliamentary procedure. Germans still felt themselves to be citizens whose vote ought to be sought. After his failed coup, Hitler realised that he would have to reckon with the vote by developing the art of persuasion. Therefore a rigorous propaganda campaign was a part of National-Socialism from the start, as was an awareness of the need for 'educating' the next generation.⁹

Although a foreigner hired to teach theology, Barth was not blind to the political climate of his new home. In a letter written to Thurneysen just after the Ruhr incident,¹⁰ Barth said that while he was beginning to "have the sentiments of a German" (his 'blood boiled' each day when the morning paper arrived), he was nevertheless appalled at the reaction of German theological professors against a student minority that wanted to favourably receive an open, friendly letter sent to German theological students by French theological students.

The majority of students were angry. Encouraged by leading professors in theology such as Emanuel Hirsch, the students wanted to respond "in the old Prussian [belligerent] style". Barth's comment about the nationalistic bias of the theology of some of the Göttingen faculty members expressed in this debate (the theological issue was fraternity of the church between France and Germany) was negative. He said: "The German professors are really masters at finding ingenious, ethical and Christian bases for brutalities."¹¹

Theology was not immune to the prevalent political attitude of nationalism. A growing movement had taken concrete form in 1921, calling itself the 'League for a German Church'. The League agitated for church reform along nationalistic lines, and freedom of theology and church life from 'Judaistic' characteristics. This latter meant a rejection of the canonical status of the Old Testament, a rejection of Paul's rabbinic principle of redemption, and a new presentation of Jesus' death as a heroic sacrifice in line with German mysticism.¹² Barth could hardly avoid this movement in theology towards identification with the prevalent historical/political cause, since one of its main (most thorough) exponents, E. Hirsch, was also at Göttingen.¹³

Not inappropriately, Barth's lectures in that decade emphasised a return to the Reformation, and its accent on Pauline Christological, soteriological, and eschatological doctrine understood in the context of the *whole* 'Word of God'- to which Barth added the ethical import of James.¹⁴ He also continued his meditation on 19th Century theology, thinking through his first attempt at a *Dogmatics*, and lecturing on Schleiermacher- shades of whose

⁹Pachter, *op.cit.*, pp. 155-61.

¹⁰ *Revolutionary Theology*. (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964) pp. 123-5, letter of January 23, 1923.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 124.

¹² Arthur Cochrane, *The Church's Confession under Hitler*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) p. 75.

¹³ Regarding Hirsch, also see Robert Ericksen's perceptive work, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emmanuel Hirsch*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. (Ericksen's description is revealing: his theological analysis itself is lacking, and he fails to understand both Barth in general, and the centrality of the Christological issue surrounding the Barmen Declaration.)

¹⁴ Busch, *op.cit.*, pp. 138-47.

method of working from man's word to God's he detected in the contemporary work of Emil Brunner (although Brunner used the method to argue against Schleiermacher), and Paul Tillich (who saw Christ as an almost archetypal symbol of a general human experience of revelation, which was "present and knowable always and everywhere"),¹⁵ as well as in the more blatant synchronisation of theology with the German national *Geist*.¹⁶ Thus, there was strategic value in the titles of his two innocuous-seeming books of lectures and sermons published in 1924: *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, and (with Thurneysen) *Come Holy Spirit*.¹⁷ (underscore mine.)

In 1925, Barth was offered a position at the University in Munster, which was in Prussia. As professorships were a civil service job, he was given joint German-Swiss citizenship in order to make him eligible to teach.¹⁸ Barth's new citizenship meant he was more personally implicated in German politics. Although he himself said later that he did not at the time realise the danger of National Socialism, he was appalled and amazed at their attempts to 'sabotage' the Republic in their fiery speeches which proclaimed a revisionist history at celebrations inside the universities. He said: "From the very beginning its ideas and methods and its leading figures all seemed to me to be quite absurd."¹⁹

In the German Evangelical Church, the leading groups had a marked bias toward the nationalists, and leaders tended to treat movement up in the ecclesiastical structure as a matter of political honour in a time of unique opportunity. Barth felt both attitudes were causing the church to forget the real need of humankind, and the true cause of the church: the Word of God.²⁰

The "German Christian Movement" founded in 1930 quite openly urged its members to join right-wing parties.²¹ In the same year, Barth decided that he had to begin a *Dogmatics* all over again, in which Christian doctrine would be free "from the last remnants of a philosophical or anthropological...justification and explanation".²² Accordingly, Barth also gave a lecture at the start of the new year (Jan. 31, 1931) in which he explained that the need of the church was to be one 'under the cross'; not 'ashamed of the gospel' (ie., refusing to assimilate its message to modern philosophical and politically popular categories such as 'fate',

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp.151/2.

¹⁶ The Thuringian 'German Christians' were especially active in this regard. They felt in general that the church was teaching stale doctrines that no longer had any salience for the German people. The old doctrines had particularly failed the German's political and national need. German national aspirations became normative for their theology, as they tried to win back disinterested Germans by "adopting the jargon of the day and interpreting the Christian message in terms of current events." (Cochrane, *op.cit.*, p.76) They argued that they experienced more genuine fellowship among the National Socialists than they did in the churches.

¹⁷ Busch, p.152.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.189.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.190.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.191.

²¹ Cochrane, p.77.

²² Busch, p.206.

'authority', 'order' or 'nation'). He emphasised that the German people needed a German *Evangelical Church*, not a *German Evangelical Church*.²³

Meanwhile, the Nazi party distinguished itself from other nationalist parties by its militancy and intransigence. The 'S.A.' (*Sturmabteilungen*) had split from the Free Corps, and formed a militia wing of the National Socialist, or 'Nazi' party. It was headed by Hitler personally. In 1928, the party still had only 200,000 members- while the S.A. had 100,000 itself. Openly singing "Today Germany, tomorrow the world", the S.A. held weekly parades where Jewish passersby were attacked at random. The S.A. also indulged in other 'goon' activity, such as busting socialist and communist party meetings.²⁴ In this way, while they maximised the paralysing potential of fear, the party's bullying techniques gained positive publicity: the S.A. was cheered for its efforts to combat the evil of bolshevism in high society, the courts, among the police, and in the press. A favourable press was also partly due to the fact that the Nazis owned two newspapers through which they disseminated their view.

By 1930, the party had 500,000 members, and won the confidence of four million voters- half of whom defected from other right-wing parties, and another half of whom were first-time voters, indicating Nazi success in capturing the imagination of both the disillusioned, and youth.²⁵

In May 1931, Barth had joined the Social Democrat party in order to provide a counterweight to Nazi strength, democratically. Then in October, Barth's friend Gunther Dehn was invited to a professorship in theology at the University in Halle. However, because he had made critical comments in 1928 about the Great War, nationalist students staged a wild protest against his appointment, threatening to move to other universities. While Hirsch and others supported the students, Barth made a public declaration of solidarity for his friend.²⁶ The reaction of the students was an alert for Barth. The following month he expressed to Thurneysen his conviction that he had to take a public position. He felt that being silent in the political situation was "like sitting in a car which is driven by a man who is either incompetent or drunk".²⁷

²³ *ibid.*, p.208.

²⁴ Pachter, p.178.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.178/9.: Although many in Germany had not read *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's programme was hardly unavoidable: it was clearly set forth in Nazi propaganda material, such as one written by Joseph Goebbels (later protection of Hitler's 'Minister of Culture') in 1930, where he said- among other things- "We are *Nationalists* because we see in the *Nation* the only possibility for the protection and the furtherance of our existence... We are nationalists because we, as Germans, love Germany. And because we love Germany, we demand its national spirit and we battle against its destroyers... We are *Socialists* because we see in Socialism the only possibility for maintaining our racial existence and through it the reconquest of our political freedom and the rebirth of the German state... Down with political bourgeois sentiment: for Real Nationalism! Down with Marxism: for True Socialism!... We are enemies of the Jews, because we are fighters for the freedom of the German people. *The Jew is the cause and beneficiary of our misery... The Jew is the Plastic Demon of the Decline of Mankind....*" (in C.L. Manschreck and Ray C. Petry, eds. *History of Christianity*, vol.2., (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964) p.528.)

²⁶ Busch, p.218.: also, Cochrane, pp.51/2. Dehn's 1928 lecture was titled "The Church and the Reconciliation of the Nations". In it he said war was contrary to God's will, and was a 'stern necessity' only as an act of self-defense, or in defense of life. He stressed that the decision to take part in a 'necessary war' was always difficult, and there was always the chance that one was wrong. Dehn was against unconditional pacifism, but advised Christians to co-operate with all friends of peace to abolish war. 'Sacrifice' in war could not be equated with a Christian martyr-death, because those killed in war were also intent on killing (whereas martyrs weren't). The upshot of the 1932 'Dehn case' was that Dehn was dismissed from teaching.

²⁷ Busch, p.217. Letter to Thurneysen, 24 Nov., 1931.

In December of the same year he published an article in the student paper, *Zofinger Zentralblatt*, in which he described Fascism as a religion "with its deep-rooted, dogmatic ideas about one thing, national reality, its appeal to foundations which are not foundations at all, and its emergence as a sheer power,"²⁸ in the face of which Christians could only expect opposition—perhaps greatest in the form of a temptation to conform to it. It had become obvious to him that, whereas the Nazis publicly attacked Jews and communists, their attack on the church (and it was an attack since it caused the church to forget her substance) came secretly. Outwardly they extended a hand to the church, while inwardly they aggressively appropriated and recast its *raison d'être*—its message.

Since few National Socialists had joined the "German Christian Movement" because it had not openly espoused *racial* nationalism, the "Faith Movement of German Christians" was founded in 1932 by Joachim Hossenfelder, a Nazi since 1929. When the Faith Movement's guiding principles were published on June 6, 1932, their obviously ideological bent did not cause a stir. Party members were then also encouraged to go to church in uniform, and to parade there together— "the swastika on [their] breasts, and the cross in [their] hearts".²⁹

Barth's response to this bolder Nazi activity regarding the church was to write an open letter in which he argued against the presented 'need' for a rapprochement between Christian doctrine, and the aims of the *Volk*. Whereas nationalist Christians were trying to make theology interesting again by fitting it to the demands of the prevalent *Zeitgeist* (philosophy and aims-of-the-day— then nationalist), Barth felt that the same activity, repeated over the centuries, had resulted in the loss of substance which was the very reason theology had become 'uninteresting' to people in the first place. It would be 'interesting' again when it returned to its own substance.³⁰

'Interesting' did not mean that it would become a privately fulfilling 'interest', but that it would paradoxically be more publically and politically relevant. Barth remarked that "the

²⁸ibid.

²⁹Cochrane, pp.81/2.; for the "Platform of the German Christians" see Manschreck and Petry, op.cit., pp.529/30. It stated the German Christian intention was to form a united, German, national church, which would be the religious expression of the German folk. Structurally, it would do away with democracy in the church ("The age of parliamentarianism is past, also in the church. Ecclesiastical parties have no spiritual claim to represent the church folk, and they obstruct the high purpose to become one church."). It affirmed 'positive Christianity', which it defined as "an affirmative style of the Christian faith, as appropriate to the German spirit of Luther and heroic piety." The purpose of having one church was to make it a better leader on the forefront of the fight "in the decisive struggle for the existence or extinction of our nation. She dare not stand aside or indeed shy away from the fighters for freedom." A German-Christian church fought by demanding a change in the constitution to make Marxism illegal...because "the way into the Kingdom of God leads through battle, cross and sacrifice, not through false peace". The fight would also be led by the keeping of racial purity: "We see in race, national character and nation orders of life given and entrusted to us by God, to maintain which is a law of God for us. Therefore racial mixing is to be opposed....faith in Christ does not disturb race but rather deepens and sanctifies it." 'Home-missions' therefore must be seen properly to mean obedience to God's will, not mere 'charity'...therefore, it is 'mission' not to foreigners and weaklings in Germany, but to Germans, to protect them "from the incapable and the inferior". Mission to Jews at home or abroad is a danger to national character, and opens a door for foreign blood to dilute German blood. "We deny the validity of the mission to the Jews in Germany, as long as the Jews have the rights of citizenship and thereby there exists the danger of racial deterioration and bastardization. The Holy Scriptures also say something about the divine wrath and self-betraying love. Marriage between Germans and Jews is especially to be forbidden." The final point was a rejection of "the spirit of a Christian cosmopolitanism" on the basis of "faith in the national mission given us by God". The "Platform" was signed by Hossenfelder.; the quote re: the swastika and cross was said by Hossenfelder of his own group. (*Oxford Companion to WWII*, p.433.)

³⁰Busch, p.216. Barth's letter to a Herr Hoffmann, titled "Protestantism of the Present" in *Jugend und Krisis der Kultur*, 1932.

proclamation of the church is by nature political in so far as it has to ask the pagan *polis* to remedy its state of disorder and make justice a reality. This proclamation is good when it presents the specific commandment of God, and not good when it puts forward the abstract truth of a political ideology."³¹

Barth's concern with the unique substance of church proclamation was not merely polemic: 1932 was the year that he completed his first book of his new *Church Dogmatics*. Lamenting the "religious insight" people 'today' seemed to find "in the intoxication of their Nordic blood and in their political *Führer*"³², he offered the church catholic his explanation of 'the doctrine of the Word of God', in which he explained 'the Word of God as the criterion of dogmatics', and the meaning in this context of 'the revelation of God'.

At the same time as Hitler was showing his concern for the people's spirituality through the Nazi concern for the church, he was also taking advantage of the global economic downturn of the Depression to pose as a brother of all those caught in a German decline engineered by the world against them. He was at once the embodiment of the suffering German 'everyman', and a strong saviour who would bring them justice. His party's campaign and propaganda strategy was chameleon-like: in the rural areas, he was the champion of the farmer and the industrialist; in cities, of the large German business, and the small shop-keeper. This strategy was believable because, instead of proposing specific remedies, he promised a total revolution and a decisive fight against the enemies all these various groups held in common.³³

In the multi-election process for the presidency in 1932, Hitler won eleven, then thirteen, then 13.7 million votes of an available 36.9 million- or, 37.4% of the vote. In the elections in November, Nazi popularity slipped down to 33.1% of the total vote. Hitler did not win the presidency- but von Hindenburg surprisingly handed the power of the chancellorship over to him anyway. The Reichstag was dissolved, and Hitler immediately used the S.A. strong-arm techniques to 'encourage' the trust of an additional 10.9% of voters, for a total of 43.9%. His investiture as Chancellor on January 30, 1933 was celebrated by torch-light parades and outbreaks of mob violence.³⁴

Later Barth recalled his reaction to the radio-announcement of 'Hitler's seizure of power', saying: "I knew immediately where I stood....In the last resort, this was simply because

³¹ibid.

³²CD. I.1, foreward, p.xi.

³³Pachter, p.180-97.

³⁴ibid, p.180, 198/9, also p.193: Hitler, an Austrian by birth, had been granted German citizenship so that he could run for the presidency.. pp.195-6: the reason the election process was multiple was due to several separate times when the Reichstag was dissolved by two successive Chancellors: the whole thing was a fiasco, and confusion, in which the S.A. was first banned, then unbanned. Unbanned, it increased its activity. Through it all Hitler demanded the chancellorship, and encouraged S.A. goonishness- publicly standing behind a squad who were convicted for murdering a farmer in his bed. The increase in violence caused the initial November decrease in Nazi popularity. Generally, there was an atmosphere of chaos surrounding all the proceedings. The Depression had hit an all-time low, and Nazi promises to nationalize business, labour and mass movements fell on soil tilted by drastic unemployment. When Hindenburg gave the chancellorship to Hitler, the Reichstag was dismissed again, and the elections were called in which Hitler 'won' 43.9% of the vote.

I saw my dear German people beginning to worship a false God..."³⁵ Reading *Mein Kampf* for the first time, he found it a confirmation of his rejection of Hitler's regime.³⁶

As Chancellor, Hitler lost no time unambiguously conducting the new German national 'revolution'. Before the year was out, he had rallied popular support for, and accomplished Germany's resignation from the League of Nations; gave orders to dissolve charitable institutions (so that they could not receive money, which would be funneled to the party instead); purged the police, and the civil service of republicans and Jews; ; passed a Treachery Law (March 21) prohibiting the spreading of opinions that 'impaired the reputation of the Reich government'; prohibited competing parties; given 40,000 S.A. men police uniforms; formed the S.S. (Gestapo); declared an emergency decree "for the protection of the German people" which gave the police power to ban public meetings, censure publications, and arrest people suspected of 'fomenting unrest'; passed an 'Enabling Act' (March 1933) which gave himself legislative power; provided for the Reich to declare invalid the citizenship of Jews who had immigrated to Germany between November 1918, and January 1933; and excluded Jews from inheriting German soil.³⁷

By the end of March, 10,000 'enemies of the State' ('communists') had been arrested, many of whom were convicted by courts ruling "according to sound popular feeling" rather than law, and sent to concentration camps.³⁸

On April 1, the S.A. held their infamous boycott of Jewish stores. During that month, books considered 'un-German' were also burned, and shortly after Easter, German universities dismissed Jewish and republican rectors. They were replaced with rectors who promised to teach 'German science', as opposed to 'vile objectivity'- Hirsch was among them.³⁹ The 'Marxist' Labour Day (May 1) was abolished, and the party took over the organisation of workers from the trade unions, forming the 'German Labour Front'. To replace the holiday, the Labour Front promoted *Volk* community by organising athletic events and weekend group outings under the banner 'strength through joy'. Business associations were also 'homologised' (brought into line with Nazi party organisation and aims), as well as the printed press, radio, theatre, and youth organisations.⁴⁰

In keeping with the absolutist party slogan 'one *Reich*, one *Volk*, one *Führer*', Hitler's strategy of homologisation aimed at three things which shaped the thought and life of German society: art, the press, and the church.⁴¹ While laws could be unilaterally passed concerning the

³⁵Busch, p.223.

³⁶ibid.

³⁷Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eric Mosbacher, Peter and Betty Ross trans., London: William Collins sons & Co., 1970), pp.201/2; Pachter, pp. 201-3/6.; *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for the Schooling of the Hitler Youth*, trans Harwood Childs, p.78.

³⁸Pachter, *ibid.* In early 1933, the camps were still large, single-sex, forced-labour prisons, and not yet extermination camps.; see also Fleming, pp.263-91. re: processes giving Hitler the idea he could get away with simply resigning from world accountability.

³⁹Pachter, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ibid., p.204.; also James, *op.cit.*, p.136.

⁴¹ibid., p.205.

first two, the church had to be approached strategically. To a 'Christian' nation, Hitler presented his party as Christian. In a proclamation published on February 1, he acknowledged Christianity as the basis of German morality and promised to take it under his "firm protection".⁴² In his March 23 speech before the first meeting of the new Reichstag, he stressed party neutrality regarding denominations, and respect for the autonomy and integrity of the church as a moral force, and therefore source of strength for the nation.⁴³

The underlying reality was that Hitler had his own intentions concerning the involvement of the church Confessions in the 'moral and ethical life' of the German people. Almost exactly one month later (April 25), Hitler appointed an old friend- then also the leader of the German Christians in Prussia- Ludwig Müller, his confidential advisor and deputy in Church Affairs. The mandate he gave Müller was to unite the denominations, whose differences he had so recently professed to respect, into a single 'Reichs church', which would be structured according to the organising principle of the Nazi government (the *Führer* principle).⁴⁴

For some time, German Christians had recognised the 'revelation' as to the 'truth' of the *Führerprinzip* as an ecclesiastical principle. "In the effort to carry on in the twentieth century the German revolution in the spirit of Martin Luther",⁴⁵ German Christians held their first national convention in Berlin, on April 3-5. This 'church' meeting was hardly conducted in a sphere separate from the State. High-ranking State officials such as Hermann Göring participated as members of an 'honorary committee' for the convention- perhaps to ensure the convention kept to its slogan: "The State of Adolf Hitler appeals to the Church and the Church has to hear his call."⁴⁶ The predominant sentiment at this convention was that the unification of the Church and State could produce an increase of power necessary to the nation, only if the basis of the church's constitution was the *Führerprinzip*.

⁴⁷ [ital. mine]

Following the convention, one of the Nazi papers ran an article (April 18) titled "Farmers, conquer the Church!", in which Germans were called to revolt against a 'priestly hierarchy' in the church, consisting of pastors who had 'failed the German people'. The president of the state government of Mecklenburg (Walter Granzow) expressed the internal Nazi policy toward the church, honouring its author (Walther Bohm) by making him

⁴² Bethge, p.196.

⁴³ He said: "The national Government sees in the two Christian Confessions the most important factors for the preservation of our nationality.... Their rights are not to be infringed.... All other denominations will be treated with the same impartial justice. The national Government will provide and guarantee to the Christian Confessions the influence due them in the schools and education. It is concerned for genuine harmony between Church and State.... The Reich Government, seeing in Christianity the unshakable foundation of the moral and ethical life of our people, attaches utmost importance to the cultivation and shaping of the friendliest relations with the Holy See..." Cochrane, p.85. Notably, the sentence about guaranteeing church influence was dropped from the official text by the publishing house a year later.

⁴⁴ Cochrane, p.89.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.86.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.87.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.87.

Mecklenburg's State Commissioner for the church.⁴⁸ When church leaders reacted by sending a letter to President Hindenburg and Hitler, Hitler had the appointment annulled, re-assuring the church that, according to his March 23 speech, his government would guarantee its independence. At the same time, his government had persuaded Catholic bishops in Germany to retract their earlier prohibitions against the Nazis, and was in the process of acquiring papal legitimation by negotiating a concordat with the Vatican, which was signed in July.⁴⁹

After Hitler's March speech, the Catholic Church had given permission to Catholics to join the Nazi party, or even the S.A. When the concordat was signed, parishioners were positively instructed to give unreserved support to the government. Yet, while outward signs ratified Hitler's declared peace with the churches, Nazis molested Catholic priests and lay leaders, searched convents, and ran a press campaign against the Catholic Church, accusing Catholics of engaging in financial activity injurious to the Fatherland.⁵⁰ In his appointment of Müller, Hitler himself moved aggressively toward the Protestant churches, 'facilitating' their 'adoption' of the Nazi worldview and aims embodied in the *Führerprinzip*.¹

On the same day as he had his meeting with Müller, Hitler met with the United Church leader Hermann Kapler and authorised him to take the necessary steps for creating a new church constitution that would demand a *Reichs* Bishop. To assist him, Kapler formed a 'Committee of Three', which included himself, Bishop August Marahrens (Lutheran), and Hermann Hesse (Reformed minister). By May 22, the Committee was waiting for an audience with Hitler in Berlin, with several proposals for Reich bishop, one of whom was Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (Lutheran)- a man widely respected for his piety. On May 23, a district meeting of German Christians nominated Müller as another candidate.⁵¹

On May 26 and 27, a conference was held in Eisenach which was attended by delegates from all the regional churches. Those who attended voted for the new bishop, selecting von Bodelschwingh. Though he was not a member of the 'German Christian' party in the church, nor a 'hard-liner' (he felt Reich *deacon* would better describe what he understood to be the role of the new bishop- the role of 'deacon' having connotations more of service than direction), he

⁴⁸ In closing, the convention passed the following resolution: "God has created me a German. Germanism is a gift of God. God wants me to fight for my Germany. Military service is in no sense a violation of Christian conscience, but is obedience to God. The believer possesses the right of revolution against a State that furthers the powers of darkness. [contextually meant: a 'democracy' such as the Weimar Republic] He also has this right in the face of a Church board that does not unreservedly acknowledge the exaltation of the nation. [statement made directly to an Evangelical Church Committee meeting held March 3, in which leaders in the church reacted to the growing trend of Nazi interference by declaring that "the Church is called to serve the whole nation and not particular groups in the nation and independently of the political situation." The Committee's General Superintendent, Otto Dibelius, followed the meeting with a pastoral letter in which he reminded ministers that the gospel does not recognize the 'self-sufficient man' (Nietzschean/nationalist), is opposed to every human ideology, and proclaims the Kingdom of God and not nationalism. Dibelius was referred to (negatively) in the German Christian conference.] For a German the Church is the fellowship of believers who are obligated to fight for a Christian Germany. The goal of the "Faith Movement of 'German Christians'" is an evangelical *German Reich Church*." *ibid*, p. 87. When church leaders protested such direct political interference in the ecclesiastical structure by sending a letter to president Hindenburg and Hitler, Hitler had the appointment annulled shortly after his April 23 speech, and re-assured the church he would guarantee its independence, according to the policy he presented in the speech. (p.88)

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 88.; Pachter, p.206.

⁵⁰ Pachter, p. 206.

⁵¹ Cochrane, pp.93-6.

was a truly *German* Christian. In his acceptance speech he voiced German Christian piety which saw the recent political events as an 'hour of the church' and a gift of God.⁵²

The activities of the Committee of Three leading up to the election of von Bodelschwingh did not include theological reflection, nor was the decision an adequate reflection of the needs and opinions of the churches involved. The delegates voted, but their selection was not made on a basis of deliberation inside their home churches, nor were they 'representatives' of their churches in the democratic sense. After his election, the 'German Christian' party dropped its conciliatory tone, launching a propaganda campaign against von Bodelschwingh, and for Müller.

They urged members of congregations and of the S.S. and S.A. to send letters to Kapler, Müller, Hindenburg and Hitler protesting von Bodelschwingh on the basis that he was 'not a confidant of Hitler', not a 'German Christian', and that the German people were not consulted in his election.⁵³ Müller himself protested on a legal technicality: he pointed out that since von Bodelschwingh had been elected before the new constitution was actually drawn up, no position of Reich bishop actually existed.

In the general environment of confusion created by the German Christians' energetic protest, the Nazi Minister of Education in Prussia, Bernhard Rust, was compelled to take an emergency measure on behalf of the State. He appointed August Jager State commissar for the church in Prussia on June 24. As State Commissar, Jager had executive authority to unilaterally discharge elected church officers and appoint new ones- which was exactly what he did, re-staffing virtually all church administrative boards with German Christians.⁵⁴ Against objections, he warned that "since the State in the interest of itself, the nation, and the Church cannot tolerate opposition of any kind, any effort to resist will be regarded as treason. I demand that strict care be taken that my decrees and those whom I have publicly authorized be not sabotaged. Any such attempt would be rebellion against the authority of the State and would be immediately suppressed."⁵⁵

The first immediate result of Jager's appointment was von Bodelschwingh's voluntary resignation. He felt that Jager's position prevented him from performing the tasks of a bishop.⁵⁶ On June 28, Müller physically took possession of the Church Federation buildings with S.A. troops.⁵⁷

⁵²He said: "We thank God that he has given us a government which with a reverence for history strengthens the will to work mightily for a better future, which wishes to lead us back again to the discipline, faithfulness, and integrity of our fathers, and which honors work. In a joyful spontaneity we Christians want to place ourselves heart and soul at its disposal in this service to the nation." Cochrane, p. 96.

⁵³*ibid.*, pp. 97/8.

⁵⁴*ibid.*, pp. 98/9.

⁵⁵*ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁷Müller justified himself, saying: "The German Evangelical Churches have fallen into a critical state. The unconditionally necessary unity of the nation and the Church are in peril. The emergency demands extraordinary measures. In agreement with the State commissar...I am therefore taking over the administration of the Church Federation with the authorization of the Reich Chancellor and for the sake of the Church and its gospel...conscious of my responsibility to God and our people, I set to work in obedience to the truth of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ." *ibid.*, p. 101.

Meanwhile, some of the displaced church leaders had protested by calling for a day of penitence and prayer on July 2, to which Hossenfelder replied by proclaiming July 2 a day of 'thanksgiving and intercession', on which a message was to be read from all pulpits declaring Church duty to co-operate with the State.⁵⁸

Von Bodelschwingh went to Hindenburg, who protested to Hitler about the disorder, warning him that he would have to do something if it continued. To Hitler, Hindenburg's threat was toothless. Hitler made his Minister of Internal Affairs responsible for resolving the conflict, but he in turn left Müller alone on the ground that work on the new constitution was progressing under Müller. Müller, meanwhile, dissolved the old constitutional committee and appointed a new one. A draft was ready July 10, adopted July 11, and confirmed by State law and published on July 13. New elections were set for July 26. In a pacifying gesture once the task of a new constitution had been accomplished, Hitler saw that Jager was retired, and that the church officers he had removed were re-instated.⁵⁹

The tight links between the government and the German Christians were clear in the electoral campaign: party and S.A. members took advantage of the organization of the State and its monopoly on mass communication to campaign on behalf of the German Christians, saying it was the duty of every Christian Nazi to vote for them; German Christians called for "a new Church of Christ in the new State of Adolf Hitler"⁶⁰ - Hossenfelder even went as far as to proclaim that "the German Christians are the S.A. of Jesus Christ in the struggle to do away with bodily, social, and spiritual distress".⁶¹ Contending parties in the church were harrassed by the Gestapo.

On the eve of the election, Hitler went on air, saying that only "these forces marshalled in that section of the evangelical population which has taken its stand in the German Christian Movement"⁶² support the freedom of the nation. Not surprisingly, the German Christians won overwhelmingly.

As a result, Müller was elected president of the consistory, and bishop of Prussia by the Prussian Church senate on August 4. On September 4 and 5, the General Synod of the Prussian Church passed a law establishing the new office of bishop. Hossenfelder was elected a bishop for Brandenburg, and became Müller's vice-president. The Synod also ruled for the discharge of those who "on the basis of their previous activity do not guarantee that they will at all times

⁵⁸Hossenfelder said: "All who are concerned for the welfare of the Church...must be deeply grateful that the State has assumed the great burden of the reorganization of the Church. Until that great hour when the evangelical church of the whole Reich has its new constitution, actions against the good intentions of the State are acts of disobedience.... We call upon the congregations to co-operate joyfully, prayerfully, and gratefully in this great work of reorganization. In this work we are putting our trust in Almighty God. He will bless those who truly love and desire his Church." *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁹*ibid.*, pp. 104/5.

⁶⁰*ibid.*, p. 106.

⁶¹*ibid.*

⁶²*ibid.*, p. 107.

unreservedly support the national State"⁶³; and the retirement of ministers and officials of non-Aryan descent, or married to such people.⁶⁴

On September 27, Müller was elected Reich bishop at the National Synod in Wittenberg. Commenting on the preceding ecclesiastical political fracas in his address, he announced that "the old has passed away. The new has emerged. The Church's political struggle is past. Now begins the struggle for the soul of the people."⁶⁵ The struggle over, peace could be affirmed. Müller issued a public statement on October 11 saying that no church member would be discriminated against for not being a 'German Christian'. Worried about the political preponderance of German Christians in church affairs, Hitler had his personal representative, Rudolf Hess, decree that no National Socialist would be discriminated against on account of membership in particular religious associations two days later.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, German Christians arranged a giant demonstration for November 13 at the Berlin Sport Palace to "rekindle the fighting spirit of the Movement and to place again in the forefront the old goals of the 'German Christians'".⁶⁷ After opening with Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is our God", a leading 'German Christian' and senior Nazi official, Reinhard Krause, delivered a speech entitled "The Popular Mission of Luther" in which he declared that the German Reformation Luther had begun would now be completed in the Third Reich; that the church in that Reich would be a people's church; and that the first step in creating an indigenous church must be to revise the Bible according to the needs of the people.

Such revision would mean getting rid of the Jewish Old Testament; purging the New Testament of 'perverted' and 'superstitious' passages; renouncing the 'scapegoat' and 'inferiority complex' theology of the 'Rabbi Paul'; and recognizing a heroic Jesus over a weak, crucified one.⁶⁸ Krause's speech was interrupted throughout with loud bursts of applause from the 20,000-person audience, who also gave him an ovation.

The resolutions passed at the demonstration called for the discharge of ministers who were unwilling to co-operate with the completion of the Reformation according to National Socialism; execution of the 'Aryan paragraph' of September 4/5; creation of a segregated church for Jewish Christians; revision of the church service and confessions so that nothing 'un-Germanic' remained; a 'freeing' of the gospel from 'Eastern distortions'; and the presentation of

⁶³ibid.

⁶⁴also Busch, p.229.; sadly, compliance with the resolutions of this Synod was almost immediate, and enthusiastic. (Cochrane, pp.126/7: the theological faculty of Marburg University gave its 'unreserved support' to the State, and that of Erlangen issued the following statement composed by Paul Althaus, among others: "In the struggle for the renewal of our people the new State excludes men of Jewish or half-Jewish origin from leading offices. The Church has to acknowledge the basic right of the State to take such legislative measures."(p.127.)

⁶⁵ibid., p.111.

⁶⁶ibid.

⁶⁷ibid., p.112. (Permission was given for November 13, because Nov. 12 was the day scheduled by the government for the plebiscite on Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations.)

⁶⁸ibid. : also Busch, p. 232.; also Daniel Cornu, *Karl Barth et la Politique*. pp.33/4.

a heroic Jesus, which would be the basis for a Christianity where servility was replaced by the proud man who was conscious of the divine in himself as a child of God, and in his people.⁶⁹

In response to the overt paganism of the 'Sports Palace Scandal', protest erupted. Meetings were held in various cities, and some areas demanded the church leaders who had participated resign. In the face of unexpected disorder, Müller relieved Krause of his church offices on November 15; publicly condemned his attacks on the Bible; and declared that all church organisations were bound to the Bible and the Confessions, and could act only in service to the congregations and the church. The National Socialists reiterated their religious neutrality in the press. Yet, Hossenfelder replaced Krause with another German Christian.⁷⁰

The scandal of the Sports Palace resulted in a weakening of the German Christian church party, but not of the National Socialists in ecclesiastical politics, or the German Christian theological syncretism. Officials of the Reich Church government were forbidden to be members of a party in the church, Hossenfelder was retired, and Müller withdrew from direct association with the Faith Movement of German Christians by resigning his position as their 'protector'. Yet, on December 21, Müller incorporated all church youth groups into the Hitler Youth, prohibiting 'youth' (under eighteen) from belonging to the former without membership in the latter.⁷¹

Barth's response, while remaining unambiguously 'theological', was nonetheless clearly articulated against Hitler's intellectually and spiritually aggressive politics. As Barth later described how he perceived the deep meaning of the situation, he said:

"What happened? First of all this happened- and this one must keep clearly in mind while seeing the whole- there was given me a gigantic revelation of human lying and brutality on the one hand, and of human stupidity and fear on the other. And then this happened: in the summer of 1933, the German church to which I belonged as a member and a teacher, found itself in the greatest danger concerning its doctrine and order. It threatened to become involved in a new heresy, strangely blended of Christianity and Germanism, and to come under the domination of the so-called 'German Christians'- a danger prompted by the successes of National Socialism and the suggestive power of its ideas."⁷²

He went on to explain that in the face of this heresy, many of his colleagues from all denominations who had formerly been so concerned about the ethical fruit of doctrine, strangely adopted an attitude of deliberately ignorant neutrality or tolerance. In fact, many fell into line with it, sparking almost no protest. Therefore, he explained, "I myself could not very well keep silent, but had to undertake to proclaim to the imperiled church what it must do to be saved."⁷³ Barth further explained that the urgency of the new situation did not change what he

⁶⁹Cochrane, pp. 112/3.

⁷⁰ibid., pp. 113/4.

⁷¹ibid., pp. 114-7.; Although not published until four years later (1937), *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for the Schooling of the Hitler Youth*, is an unambiguous illustration of Nazi policy towards German youth regarding systematic indoctrination in a worldview built on the inherent 'unlikeness of men' (intro.), and into a mode of necessary enmity against those who have the audacity to oppose this 'truth' by teaching the seductive lie of the equality of all men- specifically, youth were instructed in suspicion of and self-defense against, "Free Masons, Marxists and the Christian Church." (*Primer*, p.9.)

⁷²Barth, "How I Changed my Mind 1938", in *How I Changed my Mind*. (HCM), p.45.

⁷³ibid.

had to say. Rather, the clearly Christologically-centred theology he had already been developing deepened, and acquired a new application.

The situation could be described, such that as the ethical implications of *Christian* belief surfaced in parallel with the degree to which that belief was challenged by the National Socialist heresy, Barth found his theological stand requiring increasingly 'political' articulation over against that heresy. Having already tried the tactical, narrowly political approach of opposition to the Nazi party in his involvement with the secular Social Democrat party, Barth prophetically recognised that the issue at stake with the rise of National Socialism was not the existence of a dictatorship, but the struggle for the soul of the German people, and for Christians and non-Christians everywhere. National Socialism did not *primarily* represent an unfortunately bad political abuse, but a statement about the 'reality' of the world.

In other words, Hitler provided with it an analysis of the *malaise* of the 'races' of the world, and also a solution: salvation through human exertion led by and embodied in himself. Based as it was on presuppositions it considered irrefutable, the National Socialist view of the world effectively amounted to a Creed or Confession which demanded the allegiance of the whole person: body (in leisure and work), mind (in perception), and soul (in belief- especially in unbounded trust in the *Führer* regardless of his *seemingly* contradictory actions and policies).⁷⁴ Because of its absolute nature, National Socialism could not be merely tempered by the co-existence of its critical opposite.

Since 'heresy' is a serious (and today unpopular) charge, its meaning in this context needs explanation. 'Heresy' by definition meant that National Socialist ideology was not simply an alternate interpretation of some tertiary, or persistently ambiguous Christian belief- even in its 'German Christian' form. Therefore, it could not be accommodated in a spirit of charity, or tolerance- nor could it be resisted on a merely pragmatic level. 'Heresy' was not a designation in a mere battle of religious preference. By definition, it described a belief that bears fruit deadly to the human soul, and therefore mind and body. Since its physical and intellectual reality are products of its spiritual nature, resistance begins at the spiritual core- the place where fundamental beliefs regarding God, humanity, and human capabilities, malaise and salvation are confessed. Because of the aspect of salvation, the confessional core is also a

⁷⁴The absolute, body-mind-soul demand of National Socialism is historically indisputable. A brief glance at the *Primer* is sufficient evidence. In the *Primer*, the concept of racial 'difference' was developed in terms of all three- the main point being that it is not enough to be racially similar on the outside. People can appear similar in body. The young Nazi should not be fooled, however, but must look into the *mind*, and even the *soul* of the person whose race he/she is trying to ascertain. The primary example was of course, German Jews, many of whom appear German in body and mind. Yet, a simple glance at their belief shows that they are not German. (mainly, their beliefs exclude the 'truth' of the supremacy of some races over others). Moreover, a look at the soul of some Germans shows that they are not truly Nordic, but somehow corrupted. Their belief in the egalitarian love of God which they see also required of men, shows the deformity of their souls in relation to the souls of true Germans. Throughout, the young Nazi is admonished, encouraged, and emotionally and psychologically manipulated by the language of the document into striving for German purity- body, mind and soul. The sign of purity is his 'baptism' (initiation) into the Nazi party through the rite of repetition of a creed which provides a standard of values (of ethical 'right' and 'wrong'). Among other things, the articles of this confession state: "The leader is always right. Never violate discipline. The program is your dogma: it demands your complete surrender to the cause. Whatever serves the interest of the movement, and through it Germany and the German people, is right." (p.xxiv)

statement of hope. By definition, 'heresy' offers a false hope. Toleration of false hope for life means being an accomplice to the crime of delusion, leading to death.

Since the confessional core *has* an intellectual and physical embodiment, resistance begun at the core cannot stop in compromise at either of those two levels. In 1933, Barth recognised that one could not reject the Nazi confessional core, and yet adopt even a modified version of its intellectual framework, or accommodate its physical reality. Barth's reaction in 1933 cannot be described as apolitical. Nor can his increasingly vehement rejection of Hitler's government and aims be interpreted as a gradual politicization of an 'apolitical' and 'fundamentalist'⁷⁵ doctrinal orientation. Barth saw the issue from 1933 as both one of the 'fundamentals' of belief and hope, and their political embodiment.

Nevertheless, Barth did not begin in 1933 to advocate a military opposition to Hitler, because the situation of Hitler's control was not that extreme. He still held power more by manipulation of fear, and persuasion to faith in himself, than he did by brute force. Thus, Barth's immediate concern with theology reflects the assessment that the National Socialist heresy which was physically dangerous to Germany and Europe could not be removed by tearing at its still tender (though ugly) shoots and leaves, but only by approaching it at its monstrous root.⁷⁶

In 1933, Barth articulated what he clearly saw as *the* issue- the deadly Nazi faith and hope- in terms of the church's freedom to speak of the expectant reality unique to her. While encouraging his students to "keep on working as normally as possible" in the months following Hitler's election, Barth himself helped the church to carry on her work in the midst of change by maintaining "the biblical gospel" specifically "in the face of the new regime and the ideology which had now become predominant."⁷⁷

A few days after the Reichstag was burnt (February 27), providing the Nazi government with a reason for issuing an emergency measures decree, Barth delivered a lecture (March 10, and 12) entitled "The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom", in which he publically addressed the situation directly. In the lecture he defined the situation the church faced as one in which she was in danger of replacing God with other gods by thinking in terms of 'God *and*';

⁷⁵'fundamentalist' in this sense being an imprecise and derogatory term used in mainstream (self-styled 'open-minded') Christian and secular political discourse as a label for groups from all religions whose clearly articulated beliefs, and ethical integrity is disagreed with, and hence meant to be represented as odiously unenlightened due to critical engagement with prevalent, unquestioned categories of 'correct' and 'incorrect'- as rigidly defined and absolutised by the (ironically) 'open-minded' mainstream. 'Fundamental' in the second sense (below) refers to the etymological meaning of the word, as descriptive of that which has to do with the most basic, or in this case, with presuppositions upon which all other conceptions, perceptions, and prescriptions are built.

⁷⁶The first action required of the church in the political situation was: "to hold fast to and in a completely new way to understand and practice the truth that God stands above all gods, and that the church in *Volk* and society has, under all circumstances, and even against the state, her own task, proclamation, and order, determined for her in Holy Scriptures. Despite the fact that even today many...will not see and admit it, there could have been no other outcome than that this truth of the freedom of the church, despite the claims of National Socialism, should come to signify not only a 'religious' decision, not only a decision of church policy, but also and *ipso facto* a political decision....Behind this heresy, which I saw penetrating into the church, there stood from the very beginning the one who soon stepped out as the far more dangerous adversary, the one hailed at the beginning- and not least by many Christians- as deliverer and saviour: Hitler, himself the personification of National Socialism." *HCM*, pp. 46/7.

⁷⁷Busch, p.224. Lecture delivered in Copenhagen and Aarhus, Denmark.

by connecting God's revelation with prevalent human 'authorities' (hermeneutically authoritative existential concepts) like 'order', 'existence', 'state' and 'people'.⁷⁸

In early June, (right after von Bodelschwingh had been elected *Reichsbishop*) Barth arranged a working group on a Reformed confessional articulation: the 'Fourteen Dusseldorf Theses'. Strategically drawing on the resource of Reformed history, the first thesis rejected leadership conceived of in terms of 'God *and*', by exactly restating the first Berne thesis of 1528: "The holy Christian Church, whose sole head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, keeps to it and does not hearken to the voice of a stranger [contextually, 'stranger' should read '*Führer and or Reichsbishop*']".⁷⁹

If von Bodelschwingh's election was a serious matter, the circumstances of his resignation were an even more serious sign of the danger the church (all denominations) was in. In a climate where the language of the demands of 'existence' and the present 'hour' proliferated, Barth named the present theological crisis one of *existence*. The day after von Bodelschwingh resigned (June 25), Barth sat down and wrote his well-known trumpet call: the pamphlet saliently titled *Theologische Existenz Heute!* (*Theological Existence Today!*- *TEH!*).⁸⁰

In it Barth said that the main question facing the church at *this* time, was the question of learning 'what must be spoken at *all* times': the Word of God. Over against the temptation to try and face dangers by drawing on 'other sources'; by seeking God in places other than Scripture, the church must see that the Word of God (Jesus Christ, testified to in the New *and* Old Testament) is the only thing she can lean on in need. When theological professors abandon their job of attending to the Word through zeal for another cause (no matter how ethically justified, German nationalism was justified by 'righteous indignation' in the face of perceived injustice to and victimisation of Germans), they exchange their 'rights as first-born for a mess of pottage'.⁸¹

For example, the question of church reform is very real. In the face of it, one is tempted to applaud the reforming activities that have been going on (re-structuring and adding of

⁷⁸ *ibid.* - : a message Barth reiterated in a lecture Nov. 6, 1933. (p.231.)

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.225.; also Cochrane, p.97. An important word must be said to clear up any mis-understanding concerning the office of Reich bishop. 'Bishop', while an acceptable office in the Lutheran Church, was not acceptable to the Reformed Church. Thus, an enforced 'ecumenism' which subjected the Reformed Church to the spiritual direction of a bishop (and the office described by the German Christians was one of doctrinal and pastoral authority), was a serious invasion of her ecclesiastical structure- and this only at the surface level. At the deeper level, such invasion was a rejection of the theological reasons that the Reformed church had developed for her particular ecclesiastical structure: namely, that over against the Catholic Church, she did not believe that any human being could be vested with this type of authority. For similar theological reasons, the Lutheran office of bishop was not spiritually (doctrinally/pastorally) authoritative either, but administrative. Thus, the German Christian creation of a supreme, *Führer*-type bishop was also an ecclesiastical and theological imposition on the Lutheran Church. However, because of familiarity with the concept of 'bishop', Lutherans were not initially as suspicious of the idea of a Reich bishop. Von Bodelschwingh's appeasing of his own conscience through a representation of his function to himself as that more of a deacon-bishop than a bishop-bishop illustrates the danger this conceptual proximity held. (The German 'United' Church was an earlier attempt to united Reformed and Lutheran Churches. Regarding the 'bishop question', it was mixed- but also not very vociferous. Since its 'unity' had been achieved largely through a sacrifice of substantial theological reflection to ecclesiastical politics, substantial theological discussion tended to be dealt with by a return to the traditions of its constitutive elements (which was not generally desirable, since it threatened peaceful 'unity').

⁸⁰ Busch, p.226.; Cochrane, p.102.- both sources say Barth wrote the day of- June 24th. Barth himself said 'eve of June 25' (*Theological Existence Today!*, trans. R. B. Hoyle, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933) p. 17)

⁸¹ *TEH!*, pp.9-17.

bishops). Yet, this reform that is happening has nothing to do with the substance of the church. It does not come out of reflection on and recognition of the demands of the Word. Instead, the church has allowed a political agenda to become her theological standard. That the German Christians make use of the National Socialist use of force only further indicates the dubiousness of their authority springing from the Word and theology.⁶²

Specifically, her adoption of the *Führer* principle has not come out of careful theological reflection on the Bible. Before 1933, no-one recognised this 'pressing need' to have 'one spiritual, authoritative leader'. Now suddenly- in light of the concrete form of Hitler-obedience to the principle has become urgently necessary. This sort of compromise deprives the church of her very theological existence.

Theological existence will only be possible if she becomes sober again, and recognises that she *has* a leader: Jesus Christ.⁶³ "The Evangelical Church ought rather to elect to be thinned down till it be a tiny group and go into the catacombs than make a compact, even covertly, with this doctrine"⁶⁴: that it is the church's role to support the National Socialist government; that it is her missionary task to accomodate herself to the language of the people, to create a broad way on which they can find their way into the church; that she must help the people fulfill a calling different from the calling 'from and to Christ'; that the church must preach *under*, as well as *in* the Third Reich; that the church must widen her Confession to include the aims of the people, as a 'weapon' to help them; and that fellowship is determined by blood.⁶⁵

Theological existence depends on a clear 'No' to this doctrine, and therefore also to all similar doctrine over the centuries which underpins it, and gives it a precedent. A clear 'No' will mean disobedience to the "doctrines, pronouncements, and measures of the German Christian *Reichs*-Bishop and his prebendaries"⁶⁶ on the basis that they are contrary to the Gospel *even if "the final consequences will have to be paid"*. (ital.mine)⁶⁷ Opposition on the basis of the Gospel, not political tactics, is the only way to true freedom, regardless of the consequences.

Since this freedom has to do with the allegiance of the church to *her* 'Führer' Jesus Christ, it is not maintained through political and strategic alliances to the right and left with those who do not recognise her Master. It is not when the church twists herself into some other shape, but when she concerns herself with what she *is* that she really serves God and her people. To concern herself with what she is, means to proclaim 'the Word of God': the message of "forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting"⁶⁸- or salvation.

⁶²also see *ibid.*, pp.54, 62-5.

⁶³*ibid.*, pp.18-50.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p.50.

⁶⁵*ibid.*, pp.49-52. Barth's own list is an item or two longer, and he 'finishes' it with a dotted line indicating that the list goes on.

⁶⁶*ibid.*, p.67.

⁶⁷*ibid.*

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p.84.

By being the place where salvation is proclaimed, the church and theology are a 'frontier' or 'boundary' to the State. By being willing to unite in the proclamation of the Word which 'abides forever', they remind the State- "even this 'Total State'"⁸⁹ of its limits. Thus, they remind people of where their salvation is, serving them by making it possible for them to recognise it through making it clear- not through obscuring it by 'translating' it into the terms they insist on hearing.⁹⁰

While the church's primary need is an exclusive spiritual 'centre of resistance', that resistance is not 'just spiritual'. Spiritual resistance *is* the ground of real resistance- but it is the *ground*. The repetition and affirmation of the church's own Creed is by word *and deed*.⁹¹

Barth sent a copy of *TEH!* to Hitler on July 1, explaining that it was a recommendation to German pastors that they reflect on their position and work in light of the recent events in church politics.⁹² After the pamphlet was written, Barth continued a monthly journal (here *TET*) under the same name, as a means of continuing to encourage the body of the church broader than his immediate contacts in her 'proper tasks', and drawing other contributors into that activity. The original pamphlet, *TEH!*, was banned July 28, 1934, after 37,000 copies had been sold, and after it had already contributed to inspiring a significant movement of resistance in the church to Hitler's spiritual and ecclesiastical encroachment.⁹³

On the eve of the general elections for the new *Reich* Church (July 23, 1933), Barth declared at a meeting that for the sake of the Gospel, one could not vote for either of the lists presented.⁹⁴ Observing that the church does not know any more what the freedom of the Gospel is, because she does not know what it is to have a Lord, Barth proposed a third list and encouraged people to vote for it, 'as a statement of faith'.⁹⁵ On the day Müller was elected *Reichshishop* (September 27), Barth wrote that collaboration with such a regime signified fundamental adherence to its supporting heresy, and to the 'usurpation' that was now consummated- although this stance did not imply a rejection of the church institution itself.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ibid.

⁹⁰ibid., pp.72-7, 80-5.

⁹¹ibid., pp.76-8.

⁹²Busch, p. 227.

⁹³Parker, *Karl Barth*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970) p.90, in October 1933. Pastor Martin Niemöller drafted the terms of a 'Pastor's Emergency League', (PEL) which was to be an association of pastors who were ready to stay true to their calling to be bound only to Scripture and the Reformation Confessions in their preaching, over against the demands of the German Christians that they preach Nazism. The terms also included agreement of mutual support. The wide-spread response of pastors who wanted to join has often been at least partly attributed to the challenge of *TEH!*. The idea is that Barth sparked serious reflection around Germany. Then, when the right moment came, numbers of reflective pastors were ready to be organized by Niemöller.: according to Cochrane, pp.106-8., Niemöller started the PEL on September 21. 1,300 signed-up immediately- 7,036 by January 15, 1934. (after Müller's election, the Sports Palace Scandal, and the incorporation of church youth into Hitler Youth). The protest which Müller found so unexpected after the Sports Palace incident was largely co-ordinated by leaders of the PEL, and included a visit of Niemöller to Müller, and the denunciation of the church government from some 30,000 pulpits, coupled with an emphatic recognition of "Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament as the only standard and rule of our faith and life". (Cochrane, p.113.) At the Ulm Conference (April, 1934), the trans-denominational (truly ecumenical) PEL became known as the 'Confessing Church'.

⁹⁴Busch, p.228.

⁹⁵ibid., Cornu, op.cit., pp.31/2.

⁹⁶Of significance also is the fact that three weeks earlier (Sept. 6), the Reich Church government had officially adopted the 'Aryan clause' which excluded Jews from service in the church.

Shortly afterwards, Barth did reject an offer that had been made to him to sit on a theological committee for the development of an 'ecumenical' theology for the Reich Church.⁹⁷

Barth later (October 22) explained this stance of critical participation in the German Evangelical Church, structured as it was according to the political vision of the Reich, by saying on the one hand that the position the church was in was a "public emergency"⁹⁸ and should be treated as such. "Co-operation with this Church government, even if it may occasionally seem a practical advantage, implies fundamental recognition of the heresy that has infiltrated and of the usurpation that has taken place."⁹⁹ If the Church is to be healed, "neither must be recognised".

On the other hand, quoting Isaiah 23:16 ("He that believeth shall not run away."), Barth expressed his conviction that co-operation with the Church institution in the area of theological and pastoral work was not only advisable, but a duty.¹⁰⁰

Barth expanded on these points in the forward to the volume of *TET* sub-titled "*Luther Celebrations*" published four days (November 19) after Krause's famous speech in celebration of Luther's German-ness. He pointed out that the protest against Krause's speech was insufficiently grounded- if it had been theologically perspicacious, protestors would not have behaved as though Krause's speech was a surprise. Directing their protest almost solely to Krause's extremism, they seemed to ignore the fact that the false teaching of the German Christians was a mere example of a much broader trend of teaching widely acceptable in the church that needed to be questioned comprehensively.¹⁰¹

In their joy over Müller's immediate suspension of both Krause and the 'Aryan paragraph', they separated the symptom from the disease and forgot to consider that as long as the doctrine remained unchallenged, the specific points they found objectionable could be re-applied. Worse, false compromise with a less clearly objectionable form of the theology affecting the German Christians might well have even longer lasting consequences for the church. Moreover, Christians could not oppose the doctrine of the German Christians in their belief-choices, and yet accommodate them ecclesio-politically.¹⁰²

In their enthusiasm, those who protested Krause were in danger of missing the point: that the clarity of the heresy which had been embraced by the church implied an offer to "arise and turn round in her spiritual centre: from the ideologies to the simple, hard, glad truth of

⁹⁷ Cornu, p.33.; Parker, op.cit., p.91.; Busch, p.229.

⁹⁸ forward to *TET*, v.3, 1933, subtitled "Reformation as Decision", p. 3-, in Barth, *The German Church Conflict (GCC)*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956) p.18.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp.18/9.

¹⁰¹ *GCC*, pp.18-20.; as Barth put it in 1942 "[I]t is a monumental disgrace to all Protestantism that the monster of National Socialism could be born in the very cradle of the Reformation." (Barth, *The Church and the War*, p.15. (CW)

¹⁰² As Barth put it: "Even a hundred per cent political victory in the Church by the opposition would be of no avail if the opposition did not then understand the need to take hold of the roots of the malady in our Church, which has only broken out amongst the German-Christians, but which existed before them and is not now confined to them....if all is not to have been in vain, our opposition must rather go further and be fundamentally directed against the ecclesiastical and theological system of neo-protestantism in general." *GCC*, pp.20-1.

which she was born....to the salvation of the German people..."¹⁰³ Such a turnaround, Barth went on to encourage his readers, did not need masses of people, even if a few accepted the offer by preaching and teaching the Word of God, the church would be holy again.

Also included in the same volume of *TET* was a concise, six-point summary of the true nature of the church struggle, as Barth saw it,¹⁰⁴ and seven 'countertheses' written in opposition to a set of German Christian statements known as the 'Rengsdorf Theses'.¹⁰⁵ The seventh thesis with Barth's response is particularly important with regards to the relationship between State and Church. Drawing a line between temporal and eternal matters, the Rengsdorf theology proposed a temporal obedience to the State which was independent of the church's eternal, Word-directed obedience. In response, Barth flatly rejected the idea that the church should have any temporal code of conduct which was separate from the Word. In temporal as much as eternal matters, the church's one obedience was to the living Word.¹⁰⁶

In the conclusion of his response to the "Rengsdorf Theses", Barth called the document's so-called 'theology' a philosophical 'gnosis' which manipulates Christian concepts but disregards their substance (articulated in the first three articles of the Creed); and which makes itself authoritative through usurpation. Therefore, it is not "to be discussed but to be entirely rejected and opposed just for the sake of Christian love".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁰⁴ Barth also submitted these points to a meeting of the Pastors' Emergency League, Nov. 15. (Cochrane, p.199.) *TET*, v.4, pp.20/1. in *GCC*, pp.16/7. These points are extremely important (esp. point 3) for an unambiguous understanding of Barth's analysis of the contemporary situation in Germany. They are: 1) Our protest is directed against the teaching of the German-Christians, represented by the government of the German Church, because it is false doctrine and has become the prevailing teaching in the Church through usurpation. 2) Because the doctrine and attitude of the German-Christians is nothing but a particularly vigorous result of the entire neo-protestant development since 1700, our protest is directed against a spreading and existent corruption of the whole evangelical Church. 3) Our protest against the false doctrine of the German-Christians cannot begin only at the 'Aryan paragraph', at the rejection of the Old Testament, at the Arianism of the German-Christian Christology, at the naturalism and Pelagianism of the German-Christian doctrines of justification and sanctification, at the idolizing of the state in German-Christian ethics. It must be directed fundamentally against the fact (which is the source of all individual errors) that, beside the Holy Scriptures as the unique source of revelation, the German-Christians affirm the German nationhood, its history and its contemporary political situation as a second source of revelation, and thereby betray themselves to be believers in 'another God'. 4) Our protest against the usurpation of the German-Christians cannot begin only with the cause of suspensions and similar isolated interferences by the German-Christian governments. It must deny the legality of these Church governments as such in view of the events of June 24 [Jäger's appointment, von Bodelschwingh's resignation and Müller's march into office with the S.A.], and July 23 [new church elections], of the setting-up and also of the resolutions of the synods in August and September. 5) Our protest must, in each single action, keep the nature and the extent of the Church's sickness in mind. It can, whether on individual points or as a whole, only be raised meaningfully, seriously and forcibly when we are clear and united about the nature and extent of this sickness and when, therefore, we wish to fight it in its nature and as a whole. 6) Whoever is of 'another opinion' in any one of these five points himself belongs to the German-Christians and should not be permitted to distrust a serious opposition by the Church any longer.

¹⁰⁵ the Rengsdorf Theses were published in *Evangelium im dritten Reich*, no.45.- see Cochrane, pp119-23. for reference, and the theses, with Barth's response, in full.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.122.; also in a letter to Rudolf Bultmann, Feb. 27, 1934. Barth asked "Is National Socialism problematical only the moment it manifestly becomes a 'political religion', and not already in principle as a 'political order'?" (*Barth-Bultmann Letters*, p.73) He went on to say that he had yet to face the problem personally, but that he still could not accept the distinction in principle between 'political religion' and 'political order'.

¹⁰⁷ Cochrane, p.122.; also Cornu, pp.36/7.: On this basis, Barth openly spoke against Emil Brunner's theology (in his pamphlet simply titled "Nein!", written just after the Barmen Synod in the summer of 1934), which he had been suspicious of since the 20's (mention in the text above). He felt it unwisely separated the dog from the bite. Even though it rejected the latter, it compromised with the former, which left its adherents naively defenseless with regard to both. (see Barth's response in back of Brunner, *Natural Theology*, Peter Fraenkel trans., p.68/9 "The real danger seems to me to lie in a future attitude of the Church and of theology which is informed by the spirit of many on both sides to-day who are undecided and ready for compromise, and which might stand at the end of all that we are now going through, such an end would mean that we would continue comfortably or even busily along the very road which has led us to the present catastrophe and upon which we might meet even greater catastrophes in future....a breath of fresh air must now make an end to the compromises by which we have now lived for so long and from which we had almost died....The reason why I must resist Brunner so decidedly is that I am thinking of the future theology of compromise...") As Barth also expressed in a letter to Bultmann (July 10, 1934, *Barth-Bultmann Letters*, p.76.).

A month later (December 11)¹⁰⁸, Barth was encouraged by the phenomenal growth of the protest movement in the church (above mentioned Pastors' Emergency League), but cautioned that over-concern with the German Christians obscured the sober and humbling reality that their heresy arose in *our* 'bosom', and that the church's future would likely be worse than what had happened so far. Rather than spending all her energy pointing fingers, the church should be ashamed, both of the heresy that has found nourishment in her, and of the lack of unity opposition to that heresy made lamentably necessary. For Barth, although Aryanism was without a doubt to be rejected, the deeper lesson of Krause was that we ourselves must be 'converted' from the errors that led to its acceptance, and make a new theological start.

Hand-in-hand with his protests, Barth was himself 'practicing what he preached' through the positive and necessary, countervailing activity of theological work. In 1933, Barth continued work on his *Church Dogmatics* (CD I.2, significantly includes ch.2,pt.2: 'The Revelation of God': 'The Incarnation of the Word'; ch.3,sect.20: 'Holy Scripture': 'Authority in the Church'; ch.4,sect.22,(sub-sect.3), 'The Proclamation of the Church': 'Mission of the Church': 'Dogmatics as Ethics'); preached a sermon (December 10) emphasizing the Jewishness of Jesus¹⁰⁹; and published a commentary on 1 Corinthians.

Titled *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Barth noted in this commentary that Paul opposed early gnosticism with the statement that he "resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ". Barth's emphasis was that, against gnosticisms, the significance of the incarnation of Christ is expressed in the biblical hope of the 'resurrection of the dead', known only in Christ. In light of knowledge of the Incarnation (Jesus Christ), the meaning of the 'resurrection of the dead' is that human temporal life (read, 'activity') is placed under the 'last word', or decisive authority, of God.¹¹⁰

Through the following year (1934), the double trend of Barth's discipleship of Christ (political and theological protest and affirmation) led him into deeper engagement with Germany's circumstances. The two most significant events for Barth in this year were his drafting of the "Barmen Declaration", and his refusal to take the Nazi oath.

those who worked positively with Natural Theology in that context could *become* German Christians- indeed, Barth found that most of them did. (Earlier in the same year Barth had fallen out with his friend Friedrich Gogarten because Gogarten's own tendencies toward Natural Theology had finally resulted in his wholesale adoption of the German Christian theology. (Busch, p.229))

¹⁰⁸ *TET*, v.5, subtitled "The Church of Jesus Christ"., *ibid*, pp.22-5.

¹⁰⁹ Busch, pp.234/5.

¹¹⁰ *The Resurrection of the Dead*. trans. H.J. Stanning. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933) see esp. foreword and pp.95-123.

The Barmen Declaration

On the same day (January 4, 1934) that Bishop Müller re-instated the 'Aryan paragraph' and decreed a 'Muzzling Order', which forbade pastors to speak about any matter related to the church controversy on pain of suspension, a Free Synod of Reformed Churches meeting in Barmen adopted a "Declaration on the Right Understanding of the Reformation Confessions in the German Evangelical Church Today". The General Assembly of the Reformed Alliance for Germany also adopted it the following day.

Although drawn up by one man (Barth), the "Declaration" was the beginning of a *church confession*: *church* because its collective adoption (over 320 leaders representing more than 167 congregations) meant that what had formerly been more strictly Barth's own opinion was now broadly acknowledged to represent the church; *confession* because it was a contextually-embedded, direct response to a specific heresy. Briefly, it stated that the real problem at hand was not how to get rid of the German Christians, but what to do in order to form a united front against the century-old error they proclaimed: the belief that humanity has a legitimate authority (equal to or above God's revelation) over the church's message.¹¹¹

As has been discussed, in the German Christian case specifically, this erroneous stripping away of the complete authority of God regarding the content of the church's message opened the door to a hermeneutical methodology which subordinated Christian belief to Germanism, producing an indigenous (German), syncretistic 'Kairos' theology.¹¹² Once the thought-forms of many in the church had been co-opted in this way, it was a small matter for them to be persuaded to take the logically consistent, concomitant step: subordination of church offices and proclamation to the ultimate direction of the National Socialist government and its propaganda.¹¹³

On January 26, Barth clarified his call for a united front by explaining that, over against the false ecumenism (false because based on false creed-like presuppositions) of the Reich Church, a *catholic and apostolic church*- or true German *Evangelical*¹¹⁴ Church- must maintain

¹¹¹Busch, p.236.; Cornu, pp.39/40.; Cochrane, p.129/33.

¹¹²for Barth's discussion of the meaning of the term 'Kairos' in this connection, see his lengthy discussion of E. Hirsch's (then new) book *The Present Spiritual Situation as Mirrored in Philosophy and Theology* (in which Hirsch expounds on the 'German hour'). in Barth's (significantly) Easter Day contribution (pp.3-13) to the 9th volume of *TET*, subtitled "Revelation, Church, Theology", in *GCC*, pp.28-37.

¹¹³Not insignificantly, Barth's lectures in 1934 were on Luke 1. In them he underscored the identity of Jesus as sole Lord, Saviour, and Deliverer, as well as the significance of Jesus' identity thus understood on the real life and action of the individual in all his/her choices. (lectures published as *The Great Promise*)

¹¹⁴'*Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*' is sometimes rendered 'German Protestant Church'- mostly by North Americans anxious to avoid the word 'evangelical', because it is unpopular in some influential circles. However, this rendering is less satisfactory than the more common one 'German Evangelical Church'. While translating *evangelische* 'protestant' is factually correct in that the DEK is not Roman Catholic and is inspired by the Reformation, the word 'evangelical' holds layers of meaning not adequately represented in the word 'protestant'. To assume that the German understanding of 'evangelical' is/was synonymous with the word as it is negatively slurred in North America is to miss its significance entirely- and the significance of Barth's work. It is absolutely crucial to an understanding of the theological crises of the 20th century to retain the term 'evangelical'. Taken quite literally, it means 'pertaining to the Gospel', as it is heralded in the Old Testament, and presented in the New. The meaning and substance of the unique identity of Christianity is wrapped up in its orientation on the biblical 'Gospel'. The one thing all Protestant denominations, and the Catholic Church held in common was the Bible (Old and New Testaments). Barth's use of 'evangelical' indicates his assessment that the crises he faced were crises of the identity of catholic Christianity ('Protestant' and

her important theological differences in the true unity of a common confession of the First Commandment.¹¹⁵

This *substantial ecumenism*, or common front, against the prevalent heretical usurpation was solidified in the form of a confessional statement almost unanimously adopted at the 'First Confessing Synod' (Synod of members of the inter-denominational 'Confessing Church'- formerly, 'Pastors' Emergency League') also held in Barmen on May 29-31.¹¹⁶ The statement was actually called a 'theological declaration' due to Lutheran linguistic scruples, although in Barth's opinion, it was "in fact...what people in the olden days used to call a confession, with all the business of accepting and rejecting...".¹¹⁷

The "Declaration" listed its articles in traditional confessional fashion- affirming a Scriptural reference as a base, stating the meaning of that reference, and rejecting the usurping, contradictory and heretical meanings. The most important article- the one in whose light all subsequent articles are developed and understood- was the first which affirmed the lordship of Christ over against false lords.¹¹⁸

The subsequent articles rejected and affirmed the following: They rejected (2) the false claim that there are areas of our life in which we belong to lords other than Jesus Christ; (3) the

Catholic) itself. Thus, he calls his theology an 'evangelical' theology. A rendering of 'evangelical' to 'protestant' reaffirms a profound division Barth deliberately hoped would be overcome. Although he rejected (largely Catholic) 'Natural Theology', he did not think that that theology properly defined the real substance of the Catholic Church- just as its presence in the Protestant Church was not integral to Christian identity there either. Rather, because it was destructive in both places (obscuring the Gospel- ie. message of God's justice, grace, forgiving love and therefore, absolute claim to allegiance), he worked to call 'Christians' back to their common 'essentials', and make a way for a fundamental unity in the acknowledgement of identity in the 'holy, catholic, and apostolic church.' Moreover, only a deep, authentic commonality, such as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, would make a gracious attitude toward other differences possible. Difference could only be brought together under the ruling umbrella of God's grace, signified in the Gospel as it is recounted in Scripture. Barth was clearly inspired by the Reformers, but recognised that their intention had not been to break away from other Christians initially. He was therefore greatly encouraged by the possibilities for rapprochement that seemed to offer themselves during Vatican II.

¹¹⁵see the forward (pp.4-8) to *TET*, v.7, "God's Will and Our Wishes", in *GCC*, pp.25-8.

¹¹⁶Any lingering doubt as to the link between the heresy in question, and the Statements of the Barmen Declaration is immediately dispelled by reference to Barth's explanation of these in *CD* II.1, pp.172-8.

¹¹⁷Busch, p.245.: Also, in order to make its contextual meaning clear, the "Barmen Declaration" prefaced its six articles with the following statements: "We, the representatives of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, of free synods, Church assemblies, and parish organizations united in the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church, declare that....We are bound together by the confession of the one Lord of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We publicly declare before all evangelical Churches in Germany that what they hold in common in this Confession is grievously imperiled, and with it the unity of the German Evangelical Church. It is threatened by the teaching methods and actions of the ruling Church party of the 'German Christians'....This threat consists in the fact that the theological basis, in which the German Evangelical Church is united, has been continually and systematically thwarted and rendered ineffective by alien principles, on the part of the Church administration....we may and must speak with one voice in this matter today. Precisely because we want to be and to remain faithful to our various Confessions, we may not keep silent, since we believe that we have been given a common message to utter in a time of common need and temptation....In view of the errors of the 'German Christians' of the present Reich Church government which are devastating the Church and are also thereby breaking up the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical truths...."(Cochrane, pp.238/9)

^{118a}1. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except through me." (John 14:6) "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber....I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved." (John 10:1,9)

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation." (Cochrane, p.239.): the absolute primacy of the gracious Gospel of Christ, as opposed to its subordination to other laws (read, 'necessities', for example, the 'law' of duty to the State) is further explicated by Barth in the pamphlet he had intended to read at the Barmen Conference, but couldn't: "Gospel and Law", published in *TET*, 1935. (see Barth, *God, Grace and the Gospel*, pp. 3-27.)

church's permission to abandon its message in favour of prevailing ideological/political convictions or whim; (4) the church's 'right' apart from this ministry to give itself or receive special leaders with ruling powers; (5) the State's 'right' or 'obligation' to become the single and total order of life, and of the 'necessity' of the church to become an organ of the State by taking on its tasks; and (6) any idea that "the Word and work of the Lord" ought to be placed in service to other "desires, purposes and plans"¹¹⁹.

They affirmed that (2) God's forgiveness, justification and sanctification constitutes a claim on our whole life (1 Cor. 1:30)¹²⁰; (3) that as the 'Church of abandoned sinners', the church lives solely from this one message which she testifies to in faith, obedience, message and order- she abandons this message under no circumstances (Eph. 4:15/6)¹²¹; (4) that the offices of the church are not a hierarchy of dominion- ministry is exercised by the whole congregation (Matt. 20:25/6)¹²²; (5) that the State provides for justice and peace by exercise of force, according to human ability/judgement, and that while being grateful for and respecting the State's role, the church calls rulers and ruled to responsibility of the Kingdom of God (to *God's* commands and righteousness)- and trusts and obeys only the Word "by which God upholds all things" (1 Peter 2:17)¹²⁴; and (6) that the church's very freedom consists in her commission to deliver the message of God's free grace to all people on behalf of Christ, in sermon and sacrament (Matt. 28:20, II Tim. 2:9)¹²⁵.

Only through a profound mis-reading of the context of the "Barmen Declaration" can one possibly conclude that it was 'narrow', 'exclusionary' or apolitically dogmatic. In being 'narrowed' down so strictly to the bare (biblical) essentials of Christian faith, the "Declaration" could be affirmed by the broadest spectrum of Christians¹²⁶- thus overcoming Hitler's 'divide-and-conquer' strategy (ironic in face of the Reich Church claim) for the first time- even if imperfectly.

In 'excluding' all dogmas but the *Christian* one, the "Declaration" gave *Christians* a solid base from which to act in confidence, on behalf of all people- thus resisting the Nazi

¹¹⁹ Cochrane, p.242.

¹²⁰ "It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

¹²¹ "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 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."

¹²² "Jesus called them together and said, '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.'"

¹²³ Cochrane, p.241.

¹²⁴ "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king."

¹²⁵ "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." "...God's word is not chained."

¹²⁶ (except German Christians, and those who thought they could separate their political agenda and theology, rejecting the former and adopting a modified version of the latter) The Confession of Barmen did not replace the earlier Confessions which were significant for the Lutheran and Reformed church. It was not a melding of different Confessions, or a replacement. It was an entirely new Confession which upheld the differences of the earlier ones (still very important to each denomination), by focusing on and further developing the one substantial thing they implicitly held in common: the Lordship of the Saviour Jesus Christ. The implication of the fifth thesis was also a novel formulation for both the Lutheran and Reformed tradition- although it was not inconsistent with the basic tenets of both concerning the primacy of the Word. (see also Cochrane, p.187-91)

'watering-down' strategy.¹²⁷ In resolutely opposing the Christian dogma to Hitler's, members of the 'Confessing Church' marked themselves out for easier identification as political obstacles to the 'religiously neutral' State. Nazi persecution¹²⁸ of the Confessing Church and its pastors is perhaps the most forceful refutation of the idea that the "Barmen Declaration" might have been 'apolitical'.

In terms of the demands of the political and social context at the time, the "Barmen Declaration" signified a movement against the prevalent 'necessities' and popular language and philosophy of life, in order that *the* truly pressing issue might be addressed. As can be seen from the content of the "Document", it did not try to merely restate orthodox Creeds, but rather to say them anew. For the church, the "Declaration" was not a matter of affirmation of a static past, nor of obedience to the dictates of the present 'hour', but of meaningful (contextually responsive) confession of her one, eternal and living Lord in the present.

In terms of Barth's overall reaction to the National Socialists, the related contents of articles 1 (the supremacy of Christ alone), and 5 (the resultant implications for the roles, limits and relation of Church and State) is a paradigmatic shorthand. The most immediate cost to Barth of articles 1 and 5 was his repatriation to Switzerland. Barth did not pay this cost because he wrote the "Declaration". Rather, he had written it because he believed it, with its implications. Because he had written it, he took the ethical meaning of its dogma seriously: he refused, as a servant of the church and follower of Christ, to serve the nation (synonymous then in Germany with State) by taking an oath that he felt amounted to a pledge of allegiance to the person of Hitler as Lord, unless modified.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ As Barth later (1954) said: "At that time we were concerned with fixing certain Christian truths in connection with a definite and necessary *action*: it was necessary at that time for all the Evangelical churches and congregations in Germany to resist and attack the assimilation and alienation threatened by the German Christians. The church had to be strengthened by a reconsideration of its presuppositions and summoned to join battle boldly and confidently.... What we wanted in Barmen was to *gather together* the scattered Christian spirits (Lutheran, Reformed, United, positive, liberal, pietistic). The aim was neither unification nor uniformity, but consolidation for united attacks...and march. No differences in history or tradition were to be glossed over, but we were kept together by 'the confession of the one Lord of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church'.... This was the one and only centre around which we were gathered together.... At that time we were asked too... precisely not only *what* but *who* was the real ruler of the world and of the church... whom we should hear, whom we would trust and whom we would obey..." (in "Barmen- Then and Now" in *Kirche und Mann*, noted by Busch, p. 247.)

¹²⁸ In the first three months of 1934, over 200 pastors were subjected to disciplinary measures such as suspensions and dismissals for speaking in the pulpit about the church conflict. Niemöller sent a protest to Müller, which was ignored. Thus, the movement toward Synods became necessary. The 'Confessing Church' acquired its identity as pastors came together for mutual support made necessary under the harsher conditions. (Cochrane, pp. 132/3.) After 1934, Nazi intolerance of church dissent increased openly: as is well known, Confessing seminaries were shut, pastors were forbidden financial support from their congregations, and many were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

¹²⁹ Barth, *HCM* (1938), p. 47: "Behind this heresy, which I saw penetrating into the church, there stood from the very beginning the one who soon stepped out as the far more dangerous adversary, the one hailed at the beginning- and not least by many Christians- as deliverer and saviour: Hitler, himself the personification of National Socialism. The church-theological conflict contained within itself the political conflict, and it was no fortuitous happening that it revealed itself more and more as a political conflict. Because I could not hide this fact from myself and others, because I could not very well begin my lectures in Bonn with the salutation of Hitler, and because I could not very well swear an unconditional oath of allegiance to the *Führer*, as I should have to do as the holder of a state office, I lost my position in the service of this state and was forced to quit Germany."

Into the War: Other Writings

Immediately after President Hindenburg had died (August 2), Hitler combined the offices of President and Chancellor in himself, and decreed that all civil servants should take the following oath of loyalty:¹³⁰ *"I swear that I will be loyal and obedient to the leader of the German Empire and people, Adolph Hitler, and keep the laws, and conscientiously discharge the duties of my office, so help me God."*¹³¹ Since Barth's professorship was an office of civil service, he was required to take the oath. He applied to be allowed to take it with the proviso *"so far as I can do so responsibly as an evangelical Christian"*¹³². Not only was his application refused, but Barth was also suspended from teaching on November 26 for "his behaviour in office[with which] he has shown himself unworthy of the recognition, the respect and the trust which his calling requires."¹³³ His lectures were taken over by an approved substitute.

The next day Barth submitted an objection to the court in Bonn for being suspended without being given the opportunity to reply and without hearing the charges, and for the misleading press announcements that he had refused to take the oath *tout court*.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, he was found guilty on December 20 of having an 'incorrect' attitude to the National Socialist State, evidenced in the thought behind his requested proviso.¹³⁵ Although promptly dismissed, Barth requested an appeal in early February, 1935, which he lodged with the Prussian Supreme Court in Berlin on March 14. Prevented from teaching, he preached and lectured at conferences and in Holland once a week¹³⁶ until he was served with a total ban on speaking in March as well.

Towards the end of May, Barth returned to Switzerland to wait for the result of his appeal. On June 14, the dismissal was repealed and Barth was fined for refusing to give the Hitler salute. Eight days later (June 22), the Minister of Cultural Affairs personally dismissed Barth again on different grounds having to do with the 1933 'Law for the Reorganisation of the Civil Service'. Barth was immediately offered a chair at the University of Basle, on the condition that he serve in the Swiss army. Barth accepted and took up his post at Basle June 24.¹³⁷ He never returned to Germany to live.

¹³⁰Busch, p.255.

¹³¹Barth-Bultmann, p.78, letter 27 Nov. 1934.

¹³²ibid.

¹³³Busch, p.256.

¹³⁴see Barth's judicial statement of Nov. 27, 1934, in Barth-Bultmann, p.134.

¹³⁵ibid. pp.256/7.

¹³⁶Barth's lectures in Holland were the basis of his 1935 book on the Apostles' Creed, *Credo*. (Busch, p.260): The significance of *Credo* was that it was an uncompromising discussion of the nature of confession, and of the obligation of the church to confess *one Lord*, over against all human, limited lords. Citing 1 Cor. 8:6 ('Jesus Christ the one Lord'), Phil. 2:10 ('every knee shall bow'), and Matt. 13:38 ('the field is the world'). Barth said that while human lordship is limited, the Lordship of Christ is that of Creator, and therefore "afflicts and embraces our existence directly" (p.55). "As Creator of heaven and earth, Christ is Lord of the whole man and is either recognised as such or not at all. Again, we cannot, either in despair or in defiance, understand our natural existence as a whole, understand the fire of human culture - and lack of culture - upon which we have our being, as a sphere in which prevail other laws and orders than in the sphere where we stand as sinners before the God of grace. The Lordship of Christ is not only a so-called religious Lordship: as that, it is very much an ethical, yes, a political Lordship." (p.56.)

¹³⁷Busch, pp.255-60.

Barth's willingness to take the oath with a proviso does not signify a willingness to compromise with Nazi politics. Undoubtedly, he was aware of his responsibility to teach his students something other than what German Christian professors were handing them. Moreover, 'loyalty' to the German state in itself was not problematic for him, as he felt that acting for the benefit of one's state was a Christian responsibility. What was a problem was the seeming interpretive open-ness of the concepts of 'loyalty', 'obedience' and 'duty', which Barth felt hid a substantially absolutist Nazi interpretation. To many, this particular oath did not seem absolutist, because words like 'loyalty', 'obedience' and 'duty' were consistent with widely accepted understandings of the relationship of Christians to the State.

Barth himself did not have a problem in principle with these concepts. The difficulty lay in the interpretation of their limits before God. In refusing the oath altogether, Barth would not have been effectively representing what his opposition to Hitler and his heresy was about: a struggle *for the true good* of the German people, and *for the State*- ie. a struggle of profound loyalty based on and bound by a primary loyalty to God in Christ, and therefore opposed to the 'loyalty', 'obedience' and 'duty' as defined and required by the state. Rather than being bullied into complete disengagement with the State (represented by refusal of the oath *tout court*), Barth opted for a stance of critical engagement. To refuse the oath entirely in his context would have resulted in a mis-representation of his own stand (it would have seemed to favour non-involvement in politics), and an abdication of the responsibility of his office: the teaching of theology. And yet, the oath as it was had to be opposed unambiguously.¹³⁸

Once in Switzerland, Barth continued to support the struggle in Germany against the heresy which he felt had infected all of Europe, by continuing his theology work. More practically, he issued yearly statements¹³⁹ in the *Zwingli-Kalendar* in which he encouraged Christians outside Germany to pray for, and practically support the Confessing Church, and in which he tried to show people outside Germany what he felt the true nature of Nazism was.¹⁴⁰

Even though they knew the datum of Hitler's rise to power, the nations outside Germany seemed blind to the dangerous reality of Nazi rule. The fact that they even held the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin symbolizes this remarkable ignorance, in the face of Hitler's open

¹³⁸ Barth explained: "I have interpreted the oath to represent 100% National Socialism as it intimated itself openly enough in August after the death of Hindenburg...the intention and will of the modern State can be plainly recognised from the words and deeds of rulers...[it] is that in Adolf Hitler we have to do with a Czar and a Pope in one person, or, as one must undoubtedly put it theologically, with an incarnate God....An oath to Hitler according to the [normative interpretation of] the National Socialists means that the one who swears it commits himself hide and hair, body and soul, to this one man, above whom there is no constitution, right, or law, of whom I must be confident in advance and unconditionally that in all circumstances he knows and wills and will achieve what is best for the whole of Germany and for me, and concerning whom the mere assumption that he might lead me into a conflict in which he is wrong and I am right will already be treason, so that if I swear loyalty and obedience to him I either commit my whole person to him even down to my most secret thoughts, or I pledge him nothing....One can accept on oath only a predictable obligation. But this oath requires of me that which I can give in faith only to God." (5 December letter, *Barth-Bullmann*, pp. 136/7.)

¹³⁹ These stopped in 1939 because of the official Swiss policy of neutrality, even in the press.

¹⁴⁰ GCC, pp. 40-76.

defiance of the Versailles Treaty (he instituted universal military training in March, 1935, and marched into the Rhine area March 1936)¹⁴¹, and open persecution of Jews.¹⁴²

From outside Germany, Barth had the impression that other nations did not see what he had seen from inside as an unmistakable rise of godlessness- and therefore of profound devaluation of human beings. Rather, leaders were stunned and beguiled by Hitler. Anxious to avoid conflict, they grew increasingly accepting of the 'solution' (national resurgence/ national self-determination). The broader population was increasingly persuaded by Hitler's analysis of the 'problem'. Anti-semitism was on the rise all over Europe. Thus, from outside Germany Barth saw that while he had been so concerned with the church struggle on the inside, Hitler had already begun to aggress and defeat Europe spiritually and intellectually.¹⁴³

As Barth's position in the struggle changed (from a German citizen and teacher inside Germany), to a Swiss citizen and teacher outside, the form of his struggle for the clear knowledge of the limits of the human ruler and State under the supreme Lordship of Christ changed. Since his opposition to Hitler had been based on Hitler's claim to be a saviour, and not, for example, on Barth's rights as a citizen against Hitler's arbitrary rule, that opposition continued even though he was no longer a citizen in Germany. Inside and outside Germany, Barth had an obligation as a theologian and teacher in the church to teach the Lordship of Christ. If he had treated the implications of Christ's Lordship for Hitler's claims as a matter concerning only Germans, he would have capitulated to the isolating claims of nationalism, and denied the connected reality of the church *catholic*. In lectures Barth frequently emphasised the need for Swiss Christians to see the German Church struggle as their own.¹⁴⁴

Cut off from direct connection with the Confessing Church in Germany, and direct action from within, Barth continued to write letters of support to leaders, friends and students in Germany. Besides support, Barth also expressed criticism for the tendency in the Confessing Church to give out on the theological issue, attempting to gain ground by winning in

¹⁴¹Pachter, p.231.

¹⁴²*ibid.*, p.254, in 1935 the Jewish Laws were passed which effectively instituted public 'apartheid'. The Laws prevented Jews from marrying non-Jews; removed their citizenship; forced Germanized Jews to adopt Jewish first names; required that all Jews wear a yellow star and avoid public facilities; and barred them from performing in public, teaching, and from practicing law and medicine.

¹⁴³As early as 1938, he wrote: "Meanwhile the anti-christian and therefore anti-human essence of National Socialism revealed itself more and more distinctly. At the same time its influence over the remainder of Europe alarmingly increased in proportion. The lies and brutality, as well as the stupidity and fear, grew and have long since grown far beyond the frontiers of Germany. And Europe does not understand the danger in which it stands. Why not? Because it does not understand the First Commandment. Because it does not see that National Socialism means a conscious, radical, and systematic transgression of this First Commandment. Because it does not see that this transgression, because it is a sin against God, drags the corruption of the nations in its wake. So it came about that despite my desires, I had to persevere in my opposition to National Socialism, even after I had returned to Switzerland, for the sake of the preservation of the true church and the just State....I hope that we will not wake up too late and too painfully from the sleep in which, in company with many others, Christian circles in the countries of Europe still think they are allowed to indulge themselves." *How I Changed My Mind*, (John D. Godsey trans., Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966) p.47/8.

¹⁴⁴Busch, p.274.

ecclesiastical politics, and for not speaking enough against the Nazi treatment of Jews and political opponents, and suppression of freedom of the press.¹⁴⁵

As the Confessing Church came under increasing opposition, it was fragmented considerably and weakened in its resistance. As it retreated, Barth increasingly stressed the directly political dimension of Christian resistance to National Socialism.¹⁴⁶ Following through with this shift of emphasis in his own actions, Barth became chairman of the Basle Committee of Swiss Aid for exiled German scholars, looked for grants for German students and jobs for German emigres, hosted non-Aryans in his home, wrote letters abroad asking for Jews to be recieved there, and as mentioned, served part-time in the Swiss military.¹⁴⁷

In Switzerland, the general attitude was one of opposition to Barth, and thanks to God for Switzerland's peace. The rest of Europe did not hear his warning of the seriousness for Europe of Hitler either, and preferred to broker peace with him. In November 1937, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, assured Hitler that Britain would not interfere if Germany went through with its proposal to unite Germans by annexing Austria, and parts of Czechoslovakia and Poland inhabited by Germans, as long as he promised not to use force and compel England to fight in Europe again.¹⁴⁸

After Germany annexed Austria on March 11, 1938, the British Prime Minister Lord Chamberlain went to Czechoslovakia to persuade the Czechs to give in to Hitler peacefully.¹⁴⁹ Chamberlain's action summed up world sentiment that Hitler's demand to unite the German nation was reasonable because of principles of national self-determination, and that if he was reasonably negotiated with, he would stop once he had received what he wanted. There was an overwhelming tendency to negotiate for peace at all costs. Of course, neutral Switzerland was not involved in these negotiations directly. The Swiss responded to what was happening on the world stage by reverting to an international 'apoliticalism'.¹⁵⁰

Barth responded to Swiss lassitude in the face of Hitler's aggressions in a lecture which outlined his understanding of Christian political responsibility- or, the relationship between God's justification and man's justice. Later published under the title "Rechtfertigung und Recht", or "Justification and Justice" (probably better translated "Righteousness and 'Right'"), the lecture was delivered on June 20 and 27.¹⁵¹ Given three months before Barth wrote his

¹⁴⁵ Busch, pp.271-3. (Barth himself regretted that he had not spoken against these things more while he was in Germany, even though he had refrained, partly because a clear stance on the Jewish question would not have been supported widely even at the Barmen Synod, and partly because he was so concerned with making it clear that of all 'issues', the theological one was primary.)

¹⁴⁶ Barth apparently regretted not coming to this point sooner, and yet still felt that he could not have come to it at the cost of a theological starting-point. He continued to maintain that strictly theological opposition was a necessary starting point- but that it was a starting point. (Busch, p.274.)

¹⁴⁷ Busch, p.271.

¹⁴⁸ Pachter, p.234.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.235.

¹⁵⁰ In his letters outside Switzerland during the war, Barth picked up the theme of false neutrality and 'true neutrality'. The former consisted in indifference to the conflict- or even outright capitalising on it. The latter consisted in a critical refusal to be drawn into the military battle, in order to preserve and promote a model of 'justice' over against the Nazi injustice, with the goal of being able to help the whole of Europe restore relative justice after the defeat of Nazism. see esp. Barth's *Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland*, and "Letter to American Christians" in *The Church and The War*.

¹⁵¹ Busch, p.287.

letter to Hromadka, it sheds light on the link Barth saw between that letter, and the first article of the "Barmen Declaration". In terms of its content, it was an expansion of article five of the "Declaration".¹⁵²

While inside Germany, Barth had interpreted this article from the standpoint of opposition to the German Christian statement that the 'law of the *Reich* is equal to the law of God'.¹⁵³ Outside Germany, where the danger of this confusion was replaced with the danger of thinking that God's law had nothing to do with human laws, Barth emphasized the corollary implication of the relationship between Church and State, theology and politics, of article five. In short, he developed the view that opposition to bad or godless human leadership meant a concomitant affirmation of relatively 'good' human leadership- leadership which left room for God. Or, in the language of "Justification and Justice", it meant positive action both against godless injustice, and for relatively God-respecting human 'justice'.

Building on his earlier position in 1919 in *Romans*, Barth's argument in "Justification and Justice" was that since the God referred to in Romans 13 is God in Christ, Christology is the foundation of the legitimacy of the State.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the role of the State is to maintain an order which makes space for the freedom of preaching the Gospel. All action towards the State must be done in an attitude of prayer and respect for this temporal role, or 'office' of the State. Such prayer or respect is the essence of what is meant in Romans by 'subjection to the authorities'.¹⁵⁵

Although subjection is that of an intercessor¹⁵⁶, it is not passive. Since prayer that is really prayer (ie. really desires what is prayed) is followed through with commitment of the whole self in action, prayer for God's protection of a State in which the Gospel is free, and prayer against the State where it is not, must result in willingness to suffer either for the defense of the one, or as an active victim of the other. Both absolute right to defense, and absolute obligation to victim-hood are repudiated by Barth, because the State has no absolute value on either end of the scale of 'good' and 'bad'.

The decisive question as to whether a Christian is to pray for or against a particular State is *not* whether its leaders are 'good' or 'bad', or meet the criteria of the definition of a 'tyrant'. Neither is it whether that State fulfills the definition of authoritarianism. The decisive

¹⁵²The line of continuity between article 5, and "Rechtfertigung und Recht" can be traced through a lecture of Barth's given in 1936 in several cities in Hungary and Transylvania, titled "People's Church, Free Church, Confessing Church". In the lecture he explained that the State derives its authority from the reconciliation of Jesus Christ that has already taken place. Therefore, it has a function which is determined by the source of its authority, and which it performs whether it wants to or not, or whether it is ignorant of that function. In 1937, Barth gave a series of lectures in Scotland ("The Service of God") in which he spoke of the "political service of Christians", which was a corollary of the State's service of Christ, willing or unwilling. Busch, pp.278-80)

¹⁵³see Busch, p.230.

¹⁵⁴Barth, "Church and State", in *Community, State and Church*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960)pp.112-17/20.(hereafter RR)

¹⁵⁵ibid., pp.121/2, Barth points out that according to 1 Peter 2:13, action is 'for the Lord's sake', and that submission is in 'the fear of Christ' according to Ephesians 5:21. Thus the foundation of the imperative of submission is 'fear' of Christ. His point is to keep the 'spirit of the law'- even when it seems to contradict the letter. In all situations, the real authority being submitted to is always Christ. see also pp.135-9. Subjection to the State does *not* mean taking on its projects. It means rendering the "distinctive service" of preaching the Gospel of Christ, which is the basis of the State's legitimacy.

¹⁵⁶ibid., p.128.

question is whether or not the church is free to preach 'God's justification'- the Gospel. A State may be a terrible place, and still allow the Gospel to be preached. Before God's righteousness, all human conceptions and structures are only very relatively 'just'.¹⁵⁷ Thus, none can be identified with true righteousness or justice.¹⁵⁸ Since they are all unjust to varying degrees, human standards and justifications are irrelevant when one is considering the meaning and limits of 'subjection to authorities'. Yet, this very irrelevance of human standards points to the authoritative and limiting- and establishing- one of God's Word.¹⁵⁹

All *meaningful* definition of 'bad' or 'unjust' is derived from the definition of God's righteousness known in the Gospel. As long as the Gospel of that gracious righteousness is freely preached and not corrupted, the State in question is not wholly 'unjust'. When the Gospel is no longer free, the State *must* be recognised as 'unjust' and prayed against. Again, since it must be opposed honestly in prayer, the Christian is bound to act in opposition to it as well- not to overthrow order itself, or under false assumptions of eradicating evil, but to restore a morally ambiguous condition of order in which the Gospel can be heard.

Thus, 'injustice' is not opposed ultimately *because* it is unjust, for all human things are in relation to God. It is opposed for the sake of right knowledge of God, which is knowledge of His gracious righteousness. Likewise, relative human 'justice' is not advocated and defended because it is 'just', but for the sake of the freedom of the Gospel, by which God's righteousness is imputed to human persons.¹⁶⁰ Because God's righteousness has already been made decisive, Christians are not given the suggestion to act according to the new creation of God's decision, but positively compelled.¹⁶¹

'Order' and 'peace' are redefined according to the Kingdom and Peace of God, and 'freedom' by that of the Children of God.¹⁶² Thus, defense of 'order', 'peace' and 'freedom' in the abstract, or defined outside the Gospel is meaningless. Yet, where the Gospel is truly respected- and especially where it is not- they are defended. "[T]here is clearly no cause for the Church to act as though it lived, in relation to the State, in a night in which all cats are grey."¹⁶³

The church is not free to ignore what goes on around her, because the very identity 'church' is an earthly identity. Since there will be no 'church' in the 'heavenly City', the identity

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 124/5. Barth explains that the State can neither be deified nor demonised.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 109-11.

¹⁶⁰ *see also* p. 147.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp. 131/2. Barth says that though the Church and State cannot take on one another's roles, "this relation between the Church and State does not exclude- but includes- the fact that the problem of the State, namely, the problem of law, is raised, and must be answered, within the sphere of the Church on Earth." The Church, in other words, cannot be silent, although it cannot replace the State, or advocate 'theocracy'.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 119 p. 127. Barth explains that the Christian hopes in the heavenly City- but this does not mean Stoic withdrawal from the 'earthly city' (political orders) in which he/she is as a 'foreigner'. The Christian's identity as a foreigner means that the Christian marches to the beat of the drum of the "eternal law of Jesus Christ"- and yet *in* and not falsely separate from the earthly political order. p. 139: "Jesus would, in actual fact, have been an enemy of the State if He had *not* dared...to call King Herod a 'fox'. If the State has perverted its God-given authority, it cannot be honoured better than by this *criticism* which is due to it in all circumstances...And how could Christians intercede, if, by themselves acquiescing in the perversion of the power of the State, they had become traitors to their own cause?"

of the church is linked to the earthly order. The freedom of the church to preach is intimately linked to the existence of a State which allows her this freedom.¹⁶⁴ Christians cannot be obedient to God (perform their function of intercession) if they fail to question, the state "which is directly or indirectly aimed at the suppression of the freedom of the Word of God".¹⁶⁵

When the church 'obeys God rather than people', it defends the 'true State' against the perverted one, "saving it from ruin".¹⁶⁶ Thus, even where the church must oppose a State, it is only out of affirmation of the role of the true State. Where a Christian opposes a particular perversion of relative justice, it can only be *for* the good of that same State. A Christian is not permitted, therefore, to pronounce a categorical 'No' to military service, because doing so would mean a 'No' to the fundamentally legitimate role of the State, which it performs through the use of force. Even a 'bad' State does not categorically lose its legitimacy as a State.¹⁶⁷

In spite of Barth's call for active Christian awareness of and involvement against a State he had clearly described as one which repressed the freedom of the Word, France, Britain and Italy signed an Agreement with Hitler, while Switzerland and Europe rejoiced that war had been avoided.¹⁶⁸ In spite of world opinion, Barth felt this agreement was a catastrophe, and wrote to those who had criticised him for his letter to Hromadka that "if the political order and freedom is threatened, then this threat also indirectly affects the church. And if a just state tries to defend order and freedom, then the church, too, is indirectly involved...the church would not be taking its own proclamation seriously if it remained indifferent here."¹⁶⁹ His letter to Hromadka, he said, "was not a call to a World War...but certainly to resistance."¹⁷⁰

Summary

Clearly, according to the the theological framework of "Justification and Justice" applied in the letter to Hromadka, Barth's view was that Hitler's Germany was an 'unjust' State which threatened the freedom of the Gospel in Europe.¹⁷¹ Thus, out of submission to the authority of Christ, Christians outside Germany were under obligation to oppose Hitler's imposition of his false State onto the relatively 'just' States of Europe- just as Christians inside were under the same obligation to oppose that same imposition on the legitimate political order of Germany.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp.126-9. Thus Barth says (p.130) "Prayer for the bearers of State authority belongs to the very essence of its own existence." [the church's existence]

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.139.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.140.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.142.

¹⁶⁸ Pachter, pp.235/6, these countries signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler on September 29 (10 days after Barth wrote his letter to Hromadka), in which they agreed that all areas with more than a 50% population of Germans in Czechoslovakia should be given to Germany. The Czechoslovak government was not included in the decision. Chamberlain subsequently got Hitler to sign a paper saying he would make no more territorial demands, and went home triumphantly proclaiming that peace had been brought to Europe.; Busch p.289, thanksgiving services were held all over Switzerland for the preservation of peace.

¹⁶⁹ Busch, pp.289/90.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.289.

¹⁷¹ This explicit identification of the general discussion of a Christian political mode of being in "Justification and Justice", was made clear in Barth's July, 1939 pamphlet *The Church and the Political Problem of our Day* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939). For summary, see 'Appendix A'.

While Barth had mentioned in "Justification and Justice" that a democracy tended to approach the definition of a just State more than any other order, the defense of Europe's democracies against Hitler's (godless) totalitarianism was not really about 'democracy vs. totalitarianism', but about the church's assumption or abdication of her task to preach the Gospel.¹⁷²

Even though Barth's concern in 1933 had been a clear definition of the Gospel, it was a concern shaped in opposition to aggressive destruction of the freedom of the Gospel. As he approached 1938, he increasingly viewed Nazi political and military aggression as being the tip of an iceberg; the beginning of the same destruction of the Gospel in Europe. While Europe was praising God for peace, Barth was aware that it did not exist. He knew that Hitler fully intended to spread the same brutality by which he asserted his 'lordship' inside Germany, to the outside. Barth's opposition to such aggression was not made on the basis that it was *unjust*. Rather, he deemed it 'unjust' on the basis that Hitler closed the door to the freedom of the Gospel by setting himself up as a saviour and lord, who was owed absolute allegiance in body, thought and soul.

As Barth had seen the link between word and deed in the task of proclamation of the Gospel while inside Germany, so he continued to see it on the outside.¹⁷³ The difference was in the deeds implied.¹⁷⁴ In other words, it could also be said that what had always been implicit in the Word of Christ's Lordship, had become explicit. As Barth said, "wherever there is theological talk, it is always implicitly or explicitly political talk also."¹⁷⁵ And what applied to 'talk', applied to action as well.

Inside Germany, he had actively opposed the Nazi government by continuing to teach against its heresy, and doing what he could to obstruct its seizure of access to the souls of German people through control of the preaching of the church. By the time he was repatriated, this same form of action was having less and less of an effect, as Hitler was more openly simply giving up persuasion and applying sheer force. Though Barth no longer had immediate influence once he was outside Germany, it did not mean that he had to be ineffective in the general struggle of the church, or cease opposing the heresy as such in word and deed.

¹⁷²in a footnote in *RR*, pp. 144/5, he said: "The assertion that all forms of government are equally compatible or incompatible with the Gospel is not only outworn but false. It is true that a man may go to hell in a democracy and achieve salvation under a mobocracy or a dictatorship. But it is not true that a Christian can endorse, desire, or seek after a mobocracy or a dictatorship as readily as a democracy."

¹⁷³Barth did not start to teach and preach 'politics'- he continued teaching 'theology'. beginning work on *CD II "The Doctrine of God"*, in which he sought to explain what is meant by 'God'.

¹⁷⁴Explaining that the 'practical relevance' of his theological teaching had now become visible for the first time to most people, Barth said: "Contrary to the opinion of many, to whom it seemed I was drawing an empty bow for the sheer sport of it [ie. in his vehement warning of the 'danger' of Brunner's theology], I have quite apparently had an arrow on the string and have taken a shot. It would be well if some, looking on what has happened, would now at last comprehend how the whole thing was meant all along!" (*HCM* (1938), p. 49.)

¹⁷⁵Busch, p. 292.

After Hitler invaded Poland on August 26, 1939 and war officially descended on Europe again, Barth's position remained much as he had articulated it in both his writing and his practical activities in the years leading to 1938.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶That Barth's basic understanding of the roles of Church and State, use of force, 'just' and 'unjust', and Christian political (even military) responsibility did not change after 1938 is evidenced by his 1946 lecture "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" (*Community, State and Church*, pp. 149-189). For summary, see 'Appendix B'.

CHAPTER 4b

Barth's Reaction During World War II

The image of Barth which perhaps best captures the essence of his speaking and doing during the war, is that which he draws of himself delivering some of the lectures of his *Shorter Commentary on Romans* (1940-1) "in a rather weather-beaten uniform of the Auxiliary Armed Forces".¹⁷⁷ In other words, although personally critically and militarily engaged in the war, Barth's primary statement against the danger of National Socialism and the war it had brought was the fact that he did not let it interrupt the theological work he felt was his necessary service to Christ, for the church and the world.

His own statement that he "continued as if nothing had happened"¹⁷⁸ should not be mistaken to mean that his theological work was resolutely untouched by his circumstances. On the contrary, it *was*, just as it always had been in emphasis. However, in substance, unlike the 'Kairos' theology of the German Christians, Barth did not let circumstances dictate his theology. For example, at the outbreak of war he began speaking most clearly about Christian political responsibility. Yet, he did not equate God's will for the 'just State' with preservation of Western democracies. Also, throughout WWII he worked steadily on his *Dogmatics*, explicating what he felt to be essential Christian dogma. Yet, in a climate which demanded clear decision, it is not insignificant that he followed CD II.1 ('*The Knowledge of God*') with CD II.2 as a shorter discussion of '*The Command of God*' (completed March 1942).

Moreover, at the same time as Barth was continuing his theological work, he not only signed up for defence duty, but enjoyed the fact that it brought him into contact with all sorts of common people he would not normally spend so much time with.¹⁷⁹ He also helped found a secret 'National Resistance Movement' through which he criticised, and encouraged criticism of, the Swiss policies of exploiting the situation economically; restricting the freedom of the press and of speech; ending the 'right of sanctuary' for (primarily Jewish) political refugees; and failing to address the same social difficulties in Switzerland which had made Hitler's party seem appealing to Germans earlier.¹⁸⁰

In addition, Barth was active on behalf of Jews. He urged the Swiss that they had to help Jews for the Christian reason that they are the "physical brethren of our Saviour"; the national reason that fugitives do Switzerland an honour by coming to her because by doing so, they are saying that she is a "last stronghold of justice and mercy"; and the human reason that it is only by a miracle that the Swiss have been spared what others are suffering.¹⁸¹ He personally looked for people to take in refugees; found medicine and other needed items for some; and

¹⁷⁷ Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans*, (London: SCM Press, 1959) preface, p.7.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Bowden, *Karl Barth*. (London: SCM Press, 1971), p.76; Busch, *op.cit.*, p.307.

¹⁸⁰ Busch, pp.307-10.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.318.

organised a petition to the government pleading for action to be taken on behalf of Hungarian Jews in 1944.¹⁸²

Barth's other activities involved taking part in a 'Swiss Society for the Friends of a Free German Culture', a 'Swiss-Soviet Society', a 'Swiss Aid Society', and a society for 'Aid for Russian Internees'.¹⁸³

After 1939, the work that Barth was able to publish in Switzerland could not be overtly political due to the action of Swiss censors, who deemed such writing 'insufficiently patriotic' because it broke with official Swiss neutrality.¹⁸⁴ Having reached a point where he felt his theological work could no longer be merely implicitly political, Barth was not silenced: he sent overtly political letters¹⁸⁵ and short writings¹⁸⁶ outside Switzerland (mainly to Holland, Britain, France and the United States) to encourage the resistance effort there. The themes of these documents were exactly the same ones so far discussed in "Justification and Justice", "Christian Community and Civil Community", *The Church and the Political Problem of our Day*, and the "Letter to Hromadka", treated in the same manner. As the war came to a close, Barth also began to ask about the church's post-war responsibilities.

In 1945 (*The Germans and Ourselves*), and in 1946 (*How Can the Germans be Cured?*)¹⁸⁷, Barth emphasised that since the primary aim of the church regarding the State was the peace-building restoration of a 'just' State in peace and in war for the sake of the people in it, Christians should be thinking about how they can help Germans restore a 'just' State in Germany.

Briefly, although Barth felt strongly that German war criminals had to be tried, and that Germany had to retire from world politics (which meant disarmament) and learn to co-operate with other nations, those other nations would be forfeiting the Gospel if they treated Germans with the same lack of mercy as had been shown in the Treaty of Versailles. The German people can not be identified with their State. As Christians, other nations in the world must see the German people as a neighbour in need of a friend.

Christians outside Germany must make an unconditional offer of friendship to Germans, accepting them as they are, and helping them to learn the language of negotiation and

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p.322.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp.310-314. Also see Andre Lasserre, *La Suisse des Années Sombres*, (Lausanne: Éditions Payot Lausanne, 1989), esp. pp.13-69 re: ideological development of a Swiss national identity which used concepts of 'neutrality' and multi-racialism to promote willingness to trade with all countries on both sides, and rigorous censorship, and pp.26/59 re: repression of Barth's work, and slander in the press against him to decrease his influence.

¹⁸⁵ 11 letters written between 1939 and 1945 are published in *Eine Schweizer Stimme*. The following four are available in English: "First Letter to the French Protestants" - "Second Letter to the French Protestants" and "A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland" (Dec. 1939, Oct. 1940, and April 1941, all in *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland*, appendix, pp.30-52 (two to France), and pp.1-29; and "A Letter to American Christians" (Dec. 1942) in two parts in *The Church and the War*, pp.19-49.

¹⁸⁶ A particularly interesting one was an article written in German in May 1942 (titled "Die Protestantischen Kirchen in Europa - ihre Gegenwart und ihre Zukunft") published in English as "A Review of Protestant Reactions to National Socialism" in Sept. 1942 edition of the American journal, *Foreign Affairs*, also published as "The Churches of Europe in the Face of War" in Barth, *CW*, pp.1-17.

¹⁸⁷ This article is in *The Only Way* (Marta Neufeld and Ronald Gregor Smith trans., New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), a little volume which also includes two letters Barth wrote to a student clarifying the position he takes in the article.

mercy by offering them a 'tough love'. Even though democratic structures must be imposed on Germany, other nations must forgive them, or else the lesson of democracy will be overshadowed by a hostility which feeds their *realpolitik* worldview, in which nothing exists but the brute struggle for power. If they are to be helped out of the old paradigm of their behaviour and thinking, then the post-war question must not be about what they 'deserve', but about what we owe them: friendship.¹⁸⁸

Once the Germans were defeated, the danger of National Socialism was over. National Socialism no longer had to be opposed. Since all along it was opposed for the sake of Christ and therefore humanity, *including the German people*, Barth's stance for them after the war was hardly discontinuous. Having based his opposition on that aspect of the Gospel which proclaimed the Lordship of Christ, he now found it appropriate, in face of the destruction of Germany and the memory of Versailles, to emphasise "the cry of Jesus Christ, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*".¹⁸⁹

Practically, real 'friendship' would mean concrete things like sending financial aid to the churches and helping with the projects of rebuilding the German infrastructure. Concrete friendship would also mean actions that many Germans perhaps would not like, such as refusing to let them rebuild their military, and helping them rewrite a less ideologically bent German and world history.¹⁹⁰

A final important aspect of Barth's reaction to war in WWII is his response to the idea of 'just revolution', which he saw represented in the attempted assassinations of Hitler in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer was involved.¹⁹¹ Given his support of military defence of 'just' states, and opposition to 'unjust' ones, the question about criteria for overthrowing an 'unjust' government was posed to Barth in the context of explicit reference to Bonhoeffer's activities in that direction.¹⁹²

Giving the proviso that "only the living God in His commandment"¹⁹³ is an absolute criterion, Barth said that there were three relative criteria for an attempt to overthrow a government: In the first place, it can only be considered 'unjust' if its injustice and inhumanity have become *so* great that you become convicted it can no longer exist. A state is 'unjust' when it ceases to perform the police-like task of protecting good people and suppressing bad ones- ie.

¹⁸⁸ see esp. *The Only Way*, pp.3-13.

¹⁸⁹ *The Germans and Ourselves*, (Ronald Gregor Smith trans., London: Nisbet & Co., 1945) p.40., Barth famously said: "Come unto me, you unlikeable ones, you wicked Hitler boys and girls, you brutal S.S. soldiers, you evil Gestapo police, you sad compromisers and collaborationists, all you men of the herd who have moved so long in patient stupidity behind your so-called leader. Come unto me, you guilty and you accomplices, who now obtain your deserts, as you were bound to do. Come unto me, I know you well, but I do not ask who you are and what you have done. I see only that you have reached the end and must start afresh, for good or ill; I will refresh you, I will start afresh from zero with you. If these Swiss, swollen with the democratic and social and Christian ideas which they have always extolled, are not interested in you, I am interested. If they do not wish to say to you, then I say to you 'I am for you, I am your friend'." (pp.40/1.)

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.41-9.

¹⁹¹ for details, see Bethge, *op.cit.*, pp.524-33/75-80/85/9, 656/82-7.

¹⁹² an informal discussion recorded in *Table Talk*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963) pp.75-77.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p.76.

when it uses power for its own sake.¹⁹⁴ Secondly, all other means of changing the situation must first have been exhausted. Third, even if all other means have been tried, you must be certain that revolution is a *real* opportunity of change- one must know what to do the day after the revolution, and know that it is possible.¹⁹⁵

These three criteria cannot be used in a facile, formulaic manner. It is not so easy to be *quite* sure either that a government *is* so absolutely intolerable, or that *everything* has been tried. Regarding the criteria of successful implementation of a concretely more just government, history shows too many revolutions were wrong. The question is not whether the revolution will succeed in negating what is there, but whether you have a replacement proposal which you are convinced is practically implementable, and which the revolution will make concretely possible. According to this last criterion, most of the world's revolutions were not admissible.¹⁹⁶ Even where all three criteria are met, they cannot justify a revolution that is known after much prayer to be against God's will.¹⁹⁷

By 'God's will', Barth meant both His actual speaking in the real two-way moment of prayer, and something like His *way*- which is to do that which makes possible the redemption of people.¹⁹⁸ When God's will is done, revolution is never a question of overthrowing the State (the civil community), but of overthrowing the government,¹⁹⁹ *for* the State.

Regarding the question of murder that this question of revolution raised, Barth distinguished between killing and murder. On the basis that "the State presupposes coercion"²⁰⁰, Barth accepted that the police-duty of policemen and soldiers might involve killing which would not be murder. While Barth felt that he could not lay down hard and fast rules for differentiating killing and murder because there is no system for the Christian to use in order to evaluate their difference, he stressed that a Christian should do nothing with a bad conscience. What may be killing to one, just may *be* murder for another. To Barth, the attempted assassination of Hitler was a situation of murder, not killing.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 76/7.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 77, Barth said he thought the American Revolution fulfilled all three criteria, fulfilling the last one by succeeding in implementing a government which upheld the principle of equality in place of arbitrary abuse of power. Significantly, Barth preferred not to refer to the 'self-evident principle of equality', but a simply "evident" 'truth' "that all men are created in togetherness and mutual responsibility".

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*: In Barth's words: "If you are not sure that good can come of it, then do not do it. There have been too many revolutions in which the first and second conditions have been met, but not the third. This was my reservation about the plot to overthrow Hitler. Bonhoeffer and his friends were not clear about what would happen afterwards..... There was not a clear positive position. Negative, yes. But clear vision on practical possibilities was lacking. They were dreamers. Now if you are sure on all three points, then you must pray and ask God if He is also of the same mind. Without God's will, the best intentions of man cannot be realised. But here we are back to the absolute criterion."

¹⁹⁸ on p. 79, Barth says that obedience to God's order means acting "in compliance with civic duty"- since he has earlier defined 'civic duty' by 'Christian responsibility', ie: theologically, this definition of 'God's order', or will, is somewhat tautological, and ought to be read through the lense of "Justification and Justice", or "The Christian Community and the Civil Community".

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 80.

The important thing is that the Christian cannot subordinate the conscience to a system of ideas (ideology), or an apprehension of a 'Kairos' moment. The Christian obeys God, even if the attendant moral ambiguity is unsatisfying.²⁰¹

Summary Analysis

Barth's view of war reflected in his reaction to WWII is as complexly paradoxical as that reflected in his reaction to the former Great War. He undoubtedly saw the military war fought between 1939 and 1945 as a catastrophe, which it would have been better to avoid. For Barth the war was not limited to the 1939-45 period. For him, its aggression began in a hidden form in 1933, and an open one in 1938.

According to Barth's broader definition of the war (spiritual and intellectual as well as military), it was actually conducted in stages of concentric circles of aggression: First, the aggression was internal, both psychologically and theologically, as well as geographically speaking. When it had won enough ground internally, it spilled outward. From the beginning, its whole nature as an intentionally progressive outward movement was no secret.

Being a leader in the Christian church, Barth was first and most predominantly aware of the war in spiritual and theological terms. This awareness cannot have been *directly caused* by his vocational location, or his personal one as a Swiss, because large numbers of people in the same locations did not share it. Rather, once Barth had begun looking at the phenomenon of such vast destruction as the tail end of more general trends and processes, or a distinctive fruit flagging the nature of a much larger tree, he went for the root, so to speak. Thus, in a paradoxical manner, the extreme seriousness with which Barth viewed the war was indicated by his refusal to be thrown off track by the superficial question 'to arms or not to arms'. Although he addressed himself to this question, the answer that he gave is of miniscule importance compared with its place in his overall framework of understanding.

Barth's reaction to this war was a holistic reaction, which rejected its basis at all points. He rejected the entire paradigm, or world-view, of Hobbesian *realpolitik* which made an iron rule of Destiny out of a particular, dialectical ontology of violence.

Yet, in face of the evidence that neither pacification nor quiet acquiescence served to meliorate, or end, the destructive intent of Hitler's war on the world, Barth felt advocating military resistance was the command of God. Superficially, his reasoning could be categorised

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 79/80.: "Christians should not employ an evil means for a good end. If I as a Christian am convinced that something must be done, then I must do it, and it will not be dirty.... We must distinguish between murder and killing.... We must choose the best possibility and not hesitate, but act with a good conscience.... the Christian has no system. A Christian lives before God- not before a God who has no face, but the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ.... If it is God who is asking me to act in a certain situation, then God justifies the means. Sure, the two may look the same, but we must risk. We cannot help it because we are men."

in terms of classic 'just-war' arguments for a 'defensive' war. But to treat it superficially in this way would be to force his discourse into a conceptual paradigm alien to its substance.

Unlike traditional arguments for a defensive war, a novel aspect of Barth's call for world defence against the disease of National Socialism is that he refused to villainise either Hitler, or the German population. Although he ascribed a familiar enough police-like role to armies defending relative justice, he was unusual in thinking that even a police-role that sought a 'good' aim did not *justify* violent means. Neither did he think the role was derived from a so-called 'right' to exact punishment or demand retribution.

In Barth's framework, the role of international 'police' is more evocative of a surgeon given the lamentable task of rescuing a friend from a contagious disease, than it is of a vigilant swat-team ready to shoot the global 'social menace'. Clearly for Barth, even though positive action against Hitler is made necessary, in a manner of speaking, by the fact that passivity amounts to complicity, it is not really *justified* in the strong moral sense. As in WWI, WWII was also God's judgement on Europe- on both 'sides'.

Violent action against Hitler and National Socialism was not an absolute necessity. While war against Hitler's armies was appropriate, an attempt to extinguish Hitler's personal life was still constituted murder. To conclude that Barth was inconsistent would only be possible on the basis of the false assumption that his support of allied resistance could be clearly labelled as a positive advocacy of 'just revolution'. As we have seen, Barth attached strong reservations to his criteria for a 'just revolution', and did not think the violent internal resistance to Hitler matched the criteria. It is worth noting that Barth did not even bring up the language of 'just revolution' until well after its relevant circumstance was over. When there was the danger of being misunderstood, he did not use it. It cannot be forgotten that the Nazis themselves employed the language of 'just-revolution' ('victimisation', 'injustice', 'necessary conflict', and successful overthrow of an older, corrupt order).

Moreover, he did not cast his own support of the Allies in terms of 'just war' either. (When their 'revolution' had finished in Germany, the Nazi's used 'just war' language- secular and religious- to back their foreign policy morally.) Rather, since the entire catastrophe was more like an explosion of a festering boil of long-nurtured sin, the relevant question was whether or not to help in the process of healing. In other words, the base-line consideration was not what to do in the face of violence, but what to do in repentance that such a question had arisen in the first place.

While Barth did think that radical action was necessary for the sake of healing, he did not adopt the Allied position wholesale, couched as it was in its own ideological framework which tended to demonise Germans. The substance of Barth's thought on WWII had to do with a ontological ground-rule of peace, rather than violence. In ascertaining that the root of the war was theological, Barth was making the statement that the paradigm governing human

life was the historical fact of God's peace with humanity in Christ. Thus, the important thing was not that the church had now to accept that war was upon her, but that it was upon her as the result of her own inaction under the peace of God.

Barth's view of World War II is a general statement on war as the fruit of human sin, defined as rebelliousness against the Lordship of Christ. As far as National Socialism was concerned, this rebelliousness showed itself in Hitler's world-view, in which Germans were victims in a godless free-for-all, governed by Destiny, who required that they defend themselves. In culturally Christian Germany, an attempt was made to paganise Christianity for those who would not accept the paganism in its blatant form. Either way, God was replaced with something alien- He was deposed.

Once the God who loved humanity so much to suffer incarnation for them was deposed, humanity was sacrificed to the new god. Since worshipping God privately, and serving the idol-builders by day would constitute hypocrisy, the idol-builders had to be stopped. Yet, they too were human beings whose individual lives could not so easily be disposed of, since the gracious God Himself evidently granted them life.

The main point, however, is not what Barth thought of war in light of WWII. God did not need defending. The main point is that the normative reference for human action was peace: peace between God and humanity, which would provide ground for peace amongst human beings. Nonetheless, Barth's vision of substantial peace was primarily informed by his eschatology. Therefore, substantial peace could not be sacrificed to a lesser, superficial peace in which order preserved an ontology of violence. Consistent with his high view of the mystery and grace of the Great Judge, then, he felt that humble, responsible acceptance of human moral ambiguity (fighting in a war that ought not to be in the first place) was a better option than self-righteous refusal to accept responsibility for a preceding lack of the peace, which is humanly necessary to the free, obedient worship of God.

Militant resistance to the spread of unpeace would only be acceptable (still not *justified*) if made in the spirit of peace (friendship). True friendship may be the hardest thing in the world, because it may mean a certain intolerance. But if cleaning the boil resulted in cutting off the arm, then the whole purpose in restoring the arm would be relinquished.

"Sometime or other in the future (perhaps even soon) Hitler will no longer be with us. Then also my attitude and function will no longer need such a luridly contradictory and opposing character as it needs must have today....shall it then be possible for me belatedly to make clearer to them what to them seems so full of contradictions in what I did yesterday and am doing today? I do not know. This way or that, I hope that it may still be given to me tomorrow, under perhaps once more very much changed circumstances, to be immovable but also movable, movable but also immovable." Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind* (1938), p.49.

CHAPTER 5

Karl Barth's Reaction to the Cold War

In the summer of 1948, Emil Brunner wrote a public letter¹ castigating Barth for taking the same stance with regard to the post-war 'communist threat' that he had so vociferously denounced during the war with Hitler. Namely, Brunner thought that Barth's advice to East European Christians to concentrate on theology, and his refusal to speak up against the obviously unjust and totalitarian Soviet state amounted to a re-adoption of the political quietism which he had exhibited in *TEH!*.

That Brunner was wrong about Barth's 'quietism' in *TEH!* is now beyond question. But had Barth *adopted* such a position in the new conflict? In his reply to Brunner, as well as elsewhere, Barth refused to recognise the 'necessity' of the East/West conflict, noting that it was provoked un-necessarily by the West; refused to characterise the communist state as evil; reminded the West it was wrong too; and urged Christians on both sides to resist using their theology to oppose the other side, and to focus on the substance of their faith instead: the Gospel of Christ.² Given that Brunner's concern was based on the common (Western) knowledge that communism as such was inherently unjust in comparison with Western democracy, and that Soviet global hegemony was an imminent threat, Barth does indeed appear to have had his political head stuck in the sand.

However, a brief historical overview of the period shows that Barth's refusal to believe the official Western version of the situation swallowed by Brunner was much more politically astute and theologically responsible than Brunner (and many others) gave him credit for.

Historical Background

As early as 1941, Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt made a proposal to the Allies for a united body of nations, through which they hoped to replace the balance-of-power

¹see *Against the Stream*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954) pp.108-13.

²For the reply to Brunner, AS, pp.113-24.; other sources, see "The Christian Message in Europe Today" (1946), *ibid.*, pp.176-79; "Letter to a Pastor in the German Democratic Republic" (1958), *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land*, (New York: Association Press, 1958) pp.45-83; "The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change" (Hungary lectures, 1948), AS, pp.51-75; "The Church Between East and West" (1949), AS, pp.126-47.; Busch, *op.cit.*, p.383, (to G. Jacob, 18 Feb. 1955) Barth said that on both sides "man's pernicious propaganda prevents people on either side from seeing anything but the splinter in the other person's eye." For notes on Reinhold Niebuhr's response to Barth's Cold War stance (similar to Brunner's), see footnote #40 ahead.

system that had precipitated both World Wars, with a globally institutionalised means of conciliation and arbitration. Consistent with the newly energised drive for peaceful negotiation, both leaders met with their war-time ally, Josef Stalin, in the Crimea in 1945 to discuss the land-gains Russia had made during the war.

Although allies, Stalin did not like the political or economic systems which the Western victors were holding up as the standard for post-war Europe; and Roosevelt and Churchill were afraid that the power-vacuum in Eastern Europe would leave the door open for Russian hegemony in Europe as a whole.

Therefore, for very separate reasons, these three leaders agreed that Russian troops which had occupied Poland during the war with Germany could remain there. Roosevelt and Churchill stipulated that Poland be administered by the Russians jointly with the Polish government-in-exile in London. Knowing the weakness of the West European armies in comparison with Russia's, both Roosevelt's and Churchill's policy toward Stalin was one of conciliation and barter with pieces of Europe. It was a policy which Stalin was willing enough to work with. He was not so much interested in Russian expansion, as he was in providing himself with a buffer against the encroachment of Western democracy and capitalism in Europe.

When Harry Truman replaced Roosevelt (April 1945), he immediately took a much harder line with Stalin, aggravating Stalin's already dim view of Western activity in Eastern Europe. A joint administration never emerged in Poland, and Stalin proceeded to acquire control of more and more territory. By 1946, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland all had Soviet 'puppet governments'. Hungary followed by mid-1947. In Czechoslovakia a coalition government survived until February 1948.³

Ironically, the early spread of Soviet control was facilitated both by Western permissiveness and provocation. On the one hand, Churchill coined the term 'iron curtain' in a famous speech in Missouri in March 1946, where he called for an Anglo-American alliance to ensure that the Soviet armies did not advance further in a militarily weak Europe. Churchill's reasoning gained a hearing in a country influenced by a report written by the American diplomat to Moscow the previous month. In the report, the USSR was portrayed as an inherently expansionist state, because of the crusading nature of Marxist ideology, and traditional Russian suspicion of outsiders.⁴

The result of Churchill's call was an Anglo-American alliance to sign peace-treaties with the governments of Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. Ostensibly, the treaties were signed with former allies of Hitler. Effectively, the West signed these countries over to Stalin to control as he wished. In order to prevent military conflict, the West was willing enough to

³ John W. Young, *Cold War Europe 1945-1991: A Political History*. 2nd. ed., London: Hodder Headline Group, 1991. pp. 1-13.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 13.

leave control of East Europe to Stalin.⁵ While neither communist politics, nor economics were very palatable to the West, the Soviet presence in East Europe was not seen as an immediate danger. Many in these economically troubled countries in fact welcomed the radical reforms which the Soviets brought and promised.

However, the West was not willing to give up either global preponderance, or administrative monopoly of the resources in the fractured Germany. After the war, the Allies had divided Germany up into administrative zones. The Western allies had taken over administration of Germany's industrial heartland, leaving the less resource-rich Eastern part to Stalin. Wanting a more adequate compensation for Soviet losses to Germany during the war, Stalin demanded reparations payments from the Western part of Germany in May 1946. Since payments would weaken western Germany to the point of economic dependency, and since that dependency would be mostly on the US, the Governor of the US zone refused to let any payments out of his zone.

At the same time, Britain and the US pressured Russia to withdraw the troops she had moved into Iran during the war. Since Britain could not maintain her old strength in the Near East, the US donned the responsibility of 'protecting' the area. A year later, Truman won the financial support of the American Congress to sustain US troops in Greece and Turkey by exaggerating the need for an American military presence.⁶

Meanwhile, the fear grew that the communist parties in France and Italy would take advantage of the post-war economic difficulties and seize power. In May 1947 they were therefore expelled from the French and Italian governments. In order to address the threat of general European economic hardship, the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, proposed his famous 'Marshall Plan' which was to bring economic recovery. The significance of the Plan was less in its details than the perception of it.

In the West, it was portrayed as a necessary economic measure for the good of the whole of Europe- even Stalin was invited to the pan-European talks on its application in June 1947. Yet, since he himself saw it as a plan of capitalist governments to create puppet states Europe and subvert Soviet control in East Europe by seducing East European states, he rejected it and walked out on the talks. Stalin responded to perceived heightening of Western aggression by inviting the expelled French and Italian communists to a meeting in Poland in September, where he presented a worldview in which the world was divided between two camps, and issued a call for communists everywhere to resist US imperialism. At the same time the world-wide, communist information bureau, COMINFORM, was established.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.14.

⁶ Although guerrilla insurgents threatening the barely democratic Greek government had only tenuous links to Soviet communists, Truman depicted the Greek domestic conflict as a cut-and-dried struggle between freedom and totalitarianism which had global ramifications. The general picture that was deliberately nourished in Washington was of a communist cancer spreading through the international system, which must be met with a strong policy of containment. The responsibility for this policy naturally fell on American shoulders, since those of West Europe were now too weak (*ibid.*, pp.14-7)

In the West, this organisation was portrayed as a revival of the old Communist International, which had been formed to foster a global Marxist revolution. Shortly afterward, communists in France and Italy organised strikes designed to sabotage the Marshall Plan.⁷ Under these conditions, talks held in December failed to produce a German peace treaty, entrenching Germany's East/West division.

Although military experts in the West did not expect a soviet military invasion because the Soviet economy had still not recovered from the war, the Soviet army was larger than the Western ones. In the climate of growing tension, it was feared that a diplomatic crisis could issue in armed conflict. Since it was further felt that a US guarantee would provide a boost to West European morale, as well as a significant psychological deterrence to such an outcome, the Brussels defence pact between Western Europe was signed in March 1948.

Stalin responded by blocking the land corridors into Berlin from West Germany in June. Although he re-opened the corridor a year later, the blockade was used to 'prove' Western suspicions of Russia. The US initiated talks around a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)⁸ in July. Although the Stalin posed no real military threat, NATO became a reality *de facto* and *de jure* in Washington in April 1949. In September 1949, West Germany elected its first government, and Stalin formed an East German State in response. After the Soviets exploded the first atomic bomb the same year, the US started advocating West German re-armament, and urging Europeans to be ready to defend themselves.

The tension mounting between the emerging Western bloc, and Stalin's government was further aggravated by Truman's intervention in the Korean Civil War in 1950. At that time the pro-West southern Korea was invaded by the communist North. Truman supported South Korea externally. To do so, he internally promoted support for Senator Joe McCarthy's views, which were notoriously rabidly anti-communist. Given the 'obviousness' of the 'communist danger', the NATO signatories agreed to bring a re-armed West Germany into the pact-regardless of their earlier concerns raised by Germany's role in both Wars.

By the decade of the 50's, the East/West tension had begun to acquire a dynamic of its own. In the face of mutual provocation, the Soviet Union and the US deliberately cultivated the image of a bipolar world map. After enough provocation, they each had enough 'proof' of the inherent necessities of this perspective. The first hydrogen bomb was exploded by the US in 1952. Russia answered with hers the following year.

Even though talks between the two emerging 'sides' continued into the 50's, these talks did not stop the process of polarisation. When talks were held, the climate of tension in each 'bloc' would relax, and internal disputes and fissures would surface. As both 'sides' were anxious to maintain internal unity, the talks always broke down. When Stalin died in 1953, he

⁷ibid., pp.14-7.

⁸NATO included the US, Canada, Britain, France, Italy, Iceland, Denmark, Portugal, Norway and the Benelux States. *ibid.*, p.20.

was succeeded by the more moderate Georgi Malenkov. Worried about global war, Churchill and Malenkov entered into serious communication, which resulted in Churchill's proposing a meeting between East and West in 1954. In spite of Churchill's efforts, Germany officially became a member of NATO in May 1955. Malenkov was ousted by the hard-liners, Nikita Krushchev and Nikolai Bulganin who immediately condemned German re-armament and formed the Warsaw Pact (also May 1955), which defined a military structure for East Europe that mirrored West Europe's NATO. With the signing of the Warsaw Pact, the previously emerging East and West 'camps' were rigidly demarcated and institutionalised.

Retrospectively, 1955 can be viewed as the 'point of no return'. After nearly a decade of American provocation, the Soviet launch of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM's) and a space satellite over the next two years sparked nuclear build-up in America. On both sides the necessity of a nuclear 'Cold War' swiftly became an irrevocable 'given'.⁹

Barth's Response

Barth's basic stance in this new global context is paradigmatically outlined in the article he wrote for the June and July 1949 issues of the Berlin journal, *World Review*, entitled "The Church Between East and West".¹⁰ In this article, Barth argued that because the problem of the East/West tension affects us as human beings, it concerns God, and therefore ought to be the concern of the church- by which he meant, all who are in the Church, and not only the 'leadership'. Since the problem of East/West tension is a concern of the church as such, Christians must ask where they stand as *Christians* on it.

Before asking where a *Christian* stands, Barth found it necessary to articulate the problem clearly. He described it as a conflict, or "world-political"¹¹ struggle for power between Russia and America, in which each was surrounded by a buffer-zone of vassal states linked in a bloc and each mutually afraid of encirclement by the other.¹² Once this situation was understood, Barth argued that there could be only one clear Christian answer: Christians cannot be afraid under any circumstances, however startled they are, because theirs is and has always been a place of faith.¹³

Barth reminded his readers that such dire conflicts have arisen before in history. But they, like this one, are no more than "one form of the travail in which the creature is waiting for the great Revelation", as well as "part of the shadow of judgements passed on man on the Cross

⁹ibid., pp. 15-23.; also see Merriman, op.cit., pp. 1297-.

¹⁰see Barth, *Against the Stream*, (AS) pp. 125-46.

¹¹ibid., p. 128.

¹²ibid., pp. 127-9.

¹³ibid., p. 130.

of Calvary".¹⁴ Thus, in one sense only are they 'necessary', and that sense is no reason for fear. Since no world occurrence can shake the dominion of Jesus Christ, the great Hope of all creation cannot be overthrown. Christians today must continue as their forebearers did: suffering, enduring and surviving in the midst of everything, and emerging out of them, because none of them last. The task for Christians in this new situation, then, was to tell themselves and others that they cannot let fear be their "counsellor",¹⁵ and therefore also, that they cannot take a position which has fear for a *raison d'être*. The so-called Cold War, he said, was not a Christian concern.¹⁶

Christians are not only not to participate in the conflict, but they are to counter it with a third way which operates from the perspective of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, by "joyful perseverance" and "fearless profession".¹⁷ The only way to counter the godless-ness which the East is all too easily accused of by the West is by letting go the Western philosophical godlessness which inspired Marx, and from which the East derived its supposed godlessness. Christians cannot fall into the trap of believing in a 'Christian West' and a demonised East, but must persevere in making the Christian proclamation to victims of fear on both sides.¹⁸

Both sides proclaim a social, political and economic "ideology" or "mode of living"¹⁹ which must be applied to all areas of life. Both accuse the other of 'false faith': the West accuses the East of treating humans as an economic unit to be sacrificed to a god of progress; the East, that the West hypocritically does the same thing. As the Church listens to both sides, she cannot join either "battle-hymn"- nor can she be impartial. The church is not identical with one side or the other, but is found on both.²⁰ Therefore, she must say a firm 'No' to the cursing and false faith coming from both sides because it can only lead to war.

The 'No' of the church is not one which takes sides, as in the war with National Socialism, because the situation is different. The danger in the West is not that it will be seduced by Communism (as it was by Romantic Nationalism, and then Nazism), but by a false image of its own righteousness.²¹ The Church's mandate, as before, is to confess the 'Word of

¹⁴ibid.

¹⁵ibid., p.131.

¹⁶ibid., p.131.: "As Christians it is not our concern at all. It is not a genuine, not a necessary...conflict. It is a mere power-conflict. We can only warn against the still greater crime of wanting to decide the issue in a third world war. We can only speak in favour and support of every relaxation of the tension, and do what we can to increase the remaining fund of reason which may still be at the disposal of notoriously unreasonable humanity. With the gospel in our hearts and on our lips, we can only go through the midst of these two quarrelling giants with the prayer: 'Deliver us from evil!...' What we can do in the midst of the conflict can only consist in the wholehearted, sincere and helpful sympathy which we are in duty bound to extend to all its victims as far as lies within our power."

¹⁷ibid., p.141.

¹⁸ibid., pp.132-41.

¹⁹ibid., p.132.

²⁰ibid., pp.132-6.

²¹ibid., pp.136-9.

the Cross', not to clothe its political agenda with theology.²² During those other times, very few in the church said the unequivocal 'No' that had to be said. But the church cannot merely repeat what was said before, irrespective of context- however many may now have adopted what was said before.²³

Yet, though the church cannot say precisely the same thing again, what she has to say in the new situation must be said for precisely the same reasons as she spoke before. Barth pointed out that while the church can only fight against every totalitarian system, she still cannot identify herself with the cry of the West, because it is not an honest cry against totalitarianism *tout court* on a firm theological basis. The West not only says nothing against the Spanish dictator Franco, but makes use of him for the sake of the front against the East. The cry of the West is made for strategic reasons at least as much as principled ones- which themselves are not honestly taken.

Not only is a presentation of total opposition to totalitarianism a hypocrisy, but the West has done nothing to solve the social problem that Communism tries to solve. However much Communism uses "disgusting methods" to achieve its aim, the West itself has the "atrocities of the French Revolution"²⁴ to remember. Since the cause of the West cannot be equated with humanitarianism, much less Christianity,²⁵ Barth cautioned that the church is not to repeat "in Christian terms what is being said *ad nauseam* in every newspaper in secular terms".²⁶ Such idle repetition is cheap, and unthought partisanship.²⁷

²²ibid., pp. 140-2.: "[P]lease note that, in its relationship to Christianity, Communism, as distinguished from Nazism, has not done, and by its very nature cannot do, one thing: it has never made the slightest attempt to reinterpret or to falsify Christianity, or to shroud itself in a Christian garment. It has never committed the basic crime of the Nazis, the removal and replacement of the real Christ by a national Jesus, and it has never committed the crime of anti-Semitism. There is nothing of the false prophet about it. It is not anti-Christian. It is coldly non-Christian....It is brutally, but at least honestly, godless. What should the Church do? Protest?....Not a crusade but the Word of the Cross is what the Church in the West owes to the godless East, but above all to the West itself..."

²³ibid., p. 137.: "And so everybody is rushing about today crying that the same 'No' must be said again, with the same intonation....As if such simple repetitions ever occurred in history! And as if the Church were an automatic machine producing the same goods today as yesterday as soon as you put your penny in the slot! It may be remembered that people became receptive to these same goods at that time only very hesitantly, slowly and after much resistance!"

²⁴ibid., p. 139.

²⁵ibid., pp. 139/40.: "[I]t is pertinent not to omit to discriminate in our view of contemporary Communism between its totalitarian atrocities as such and the positive intention behind them. And if one tries to do that, one cannot say of Communism what one was forced to say of Nazism ten years ago- that what it means and intends is pure unreason....It would be quite absurd to mention in the same breath the philosophy of Marxism and the 'ideology' of the Third Reich....What has been tackled in Soviet Russia- albeit with very dirty and bloody hands and in a way that rightly shocks us- is, after all, a constructive idea, the solution of a problem which is a serious and burning problem for us as well, and which we with our clean hands have not yet tackled anything like energetically enough: the social problem. Our Western 'No' to the solution of this question in Russia could only be a Christian 'No' if we had a better conscience with regard to what we mean and intend with our Western freedom....As long as one cannot say that of the West....as long as there is still a 'freedom' in the West to organise economic crises, a 'freedom' to dump our corn into the sea her whilst people are starving there, so long as these things happen, we Christians, at any rate, must refuse to hurl an absolute 'No' at the East. We are not wrong to accuse the East of inhumanity in its methods. But do not let us forget that the East, as we have already heard, also accuses us of inhumanity..."

²⁶ibid., p. 142.

²⁷ibid., p. 143.: "The partisanship of ten years ago was a matter of a good Christian-political Confession. Today, if we were to become guilty of the kind of partisanship which is desired of us, it could only be a matter of merely dabbling in politics and

Just as before, the church must accompany her renunciation with affirmation. The church's positive task in face of the East/West problem is reconstruction. Reconstruction means that in the West, the church must call the West to the humanity, peace and freedom of God, and that in the East, the Eastern church must do the same for the East. All practical action must spring from this task. Wherever she is, the church must remind both sides, in rejection of their ideologies, to be neither "righteous over much", nor "over much wicked".²⁸

For all of these reasons, the church participates in the present political situation by "believing, loving and hoping and thinking of the word of promise, the Word of God through the prophet Isaiah: 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land....' ".²⁹

The assessments, arguments and conclusions Barth presented in "The Church Between East and West" were repeated and expanded on in various letters, writings and lectures in which he spoke of the East/West conflict, but not changed.

On the one hand, Barth clearly recognised the danger of the Soviet ideology, and cautioned colleagues in East Europe against easy accomodation with it.³⁰ Barth was further willing to protest infringement on the church's responsibility to stand on her own ground. In 1953, he wrote to the East German Minister of State, protesting the unjust arrest and detainment of a pastor.³¹

Yet, on the other hand, he felt that it was not his place to make a call to armed resistance- partly because he did not live in East Europe and therefore could not assess the situation with certainty, and partly because it was not so clear either to the West or East Europeans that the Soviets themselves actually wanted and were headed towards an armed assault on Europe.³² Barth therefore did not approve of the re-armament of Germany which was advocated and justified on grounds of supposed Soviet military threat. He further opposed nuclear armament for both sides, for two reasons. First, he did so because of the absolute destructiveness of the weapons.³³

expressing badly certain completely unclarified and imperfectly grounded Western feelings. The Christian-political Confession today must consist precisely in the renunciation of such partisanship."

²⁸ibid., p. 145.

²⁹ibid., p. 146.

³⁰See "Letter to a Pastor in the German Democratic Republic" ("LPG") in Barth, *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land*, (HSGML) p.53: "It is exceedingly difficult for the church and for individual Christians here and there to find and to tread ever again the narrow path of obedience, to resist on both sides the compulsory domestication and, even more, the ever-present temptation to voluntary conformism."; and Barth's May 1948 letter to friends in Hungary. in AS, pp. 118-24. esp. p.120.

³¹see Bowden, op.cit., p.79. The pastor was arrested for his views, and detained without due process between February and July of 1953.

³²see Cornu, p.137- reference is to an article titled "Faith and Life" ("Foi et Vie"), published 1951.; also Busch, p.350 re: comments on not living in East Germany.

³³see Cornu, p.196. In a report Barth participated in editing in 1958, it was stated that the preparation and conduct of atomic war can only mean "the formal and real negation of the will of God the Creator, of His faithfulness, and of His grace toward humanity". Therefore, "obedience to Jesus Christ excludes all participation in atomic war and its preparation"- even nuclear experiments were a danger to humanity.; p.197, see Barth's January 1959 letter to the European Congress in which he repudiates

Secondly, the arms race itself accepted war as the ultimate means of solving human difficulties and conflicts. The production of atomic weapons was the extreme conclusion of the balance-of-power logic he had been rejecting since the First World War.³⁴ The 'necessity' of the East/West conflict was an ideology in itself, which was alien to the church's own message.³⁵ The "alien power" of the East German government, for example, was less a danger than the power of this alien ideology.³⁶

In his 1958 summary of the preceding decade,³⁷ Barth questioned the redemptive value of perpetuating an enemy-mentality, and rejected its justification on the basis of principles.³⁸ He also reproached the West for the "madness" of "passing off" mutual atomic annihilation for the work of Christian love, and for ignoring the many possibilities for mutual negotiation that had arisen.³⁹

The bottom-line of the East/West problem for Barth was not 'East vs. West', but fear vs. faith. In the face of this question, *Christians* had a greater responsibility to clearly example what the whole of Europe lacked, than they did to reiterate what anyone could read in any

the fear mentality that drives the arms race.: *KB Letters. 1961-68*, p.164, May 1964 letter to a pastor in Lausanne: "The only thing I regret is that I did not take into serious consideration the possibility of atomic armament and atomic war, which by its very nature calls into question even what I had called [in *CD III.4*] an adequate reason to make war legitimate- including the military defence of Switzerland. Defence of our Confederation by atomic weapons would imply an inner contradiction."

³⁴Cornu *ibid.*: also see Busch, pp.429/30: Barth, *Karl Barth Letters. 1961-68*, (G. Bromiley trans. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981) pp.13/4, July 1961 letter to an editor of a paper in Hamburg in which Barth mentions his involvement in a small movement against nuclear armament, for which he gained 74,000 signatures on a petition- which leaders ignored "going on with their evil designs". : Cornu, pp.185-7.

³⁵in "*LPG*". (1958), Barth spoke of the ideology of 'anti-communism' which he refused to feed by publicly emphasising the faults he saw in communism, rather than openly reminding everyone of the West's own attempts to seduce the church away from being herself, and of the church's task to be herself nevertheless, wherever she is.: see also *KB Letters. 1961-68*, pp.82/104, Barth writes to Professor Hromadka in 1962 and 63, expressing his disappointment in Hromadka's easy adoption of the ideologies of the East by conforming his theology to a special 'philosophy of history': toward the West, Barth said: "The churches have injured the cause of the gospel by the manner, to a great extent thoughtless, in which they have identified the gospel...with the badly planned and ineptly guided cause of the West."(*HCM*, p.65.) He also said: "I regard anti-communism as a matter of principle an evil even greater than communism itself. Can one overlook the fact that communism is the unwelcomed yet- in all its belligerence- natural result of Western developments?"(*ibid.*, p.63.)

³⁶*ibid.*, pp.54/5. Barth said: "This power would not have gained control over you had it not been for all the sins of past leaders and people in society, state, and church. You are assuredly undergoing a painful process of purification and fiery refining, such as the Western world also will not escape sooner or later in some form...." Barth encouraged the East Germans to hope in God, because such hope was never in vain. The struggle of the church was not against the political order this time, but against the temptation to so concern itself with the political order that she ceased to be what she was: a witness of the grace of God. p.57/8 "Rather, you must meet [your countrymen's] unbelief with a joyous unbelief in their attempted atheism. You as Christians must confidently claim that your atheists belong to God as much as you do. Whether they will be converted may be more doubtful; but this is a secondary question. What is certain is that God is not against them, but for them. And you, for your part, not only may but must believe this for their sake and on their behalf."

³⁷*HCM*(1958). in *HCM*.

³⁸*ibid.*, p.63.: "[C]ould we really intend to help the peoples governed by communism and the world threatened by it, or even one individual suffering under its effects, by proclaiming and seeking to practice toward it a relationship exclusively that of enemies? Have we forgotten that what is at stake in this 'absolute enemy' relationship, to which every brave man in the West is now obligated and for which he would give his all, is a typical invention of (and heritage from) our defunct dictators- and that only the 'Hitler in us' can be an anti-communist on principle?"

³⁹*ibid.*, p.65.

newspaper.⁴⁰ Christians had no business accepting the worst-case scenario painted by fear, which was still mere speculation.⁴¹

Thus, faced with the "tribulation and anxiety" of obvious totalitarianism in the East, and "creeping totalitarianism"⁴² in the West, Barth instructed the church attend to *her* responsibility: to discover who God is, and to fear Him only.⁴³ The following excerpt summarises his position on Christian ethics in the concrete, historical (political and theological) context Cold War:

"Simply put, to believe truly and gladly in the God as whose witnesses we are commissioned, you there and we here. To believe in him means, as you know as well as I do, to fear and love him, his kingdom and his grace above all else, and so to fear and love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ above all things; to acknowledge him and submit to him in all our problems, great and small, as the One who was, is, and is to come; to risk everything in our personal and in our corporate life on the faith that he will provide all that is good for us, and that all he provides will be good. This belief is, even in the East German Republic, the only key, the only treasure, the only armor.... God above all things! He is the One who has willed and ordained that the Christian Church be both confident and joyful in the midst of mankind to have a gift and a task even under the domination of an alien power, a socialism that is inspired and directed by Moscow!.... God above all things! Sovereign even over the legalistic totalitarianism of your state! You fear it? Fear it not!.... Indeed, grace is all-embracing, *totalitarian*.... It does not retaliate.... This means, of course, that you will scrupulously avoid encountering and counteracting your rulers on the ground unfortunately chosen by them, that is, merely countering their crude ungodliness and inhumanity with more refined versions of the same. They evidently fail to grasp a truth which we may not have made sufficiently clear to them: the Church of Jesus Christ in the totalitarianism of her gospel confronts them on an altogether different ground.... She is not to rebut a materialistic world-view with a Christian world-view.... Only "firm in the faith", that is in *this* faith, can the church resist: never, in the name or in honor of any principles or dogmas.... She can only follow Jesus.... Whether or not her witness will be believed, she will at any rate be worthy of belief."⁴⁴

⁴⁰In 1956, the American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, wrote an article titled "Why is Karl Barth Silent about Hungary?". On October 23, 1956 the Soviet crackdown on the Hungarian revolt had provoked a strong response in the West. Barth, however, was silent. Citing 1 Sam. 3:11 ("For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil"), Barth argued that it was inappropriate for the West to concern herself with the splinter in another's eye while ignoring the beam in her own. He refused to respond to Niebuhr's article, except to say that Niebuhr hadn't really posed an honest question. Rather, he felt that Niebuhr was "trying to draw his opponent on to thin ice, either to compel me to accept his primitive anti-communism or to unmask me as a crypto-communist, and in either case to discredit me as a theologian. What could I have said in reply?" (see Busch, *op.cit.*, p.427, and for further reference to Barth's interactions with Niebuhr, pp.360, 396 and 437.) In a letter written to Joseph Hromadka on December 18, 1962, Barth rebuked Hromadka for using theology to back his political opinion, mentioning that Niebuhr and Brunner were regrettably doing the same thing in the West. (see Barth, *Letters*, pp.82/3.

⁴¹Barth, *AS*, pp.98/9. During a question and answer period following a lecture he had given in Hungary in the summer of 1948, Barth said: "[E]ven if the State begins to show signs of the beast from the abyss, as Christians we shall not immediately clutch at the *ultima ratio*.... The christian life is based primarily on affirmation of the good and only secondarily on condemnation of the evil.... What has the christian Church to fear if it has faith?.... There is not a trace in the New Testament of the Church being afraid of the State. Therefore...let us not be afraid. It is easy to be afraid anywhere in the world today. The whole of the Western world, the whole of Europe is afraid, afraid of the East. But we must not be afraid.... Great dangers in the life of individuals and nations have often only appeared on the horizon. Everything is in the hands of God. We must certainly offer resistance if necessary, but why be nervous and despondent? We shall never act aright in this State if we indulge in that mood."

⁴²*LPG*, pp.52/3.

⁴³*ibid.*, pp.53-61.

⁴⁴*ibid.*, pp.53-61.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In answer to the initial question of this thesis, 'how does Karl Barth's view of war develop from the First World War (WWI), to the period of the Cold War?', it must first be stated that Barth's view is indeed one which *develops*. In other words, Barth's deep consistency in the face of war is more pronounced than the superficial "changes" in his responses.

His consistency is characterised by the view that all war is a judgement of God on false human peace caused by the idolatry of unbelief in various forms. In speech and in action, Barth upheld his statement, "God does not will the war, the war is sin", from 1914 through to his death.

Yet, Barth also became more and more aware that the things of the penultimate realm, the world bound in time, cannot be equated with God's ultimate decisions. God may not will the war, but it may be precisely for that reason that God Himself calls someone to fight it.

As Barth matured politically, theologically and as a person, his tendency towards paradoxical ethical answers illustrated in *Romans* became increasingly more thorough. His complex Yes/No answer to WWI was still fairly simple in that various actions could be classified on one side or the other with a fair degree of certainty.¹

At the time he was writing *CD III.4*, and even later when he was conducting discussions such as those recorded in his *Table Talk*, general classification was still necessary and possible. Yet, Barth had lost something of his youthful certainty. Ethical 'right' and 'wrong' had moved from being merely complexly paradoxical, to also being ultimately hidden to human view behind the righteousness of God in Christ.

In a typically paradoxical manner, the tool of the *Grenzfall* helps Barth avoid two common, but opposing, pitfalls. On one side, his leaving the living God's actual command as the ultimate criterion of action meant that he could make strong faith statements without becoming legalistic or moralistic. On the other, he closed the door to ethical liberalism, or moral opportunism by grounding human freedom from the law in belief in this particular, free God whose particular action on the Cross freed humanity.

Having now examined Barth's actual responses to three, concrete, historically very different situations of war, it has become clear that the position he held from 1914 to 1968 was indeed one characterised by the same diversity-in-continuity described by his theoretical discussion of the *Grenzfall* concept in the *Church Dogmatics*.

¹ See Summary section, Chapter Three: "Barth's Reaction to the First World War"

In light of Barth's various articulations and actions in response to three wars, the *Grenzfall* is clearly not any of the three things Yoder suggested that it was: a) the principle that every principle must have an exception, b) a foisting of human responsibility onto 'the sovereignty of God', c) a statement about the finitude of all human values, such that ultimately ethics boils down to a weighing of one human value against another.

In the first place, it cannot be the (illogical) principle that 'every principle must have exceptions'. It is not a *principle*, but a statement that humans do not live by principles, but by faith in Jesus Christ. That is, by constant and active listening to the Word of God which is 'new every morning', even as it is always the Word of God. It is a statement that 'principles' are false absolutes which provide humanity with human justifications, and therefore make a false claim to also provide humanity's sanctification.

Second, the *Grenzfall* can hardly be an evasion of human responsibility on the excuse that human responsibility negates the 'sovereignty of God' which must be safeguarded. God keeps Himself quite sovereign without human assistance. Since 'responsibility' is defined by His claim on humanity, and not the limited claims made on human beings by time, vocation, fellows, or country/State/nation/people, and since God further claims responsibility in full awareness of all these other pulls and limits, human responsibility is not negated by Barth's emphasis on God's responsibility because the two are simply not in the same category. God is responsible for righteousness. Humans are responsible for humble, ever ambiguous obedience under God's grace. I might further be said that the *Grenzfall* increases human responsibility by placing the individual human being so directly before God at the moment of choice.

Obviously then, Yoder's third definition of the *Grenzfall* (that the finitude of all human values is really a practical casuistry where one, arbitrary elected value is weighed against another) is also false. All human values are limited, not by other human values, but by God who gives limited value. The bottom-line is not that the human value of a life is bordered by the equally human value of other lives, but that both are bordered by the God who alone knows and does what is truly just and right. Since God gives meaning to life in the first place, He also sets the limit of its value. Being the only Lord, obedience is ultimately to Him, and cannot stop with values that may seem so much more straightforward than His aims at any given moment. Though God may be constant, the very definition of human being is a life in constant flux, bound to God, yet always beginning anew and moving towards a goal which is not fully known to the person concerned.

Constant beginning implies an ethical "de-assurance" because it precludes *a priori* certainty. Human life is reconciled fellowship with a living God who actually speaks and has something to say by way of direction for the humanity He has taken responsibility for. Therefore, the one thing that can be known about the definition of 'right action' is that it is never static.

Contrary to Yoder's hasty conclusion regarding a necessarily concomitant theological mutability, the changeability of the content of God's commands is an ethical possibility for Barth because of the relative immutability of dogmatic knowledge and understanding. Humans are free to accept their epistemological and hermeneutical incertitude precisely because God is revealed as one who knows and understands all completely.

Whatever God may further reveal regarding His nature and will, He has once for all revealed His character and purpose for humanity in His own being-in-act: Jesus Christ. Thus, the thread that ties obedient actions together is not their superficial form, but their underlying, common criteria of faith in this Person. In other words, the diversity of ethical responses is made possible by consistent belief.

Barth's diversity-in-continuity described by the *Grenzfall* can be illustrated concretely.

From his earliest sermons in 1914, Barth already emphasised the great difference between God and God's plans, and humanity and human knowledge. As Barth developed theologically, he never abandoned this foundational presupposition. Once he had articulated it systematically for the first time in *Epistle to the Romans*, he seems to have expanded and built on it for the duration of his life. The ethical result of this awareness in 1914 seemed to require a disassociation with the nationalistic ideology raging through Europe, and thus a disassociation with the justifications all sides in the Great War were using. From 1914 through to the publication of *Romans*, Barth called to his fellow citizens to follow Christ, whose way was different than human ways, and who could not be used to give moral support to human ideologies.

Yet, even as he did so, he did not call for apolitical inaction. Barth remained concerned with the workers' struggle, continued to perform his duty with the homeguard, and urged the Swiss to see neutrality in an active rather than passive sense. Swiss neutrality, he argued, was a positive opportunity to illustrate the obedience to Christ that the whole world had need of.

Even in his earlier sermons and lectures Barth's emphasis on the distance between God and human beings implied a paradoxical relationship between them. In short, God is known as 'other' because He has come to us in Jesus Christ. Knowledge that God is 'other' is possible through the knowledge that He Himself draws close and demands personal response from human beings.

By 1938, Barth's early sentiment that obedience meant engaging in the world around in a special way more than it meant turning one's back on the world around had developed. In the changed historical and political circumstances, ethics continued to be a possibility springing from the dogmatics about this God witnessed to as Christ in the Bible. Barth continued to exhort the church to have faith in Christ rather than seductive ideologies and leaders. And yet, the implications of this same faith were different. In WWII, Barth had to not only persist in

deconstructing the myth that God sides with a victorious nation, but also to shed light on a new myth concerning the salvific claims of a particular man (Hitler).

Moreover, the issues at stake in WWI were different from those of WWII. The first war was still very much a game of its leaders, even if it did change this same fact for the rest of history. The second so involved all citizens that quietism amounted to compliance. Whereas refusal to throw in one's lot with any side constituted resistance to the ideology of national glory driving the earlier war fever, resistance in the second circumstance was defined differently.

In WWII, resistance to the pervading ideology had to be complete in a way different from that of WWI. The nations fell into WWI, more or less with gusto because it was felt that the war would end in a few months. To mobilise their armies, leaders drew on the myths of heroism and glory that had long been associated with battle. Resistance to the godless world-view shaped by the earlier *Realpolitik* meant refusal to rush in with the crowds.

Hitler's rise to power, however, was characterised by his ability to hypnotise and dissuade his opponents until it was too late. One has only to recall the Munich agreement of 1938 to see that the crowds were not rushing to battle on the eve of WWII. On the contrary, people inside and outside Germany were succumbing to Hitler's pretensions as a political and economic saviour of Europe. Given the philosophical-spiritual core of Nazi ideology (illustrated in *Mein Kampf* and the *Nazi Primer*), resistance was again a root question of faith. It was not long, however, before authentic faith was put to the test of the actions those who claimed to have it were prepared to undertake.

Hitler's assumption that practicing believers had to restrict their belief in an absolute God who was Lord in all aspects of life to a tiny corner of their private life had to be challenged. Compliance would have amounted to a denial of the Lordship of the Triune over the whole person.

By the time Europe was divided by the Cold War, the face of the situation facing the church had changed again. And yet, for Barth, the key question continued to be the question of faith in the God who went to the Cross for the humanity He loves. By the time WWII had ended, the whole world seemed to have been infected by early German *Realpolitik*. The ideology of the Cold War created a 'necessary' dialectic of animosity, based on an unquestioned ontology of violence.

In a universe where there is no God, the claim that humans are locked into a continuous struggle of self-defence is believable. But in Barth's universe there was a God who made humans free to believe differently because He took responsibility for them, preserving and accompanying them. For this reason, and because of the reality of atomic warfare, the question posed by the Cold War was not really the age-old problem of war: to arms or not to arms. Instead, it was again a question of where one's faith was directed. Even though the whole

world seemed to take it as the most pressing reality, the Cold War itself was a constructed, virtual war. Against the imposition of virtual reality, Barth called Christians to the recognition of the reality most basic to human life: the peace of God in Jesus Christ.

Thus, rather than constituting a justification for some action he wanted to take which might go contrary to an earlier position, the *Grenzfall* concept is descriptive of what Barth actually did. Based on a solid dogmatic understanding, the *Grenzfall* permits freedom to respond with a consistent faith in changing contexts, as Barth did. Rather than being a solid law proscribing *ethos*, it is his attempt to describe general guidelines, or *ethics*. It would be consistent with what has been discovered about Barth's thought in this paper to conclude by remarking that, no doubt for Barth, even his own actions remained ultimately unjustified insofar as human knowledge is concerned.

It would also be consistent with what has so far been discussed to say that the point of studying Barth's reaction to war and articulation of the *Grenzfall* is not to find a solid, acceptable, 'right' "Christian" response to war, at least in terms of the question of taking up arms. Whatever situations Barth was in, no human being will ever find himself in precisely the same spot. Therefore, whatever Barth may have heard God command him regarding encouragement of military resistance to Hitler, defence of Switzerland, or refusal to advocate a side in a questionably real struggle of powers is never going to be perfectly re-applicable by any one else under similar conditions.

And yet, whether under similar conditions, or in situations of war Barth did not consider such as civil war, the *Grenzfall* is a useful tool of thought. Precisely because it is not a clear law which can be re-applied, it provides a guideline for thinking in an unlimited diversity of circumstances. The one, solid, "Christian" ethical response is, for Barth, the action of believing the God known in Christ Jesus.

In each new moment belief may have a different form as it changes in resistance to the particular form of unbelief which presents itself as a temptation. Were the temptation of unbelief to remain in the same form all the time, it would lose its appeal. Once conquered by a person in their walk following Christ, they would never be susceptible again. In Barth's theology, the persistent fact of human sin clearly shows that this is not an earthly possibility, and that Christian faith is therefore an ongoing, changing challenge.

To regard Barth's responses to WWI, WWII and the Cold War as evidence of a flip-flop from pacifism, to militarism, and back to pacifism is to force his thought into a framework completely alien to it. It is to wrongly assume that he was thinking within the rather flat paradigm of 'arms vs. no arms' where peace is the simple absence of armed war. Because this paradigm stands on a foundational ontology (an ontology of violence described by both German *Realpolitik* and English Hobbesianism) which Barth rejected at the outset, its language does not provide categories appropriate for describing Barth's responses.

It is not so much that those on either side of a pacifism/militarism dialectic do not have religious reasons behind their positions. Rather, the dialectic itself is faithless in the area of its operating presuppositions, if not its claims. A grounding ontology of violence can only be atheistic, agnostic, or deistic because it presupposes either that God does not exist, or that He is not involved with His creation in an ongoing, active and communicative, personal manner.

In beginning with faith in God in Christ, Barth stepped outside the polarity of pacifism/militarism, into a different paradigm of thought. From within the framework set by his theological presuppositions, Barth's definition of peace rejected the common one of 'not war'. Peace for him resembled the biblical concept of *shalom*, suggesting positive action in parabolic illustration of a positive reality based on an ontology of fellowship and love, revealed in God's movement towards humanity. Barth was consistently for peace and against war. Yet, to ask whether he was pacifist or militarist at any given point is to ask the wrong question, because the question itself deforms Barth's answer.

Barth cannot be labelled with these simple poles, because his own questions dove underneath them to the level of their operating assumptions. Barth's response to war, then, is too complex to be summarised into neat, familiar categories.

Given Barth's own awareness of the ambiguous nature of human judgement of human righteousness, neither is it appropriate to make strong ethical conclusions regarding the ways he responded in contexts of war. The key to understanding Barth's view of war is in recognising that for him war always raised the question 'who is your God?', and that, in one form or another, his answer remained identical with the first article of the Barmen Declaration: "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death."² Whether he followed his Lord or not is hidden in God until that day when all is revealed.

²See the section on the Barmen Declaration, Chapter 4., and Cochrane. *op.cit.*, p.239.

APPENDIX A: 1939 Pamphlet "The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day"

Barth begins this work by explaining that the 'political problem' is primarily confessional lack of commitment- but it is this in the face of "German National Socialism, which directs itself to the whole contemporary world, and ...Church." (p.22) Barth said: "You have only to think of what has happened inside Germany itself; within a bare six years a great and in the end not abnormally unreasonable...people is claimed and possessed by a new political system in such a way that to-day every movement...of its inner as well as its outer life in all areas is so determined by this system that all resistance...even all disagreement is made...impossible. One has only to think that this has happened...in our next-door neighbour's house...when you see that, would you not have to admit that here *the* political problem is raised...for the whole world and...Church?...National Socialism occupies to-day *outside* Germany precisely the same position which it occupied *inside* Germany...in the summer of 1932. This much is certain, that in the year 1938 it can no longer remain hidden that German National Socialism is in reality reaching out after the *whole* of Europe, and even beyond...with its propaganda...foreign policy of menacing force...but still much more...with the magnetism of its "spirit"..." (pp.23/4.)

The reason National Socialism is *the* problem of the day for the church is because it is a "religious institution of salvation" (represented in its 'world-view') (p.41-3.), to which the church must say an unambiguous 'Yes' or 'No', in confession of Jesus Christ. As a political experiment, the church's response to it might as well be the same as her response to Nero: martyrdom. (pp.29-31) "The Church so far as she herself is concerned, can exist just as well under an aristocratic or democratic republic as under a monarchy, or even finally under a dictatorship." (p.30) In its early stages, National Socialism was just a political experiment as far as the church was concerned. Therefore, although a suspicious experiment, it was not immediately a matter of confession. The "heretical intoxication of that time" (p.31)- of the German Christians- was.

Now, however, the meaning of *political* National Socialism for the church and her witness to Jesus Christ is quite clear (especially in its treatment of Jews) (p.51). Therefore, her confession means that she can no longer be politically neutral. (pp.35-7) "To-day it is senseless to continue to close one's eyes and deny that the import and character of National Socialism...is a dictatorship which is totalitarian and ...which not only surrounds and determines mankind and men in utter totality, in body and soul, but abolishes their human nature...this constitutes...a question for decision addressed directly to the Church...to which the Church cannot but answer with Yes or No. Mark well, this is not something to be said of every dictatorship as such...But in our situation to-day we have to do with *this* form of the State...[that] faces us with the question of God, and thus with the question of faith...*this* dictatorship can no longer be understood as the carrying out of a divine commission..." (pp.37-9.)- which latter Barth understood "in the sense of Romans 13" (p.39).

Political National Socialism is an unambiguous question of faith and God because it operates "in the presupposition that it itself is able to be and to give to man and to all men everything necessary for body and soul, for life and death, for time and eternity." (p.41) "What is a choice of faith if it never becomes a political choice?" (p.58) Since the church cannot compromise with National Socialism, it must "pray for the suppression and casting out of National Socialism" (p.59), and therefore also "for her own restoration and preservation...and for the restoration and preservation of the just State" (p.67)- (which does not mean prayer for "preservation of Switzerland...Holland or England as such" (p.72)). The prayer of the church cannot be merely negative. The suffering the church undergoes for the sake of the struggle to suppress and cast it out is God's judgement that it rose up in the first place. (pp.61/2) "But wherever the just State is not yet dissolved, where it has not yet succumbed to anarchy or tyranny, it is worth preserving from anarchy or tyranny, and worth defending from these in emergency. And if no one else were to say it, the Church would have to say...that this defense is in principle necessary." (p.77)...even though there are other wars "to which the Church will have to be neutral" (p.78) sometime.

Although Barth wished that the church had concerned herself with restoration of a just State before matters got as bad as they had, he said that now "as a praying Church she must support armed defense against the advancement of the dissolution of the just State, just as she would support a police measure taken in the normal way." (p.79) Barth's final point was that the unity of the church depends on her speaking on clearly on her "decision of faith". (p.80)

APPENDIX B: 1946 lecture "The Christian Community and the Civil Community"

(in Barth, *Community, State and Church*, pp. 149-189).

In this lecture, Barth replaces the former categories 'church' and 'state' with 'christian community' and 'civil community' to clarify his former distinction between the institutions of church and state, and the 'true' state and 'true' church. (In Lutheran and Reformed Europe, there was such a great tendency to equate human orders with 'orders of Creation' supposedly obvious as instituted by God.) In addition to clarifying his definitions, Barth clarifies the relationship of these two communities in order to further distance himself from an idea of human institutional identification (ie: from the idea that the State could be identified with the Christian community in a 'just' State, or the church with the civil community.). "The Church reminds men of God's Kingdom. This does not mean that it expects the State gradually to become the Kingdom of God." (p.167.). The Church stands with the state in a world not yet redeemed, and it is therefore also not the Kingdom of God. (p.169.) 'Community' is a task-oriented definition, which describes different tasks, yet designates something of a shared mode of being for both communities.

In short, Christ is the axis, or centre-point around which the worshipful Christian community gathers- the relationship looks like a circle with a point in the middle. This circle and point are at the centre of a greater circle, which is the civil community. Thus, Christians can neither deny their unique knowledge of Christ, nor their participation in the civil community, nor the basic fact of Christ's being at the centre of both. The Christian community is represented by a circle smaller than the civil community, because the two will never be identified- Christians have to come to terms with the fact that much of the civil community will always operate under Christ, in ignorance of Him. Barth further explains that the Christian community does not need to defend itself as a community, but it is obligated to 'pray for the prosperity' of the city of the civil community. In other words, in any region, Christians are responsible for the level of justice/ injustice in their political community.

Thus, the church should not defend religious privileges, but rather act on behalf of the well-being of the whole community- Christian or otherwise. In doing so, they cannot abandon their centre. They do not deviate from their task of preaching the Gospel- it is just that wherever the whole Gospel is preached, the wider civil 'circle' outside the Christian community will be disturbed and changed. The duty of the church is "the preaching of the whole gospel of God's grace, which as such is the whole justification of the whole man- including political man. 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 the right interpretation of the Scriptures it will necessarily be prophetically political.....The Christian Church that is aware of its political responsibility...will interpret [preaching] politically even if it contains no direct reference to politics. Let the church concentrate first, however, on seeing that the whole gospel really is preached within its own area. Then there will be no danger of the wider sphere beyond the Church not being wholesomely disturbed by it." (pp. 184/5.)

The disturbance the Church brings to the civil community is not spoken to that community in the language which is spoken inside the Church. "In the political sphere Christians can bring in their Christianity only anonymously." (p. 184) (They fight for 'justice' and 'freedom', for example. But they do not fight for these because they are justice and freedom- no human value provides adequate ground for the Church's proclamation- the church always proclaims only the gospel. It is just that outside of the church, in political life, it is spoken parabolically so that it will gain a hearing. Outside the church, the church speaks in analogies. Barth's example is 'democracy' (pp. 173-9).

Although he repudiates any consideration of it as something absolute- ie: worth defense at all costs- he finds in it a certain analogy to the freedom in which God approaches man and waits for his response. However, even though Barth finds an analogy to the Gospel in democracy. Christians are made free in their political speech and choice because their base is Christ, and not absolute principles. Therefore there is no contradiction in Christians getting involved politically by joining different parties. In joining a party, a Christian does not adopt its arguments wholesale, but acts with others for principles he/she has become convinced are analogous to the Gospel irrespective of that party's program.

Even in this action, the Christian's prime interest is not the 'principle', but human beings to whom he/she seeks to bring the gospel in this parabolic, political 'speech'. "...the Church will always and in all circumstances be interested primarily in human beings and not in some abstract cause or other....right in itself becomes wrong..." (p. 171.) Christian engagement in politics means neither absolute acquiescence before whatever State is there, nor a priori rejection of the State as 'secular' and therefore irrelevant to God. It is not opposition based on the Gospel, but *indifference* which Barth thinks constitutes the 'rebellion' against God's order of Romans 13:2. (p. 157.) At the close of the lecture, Barth notes specifically that it has been an extended explanation of article five of the "Barmen Declaration" (pp. 188/9)

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