

# Introduction

Christian theology thinks and speaks of God in terms of Jesus Christ. But what exactly does it mean to think and speak of God in terms of Jesus Christ? If Christian theology is to be decidedly *Christian* thought and speech, then it has to be more than religion, piety, or social justice. It has to be the reiteration of Jesus Christ himself—his life, ministry, death, and resurrection—in contemporary thoughts and words. If Jesus is anything less or other than the content of our thinking and form, the material of our speaking and method, then we cannot avoid constructing “God” according to some preconceived pattern in religious imagination, for which Jesus merely supplies the color and texture.

Christian faith, in other words, is not prior religious sentiment to which Jesus gives meaning and direction, or prior ethical impulses to which he provides an avenue of action. It is just the opposite. Christian faith is belief in Jesus as the revelation of God, as the condition by which belief in God is real and possible; it is thus the critical interrogation of all religious sentiment, and the life-act from which all ethical impulses are cultivated.

For Christian knowledge and confession, there is no God behind or prior to this one, Christ Jesus, no religion that is not subsumed into this life and no ethics that is not derived from it. Everything that we would think and say of God in eternity and in time, God in himself and for us, is given in the historical event of his being God-with-us, Immanuel.

I begin with these delimiting observations because this is a book about a topic commonly pursued with little delimitation, namely, the Holy Spirit. More exactly, it is a book about how to think and speak of the Holy Spirit as the center of further thought and speech of God. It is an extended prologue to a theology of the Third Article of the ancient creed of Nicaea (325 c.e.) and more fully, Nicaea-Constantinople (381 c.e.), the first of which confesses the existence of God’s Spirit, and the second of which more fully acknowledges the divinity of the Spirit, along with the church and the life to come.<sup>1</sup> It is dedicated

1. On the rules of faith deriving from the first and second ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Nicaea-Constantinople, see for starters Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26–28; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 223–79.

to the premise that to think and speak of God even as Spirit, we must do so in terms of Jesus Christ, when “in terms of” indicates both a material and a methodological rule. *The only Spirit known and confessed by Christian theology is Spirit of the enfleshed Word.*

To do theology in terms of the Holy Spirit is to think and speak of God being God a third time. It is to think and speak of God being God again, as God always has been, but here and now, specifically in the terms of God’s engagement with the creature, in the event of being engaged by God as a creature. There is no basis on which we might think and speak of God being God except the event in which he *is* God-with-us.

To be even more exact, then, this is a book about how to think and speak about God in terms of the Holy Spirit, arguing necessarily from within its own operation of faith, that is, clunky and suspicious as it may initially sound, *as* thought and speech given in and shaped after encounter with God being God *for us*. It can only show that we must think and speak of the Spirit in terms of Christ Jesus *by* thinking and speaking in terms of Christ Jesus. It does not linearly deduce that Christ is the exclusive basis and norm of thought and speech of the Spirit, for that would already mean that Christ is *not* its exclusive basis and norm, that it might work from a given ground or manner of deduction at least for a while, until it “found” God in Christ. It recognizes that the theologian does not find anything that has not first found it, that she is thrown into this hermeneutical spiral: one can only move to God from within God’s movement to her in the incarnate Word. One can think of the Spirit only from within the divine address according to which the Spirit is known (but also of course, by whom there is the divine address!).

Those familiar with the last century of Christian theological reflection will notice that this line of thinking closely resembles that of the Swiss master, Karl Barth. In fact, this book makes its case by following Barth, teasing its defining features out of Barth’s work and showing their necessary interconnection. It demonstrates that Barth had to think the way he did, and so must we—from Christ outward—lest the Holy Spirit be subsumed under the human spirit.

In this regard, the work also functions as a kind of summary defense of Barth against his critics, who maintain that he left little room for thinking and speaking of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most well known of such critics is Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson.

It is not entirely accurate to call Jenson a “critic” of Barth, for the majority of his work on Barth is approving,<sup>2</sup> and his own constructive efforts have clearly taken much from Barth.<sup>3</sup> Still, Jenson has publicly critiqued Barth for an alleged

tendency to avoid a fully agential account of the Spirit, and to operate by lengthy turns with a “binitarian” rather than “trinitarian” logic.

In his brief but dense article “You Wonder Where the Spirit Went,”<sup>4</sup> Jenson “nit-picks” Barth’s use of the Trinity as a dogmatic locus.<sup>5</sup> As is typical of Western trinitarian theologians, says Jenson, Barth conceives of God’s three-in-oneness in a way that provides no resources for conceiving of the Persons as “parties of divine action.”<sup>6</sup> And it would seem necessary to understand the Father, Son, and Spirit as discrete parties or self-directing agents if one is to *use* their respective activity to make other doctrinal claims, as Barth tries to do—to contend, for example, that maleness and femaleness reflect the Father–Son interplay of command and reception.<sup>7</sup> Barth would need to show how each of

2. See, for example, Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963).

3. See, for example, Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997–99).

4. Robert W. Jenson, “You Wonder Where the Spirit Went,” *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 3 (1993): 296–304.

5. *Ibid.*, 297. Jenson identifies three modes of trinitarian thinking in Barth’s work: as the identity of God, as a technical doctrine, and as a construct that one might use to think of other doctrines. It is only the last that Jenson “nit-picks” (his term) as lending itself to neglect of the Spirit.

6. Jenson, “You Wonder,” 299.

7. “Male and female being is the prototype of all I and Thou, of all individuality in which man and man differ from and yet belong to each other,” writes Barth in *Church Dogmatics*, III.4, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 150; subsequent citations in this book follow the conventional abbreviation, CD, followed by volume and part numbers, then page number. This individuality in belonging, or diversity in unity, is, for Barth, grounded in God’s own life and characteristic of our being made in “the image of God” (Gen. 1:26–27): “That God created man as male and female, and therefore as His image and likeness . . . is something that can never lead to a neutral I . . . but rather [finds] an inward, essential and lasting order of being as He and She, valid for all time and also for eternity” (CD III.4, 158). Because humanity is created *per se* as male and female, “they stand in a sequence. It is in this that man has his allotted place and woman hers” (CD III.4, 169). There is an order proper to male and female as humankind bears God’s image. “A precedes B, and B follows A. Order means succession. . . . It means super- and sub-ordination” (CD III.4, 169). However, the language of “command and reception,” or “super-ordination and subordination” should be taken neither to indicate a form of ontological deficiency in the Godhead nor to justify, on such a basis, male–female hierarchy in humanity. “When it is a question of the true order which God the Creator has established, succession, and therefore precedence and following, super- and sub-ordination, does not mean an inner inequality between those who stand in this succession and are subject to this order” (CD III.4, 170). That is because obedience is as proper to God’s God-ness in the mode of his being the Son as command is of the Father; the former is not in any way a lesser sort of being, divine or creaturely. For more on this see CD IV.1, 199–210; see also Kevin Giles, “Barth and Subordinationism,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 3 (2011): 327–46.

the Persons is constituted in or determined by such respective agential qualities if he is to apply those qualities to human social entities.

But rather than thinking of the Trinity in a way that allows for understanding the Persons as individual parties, Barth notoriously considers God as a singular being eternally existing in three *modes* (*Seinsweise*), where “being” (*Sein*) is not a substantialist über-quality, but an adverbial manner of existence (specifically, a unique and active Lordship). God is God in being Lord three times differently. In this, Barth reflects a Western emphasis on God’s oneness,<sup>8</sup> and for all his creativity, Jenson argues, he cannot avoid slavishly repeating the failure latent in this emphasis of not thinking robustly of distinct centers of action in God. Thus, his doctrine of the Trinity does not justify the use that he tries to make of it.

This quintessential Western failure is a bigger problem in Barth’s theology than in other thinkers “just on account of his achievements.”<sup>9</sup> Because Barth succeeds in making the full scope of salvation history real in the life of God, God’s triunity functions as a kind of calculus according to which God’s life in relation to the creature, as well as the origin, nature, and goal of creation, is reckoned. So Jenson concludes, “in Barth’s theology, Western trinitarianism’s common difficulty in conceiving the Spirit’s specific immanent initiative in God must become a difficulty in conceiving the Spirit’s entire salvation-historical initiative.”<sup>10</sup>

8. “A Western emphasis on God’s oneness” is a somewhat casual association of two phenomena: a historical development in dogma emerging during the patristic era, above all in St. Augustine, which formulates its conception of triune God on the basis of a philosophical pre-commitment to the unity of “nature” (over against an Eastern/Cappadocian model deriving from distinct activities), and a more general tendency reflected among Catholic and Protestant dogmatians across Christian history to emphasize the essential unity of the one God. Théodore de Régnon is credited with laying out the defining parameters of the first phenomenon; see *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892–98). Insofar as Jenson’s critique is, at bottom, a critique of a basically Augustinian conceptual pattern (at least roughly following de Régnon’s outline), then it is already refuted by Michel René Barnes and Lewis Ayres, each of whom has shown that de Régnon’s construct fails to do justice to Augustine’s actual dogmatic development and conclusions. See Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered,” *Augustinian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1995): 51–79; Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 366–67; Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Yet insofar as Jenson’s concerns are directed toward the second phenomenon, a recurrent tendency in Catholic and Protestant dogmatics to give only superficial treatment to the Persons’ distinctive activities vis-à-vis the constitution of God’s God-ness, this especially with respect to the Spirit (so that one is left without adequate resources to think of “God” pneumatocentrically), then it continues to bear weight and must be addressed.

9. Jenson, “You Wonder,” 299.

10. *Ibid.*, 300.

Barth shares in the shortcoming of failing to account for the actuality not only of the Persons generally but above all of the Spirit. Since Augustine, the tendency has been to think of the Spirit as the “principle of peace” between the Father and the Son, making the Father and Son to be defined agents and the Spirit to be an undefined agency. The Father and Son have their Personhood in standing opposite one another—again in Barth, in a dynamic, salvation-historical way such that the Son has his Son-ship or filiation in humanly living the obedience to the Father that the creature does not, and in fully becoming sin for us, taking upon himself the judgment of the Father that is due us. It is not clear, in turn, how the Spirit is a self-determinative contributor to the triune life of God:

Precisely in that the inner-trinitarian relations do gloriously become concrete and alive in Barth, so that the Father and the Son *confront* one another, the actuality of a *vinculum* between the two parties Father and Son must be their I-thou relation itself. Thus the very reality of the Spirit excludes his appearance as a party in the triune actuality.<sup>11</sup>

God is actually triune God in the eternal event of self-election wherein the Father and Son stand in a concrete, salvation-historical relationship to one another, leaving the Spirit only to be the impersonal relation or mutuality between the First and Second Persons. We might say that the Spirit actualizes the Father–Son history; he is not an actuality with the Father and Son in history. “When does the Spirit disappear from Barth’s pages,” Jenson asks? “Whenever he would appear as someone rather than something. We miss the Spirit at precisely those points where the Bible or catechism have taught us to expect him to appear as someone *with* capacities, rather than as sheer capacity.”<sup>12</sup>

Jenson is surely right to raise the conundrum, not unique to Barth, as to how the Holy Spirit can be known as the power of God without, by that very knowledge, denying self-determinative actuality in full correspondence to the self-determinative actuality of the Father and Son. I put the matter this way—in view of the *knowledge* of God—because it strikes me that this is the fulcrum, the point to which Jenson’s analysis leads yet also at which it comes up short, thus

11. *Ibid.*, 301.

12. *Ibid.*, 304.

the point at which Barth's thought concerning the Spirit is comprehended in its full viability.

Absent from Jenson's otherwise incisive analysis, perhaps just due to its limited scope but conspicuous all the same, is the central Barthian motif of *revelation*. Granting potential shortcomings attending the method, it is nevertheless important that Barth derives his doctrine of the Trinity from a question concerning *who* it is that reveals, *what* is revealed, and *how*.<sup>13</sup> He does so because he realizes that one really cannot properly inquire of God without having first been met by God; one cannot presume adequate, operative "equipment," if you will, by which one forms even the very question of God. Apart from the prior fact of revelation, one knows neither the triune God nor her place within the salvation-historical life of God, so that she might summon the thoughts and words by which "God" becomes a proper object of investigation.

Precisely in self-determined triunity, God is so "wholly other," so qualitatively distinct from humanity that humanity stands comprehensively in need of God's Word if God is to be known. Yet in speaking to us, in telling us who God is and who we are in relation, God must remain *God*—utterly distinct and transcendent even in familiarity and proximity. If "God" is to mean anything more than *glorified humanity*, Barth reasons, then he must not be inhibited either by himself, unable by virtue of his eternal distinctness to come to time and familiarity, or by us, unable by virtue of our temporal commonness to be Lord among us. He must moment-by-moment remain the incomparable Lord even as he exists in ordinary flesh and language.

For Barth, then, the being of God, his very triune existence is an active *way* of being; it is, namely, the dialectical reality of overcoming the boundary that separates deity and humanity exactly in the event that he makes that boundary to be real and perceived. There is no God or God-ness (way of being "God") outside of this active happening.

13. Or, the doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of God as "revelation," "revealer," and "being revealed"; see Barth, CD I.1, 304–33. Concerning potential shortcomings of Barth's trinitarian derivation in CD I.1, see Bruce McCormack, "The Doctrine of the Trinity after Barth: An Attempt to Reconstruct Barth's Doctrine in the Light of His Later Christology," in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 148 (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011), 87–118. McCormack argues that the abstractedness characterizing Barth's concept of divine Lordship, trading as it does upon undefined notions of power, which guides his early triune discourse, would have to be revised in light of the concrete, human submission of the Son in his mature Christology.

That means that there is no God outside of the event in which God makes himself known, the event of revelation. Barth expects us to think and speak of God entirely within this event. And in doing so, there is in fact meaningful opportunity to think and speak of the Holy Spirit as full actuality or “party” in the life of God. To be precise, it is possible within the framework of revelation to think and speak of the Spirit as both the power of God and a center of power, as both the principle of divine love and self-determinative iteration of that love in salvation history.

I argue that the Spirit is God a third time, subsisting in ontological unity with the Father and Son, yet distinctly his own Person in that he is the contemporaneity of the revelation event in which God has his existence. The Spirit self-determinatively repeats the (ontologically decisive) will of God to be God-with-us by reiterating the life-act in which God is in fact with us. The Spirit is contemporary instantiation of the Incarnation, or, the parallel life-act of *Inverberation*.

To *verberate* means “to strike so as to produce a sound.”<sup>14</sup> The object struck can be an instrument, as in percussion. But the meaning I would highlight is the etymological act of producing sound waves: air struck by vocal muscling, which generates an object for hearing. When I say that in and as the Spirit God is *inverberate* I mean that he continues to generate a real object for ocular and auditory ingestion by placing himself before us in the reading and proclaiming of Scripture. As these human words throttle space-time, the Spirit mediates correspondence between them and the eternal Word. The beating rhythm of Spirit-Word is God’s truth, which objectivity shapes us as subjects. The Spirit-shaped event is not something that, as such, can only be “perceived” by a mystical sixth sense, if we close off our natural senses and wait to be enraptured in inexpressibilities. Rather, God makes *himself* perceptible in and by our senses, in and by speech and its ocular and auditory partaking.

In and through this coordinated object of sensation we are translated subjects, we receive the “eyes and ears” of faith and recognize that we cannot fix this occurrence as spoken, seen, and heard. We recognize that it is faith itself that enables us to speak, see, and hear truthfully. Our tongue, eyes, and ears are ratified *and* rebuffed moment by moment in the event of God among us. Wording, seeing, and hearing *God*, they are muted, blinded, and deafened, “for no one may see me and live” (Exod. 33:20b). The dialectic of this No and Yes, of God having his life in the unique freedom to be both against sin and for us,

14. *Oxford English Dictionary*. With *inverberation* I am trying to evoke an etymological association with *verbum*, as in *verbum dei*.

uniquely in judgment and salvation, to be God in the incarnate Word again today in unqualified continuity with, yet real distinction from, his way of being God there and then, is the life and work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is *Spirit of the Word*. He is not a free-floating second revelation of God alongside or at variance with Christ, but the ongoing reality of God in his historical revelation as that revelation takes place in the idiomatic thoughts and words (*verba*) of Christ's proclamation today.

The desire, however catechetically inspired and ecumenically minded, to think and speak of the Spirit as a party of action in the Godhead does not grant license to ideate in abstraction from God's self-determinative act of revelation, of speaking to us but as God, of assuming flesh but as the eternal Lord. The Spirit, too, is this very self-determination. He is God in active generation and assumption of ongoing, contextualized human words bearing witness to the revelation event of the Word's enfleshing. This *act* of assumption must be understood in terms of the Word's assuming flesh, so that again we are not thinking and speaking of God in any way other than his thought and speech directed to us. And the *content* of the act, the actual, collective ideas and words assumed, must be neither more nor less than formal witness to God's own thought and speech, to Jesus Christ.

The Spirit is Spirit, then, in the event of the *church*—the where and when of gospel proclamation—in a manner parallel to the way that the Word is Word in the specific flesh of Jesus of Nazareth (and not flesh or humanity in general). The Word assumed *this* flesh, and the Spirit assumes witness to *this* logically prior assumption.

Jenson rightly calls attention to the intimate connection between the Personhood of the Spirit and the actuality of the people of God. He suggests that Barth's failure to understand the Spirit as a distinct center of action in God corresponds to his failure to think concretely and extensively enough about the church. "Perhaps the final reason for the whole web of Spirit-avoidance in the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* is avoidance of the church."<sup>15</sup> "Spirit-avoidance" is a misleading caricature, as is the curious corollary that Barth somehow avoids the church in his massive *Church Dogmatics*. (Is this not a work for the church and, in many respects, about the church inasmuch as it is about the God who only is known as Lord over these people, Father of these children?) But Jenson is correct to locate the salvation-historical life and work of the Spirit in and with those being "called out" to faith in Christ. I will show that Barth in fact points us in just this direction.

15. Jenson, "You Wonder," 302.



As Spirit of the Word, the Spirit is agentially objectified in the act and content of the church's proclamation of the gospel, in which act and content the *ecclesia* itself comes into being. Proclamation of Christ means holistic obedience to Christ, the embodied, visible, secondarily determinative life-act of receiving and attentively declaring him, declaring and attentively receiving him in thoughts, words, and kinetic activities shaped after the testimony of the prophets and apostles.

Jenson indicates that this is the direction Barth ought to have taken:

For if the Pentecostal creation of a structured continuing community were identified as the "objectivity" of the gospel's truth *pro nobis*, then this community itself, in its structured temporal and spatial extension, would be seen as the *Bedingung der Möglichkeit* of faith. Or again, if the Community between the Father and the Son were himself an agent of their love, immanently and economically, then the church, as the community inspired by the Agent, would be the active *mediatrix* of faith.<sup>16</sup>

I contend that this is the direction Barth *did* take, albeit perhaps incipiently in a penultimate phase of his work (yet already with greater refinement than Jenson's critique affords), thus that the Spirit is not nearly so absent from his pages as it might seem. On the contrary, Barth gives ample resources for thinking and speaking of the Spirit precisely as a Western Protestant theologian committed to the decisiveness of the Word.

Barth perceives, especially in a period of work stretching from the mid-1920s to the late 1930s, that at the heart of the Reformation construal of the church is not its imperceptibility but its event-character. The church is a being in becoming, which corresponds directly to the actuality of God's own being in Christ Jesus. The church happens in the happening of obedience to Christ, thus it is an entirely visible enterprise, an organism of the gospel's objectivity with space-time extension. But unlike Jenson, whose ecumenical interests leave him dissatisfied with an ecclesiology that does not locate faith's "condition of possibility" in the church, Barth retains the Reformation emphasis on the active operation of God in the event of faith rather than on the (all too human) church.

16. *Ibid.*, 303.

The *Bedingung der Möglichkeit* of faith is not the community per se, but the condition of the community's possibility, for the community is neither more nor less than beings in every time and place who are receiving and coming to faith. It is neither more nor less than those who have met Christ Jesus again, in this context, and have responded again, in ways appropriate to this context. The Spirit is the power of this happening, as well as the origin and goal. He is the authority of the witness confronting these persons in this place, its force and effect, as well as the inspiring source and illuminating end of this witness. He is therefore identified with the community of faith, but indirectly, as the Son was indirectly identified with the flesh of Jesus.

In short, Barth is able to think and speak of the Spirit in a way that his critics do not allow, as the divine agency *and* agent. But he can do so *only* by remaining true to the insight, flashing once more upon the scene during the Reformation, that God is the *living* God. God has his being actualistically, in the life-act of the incarnate Word here and now just as he did there and then, in 1–30 C.E.

If we are to follow Barth, then we think and speak of the Spirit not only as an agency in service to the Word but also as a party in the Godhead known and confessed in terms of the Word. We seek the Spirit in truth when we seek him in the same self-determinative will of God to be-with-us that we encounter in Christ Jesus, in continuing encounter with the reality of Christ Jesus as Lord in our time and place *and* in reiteration of the real dialectic that is Christ Jesus. The Spirit is Spirit of the Word when and where Christ is made to be Lord here and now, in the event of actual thought and speech that are captive to him, *and* thus in the generation and assumption of that thought and speech as the revelation of God. The Spirit is Spirit of the Word in the event of the church, when “church” is the collective happening of faith in Christ extending across space-time, hence occurring again as a structured reality in this space-time.

I make this argument over five chapters. Chapter 1 demonstrates that at the core of Barth's understanding of God, as an understanding forged in response to the subjectivity of modern Protestant liberalism, is the objectivity of God's life-act in the enfleshed Word. This objectivity must remain in force in any account of God, for it is characteristic of God as he makes himself known, which is to say, as he *is* in the event of revelation. We cannot circumvent divine objectivity without also circumventing divine revelation, and in this, the determinative event of God *being* God. Thus, when we turn to the Spirit, to the event of God being God *in* human being, we cannot lose the objectivity of God. Divine subjectivity remains shaped after divine objectivity, after God's uniqueness in Christ Jesus; God is God in Christ even when and where he is God in us.

Barth states the same basic conviction concerning the subject-determining objectivity of God in terms of “reality” and “possibility.” Chapter 2 shows that the reality of God is given shape and structure in Christ, such that reality external to him (the life-act of the creature) and all possibility (that and what God might be and that and what creation might be) are critically delimited by Christ. The revelation of God in the Christ-event is determinative of God and of all being relative to God. If we are to do theology in terms of the Spirit, then, we must do it in terms of the event of revelation in which the definition and determination of divine and human reality take place.

Indeed, the possibility of such thought and speech must itself be grounded in the movement of this revelation, given in and with it, for there is no reality outside of this event according to which true thought and speech of God can happen. The happening of revelation must be generative, and it must be reiterated here and now; the dialectic of God’s assuming creaturely modalities without forfeiting his deity in so doing, but in fact, having his deity just in the freedom for this act of assumption, must be a continuing reality in the Spirit. The Spirit must have his life and work *in* contemporary *verberation* of witness to Christ if authentic thought and speech of God are even to be *possible*.

But if God is objective reality, such that all creaturely reality and subjective possibility are contingent upon his being God in Christ, of the Spirit of God having his life and work in the act of making Christ authoritatively manifest here and now, then God is no aloof entity in some kind of metaphysical stasis.<sup>17</sup> Chapter 3 contends that God is God in coming to space-time, in fact, in taking

17. So far as I can tell, the argument that I am making in this book runs parallel to that made recently by Kevin W. Hector in *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition*, Current Issues in Theology 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Hector argues for a “non-essentialist” account of language, in which concepts obtain meaning as they “link up with a chain of precedents that carries on the normative commitment implicit in an initial act of picking-out, in such a way that one inherits . . . that commitment” (p. 38). The concept of God, for instance, becomes an intelligible concept insofar as it takes place within a normative pattern of discursive commitments, which are implied in the primitive act of selecting this particular “God-language”; then and only then can it be inherited and passed along. In such an account, the Spirit of Christ is the agency of normative commitment. He is recognized, or perhaps better, re-cognized in intersubjective patterns of thought and behavior stemming from Christ through his disciples. At times, Hector is still able to speak of “the Spirit” as an entity, which commandeers language, and thus in at least quasi-metaphysical terms. For instance, he can say that “the Spirit conforms one’s beliefs to Christ” (p. 39), when it would seem more consistent with his own argument to formulate this more like, “the Spirit’s life is in the act of conforming one’s beliefs to Christ,” or more strongly, “the Spirit just is the conforming of one’s beliefs to Christ.” There is no knowledge, no concept, “spirit,” external to this life-act. But this is a nit-picky observation on my part, and one that Hector may be able to answer with more expansive explanation (to call *Theology without Metaphysics* dense would be a terrific understatement). In any event, I take his main point to be

up the constitutive features of space-time in order to make himself known in them and thus remaking them in each instant of his revelation to be adequate to him. It shows that this way of thinking and speaking of God (this Spirit-centered thought and speech patterned after Christ) is entirely viable relative to the modern understanding of space-time articulated by Albert Einstein.

God has his being in coming to space-time; humanity has its being in contemporary response, correspondence, to this coming. Just as God takes temporality to himself in Christ, so does he create the condition of possibility for us to be his children in this temporality, in the life-act of obedience to him, which co-determines our history as *time for God*. Chapter 4 returns to the constructs of *reality* and *possibility* in order to show that the event of God being God a third time entails the continued restructuring of human existence in the lived happening of the *church*. The church is the first fruit of space-time obedience to the Word through which the inverberate opposition of God to all non-being, darkness, and death is made manifest to the world.

To think and speak of God in terms of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ Jesus, then, is to think and speak of God in his self-determination to be God in refusal of every force of opposition to him, in the revelation and cultivation of obedience to his definitive Lordship. Chapter 5 argues that the Spirit is the contemporary instantiation of obedience to God made real and revealed in Christ Jesus as the Subject and Object of the primal decision in which, for Barth, God is God. He is the Spirit of divine Self-election to the humiliation of servitude, damnation, and death, on the one side, and in and through this, to the exaltation of rule, salvation, and resurrection, on the other.

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correct, namely, that we can think and speak of the Spirit only in the event of re-cognizing the normative patterns of thought and speech given in Christ Jesus.