

Geistproblem and Kulturproblem

Barth's Response to Schleiermacher

Any project that makes use of Karl Barth for the purpose of linking together what are arguably his two biggest fears—a theology of the Spirit and a theology of culture—must first account for how this will be accomplished without doing violence to Barth's theology. Indeed, Barth was apprehensive about the consequences of placing pneumatology and theology of culture in close, mutual relation. In relation to both, Barth's allergy was influenced by his aversion to modern theological trends toward the deification of human achievements that, in his view, led theology to be uncritical of and eventually absorbed by secular culture—trends that he traced back to a single source: “the common denominator was and is indeed Schleiermacher.”¹ In his lifelong struggle with Schleiermacher's theology (“old love never fades”²), Barth was always accompanied by the noisy congregation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theologians who drew their inspiration from this venerable forefather and who therefore greatly influenced Barth's own reading of Schleiermacher.³ By exploring Barth's reaction to Schleiermacher and his legacy, the following will provide a context for Barth's *critical* assessments of modern pneumatology and theology of culture for the purpose of exploring his *constructive* contributions to both.

BARTH'S *KRIEGSERKLÄRUNG* ON SCHLEIERMACHER

Barth's theological education began in Berne, where his father served on the faculty. He then spent a brief but formative semester studying under Adolph von Harnack in Berlin, where he purchased his first copy of *The Speeches*. He later travelled to Marburg where Wilhelm Herrmann became “*the* theological teacher of my student years.”⁴ Here, Barth fully embraced Schleiermacher,

whose “*Speeches* were the most important and correct writings to appear since the closing of the New Testament canon.”⁵ In 1909, he became an assistant pastor in Geneva, delivering sermons in the very same pulpit as John Calvin. “However,” he recalls, “I’m afraid that Calvin would hardly have been very pleased at the sermons which I preached in his pulpit then.” Eberhard Busch offers some startling examples:

Typical of his sermons were remarks like, “The greatest thing is what takes place in our hearts.” Or, “To each man goes out the call to be true to himself, namely . . . to that model of the best that anyone can become.” He told the congregation: . . . “Dear friend, think seriously about yourself.” As he explained “Before I can know God, I must know myself.” He introduced Goethe’s *Faust* as “without doubt a true Protestant.” The congregation learnt that “Calvin’s view of the authority of the Bible would be quite wrong for us.” Critical light was shed on the Ten Commandments: “Sometimes they contain too much for our needs and sometimes too little.” And once for a whole sermon he argued that “James wrote the section which we are looking at now in a weak moment.”⁶

Luckily for Barth, Genevans were not the church-going type (historically so, not even when truancy could get one hauled before the Consistory for a formal scolding from Calvin himself⁷). For example, when visiting the sickbed of an elderly citizen, Barth asked him which church he attended and was met with this response: “Pastor, I’ve always been an honest man. I’ve never been to church and I’ve never been in trouble with the police.”⁸ Barth later wrote: “I never regretted having tried to foist all that historicism and individualism on the people in Geneva, but in any case, they weren’t having any.”⁹

Though his Marburg education remained at the forefront early on (having now acquired copies of Schleiermacher’s sermons), it was only while serving as pastor of the small agricultural/industrial village of Safenwil that Barth began to grapple with the twofold problem of how he could truly *preach* the Word of God and how his congregation could truly *hear* the Word of God.¹⁰ Human words seemed to be all he could offer and all they could receive, and this was clearly not enough.

The outbreak of war and the release of the “Manifesto of the 93 German Intellectuals” (1914) in support of the Kaiser’s war policies drove him further from his liberal ideals. Seeing his mentors, Harnack and Herrmann, among the manifesto’s signatories was a “twilight of the gods,”¹¹ transforming theology

and scholarship “into intellectual 42cm cannons.”¹² (Barth’s choice of words here is deliberate, as it was Germany’s new 420mm siege howitzers that destroyed Belgium’s “impregnable” forts—the very attack that the Manifesto cast as self-defense.) Barth’s subsequent ballistics investigation led him straight to Schleiermacher, and to a drastic reorientation of his attitude toward modern liberal theology.

An entire world of theological exegesis, ethics, dogmatics, and preaching, which up to that point I had accepted as basically credible, was thereby shaken to the foundations, and with it everything which flowed at that time from the pens of the German theologians. And Schleiermacher? Had not even he in the first of his *Speeches* from 1799 written impossible things about the British and the French? Had he not also been a leading Prussian patriot from 1806 to 1814? Would he also perhaps have signed that manifesto? Fichte certainly, perhaps Hegel too, but Schleiermacher? According to what I know of his letters from the period after 1815, I remain convinced that, no, he would not have done that. Nevertheless, it was still the case that the entire theology which had unmasked itself in that manifesto, and everything which followed after it... was grounded, determined, and influenced decisively by him.¹³

Wrestling with these crises prompted Barth to re-exam Scripture, where he discovered the “strange new world within the Bible.”¹⁴ Upon his arrival at Göttingen, Barth resolved “to inaugurate my teaching post straight away with a Declaration of War”¹⁵ (*Kriegserklärung*) against modern theology via a series of lectures in which he intended to aim “the muzzle of the cannon” squarely at Schleiermacher.¹⁶

But what exactly earned Schleiermacher such an aggressive response? To answer this, we can explore Barth’s criticisms under two interrelated themes: the assimilation of Christianity to culture and the conflation of the human spirit and the Holy Spirit.

Barth charges Schleiermacher with an emphasis on apologetics so decisive that, in the end, Christianity and Christian theology are wholly absorbed into modern culture, and the kingdom of God “is utterly and unequivocally identical with the advance of civilization.”¹⁷ Christianity becomes equated with the principle of progress. Moreover, by surrendering to the epistemological principles of the Enlightenment—such as cultural progress, philosophical reason, and so on—and locating religion in the realm of “feeling,”

Schleiermacher put himself in a position of having to reject the possibility of the proclamation of truth in the realm of theology. Intellectual, expressible “truth” is reserved for philosophy while “truth in the ultimate, decisive, but also ineffable sense is reserved for mute feeling.”¹⁸

Barth compares and contrasts Schleiermacher’s position with Hegel’s interpretation of modern cultural awareness as fundamentally concerned with claims of truth. Hegel reminds us that “a theology which is jostled by philosophy . . . is just the one which has often forgotten and still forgets that truth should not concern it any less than philosophy but, on the contrary, much more” and, “dare it fall short of Hegel in this respect,” theology will certainly find itself “in the shadow of philosophy, philosophy being regarded as something much more important.” Though by no means a Hegelian, Barth prefers Hegel’s “apotheosis of thinking” (which at least makes room for theological truth) to Schleiermacher’s “flight into feeling.”¹⁹

The result of embracing modern cultural values was an anthropocentric theology, which, “if we call to mind the entire situation of theology in the modern world then we shall find it understandable that it fastened upon the point which had come to the center of the entire thought of modern man. This point was simply man himself.”²⁰ Barth does not condemn Schleiermacher’s anthropocentrism in itself, but rather the methods and motives driving this anthropocentrism. Barth’s question as to whether Schleiermacher the apologist succeeded at the expense of Schleiermacher the theologian is not prompted by the anthropocentric focus but by an apologetic mode that allowed the capitulation of truth and revelation to philosophy and history: “The fact that Schleiermacher’s theology was anthropocentric is not in itself a sufficient justification for this question, let alone that this fact should be made the subject of a reproach. What certainly does make this question necessary is the way Schleiermacher immunized the concept of revelation.”²¹ In overestimating human reason and interpreting Christianity in terms of “a general doctrine of man . . . the real knowledge of the Word of God is the realization of a special potentiality of knowledge proper to man as such.”²² In this case, that Word and its witnesses become more or less superfluous (“dead letters”) and modern theology is able to leap over Lessing’s ditch “always with increased excellence and skill.”²³

By limiting theological truth to “a determination of feeling,” Schleiermacher backs away from the authority of revelation and the divinity of the Word, “giv[ing] to the Word, and with the Word, to intellectual truth, only a position of secondary importance. The tenets of the Christian faith are simply only ‘conceptions of states of mind of Christian piety, represented

in speech.' . . . Thus theology . . . is free, capable of transformation, and relatively non-binding—not bound in respect to its subject."²⁴ Barth, therefore, locates the "tragic guilt or apostasy"²⁵ of Schleiermacher's theology not in anthropocentrism but in his flight to apologetics, which was the direct and inevitable result of Schleiermacher's desire to be both a Christian theologian and a modern man, but which ultimately led to a surrender of the theologian to the philosopher.²⁶ This apologetic concern was the ultimate downfall of Schleiermacher's theology, "forc[ing] Christianity, solely for the sake of culture, into a position where the whole was already surrendered" by allowing his depiction of Christianity to be determined by nineteenth-century German cultural standards.²⁷ Under Schleiermacher's influence, therefore, modern theology "had let itself be driven by the upsurge of a self-glorifying and self-satisfied humanism. . . . It had been forced into an apologetic corner where it had ever lessening power of defence."²⁸

Further, Barth maintains that Schleiermacher's profound interest in and embrace of secular culture entails a grave overestimate of human reason that begets (or is begotten by) a conflation of pneumatology and anthropology. In the post-Enlightenment context of Schleiermacher's work, Barth claims, "that which is to be achieved by the divine Spirit is from the very first co-positd in some way in human reason, for what contradicts this Spirit contradicts reason too."²⁹ Schleiermacher is thus willing to submit theological claims to the ultimate judgment of the secular sciences, with reason as the final arbiter of truth—and the result is a pneumatology that places the human spirit alongside the Holy Spirit, blurring the distinctions between them. While the Reformers understood faith in terms of the Spirit's action upon the human, "Schleiermacher reversed the order of this thought" as one interested only in "the question of man's action in regard to God."³⁰ It is this reversal (again, the *way* Schleiermacher frames and pursues his anthropocentrism) that Barth attacks. As Philip Rosato observes, "the root of Barth's embarrassing ambivalence toward Schleiermacher . . . rests not in the latter's attempt at a theology of the Holy Spirit, but in the execution of this intention," wherein he fails to hold "the two poles, Christ and Christians, in an equal tension."³¹ In Barth's words, the "shifting of interest [to man himself] did not necessarily have to mean man without God, man in his own world," but could have meant "man in the presence of God, his action over against God's action. A genuine, proper theology could be built up from such a starting point."³² But once again, Schleiermacher the philosopher led Schleiermacher the apologist along a route colored by a confusion of anthropology and pneumatology, influencing

the course of modern Christianity—both in academic theology and popular worship.³³

Casting the human not only as the central *interest* of Christian theology, but as its *source* and *authority*, ultimately endangers the divinity of the Spirit as well as the authority of the Word. Theology had developed conceptions of God that amounted to little more than the self-deification of humanity through the deification of human conceptions of simplicity, time, progress, etc. If Christianity cannot be presented in such a way that it might conflict with modern science, philosophy or history, then “proclaiming God mean’s proclaiming one’s own piety, that is why for him preaching consists essentially of a self-imparting by the preacher.”³⁴ Here, Christian truth is limited to the *subjective* experience, allowing for “the dissolution and disappearance of the objective moment” into it. Since the objective moment is, for Barth, Christ’s revelation while the subjective moment is the Spirit’s illumination of that revelation, it was Schleiermacher’s conflation of pneumatology and anthropology that proved to be the source of his weak Christology. As Hunsinger argues: “Schleiermacher’s theology, we might say, was formally but not substantively christocentric. The saving significance of the Redeemer, as Schleiermacher understood him, was no more than a matter of his ‘God-consciousness.’ This was a modern, somewhat secularized way of saying that the important thing about Jesus, the thing that made him savingly significant, was the Holy Spirit.”³⁵ With the human at the center as the one on whose subjective feelings theological truth is to be based, Christology “has as its summit the indication of a quantitative superiority” wherein Christ “has only an incomparably greater quantity of that which we see in ourselves” and is the exemplar for pious consciousnesses everywhere only “until further notice.”

In his blending of pneumatology and anthropology, Schleiermacher remains a theologian of the spirit, but of which spirit? Barth writes that “Schleiermacher obviously wants to give us *more* than a theology of the Holy Spirit,” which can really only be a theology of the human spirit and thus “*less* than theology could and should be.”³⁶ On Barth’s reading, it is the relativizing of the truth of the Word and the authority of Christ that proves it to be a theology of human spirit:

The Word is not so assured here in its independence in respect to faith as should be the case if this theology of faith were a true theology of the Holy Spirit. In a proper theology of the Holy Spirit there could be no question of dissolving the Word. . . . Thus it seems necessary for us after all to begin to consider whether what has happened

here is that it is not the Holy Spirit, but, as Schleiermacher claims, merely man's religious consciousness which has after all become the theme of theology. In some depth of his mind Schleiermacher must have intended otherwise. This different intention must then have become submerged in the stormy need of the apologist to make plain the working of the Holy Spirit in the familiar form of religious consciousness.³⁷

Barth therefore identifies the close and dangerous relationship between an amplified anthropology, a deflated pneumatology, and a feeble Christology as a general characteristic of the entire landscape of modern theology, which "was so interested in man's freedom that it forgot the divinity of the Holy Spirit."³⁸

This conflation of pneumatology and anthropology (in which anthropology overtakes pneumatology and objective truth is dissolved into subjective experience) is related to Schleiermacher's conception of "mediation." Barth sees in Schleiermacher what we might call a "mania for synthesis" that contributed to many of the errors Barth perceives in the methods and the content of this theology. In every case, Schleiermacher seeks synthesis/mediation/equilibrium between all things, even "between the ultimate and highest contradiction, that between the infinite and therefore identical being and knowledge of God with our finite and therefore divided, non-identical being and knowledge" not in the Hegelian sense of absolute knowledge, but "as a knowledge of a unity which can be felt, that is, of the presence of God felt in human awareness."³⁹In Christology, for example, Schleiermacher constructs a relation between Christ and Christian in which the "first thing, and therefore the final thing too is the unity between the two, and the point at which this unity can be perceived is not by any means Christ, but the Christian, the view of Christ being in principle a view back toward him."⁴⁰ Salvation becomes "the great synthesis of all antitheses," the good of which is found "not in a *relation* between God and man but in their *undifferentiatedness*."⁴¹Barth concludes that, grounded in this concept of mediation, "the truth—once again in contrast to Hegel—is not to be found in some definable third thing, but in the indefinable centre between the first and second."⁴²

Even the flight into feeling (itself an attempt at a synthesis between knowing and doing) and his apologetic mode grew out of an effort to achieve synthesis between himself as a Christian and himself as a modern man; between the theologian and the philosopher. Schleiermacher's desire for a synthesis of faith and culture required, however, "a position which is in principle beyond that of both," looking down from some superior standpoint—not "as a

responsible servant of Christianity but, like a true virtuoso, as a free master of it.” Barth argued that if we wished to avoid accusing Schleiermacher of “consciously betraying Christianity to science,” our only alternative would be “to say that as an apologist of Christianity Schleiermacher really played upon it as a virtuoso plays upon his fiddle: he played the notes and airs which, if they did not cause his hearers to rejoice, could at least be acceptable to them.”⁴³

Under Schleiermacher’s influence, theology now allowed itself to be determined by culture rather than God’s self-revelation in scripture and, as T. F. Torrance asks, “what else can this lead to but to the identification of Christianity with the basic *Weltanschauung* or attitude to existence that already lurks in the prior understanding of ‘historical man’? And what has this to do with the Gospel, that is, with genuine news communicated to man?”⁴⁴ Vanishing into anthropology, theology became irrelevant, “unable to serve the advance of culture as it desired, for it had no positive word to say to culture which that culture did not already know and had not already said to itself in ways more congenial to it.”⁴⁵

For Barth, the disintegration of the medieval fusion of church and culture had been a salutary achievement of the early modern period. The church cannot fulfill its task of proclaiming the gospel without a confrontation with culture, but the supposed continuity between the two in the Middle Ages and the synthesis proposed by modern theology prevented such a confrontation: “In the nineteenth century, the progress of science intimidated us. Theologians sought to provide a place for the church within the area of human activity. They said there was art, and science, and religion. Religion became a kind of Indian Reservation where God and Christ and the Holy Spirit might be cultivated. And beginning with this Indian Reservation, the cause was lost.”⁴⁶

In sum, for Barth, a poorly executed pneumatology can lead theology toward an uncritical acceptance of culture and vice versa: Beginning with (1) a pneumatology that fails to fully recognize the *divinity* of the Holy Spirit end up (2) confusing the human spirit and the Holy Spirit, leading to (3) an anthropocentric theology that glorifies human capacities, which (4) puts theology in the position of conforming its claims and sources to whatever cultural worldview reigns at the moment, causing (5) theology to blend into psychology, and soon (6) Christianity becomes just another aspect of secular Western culture that ultimately has no “news” to bring and thus (7) becomes irrelevant and eventually passes away. If we begin with the assimilation of Christianity to culture, the end result is the same: (1) Assimilation to extra-theological principles requires (2) an anthropocentric theology with an overemphasis on human capacities, which leads to (3) a weakening of the

concept of theological truth (now surrendered to philosophy) and a theology that cannot claim the authority and divinity of the Word (now surrendered to history). (4) This prevents the recognition of the authority and divinity of the Spirit, resulting in (5) a conflation of human and holy that (6) creates an anthropological view of Christian belief akin to Feuerbach's and leads ultimately to (7) the irrelevance of Christianity in relation to other kinds of psychology.

It was Barth's intention, therefore, to "counterbalance the humanism of the 19th Century, when men were overconfident in their own ability to run the world, by a return to the Bible in which God talks to men."⁴⁷ Through an unswerving christological concentration, he sought a *diastasis* between theology and culture grounded in "a proper theological procedure [that] involved an approach to [Christ] which let our previous understanding and naturalistic *Weltanschauungen* be called into question."⁴⁸

GEIST, KULTUR, AND GEISTESKULTUR

That pneumatology was so fraught with peril can be attributed in part to the problematic nature of the term "*Geist*" and its relation to the similarly problematic "*Kultur*." Like *ruach*, *Geist* conveys a sense of invisible movement and is related to concepts like breath, air, "life force," etc., while also implying (especially in its philosophical usage) ideas of relationality. It can be translated as either "mind" or "spirit," carrying both intellectual/rational and affective/emotional connotations, making English renderings difficult. In the late eighteenth century, Kant tended to avoid the term while Herder chose to embrace it, employing *Geist* "as an alpha-and-omega-term referring to a higher unity of human being."⁴⁹ *Geist* formed the center of Hegel's philosophy, retaining its sense of relationality and its theological connotations of *Geist*, but his terminology has posed problems for English translators. On the one hand, *mind* risks conveying an "abstract, formal, disembodied, worldless subjectivity" that is opposed to Hegel's project.⁵⁰ On the other hand, *spirit* cannot "allay the 'ancient variance' between the religious and the philosophic mood," and so "to average English ears the word Spiritual would carry us over the medium line into the proper land of religiosity."⁵¹

Adapting Herder's "*Geist des Volkes*," Hegel coined the term *Völkgeist* (national spirit—his translation of Montesquieu's "l'esprit général d'une nation"), which came to be strongly associated with German nationalism and concepts of culture and cultural studies. By the twentieth century, *Geist* (and related

concepts *Volksgeist*, *Zeitgeist*, and *Weltgeist*) had “served for decades as the standard term both for intellectual mind and for the principle of culture. It had become the pennant of the highest and vaguest ideals, the word that one used to talk (not always very definitely) about what one felt (not always very distinctly) to be most important in human life.”⁵²

Thus, the term *Geist* had become bound up with a particular understanding of the term *Kultur*, the history of which is similarly complex. In opposition to French and English notions of culture, *Kultur* was restricted to those human achievements that stepped beyond mere “civilization.” Later, *Kultur* was linked to *Bildung* and “was mobilized by the rising bourgeoisie to refer to the *result* of ‘cultivation,’ and turned polemically against mere ‘civilization,’ looking back to an earlier distinction between courtly manners and true virtue.”⁵³ According to Tanner, “For the German intelligentsia, *Kultur* was, indeed what enabled the Germans to resist the encroachments of an expansionist French nation, the purveyor of a transportable Enlightenment. Intellectual, artistic, and spiritual achievements could be Germany’s bulwark against French-dominated internationalism—not simply because they represented a higher form of achievement than an external civilization but because they manifested a spirit that was peculiarly German.”⁵⁴

Associated with the “higher” achievements of art, poetry, religion, and so on, it came to be associated with the “spirit” of the nation and its people. Mere inventions can be imported, but the intellectual/spiritual achievements of the people cannot. In short, *Kultur* evolved into *Geisteskultur*, which “became definitional of German life and the First World War was fought as a struggle between culture and barbarism.”⁵⁵ By ascribing the term *Kultur* to German culture (and refusing to ascribe it to American culture), according to Adorno, “one feels superior to the other continent because it had produced only refrigerators and automobiles while Germany produced the culture of spirit [*Geisteskultur*].”⁵⁶ According to Gorringer, this elitist conception of the German term *Kultur* is expressed most obviously in “Schleiermacher’s observation, in the first of the 1799 *Speeches*, that it was useless to appeal to the working class, who did not have the time needed to attend to things of the Spirit. Hence it was the *cultured* despisers who had to be addressed.”⁵⁷ Schleiermacher identified the “cultured” despisers as “those who had leisure to immerse themselves in philosophy and the arts and who, in doing so, were doing that which was truly religious, cultivating a sense and taste for the infinite.” The result, says Gorringer, was an attitude in which it became “self-evident to him that the working class had no leisure for this and could not therefore lead in either

religion or culture.”⁵⁸ Moreover, Schleiermacher proceeded with a definition of culture that excluded the empiricism and industrialism of English culture and the “unbridled arrogance” of the French as leading to anything that might be considered genuine religion.⁵⁹

Though Barth’s writings on culture often reflect basic aspects of the German *Kultur*, he claimed to reject English, French and German conceptions of culture in favor of a catholic theological definition. In his 1926 “Church and Culture” lecture, he cites the French definition culture as “the sum of the aims proceeding from human activity and in turn stimulating human activity,”⁶⁰ while Germans understand culture to be “the final goal and totality of norms by which human activity should be guided.” Were either of these views to be embraced by theology, “the only reasonable possibility would be to speak first of the Church, and then independently of the so-called culture.” Whether understood as the sum-of-the-aims or as the final-goal-and-totality-of-norms, culture is elevated to the position of “an impossible fantasy and an idol.” Against this form of idolatry, the church “declares that ultimately neither aims nor values nor good, neither the idea of a goal, nor the concept of norms, determine or ought to determine human action. The Church sets the Word of God at the beginning and the end, above all empirical or transcendental principles as the sole, supreme event which gives law.”⁶¹ In other words, the Word is the sum-of-the-aims and the final-goal-and-totality-of-norms toward which all humanity activity strives. The purpose of human culture is to achieve “the destined condition of man in unity of soul and body.”⁶² Culture, as the promise, law, and limit of this unity, can only be understood in seeking it and working toward it, and therefore “those who speak about culture as a given and existent reality know little about it.” Moreover, views of culture that privilege certain kinds of work (that is, the work of “high culture”) treat culture as “as a kind of deification of man by not letting it be abstracted in any great or little act of culture from the honest material without which human action would not be human at all.”⁶³ Barth is therefore confounded by Schleiermacher’s characterization of the “cultured despisers” in nationalistic terms in light of his understanding of “religion” as something universal, imparted to our very nature as humans: “If we inquire as carefully as possible into its universal character, our astonished gaze falls in the very first speech on an ethnological discussion of the better or less good aptitude for religion of the English, French, and Germans in which (as is natural in such discussions) things go badly for the English and French and the palm is given to the Germans. . . . Is it not remarkable that Schleiermacher can even think of opening up the problem of nationality when speaking about this *something*? What is the point?”⁶⁴

Barth is concerned not only with the general theological implications of such deifications of human capacities for religion and cultural achievement, but with their ethical and pastoral implications as well. For example, Schleiermacher's view of religion and the higher self-consciousness meant, in Barth's view, that he "would deny any relationship with God to one who is sick in soul" or in mind: "As a pastor he actually comforted the relatives of the dead (or failed to comfort them) with the argument that with the entry into unconsciousness and its painful consequences the access of the dead to God takes place as all subjective determination drops away and . . . he himself said it was his supreme wish to be allowed to die in full possession of his faculties."⁶⁵ The deification of culture also has ethical implications for the working class, women, and the sick in body or mind. While *Kultur* separates culture from the majority of people within that culture, under Barth's theological definition of culture, scholars, artists, poets, and theologians do nothing special in comparison to farmers, plumbers, and secretaries, and we certainly have "no reason to go into raptures because we are working."⁶⁶ At the same time, he holds that the dignity and value of human work toward the cultural goal "cannot be taken from anyone."⁶⁷ The terminally ill, the disabled, and the elderly, for example, should not be thought of as (let alone told to be) one who does not contribute to the goal of culture.

A hopeless victim of tuberculosis at Davos, who perhaps engages in an honest inward analysis of his destiny with its incipient threat to humanity at large, can still participate in the active affirmation of existence. Indeed, even though this participation may consist in practice only in patient suffering and endurance and the evincing of a little courage and paradoxical cheerfulness, in the midst of his environment he may well do so more intensively than the able-bodied man busy creating values, conducting affairs and forging a career in the heart of Zurich. And there may well be a similar relationship between what a useless old "grannie" can still do and what her offspring are beginning to do or already doing.⁶⁸

To understand culture in terms that deny it to so many is simply another way of deifying culture and making it into an idol that forsakes the genuine value and task of human cultural work.

For Barth, therefore, both *Geist* and *Kultur* were loaded terms to say the least, and this no doubt influenced his hesitation in the area pneumatology. With an understanding of *Geist* that confuses human and holy, *Geist Gottes*

becomes *Geist des Menschen*, *Geist des Volkes*, and finally *Geisteskultur*, in which human nature and human achievements are deified and genuine humanity (as *fellow-humanity*) disappears amidst attitudes of national or class superiority.

The linguistic *Geistproblem*⁶⁹ is brought out especially in *CD III/2* §46, where Barth argues against Kierkegaard's formulation, "a human being *is* spirit." Kierkegaard understood *Geist* as an aspect of the relationship between body and soul (or finite and infinite), but ascribed "spirit" to the human-as-such when this synthesis is achieved.⁷⁰ Barth holds, instead, that a human being *has* Spirit—the divine Spirit as giver and preserver of life—and this the human has not in its own right, but as the free gift of God. Barth is careful to repeatedly express the distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit, arguing that "to call man spirit whether 'created' or 'ultimate,' as modern theology likes to do . . . always involves at least an indirect identification of man with God." Rather, by saying that man *has* spirit, "we describe the spirit as something that comes to man, something not essentially his own but to be received and actually received by him, something that totally limits his constitution and thus totally determines it. As he is man and soul of his body, he has spirit. We must perhaps be more precise and say that he is, as the spirit has him. Man has spirit, as one who is possessed by it."⁷¹ Barth's already complex discussion of the constitution of the human being as body and soul is further complicated by conventions of written German. Barth's text simply uses *Geist*, requiring him to offer repeated clarifications as to his meaning—the distinction between human and holy being the central concern of this paragraph. In the standard T&T Clark translation, however, "spirit" is rendered with no capitalization, leading the reader to wonder (in spite of Barth's efforts to maintain clarity) whether he is referring to a human spirit or the divine Spirit, the latter being capitalized elsewhere (*everywhere*) throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. Geoffrey Bromiley later admitted that "in the English translation it would have been better to have consistently capitalized Spirit since Barth rejects trichotomy and seems always to be referring to the Spirit of God."⁷²

BARTH'S CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE

Rosato argues that in spite of his continued negative judgment of Schleiermacher, Barth always maintained a "glimmer of hope for a future positive judgment by holding out the possibility that Schleiermacher is the first great pneumatologist."⁷³ So too with the entire modern tradition: "Barth, the relentless critical redactor of nineteenth-century Protestant theology, is ironically also its staunchest defender. . . . If they can be viewed as theologians

of the Holy Spirit, that is, as exponents of the subjective side of Christian revelation, their theology takes up and develops an essential component of the Reformation,” namely, a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, Barth argues, the problem with modern theology is that its forerunners are found not in the Reformers, who always anchored Spirit to scripture, but “in the *Anabaptistae et Libertini*,” who took the Reformation emphasis on subjective experience and the immediacy of the Spirit as license for antinomianism.⁷⁵ In the conflation of human and divine, Schleiermacher’s apologetics is again the transgressor, with mediation as its weapon. Barth links these in a comparison with the Reformers, who related Word and Spirit through opposition.

In this opposition both were strictly characterized as moments of the divine revelation and protected, each by its correlation with the other, from being confused with a mode of human cognition. Schleiermacher could not acquiesce in this opposition, because it was not his intention at all to characterize these two moments as revelation, nor to protect them from being confused with a mode of human cognition. As an apologist he was bound to be interested in an understanding of revelation not strictly as revelation, but in such a way that it might also be comprehensible as a mode of human cognition. He was bound to look upon this opposition as an inconvenience, and to look for a means of overcoming it. And the means he found was this principle of mediation.⁷⁶

What Schleiermacher makes the central theme of his theology, therefore, is “not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit . . . but religious consciousness as such.”⁷⁷ In response, Barth seeks a proper understanding of union that would protect our humanity and God’s divinity, preventing the overestimation of human achievements and thus the assimilation of Christianity to modern culture. Barth identifies the creation and preservation of such a union as the activity of the Spirit, who unites divine and human, Christ and His community, “not to identify, intermingle or confound them, or to merge them— but to coordinate them, bring them into harmony and therefore to bind them into a true unity.”⁷⁸ As Rosato puts it, “the proper function of the Holy Spirit is that of holding the two foci . . . in tension, and not that of collapsing the bipolar ellipse in such a way that a fluid amalgamation of the speaking of God and the hearing of man results.”⁷⁹ In opposition to the undifferentiated synthesis that makes human and

divine indistinguishable, Barth seeks to retain the individuality of each element to be united such that the Spirit remains Holy and the sinner remains human.⁸⁰

Barth was fully aware of why talk of spirit and Spirit were so thickly intertwined, and he himself identifies the Holy Spirit with the subjective. Indeed, Barth argues, an “objective” theology of the Holy Spirit apart from the human is impossible: “The Holy Spirit within the Trinity marks the point where the Trinity meets man. How could you have a Doctrine of the Holy Spirit except in connection with man?”⁸¹ Barth does not deny the subjective moment, the union between divine and human, or the importance of the human as a subject matter for theology, but he does reject the way in which Schleiermacher and his successors conceived of the relation between God and man—both the nature of the relationship (as undifferentiated unity) and the ordering of it (as an action on the part of the human toward God). He counteracts this with a pneumatology in which the Spirit establishes *unity in particularity* or as Barth calls it, “union in freedom, in which the individual does not cease to be this particular individual.”⁸² In explicating the clause of the Nicene Creed that identifies the Spirit as the one “who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified,” Barth states: “What is obviously stressed here is the deity of the Spirit as it must now be established from the human standpoint . . . And by being denoted object of worship and glorification the Spirit, who in revelation is the Spirit of God and man (*Spiritus Dei et noster*), the consummation of the fellowship between God and man, is again very emphatically withdrawn from man’s sphere. . . . Nowhere is there more obvious danger of confusing the subject and object of faith or love than in relation to this third mode of God’s being in revelation. But all such confusion is ruled out by the clause.”⁸³

Barth identifies the Incarnation as the *objective* reality and possibility of revelation, while the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the *subjective* reality and possibility of revelation, bringing the human to the Word and enabling her to hear it and be mastered by it. In the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth places his discussion of objective revelation under the heading “God’s Freedom for Man” (it is in God’s existence as the Son that God is free for us, free to reveal God’s self to us) and introduces the Holy Spirit as the *subjective* reality and possibility of revelation under the heading “Man’s Freedom for God” (human freedom is a gift of the Spirit). In an effort to avoid the pitfalls of modern theology, Barth discusses human freedom and subjectivity in terms of the work of the Spirit rather than in terms of human activities or capacities: the subjective means not only the human reception of revelation *by the Holy Spirit*, but also, and principally, God’s act of giving revelation *by the Holy Spirit*. Barth insists that

even the subjective reality of revelation always contains the objective reality within it, and he warns that where “the Holy Spirit is sundered from Christ, sooner or later He is always transmuted into quite a different spirit, the spirit of the religious man, and finally the human spirit in general.”⁸⁴

Barth’s careful linking of the Spirit with the Word represents an effort to avoid relativizing Christ in the way that Schleiermacher’s anthropneumatology had done. By understanding the subjective possibility of revelation as one that makes the human free to understand and to come under the mastery of the Word, it is not the Word that is relativized but rather “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signifies the relativising of the question who and what we are in ourselves.”⁸⁵ By identifying this with the activity of the Spirit, he protects the divinity of the Spirit in relation to the Word that is given and the freedom of the humans to whom it is given.

Barth thus acknowledges the legitimacy of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that makes divine-human union a central activity of the Spirit, but rather than propelling him full speed ahead into pneumatology, this view is precisely what led to his hesitation towards the Spirit as a focal point for theology; not just an erroneous pneumatology, but even an orthodox one, runs the risk of becoming nothing more than the “apotheosis of man.” As E. Rogers has argued, “Karl Barth allows the Son to eclipse the Spirit when he allows his fear of Schleiermacher to overshadow his admiration for Athanasius.”⁸⁶ Criticisms of Barth’s pneumatology are often concerned with the degree to which he links the Spirit with the Word to the detriment of the full personality and divinity of the Spirit. However, while the link between Word and Spirit is close (and intended to preserve the divinity of both), Barth does not fail to enforce their separation as well. Furthermore, while the Word is central to each and every aspect of Barth’s theology, it is the Spirit who creates and holds together the relationships discussed above (between Father and Son, divine and human, theology and culture), but the very nearness of divine and human brought about by the Spirit puts one in danger of blurring of the distinctions between the two—hence Barth’s staunch christological concentration.

CONCLUSION: A BARTHIAN THEOLOGY OF CULTURE?

Barth was not opposed to a mutual relation between theology and culture. He appreciated the enormous task Schleiermacher faced in attempting to present Christianity to modern culture, and acknowledged that a theologian is always a product of his/her time. He understood “with what historical necessity [Schleiermacher’s theology] had to come and how well—how only too well—it fitted the whole spirit of Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries.”⁸⁷ His condemnation of Schleiermacher’s work, then, is not a condemnation of a theological engagement with culture but of a relationship between the two that stunts the theologian’s ability to diagnose and address social ills. The subordination of theology to culture allowed scientific values (for example, historical criticism, psychology, philosophy) to determine its sources and methods and allowed cultural values (governments, economic structures, moral customs) to determine its stance on human actions; Barth had witnessed the catastrophic results in the “Manifesto of the 93” and the capitulation of the German Christians to National Socialism.

But, while Barth rejected “a general sanctifying of cultural achievement, such as Schleiermacher accomplished,” he equally rejected any “basic blindness to the possibility that culture may be revelatory.”⁸⁸ Torrance argues that Barth’s intention “was by no means an attack on culture as such, but rather the opposite, upon a bogus mystification of culture which required to be disenchanting of its secret divinity before it really could be human culture.” When culture bears the burden of being a substitute for the kingdom of God, it is not free culture, for “what gives our work its true consecration is not that it involves creating like the divine creating . . . but that it is wholly human creating.”⁸⁹ Once “disenchanted of its secret divinity,” culture is free to be itself—to be secular and thus to be human. An understanding of the relation between divine and human that recognized “the grace of God alone,” allowed Barth “to build up a constructive theology, which laid the foundation for a genuine theological culture, without the confounding of God and man that is destructive of both good theology and good culture.”⁹⁰

Thus, Barth’s apprehensions *do not* rule out the possibility of developing a Barthian theology of culture. His pneumatology was deliberately designed to avoid the conflation of human and holy that he found in modern discourse on the Spirit, and his profound interest in secular culture (politics, music, history, and so on) is self-evident. One who takes careful account of his concerns can proceed with a (relatively) clear conscience in constructing a Barthian theology of culture. That Barth did not pursue such a project is due to two limiting factors: his historical context and his “allotted time.” On the first point, we have seen that Barth acknowledged the possibility of pneumatology as the meeting point between his own theology and that of Schleiermacher, a point where “we may perhaps no longer need to think with wrathful indignation of him and the theologians of the nineteenth century.”⁹¹ Indeed, he identifies pneumatology not only as the central *problem* but as the most plausible *solution* to his struggle to understand Schleiermacher.⁹² But he felt that his own historical context still prohibited a “theology of the third article.” When asked why the Spirit did not

play a larger role in his doctrine of the revealed Word, Barth replied, “you must remember the theological situation in 1932. At that time I wanted to place a strong emphasis on the objective side of revelation: Christ. If I had made much of the Holy Spirit, I am afraid it would have led back to subjectivism, which is what I wanted to overcome.”⁹³ Thus, even though he acknowledges that pneumatology might have been a more successful approach, he stops short: “I personally think that a theology of the Spirit might be alright after a.d. 2000, but now we are still too close to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is still too difficult to distinguish between God’s Spirit and man’s spirit!”⁹⁴

On the second point, Barth indicated a greater interest in pneumatology and culture in his later years. His final year was devoted to seminars and essays on Mozart, Calvin’s doctrine of the Spirit, and, of course, Schleiermacher. But old age and failing health meant that these hints were left unexcavated at the time of his death. Volume IV/4 of the *Church Dogmatics* is available only as a fragment (including a survey of Spirit baptism), and the fifth and final volume (on the doctrine of redemption) was never begun. Pneumatology was to play a far greater role in Barth’s doctrine of redemption; moreover, if he were to have developed a thoroughgoing theology of culture, he would have placed it in *CD V*, but he expressed his characteristic hesitation at the prospect: “I have always believed that the problem of art or the arts must be dealt with in connection with the eschatological apocalypse . . . and it is for me a serious reason not to write *CD V*, in which I should have to speak about the matter.”⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the argument for constructing a Barthian theology of culture can be made through his extant works. But in order to do justice to Barth’s theology, the procedure must be grounded in a clear understanding of the principles and concepts in Barth’s pneumatological eschatology, which he developed with the intention of avoiding the dangers of “apotheosis” or assimilation that had kept him from pursuing such a project himself. Though acknowledging the necessity of a mutual relation between theology and culture, Barth insisted that, in this relation, theology remain free from the constraints of culture and culture remain free to be fully human and secular culture—and *both* must remain free from assuming a counterfeit divinity. This proper relationship between theology and culture mirrors the relationship between divine and human and can be classified under the very same activity of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ Barth’s doctrine of the Spirit offers the possibility of union between theology and culture that preserves the distinctiveness of their functions as autonomous aspects of human life, thus preventing the assimilation of theology to modern culture. From the side of theology, “the *koinonia* established by the Holy Spirit equips the community in freedom for solidarity

(though not conformity) with the world.”⁹⁷ From the side of culture, this unity in distinction allows secular culture to remain *secular* and thus truly *human*. Importantly, the Word does not disappear but remains the criteria against which human words (both cultural words *and* theological words) are to be judged; the eschatological Spirit establishes the relationship between theology and culture that permits theological reflection on and through secular culture, while the Word provides a means for critically assessing culture without opening up theology to “every new spirit.”⁹⁸

Notes

1. *ThSch*, 269.
2. *Ibid.*, 267.
3. Dietrich Ritschl argues that, for Barth, Schleiermacher is always and everywhere “understood in terms of his influence.” See Ritschl, “Editor’s Preface,” in *ibid.*, x.
4. “The Principles of Dogmatics according to Wilhelm Herrmann,” in *TCSW*, 238.
5. *ThSch*, 262.
6. *KBL*, 54.
7. See Robert M. Kingdom, Thomas A. Lambert, and Isabella M. Watt, eds., *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, vol. 1, 1542–44, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
8. *KBL*, 54f.
9. *Ibid.*, 57.
10. For a succinct account of the problem Barth faced in serving the Safenwil congregation, see T.F. Torrance, “Introduction,” in *TCSW*, 10–13. A more detailed account is found in *KBL*, 60–125.
11. *KBL*, 81.
12. *Ibid.* (Letter to W. Spöndlin, 4 January 1915.) As Ingolf Dalferth states it (echoing the harshness of Barth’s own response), “their support of military aggression in 1914 for him was proof that theology of this sort lacked nothing—except a backbone and a basis in reality,” having “gone native,” losing the “capability of critical theological judgment.” Ingolf Dalferth, “Karl Barth’s Eschatological Realism,” in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14.
13. *ThSch*, 265.
14. His description of his response to these readings and the title of his now famous 1916 address in Lentwil. Indicative of the changes in Barth’s thought was his last communication with Herrmann (1918), who sent his recently published pamphlet with the following inscription to Barth: “Nevertheless, with best regards from W. Herrmann.” The pamphlet was Herrmann’s 1918 *Der Sinn des Glaubens an Jesus Christus in Luthers Leben*. Quote is from “Die dogmatische Prinzipienlehre bei Wilhelm Herrmann” in *GA III.19* (ed. Holger Finze, 1990), 554: “Trotzdem mit bestem Gruß von W. Herrmann.” See also Barth, *TCSW*, 239.
15. *GA V.3 (Karl Barth—Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel, Band 1: 1913–1921)*, ed. E. Thurneysen, Zürich: TVZ, 1973), 489. (Letter to Thurneysen, 18 May 1921.)
16. *Ibid.*, 492. (Letter to Thurneysen, 23 May 1921.) He is referring to the 1923/1924 lectures, which constitute his *ThSch*.
17. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 421. Barth explores this theme in relation to the concept of mediation in his lectures on Schleiermacher’s Sunday sermons: “As man seeks and finds God in

prayer, he finds the point beyond the antithesis of rest and movement, receptivity and self-activity; according to the model of Jesus prayer can be only the end of all our own desires, only our orientation to God's will, and therefore prayer is not to be differentiated as a special thing from fellowship with God, nor from activity in God's kingdom that is pleasing to him. Once this dam is opened we relentlessly move on to a complete and irreversible amalgamation of Christian life and civilization. Schleiermacher's Christian is transformed (we need not be surprised at this after what we learned about miracles and about the general aim of the movement of life that emanates from Christ), for after a short stay in the inner sanctuary he emerges, newly strengthened, as the ideal civilized man who is distinguished from others only by knowing what is the goal of civilization, namely, the divinely willed mastery of nature by spirit, so that he can be called more joyful, unhampered, free, and direct than anyone else." *ThSch*, 34.

18. *Ibid.*, 441. Barth continues, "Schleiermacher's real and serious opinion was that all theological pronouncements were strictly theological to the extent that they were intended and meant to be received as pronouncements of religious feeling . . . they declined in theological severity in proportion as they referred . . . to the objects of human knowledge or action." [18] Barth addressed this demise of "truth" in the early Göttingen lectures as well: "Schleiermacher is opposed to what I might call the view that there are *true words in the relationship with God*. The belief that some words may be naively taken to be true as they stand is what gives rise to the religious wrangling of parties. Naively taking certain words seriously as though they could mean strictly and in practice what they seem to be saying, for example, such words as repentance and sin, is the source of religious excitement and tragedy. We have to realize that strife and agitation are not worthwhile because they are without point. There are for us no true words in relation to God. The truth is not in words but-where? We shall have to see this later. The negation is what Schleiermacher tirelessly impresses on his congregation." *ThSch*, 45. Italics original.

19. "Hegel," in *PT*, 401. Of course, Barth rejects Hegel's "philosophy of religion," which denies divine freedom and finds revelation getting *aufgehoben* along with every other kind of knowledge.

20. "Schleiermacher" (1933), 445.

21. *Ibid.*, 450. In an examination of Schleiermacher's *Speeches*, Barth discusses the relation between "feeling" and "revelation": "But how about the communications that circulate around everything in this church? How about *theology!*-insofar as there can be any speech about God and the things of God alongside the sacred music. Obviously theology does not fare too well if it is true, as we have already been told in the first speech, that the spirit is usually *damped down* on the way from the first mouth to the first ear! Dogmas and principles are obviously not the content of religion. The *content* of reflection differs from the act itself. Words are only the *shadows* of contemplation and feeling. Nevertheless, those who think comparatively about their religion inevitably find certain basic theological concepts on their path and are unable to avoid them. Let us see what becomes of the most important of these: What is meant, for example, by *revelation*? Answer: "Every original and new view of the *universum* is a revelation, and each knows best what is original and new to *him*, and if something that is original and new in *him* is also new for you, his revelation is also a revelation for you, and I would advise you to weigh it well"! . . . Schleiermacher is no better when he talks about the concept of *holy scripture*. As "dead letter" this is mentioned for the most part only in an unfavorable context." *ThSch*, 257. Italics original.

22. *CD I/1*, 192f.

23. *Ibid.*, 146.

24. "Schleiermacher" (1933), 440.

25. "Schleiermacher" (1926), 198. Ingolf Dalferth substantiates this view, writing that "it was a fraud to base Christian theology on . . . inner experience of the autonomous subject which, as [Barth] saw it, turned Christian faith into a matter of taste or distaste . . . and lost its capability of critical theological judgment by concentrating not on *God* but on our *constructions* of God out of our (religious) experiences." Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," 15.

26. “He must, even if he himself belongs to one side, at least carry a white flag in his hand when approaching the other for a parley; he cannot at that moment be engaged as a combatant. To put it unmetaphorically: as long as he is an apologist the theologian must renounce his theological function.” “Schleiermacher” (1933), 442

27. In fact, Graham Ward notes that, “on the basis of his exposure to and researches in nineteenth-century German theology and his in-depth analysis of Schleiermacher’s work during his Göttingen employment, Barth conflates ‘apologetics’ with ‘Kulturprotestantismus.’” Graham Ward, “Barth, Hegel and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics,” in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. John C. McDowell and Mike Higdon (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 65 n. 2.

28. “Ludwig Feuerbach” (1920) in *TCSW*, 227. According to Barth’s interpretation, Schleiermacher had inaugurated an anthropocentric theology that led to (and could only lead to) Feuerbach (who becomes an unlikely hero for Barth as one who simply had the audacity and acumen to follow the current theological claims to their inevitable conclusions). One finds in Barth’s writings on Feuerbach a respect and sympathy for this “unrepentant publican and sinner,” who, after all, identified Schleiermacher as fundamentally an anthropologist or psychologist nearly eighty years before Barth. See: “Feuerbach,” in *PT*, 520–26. One could argue that Feuerbach’s influence may be second only to Schleiermacher’s when it comes to Barth’s constructive theology and his diagnosis of problems within the contemporary Church and within modern the theology (for example, in Barth’s disappointment that the Church did not embrace socialist economic reforms, allowing Marx and Engels to cast the Church as an opiate and oppressor). Indeed, Feuerbach seems to have greatly influenced Barth’s own interpretation of Schleiermacher, though, unfortunately, an examination of this aspect of Barth’s work is well beyond the scope of this project.

29. *ThSch*, 241.

30. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 445.

31. Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 14.

32. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 445.

33. In an excursus on the evolution of hymnals over the centuries, Barth argues that this conflation of spirits “can be more or less clearly demonstrated in every section of our hymn-books. It is the heresy of the third article. The Holy Spirit has ceased to be the Spirit of Jesus Christ. To all appearances He is still a spirit of God, even a Christian spirit. In fact, however, He is the spirit of human inwardness and seriousness, the spirit of mysticism and morals.” *CD I/2*, 257 (entire discussion of the hymn books runs from 252–57).

34. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 454.

35. George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 283.

36. *ThSch*, 171. Italics original.

37. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 457. Italics original.

38. *CD I/2*, 210.

39. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 453.

40. *Ibid.*, 454.

41. “Schleiermacher” (1926), 173. Redemption becomes “a human state in which human reason and the divine Spirit mutually know one another and can no longer be distinguished” such that “in the last resort even the divine Spirit is only a supreme enhancement of human reason.” *ThSch*, 242.

42. “Schleiermacher” (1933), 453.

43. *Ibid.*, 432.

44. Torrance, “Introduction,” in *TCSW*, 19.

45. *Ibid.*, 16. As Barth characterizes the situation: “Evangelical theology... had become religionistic, anthropocentric, and in this sense humanistic. What I mean to say is that an external and internal disposition and emotion of man, namely his piety—which might well be Christian

piety—had become its object of study and its theme. Around this it revolved and seemed compelled to revolve without release. . . for this theology, to think about God meant to think in a scarcely veiled fashion about man, more exactly about the religious, the Christian religious man. To speak about God meant to speak in an exalted tone but once again and more than ever about this man—his revelations and wonders, his faith and his works. There is no question about it: here man was made great at the cost of God.” Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (Richmond: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 40.

46. “Interview von Mr. Lemon,” in *GA IV.25* (ed. Eberhard Busch, 1995), 446.

47. “Pressekonferenz in Chicago,” in *GA IV.25*, 450.

48. Torrance, “Introduction,” in *TCSW*, 22.

49. Steven Smith, *The Concept of the Spiritual: An Essay in First Philosophy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 27.

50. Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 2. See also Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 19.

51. William Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894), xlix.

52. Smith, *Concept of the Spiritual*, 32.

53. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 5.

54. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 9.

55. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 6.

56. Theodor Adorno, “On the Question: ‘What Is German?’” trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn, 1985), 126.

57. Timothy Gorringe, “Culture and Barbarism: Barth amongst the Students of Culture” in *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 1996), 42. Gorringe is contrasting the German “*Kultur*” with English “culture” as represented by Raymond Williams, who wrote: “We use the word culture in two senses: to mean a whole way of life (the common meanings); to mean the arts and learning (the special processes of discovery and creative effort). Some writers reserve the word for one or the other of these senses; I insist on them both, and on the significance of their conjunction.”

58. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 6.

59. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. and ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9f.

60. CC, 337. Citing Samuel Eck, “Kulturwissenschaft und Religion,” in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Dritter Band, ed. Friedrich Michael Schiele and Leopold Zscharnack (Tübingen: Mohr, 1912), 1815.

61. CC, 338.

62. *Ibid.*, 337.

63. *Ethics*, 217.

64. *ThSch*, 248.

65. *ThSch*, 221f.

66. *Ethics*, 218.

67. *Ethics*, 219.

68. *CD III/4*, 549.

69. Barth was on the whole dissatisfied with the German term *Geist*, which he does *not* view as especially dynamic or in keeping with the Scriptural terms: “The biblical name of this sovereign effective power is *ruach* or *pneuma*. And both terms mean, specifically, moved and moving air; they mean breath, wind, probably also storm, and in this sense, *spirit*. In the Latin *spiritus* and also in the French *esprit* this significance is rather clearly recognizable. In English the word should certainly not be reproduced by “Ghost” with its frightening proximity to ‘spooks.’ In German, unfortunately, *Geist* is a word which makes the dynamic significance of the biblical term

altogether unrecognizable." *EvT*, 53. On occasion, translators of the *Dogmatics* do in fact use "Ghost," despite Barth's protest.

70. See especially *The Sickness Unto Death*. Kierkegaard does not argue that this synthesis is easily (if ever) achieved, but does seem to place it within human possibilities. On the other hand, L. Klages argued for the *Spirit as Adversary of Soul*, for "Spirit does not peacefully coexist with soul and body in the house of human nature; it wars against them as an outsider. That it is a deathly disease of human life becomes evident in such famous precepts as . . . 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'" Smith, *Concept of the Spiritual*, 32. See Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (Leipzig: Barth, 1929).

71. *CD III/2*, 354.

72. See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 130–34; *CD III/2*, §46 as translated by Harold Knight, Geoffrey William Bromiley, J. K. S. Reid, R. H. Fuller (London: T&T Clark, 1960).

73. Rosato, *Spirit as Lord*, 14.

74. *Ibid.*, 12. Barth expresses the same sentiment in a letter to Bultmann: "My best and most peaceful thoughts about you are when I try to think of you with the hypothesis with which I seek to bring the great Schleiermacher before myself and my students, namely, that what you are after is to be regarded as an attempt at a theology of the "third article" and therefore of the Holy Spirit. I could view this as a fundamentally legitimate and even fruitful undertaking. But then the relation between the third and the second article must be clarified, i.e., the latter must not be dissolved in the former but set forth in its own dignity over against it. This is where I balk at you as I do at Schleiermacher (and often also at the younger Luther)." Karl Barth, *Karl Barth—Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922–1966*, ed. Bernd Jasperts, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 108. (Letter to Bultmann, 24 December 1952.)

75. *CD I/2*, 252.

76. "Schleiermacher" (1933), 448f.

77. *Ibid.*, 449.

78. *CD IV/3*, 761.

79. Rosato, *Spirit as Lord*, 15.

80. *CD I/1*, 462: "The creature to whom the Holy Spirit is imparted in revelation by no means loses its nature and kind as a creature so as to become itself, as it were, the Holy Spirit. Even in receiving the Holy Ghost man remains man, the sinner sinner. Similarly in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost God remains God. The statements about the operations of the Holy Spirit are statements whose subject is God and not man, and in no circumstances can they be transformed into statements about man."

81. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talks* (recorded and edited by John Godsey), *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers 10* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), 21.

82. *CD IV/2*, 635. This is true even in the union of the human body and soul, which, "through the Spirit of God," is able to be "wholly and simultaneously both, in ineffaceable difference, inseparable unity, and indestructible order." *CD III/2*, 326.

83. *CD I/1*, 489f.

84. *CD I/2*, 251. Critics of Barth's pneumatology tend to see a relationship between Word and Spirit that subordinates the activity of the Spirit to the work of Word and even renders this activity a mere repetition, which has serious consequences for both pneumatology and Christology. For example, Jürgen Moltmann criticizes what he calls Barth's "trinitarian monarchy," which places the emphasis on the sovereignty and unity of God in order to protect monotheism "against a 'tritheism' which has never existed." This leads to concerns about the independent existence of the Spirit as well as to serious questions about his christological position. Moltmann argues that Barth's position endangers traditional christological concepts and leads to either Athanasian or Sabellian views of the Incarnation. See Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 143,

and *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 125–42. Barth's pneumatology has also come under heavy criticism from authors such as Robert Jenson in "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went?" *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 2 (1993): 296–304, in which Jenson argues that the Spirit "disappears" from the pages of Barth's work whenever it would have to function as a "who" rather than a "what." See also, Eugene Rogers "The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth," in *Conversing with Barth*, 173–90.

85. *CD I/2*, 275.

86. Rogers, "Eclipse of the Spirit," 173.

87. *ThSch*, 260.

88. CC, 344.

89. *Ethics*, 218.

90. Torrance, "Introduction," in *TCSW*, 22f.

91. Karl Barth, *Learning Jesus Christ through the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 84.

92. E.g., *ThSch*, 276. "Is the spirit which moves feeling, speaking, and thinking persons, when things come about properly, (a) an absolutely *particular* and specific Spirit, which not only distinguishes itself again and again from all other spirits, but which is seriously to be called "holy"? If this is the correct way to understand Schleiermacher . . . then—instead of disputing with him—what is to prevent me from joining him and deliberating further with him about its basic content and consequences? But then, in this way have I understood him correctly? Could I, as a conscientious interpreter, be responsible for this understanding of Schleiermacher's position? Or, according to Schleiermacher, is the spirit which moves feeling, thinking, and speaking persons rather (b) a *universally effective* spiritual power, one which, while individually differentiated, basically remains diffuse? In that case we would be and remain—he, the great, and I, the little, man-separated from each other. But in this way have I understood him correctly, i.e., congenially? Or have I burdened him with an alien point of view? If I could dispense with this viewpoint, would I not have to recognize and confess that he and I are not quite so far apart?"

93. Barth, *Table Talks*, 27.

94. *Ibid.* I certainly do not intend to argue that we should take Barth's "a.d. 2000" as some kind of permission to run wild with his theology (which would be to take Barth too seriously, as I will later argue so many interpreters of his writings on culture have done), but his remarks do indicate that he would not rule out pneumatology as a legitimate course for future theology.

95. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth Letters 1961–1968*, ed. Jurgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 101 (Letter to Karl Lüthi, 22 June 1963.)

96. In suggesting the Spirit as the source for a Barthian theology of culture, the immediate question is why it should arise from pneumatology rather than Christology. Christological readings of Barth's writings on culture have been put forward and are compelling (these will be addressed in subsequent chapters). Pursuing a Barthian theology of culture through his view of Christ as the objective reality and possibility of revelation would indeed correct many of the errors he saw in modern theological views of culture, but would do so at the expense of the *subjective*—of an understanding of the human theologian as he/she explores human culture. After all that was presented above, preserving the objective at the expense of the subjective may not seem unthinkable, but I argue that pneumatology would be a more fruitful path for pursuing Barth's theology of culture in light of his use of the concepts of freedom and union and how these are situated in his work, namely, under the doctrine of redemption and the specific activity of the Holy Spirit.

97. Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 172f.

98. A common, if perhaps unfair, caricature of Paul Tillich's early theology of culture, drawn from his "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture." See Victor Nuovo, *Visionary Science: A*

Translation of Tillich's "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," with an Interpretive Essay (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 37.