Introduction

In the fifth episode of *Deadwood*'s first season, the Reverend Smith is called upon to eulogize Wild Bill Hickok just as the man responsible for his murder is acquitted and released to ride freely from the camp.

> Mr. Hickok will lie beside two brothers. One he likely killed, the other he killed for certain and he's been killed now in turn. So much blood. And on the battlefields of the brother's war, I saw more blood than this. And asked then, after the purpose, and did not know. But know now to testify that, not knowing, I believe. St. Paul tells us from one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member but many. He tells us: The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble and those members of the body which we think of as less honorable–all are necessary. He says that there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one to another. And whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it. I believe in God's purpose, not knowing it. I ask him, moving in me, to allow me to see his will. I ask him, moving in others, to allow them to see it.[1]

I begin with this homily in part to signal the focus of this "theology of popular culture" (namely, television entertainment) but, more substantively, because it highlights two central themes: relationality and diversity. *Deadwood* creator David Milch identified this sermon as a kind of mission statement for the series as a whole, which explores the efforts of an illegal camp to impose order on itself and evolve into a genuine community in which each member is recognized as necessary and irreplaceable. For Milch, this relationality also characterizes the writing process as well as the connections made between viewers and characters: "the telling of a story is nothing more or less than the process of the viewer coming to experience what has seemed to be separate entities as informed by a single unity. And, in that context, all of the sort of abstract categories of plot, character are subsumed into really what is a religious

construct… e pluribus unum, 'out of many one.'"[2] Matthew Weiner (*Mad Men*) describes the experience of TV viewers as follows: "People feel less alone in a great way. It becomes part of their education. It becomes an entertainment that is substantial. They feel close to other people. They communicate with an artist. There's light shed on their lives. They're diverted. They're lifted from their burdens. They're entertained."[3] Television has the capacity to bring people together. It creates relationships—not only with fictional characters (as is true of any other form of storytelling), but also with writers and with fellow viewers. Far from a passive and solitary experience, as it has so often been depicted, watching television has become an active, *inter*-active, and relational endeavor. Through Twitter, Reddit, Comic-Con panels, and blogs, viewers get to know the creative voices behind a series and get to know fellow-fans as well. For example, when Todd VanDerWerff suggested a target of 100,000 comments on his review of *Community*'s third season finale (to demonstrate support for the series and for series creator, Dan Harmon, who was fired by Sony Pictures Television the day after the finale aired), readers stepped up, reaching over 160,000 (so far). Consider this excerpt from the 100,000th comment: "*crucially*, this is a message board not about *Community* itself, but about one of the show's central themes: acceptance. That there's a place where you can talk about whatever's on your mind, where you can post about any subject you have a passion for, where you can love or hate or be indifferent to anything you want. A place where you're already accepted."[4]

For Milch, storytelling (on television or elsewhere) lends to the telos of human existence as a "co-habitation in the Spirit," which he (drawing from Kierkegaard) understands as coming to "rest transparently in the spirit that gives us rise."[5] But television is too often dismissed wholesale as "junk," "idiot box," "boob tube," something less-than all other forms of art or media. While film and music (even in their more "popular" manifestations) might qualify as art, many unreflectively label television as *mere* entertainment. "Once we begin to generalize about television," Milch warns, "we have given in to a kind of fear which postulates that television is other-than, and it isn't."

> The preparation of the spirit is in the renunciation of credence in certain dualities, one of which is, say, the fallen state of television. You know, not for nothing: there's no such thing as television. Whatever television is, it's just a name we give to certain waves. And once you start to call it television, you have embarked on the process of corruption, which we subsequently bemoan. I'm just

> telling stories, and if they start rolling a camera, God bless 'em. But we're doing the same thing all the time.[6]

Romanowski lists "providing social unity and contributing to the collective memory" as two of the "good purposes that God brought into existence for the popular arts."[7] In addition to providing a sense of community, according to Detweiler and Taylor, "television can provide a window into the world, to the many faces of Jesus."[8] It can therefore serve a function similar to the mutual seeing, speaking, and hearing that Barth views as constitutive of genuinely human being-in-encounter. Barth holds that the *imago dei* resides in human fellowship through the activity of the Spirit.[9] If we actualize our humanity not in ourselves but only in relation to others, then by encouraging present unity through "common experiences with the popular arts that inform people's communal identity,"[10] popular entertainment can be understood as an anticipation of final human unity-in-fellowship.[11]

This brings us to the second theme, which concerns the context from which the *Deadwood* sermon draws, namely, Paul's account of the diverse gifts of the Spirit. Against those who fretted over their lack of this or that gift and those who boasted about their own gifts, Paul reminds his readers that there is not a hierarchy among the many spiritual gifts but rather they are given according to the freedom and wisdom of the Spirit—and, again, all are necessary. When we affirm the unity of the community as the body of Christ, we are able to affirm simultaneously the particular gifts of individuals in recognition of the freedom of the Spirit; the same principle applies to the various spheres of human culture, each having its place and vital role in human life. Just as "high culture" and "high art" have been gifted with certain important contributions to human flourishing, the same is true of popular culture and, within it, of television. Ignoring this, however, we allow high culture and art to become an idol, a modern golden calf. In Barth's terms, this amounts to yet another deification of human achievements that confuses the Holy Spirit with the human spirit.

Romanowski observes that the distinction between "high" and "low" culture arose from that very desire among the elite "to legitimate their privileged social status," making "high" art "the exclusive property of an educated elite composed of virtuosos and connoisseurs who thought they alone could understand and properly appreciate art."[12] This kind of elitism is a mainstay of academic culture, academic theology included. According to James K. A. Smith, Christian scholars seeking to return to the mainstream of the academy discovered that "one of the prices to pay for such respectability was

to adopt a staple stance of academic elitism: an allergic abhorrence for anything 'popular.'"[13]

Perceived as the most "popular" (both in the sense of being widely consumed and in the more negative sense of being "low-brow" or "vulgar") of the popular media, television and its particular potential to contribute to various aspects of human flourishing will be the primary focus of second half of this project, allowing us to more clearly appreciate the value of Barth's theology for developing a view of popular culture that resists the temptations of deification and elitism. Regarding the former, Barth's constructs his pneumatology so as to avoid the conflation of human and holy, labeling a genuine relation between the two as an encounter-in-unity held in tension by the power of the Spirit. Regarding the latter, Barth rejects views of culture that would reserve the dignity of cultural contribution solely for the elite: "Does the statesman, scholar, or artist really do anything special as compared with the best handyman? We want to live, and so we work. . . . There is no reason to go into raptures because we are working at this or that task."[14] For Barth, artistic culture points to the promise of redemption by reminding us that present reality is merely provisional in light of the final future of the eschatological Kingdom; through Barth's eschatological concepts of *play* and *release*, we will find that *popular* media such as television point us to the *universality* of the Spirit's redemptive promise as "the destiny of all men."[15]

One goal of this project, therefore, is to put Barth in conversation with contemporary scholarship on popular culture *and* with cultural producers in order to develop *theological* definitions and criteria that resonate more deeply with popular entertainment's *secular* self-understanding, producing more culturally relevant and methodologically sophisticated analyses that can account more robustly for the complex structures through which these works are produced and distributed.

Karl Barth is too often overlooked as a resource for theology of culture in part because scholars have yet to articulate fully the approach that enabled him to engage freely and gladly with secular culture. In doing so, however, a view of culture emerges that can respect culture's integrity and autonomy while still allowing for critical theological analyses of its products. Barth's theology proves well-suited to studies in theology and popular culture because of his appreciation of the freedom and the *secularity* of cultural work. Barth maintains that theology and culture have distinct but equally vital "tasks," and the *theological* task entails an appreciation of culture's *secular* task, recognizing that theology's freedom is circumscribed by the freedom of secular culture. Barth therefore offers a middle way between liberal theologies (which tend

either to relativize religious forms or to distort cultural forms when excavating them for hidden theological meanings) and the Christian right (which tends to perpetuate an unconstructive, polarizing opposition to secular culture and to exploit cultural forms to serve a political agenda), both of which place an undue burden on popular entertainment that inhibits the potential for dialogue.

The Barthian framework I develop here recognizes the theological significance of popular culture's very *secular* task and attempts to develop theological criteria *relevant* to that task—but without asking theology to relativize its own positions.

I realize, of course, that producing more relevant analyses does *not* mean that those involved in creating popular entertainment will notice, much less care, what theology has to say about their work. In fact, most people working in the entertainment industries would likely respond to the phrase "theology of popular culture" with puzzlement if not contempt. There are exceptions, such as Milch, who speaks of popular entertainment in pneumatological terms drawn explicitly from Kierkegaard and Paul, but most entertainment insiders are not as amenable as Milch to theological discourse on art and entertainment.[16] This allergy is due largely to the caricature perpetuated by extremist groups that exploit both religious language and cultural forms in service to personal and political agendas. Contemporary American theology has failed to produce (or at least to communicate) insights with substantive relevance to the larger culture and is frequently excluded from public discourse as a result; this silence has created the void that reactionary groups have volunteered to fill, creating a destructive caricature of Christian attitudes toward culture and the media. As Gordon Lynch observes, "one of the reasons that theology has made a limited impact on wider cultural debates is that, fairly or unfairly, religious responses to popular culture are sometimes perceived to be reactionary, superficial, or ill-informed."[17] Indeed, conservative activist groups like the American Family Association sometimes seize on television programs they have never actually seen, falsely contextualizing explicit content. Calling on members to file formal complaints with the FCC against the "toxic perversion" of FOX's *American Dad*, the AFA described the series as "one of the most popular animated children's programs" whose "popularity ranges primarily from children 2–11 years old"!![18] In fact, the series is rated TV-14 and, like the rest of FOX's Sunday night animated line-up, it is unmistakably intended for adults. Sensationalizing content deemed objectionable by disseminating false information about it is reactionary and irresponsible, and if this is what people think theology is then it is no wonder they have no interest in what theology has to say.

However, theologies at the other end of the spectrum also miss the mark. While groups like the AFA too often exploit cultural forms or demand conformity to a particular moral code drawn from a particular interpretation of the biblical texts, liberal academic theologies too often frame their analyses of culture in (frequently Tillichian) terms of facilitating an encounter with the infinite or unearthing culture's hidden theological assumptions or in terms of the possibility of a theonomous culture that expresses "something ultimate in being and meaning, in all its creations."[19] These, too, misunderstand culture's value and purpose. Both sides fail to appreciate popular culture's freedom and value as an independent sphere with unique contributions to human flourishing, and both therefore contribute to an atmosphere in which theological discourse is seen as a nuisance to be ridiculed or dismissed.[20] In light of such approaches, I share Lynch's emphasis on "the importance of listening to popular culture on its own terms before making any theological evaluation of it."

Failure to recognize and respect the freedom of secular culture has led to unconstructive debates between "religion" and "culture" that have further eclipsed theology's voice in contemporary society. If theology is to be taken seriously again, it must recover its public voice—but in order to effectively communicate with culture, theology must first *understand* culture. Grounding a theology of popular culture in Barth's work will allow theology to explore cultural forms *critically* without burdening them with responsibilities (such as revealing a depth dimension or facilitating an encounter with the divine) that are superfluous to their secular task.

Of course, Karl Barth is not typically identified as a theologian of culture but as a theologian of division, putting asunder any constructive relationship between theology and culture. Though much of this is based on an unfair caricature of Barth, it also grows out of a very real skepticism on his part toward the possibility of a theology of culture that could avoid the deification of human achievements. Therefore, as a limiting principle throughout this work, I will keep in mind an admonition that Barth once registered (in an unrelated context): "So, the curious are warned! Whoever takes a different view from the one here solemnly advised does so with my express disapproval."[21]

Outline of Chapters

The first half of this project will develop a theoretical framework, drawn from Barth's writings on pneumatology, eschatology, and hermeneutics. The second

half will bring these together with his discussion of work in *CD* III/4 in order to elaborate practical criteria for applying this approach to theological analyses of contemporary popular entertainment.

An analysis of Barth's theology of culture must first confront his famous remarks *against* theology of culture in *CD* I/1 and elsewhere. Barth's allergy in this area was closely connected to his misgivings about modern pneumatology, both influenced by theological trends toward the deification of human achievements that, in his view, prevented critical dialogue with culture and thus rendered theology impotent and irrelevant. Chapter 1 briefly identifies the source of Barth's apprehensions in his interpretation of Schleiermacher (whom he saw as the father of these modern trends).

The next three chapters argue that Barth's writings present two discrete approaches to culture (the first found in §69, the other implied in his analyses of particular cultural forms) and that attempts to link the two overlook the rationale behind his efforts to isolate them. Chapter 2 claims that, while interpreters of Barth's theology of culture typically turn to *CD* IV/3 §69 (which lays out what I will call Barth's "true words approach"), this material is not the place to look for insights into his analyses of cultural forms. Rather, it is better understood simply as an extension of his doctrine of the Word—virtually the same in both content and context as his remarks against theology of culture in *CD* I/1. I argue that this material should therefore be abandoned in favor of a model guided by Barth's writings on culture and the Spirit in the context of his eschatology, which better harmonize with his own analyses of particular cultural forms.

Chapter 3 attempts to reconstruct Barth's theology of culture from his writings on the doctrine of redemption, where both Spirit and culture come into their own in Barth's work. Art, for example, is presented here as a worthy achievement in its own right, contributing to human flourishing by "playing with reality" and thereby inspiring hope as a reminder that the present is not the final word.[22] Moreover, the very possibility of human recreation derives from humanity's re-creation by the eschatological Spirit, remaking humanity into playful children of God. Turning to the oft-cited Mozart essays, I argue that the frequent attempts to link Barth's writings on Mozart with the true words approach of *CD* IV/3 are simply taking Barth too seriously in a context intended to be playful. These (wholly *un*critical) essays are better understood as an application of his eschatological conception of play. From this eschatological point of view, we can recognize theology of culture as itself a form of play. The theologian approaches a cultural form freely, while recognizing this freedom to

be qualified by the corresponding freedom of secular culture, which must be allowed to speak on its own terms.

Chapter 4 then explores Barth's use of art and literature in the *Church Dogmatics* in order to isolate what I will call his "hermeneutic of culture." Once Barth has examined an artistic work in terms of its *cultural* task, for example, he can then turn to it for assistance in fulfilling his *theological* task. Theology is free to make use of these cultural products when they prove useful and to set them aside when they do not, thus protecting the *freedom of culture* against theologies that would distort its self-expression in order to confirm their own positions. Barth's conception of genuine humanity as being-in-encounter is thus central to the theology of culture suggested here: theology can neither seek to dominate culture nor offer itself in submission. Just as Barth identifies the Spirit as the subjective possibility of revelation, I will suggest understanding the Spirit as the *subjective possibility of theology of culture*, revealing it to be playful, glad, and free.

Though Barth's work drew almost exclusively from the world of "high art," chapter 5 will demonstrate that there is in fact room in Barth's theology for an appreciation of popular entertainment. I begin by reviewing Barth's various articulations of the tasks of culture and art, introducing his five criteria for human work (objectivity, value, humanity, reflectivity, and limitation), which will provide the structural framework for the final two chapters. The criterion of "limitation" is the most significant for understanding popular culture's place in Barth's theology. Work must be punctuated by "distraction or diversion," which provides "temporary release and liberation," without which our work becomes "diseased and evil work which resists God and destroys man." Because relaxation is "re-creative, refreshing and beneficial" and therefore necessary if our work is to remain objective, valuable, humane, and thoughtful, Barth holds that it "ought to be regarded as a divinely ordained hygiene."[23] With this in mind, I suggest that the specific task of popular entertainment is to contribute to *play*, *fellowship*, and *relaxation*, augmenting the task of culture by fostering individual and communal wholeness and augmenting the task of art by pointing to the *universality* of the promise of the Spirit. Barth's claim that "to evade the anticipatory creativity of esthetics… is to be immoral and disobedient"[24] must therefore be extended beyond high art to popular culture in recognition of its particular "gift" in relation to human flourishing. Because the final chapter will narrow the focus to television entertainment, this chapter also addresses the fact that, even as the study of popular culture gains respect in the academy, television is too often overlooked in favor of media such as music and film (which often exist at the border between popular and "high" art). For many,

television provides important opportunities for the enjoyment and relaxation that Barth held to be necessary for human wholeness, and it therefore merits close attention as to whether or not it genuinely fosters human well-being. On the other hand, Barth wrote of television only twice, and it did not fare well in either instance. His criticisms, however, related less to the content of television programming than to the influence of advertisers on the medium. Putting Barth in conversation with contemporary TV showrunners, therefore, I carefully examine his comments in light of their shared concerns about the power of commercial advertisers.

The final two chapters take this framework from theory to practice in order to see how it might enhance our understanding of the value and task of popular culture. Chapter 6 applies Barth's five criteria for work *first* to the work of the theologian of culture: What makes theological analyses of popular culture objective, valuable, human, reflective, and properly limited? *Objectivity* requires understanding the "rules of the game," and here I address the frequent charges of dilettantism and subjectivity leveled against work in theology and popular culture. While theology must remain true to its own methods, it must also understand the rules of the game that apply to the production of popular entertainment; otherwise efforts to under*line* the value of popular culture actually serve to under*cut* it by treating it with a degree of superficiality that would be unacceptable for any other object of inquiry. *Value* concerns the contribution of individual work to the larger work of culture. The value of a theological analysis of popular culture depends upon recognizing the value of popular culture itself. That such studies require elaborate justifications as to their legitimacy speaks to an enduring elitism in the academy, which a better understanding of popular culture's unique contribution to human flourishing can help to counter. *Humanity* asks us to consider whether its work is "injurious and ruinous both to the worker and to those around," which could take the form of exploiting culture (distorting its self-expression) or of encouraging popular culture's exploitation of others (industry workers, audiences, and so on). *Reflectivity* concerns the inward reflection that informs and guides outward work. Theology must engage in frequent self-reflection in order to prevent undue deification or demonization of culture and to avoid absorbing destructive cultural values and trends. *Limitation* is the most important criterion for understanding popular culture's place in Barth's theology. The theological significance of relaxation means that popular entertainment must remain free to pursue its secular task. This circumvents views that would reject cultural forms based on their lack of theological sophistication, which misunderstands the task of secular culture and needlessly

excludes cultural forms that make a valuable contribution to human life (as opportunities for play and relaxation).

In chapter 7, these same criteria are then tailored specifically to the production, distribution, and reception of television programming. For example, under the criterion of *limitation*, I explore television comedies and the recent trend toward less cynical humor in light of Barth's eschatological description of "true humor," as well as trends in viewing habits and the question of television as "constant companion." Under *reflectivity*, I address television's impact on reflective thinking and the development of technologies that allow interactive engagement with programs, including the expansion of timeshifting technologies and their impact on television advertising. An examination of the *humanity* of cultural work includes issues such as reality TV participation contracts, the treatment of animals in television production, the recent fascination with the not-exactly-human (superheroes, aliens, zombies, etc.), and television's ability to contribute to a sense of community. The question of *value* is considered in light of debates about television violence, the efficacy of online forums for gauging audience reception, and the role of programming that treats the darker side of life. *Objectivity* proves to be the most interesting, touching on a variety of issues such as product integration (supporters and opponents), the impact of "network notes" on scripted television, and TV auteurs and the question of "TV as art."

"Reconnoitering the Rim" (A Brief Review of the Literature)

Because current work in Barth studies and theology and popular culture will be central to developing my argument, the relevant secondary literature will be incorporated throughout. Rather than a full-scale review of the literature, therefore, I will simply map out the current landscape in these fields.

Karl Barth's Theology of Culture

In 1972, *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* devoted its fall volume to the Karl Barth Colloquium convened by the Seminary two years earlier; this volume included three articles that addressed the possibility of Barth as a "theologian of culture." Gabriel Vahanian's essay noted the complicated dynamics at play in Barth's conception of the relationship between church and culture, wherein "the church is more secular than the world," while "culture belongs to the order of grace." The key, Vahanian points out, is Barth's eschatology, for the "point of convergence" between revelation and culture "belongs not to 'creation' but to eschatology," under which "the church is where the world falls into place

as creation- as the new creation."[25] In the same volume, however, Michael Novak and Markus Barth take issue with Vahanian's description of Barth as a "theologian of culture" in the sense that we understand that term in an American context. Novak observes that "what American culture is, or will be, is much more problematical for us than it is when Barth uses the word in Switzerland," and therefore "what culture is in Barth's mind, as he uses that word, seems to me so very different from what it is in the United States."[26] M. Barth agrees and further claims that much of what Americans consider culture "would be defined by my father as barbarism, as examples of extreme boredom or of the absence of any sort of value" (a claim I will challenge in chapter 5). Culture does not encompass "every shop on the street, and the Pentagon, and what not," but rather, "when he asked whether *Kulturprotestantismus* is possible, or desirable, or the way of the future, he was referring to this acme of human learning and the rare instances when one could say that here is humanity at its best."[27]

Later works have also emphasized the importance of eschatology for understanding Barth's theology of culture. Ralph Wood examines American comic fiction in terms of the doctrine of redemption, citing the Gospel as "an unalloyed comedy" in that "it proclaims a happier outcome to life than humanity itself might dream or wish," namely, "the unqualified triumph of God's own Kingdom."[28] He argues that the message of human redemption through Christ is therefore best expressed through comic art, and he holds that "God himself is the comedian who *wants* his audience to laugh—to rejoice in and thus to be transformed by the Good News."[29] Against Niebuhr's "tragic vision," Wood turns to Barth's "fundamentally comic" reading of the Bible, which allows Barth to maintain a view of culture that is "quintessentially positive and joyful." This "comic" orientation does not ignore the depth of human despair, but Barth's explorations of the darker side of life are always over*shadowed* by the awareness of the promise of redemption. For this reason, Barth's eschatological orientation makes him the ideal choice, over against Niebuhr, for an exploration of American fiction in which "parables" are discerned "not so much in tragic art, where culture regards itself most somberly, but in the laughter that refuses to take the world's sadness as final."[30] Wood understands Barth's theology of culture through the eschatological concepts of freedom and hope, employing Barth's concept of "playing with reality" as he explores American novels that laugh in the midst of suffering—inexplicably, though, Wood does not include any reference to the discussion of humor and art in the *Ethics*, but relies on the "true words" approach (located within

the doctrine of reconciliation), which lessens the force of his eschatological concentration.[31]

Having written on Barth's attitude toward culture[32] and his value for liberation theology.[33] Timothy Gorringe briefly treats Barth in his own liberation theology of culture, taking from Barth three main points for doing theology of culture. (1) Barth's emphasis on the human as soul and body in conflict and the role of culture in unifying the two represents, for Gorringe the significance of the incarnation in understanding culture as the marriage of economics, politics, ethics, aesthetics, and basic survival in "unity without confusion of division of Word and flesh." (2) Barth's view that "the gospel meets every culture with 'sharp skepticism,'" reminding us that "no culture embodies the kingdom" (the "eschatological proviso" of liberation theology). (3) But, while the crucifixion reminds us that we must "pay attention to the dark side of cultural history,"[34] Barth's eschatology, as a theology of hope, allows theology of culture to avoid pessimism by recognizing culture as a "process of becoming."[35] This final element means that the injustices within culture are not destiny, but rather the destiny of culture is the Kingdom, which is "reached by the long revolution, the journey from bondage to freedom." This eschatological dimension enables theology to address modernity's "lack of any sense of meaning and value."[36] While Gorringe goes so far as to argue for the importance of the Spirit as a central symbol for a Christian theology of culture that can account for *popular* culture, he does not draw this from Barth, but from Herder (whose pneumatology, Gorringe says, enables an appreciation of multiculturalism in recognition of the "underlying unity" given by the Spirit) and the Christian emphasis on care for the poor (which "points away from both elite culture and cultural populism.")[37] Drawing more extensively from Barth, I believe, would have *strengthened* his emphasis on the diversity of gifts bestowed by the Spirit of Pentecost and on popular entertainment as a "celebration" of daily life. Both of these elements, in fact, could have been drawn out of Barth's *eschatological* concept of the Spirit of Promise, which reveals that "our conduct bears the mark of good . . . when it is not done in earnest but in *play*."[38]

While Wood and Gorringe have both touched on important elements in Barth's thought that can help us gain a more nuanced understanding of his theology of culture, Gorringe seems to overlook the valuable contribution Barth might make to a more pneumatologically centered theology of culture that can account for multiculturalism and popular culture, while Wood's "comedy of redemption" remains tethered to the all too serious true words approach of §69.

George Hunsinger has described Barth's understanding of the Spirit as "like the 'strong force' in modern physics, which holds disparate entities together within an atom's nucleus"—the Spirit unites disparate realities "across the divine/human ontological divide," such that "two freedoms are mysteriously conjoined" (the divine and the human) in a unity-in-diversity that preserves the distinct reality of each entity.[39] The work of the Spirit extends beyond the church to the entire world, and non-Christians "are not to be regarded, Barth proposes, as outside the scope and promise of the Holy Spirit," thus revealing that "the church's distinction from the world is rendered entirely tentative and provisional, for the promise of the Holy Spirit avails and applies not just to some but to all."[40] However, rather than applying pneumatological categories to the examination of *CD* IV/3 §69 (which appears the epilogue to his introduction to Barth), Hunsinger turns instead to christological categories, reading these passages in light of what he calls the "basic Chalcedonian character" of Barth's Christology.[41] After a close reading of the relevant passages in §69, Hunsinger concludes that Barth's attitude toward culture could be labeled "exclusivism without triumphalism" (in that it holds Christian doctrine to be true, while all others must therefore be regarded as false, but does not then claim salvation to be limited to those within the church) or "inclusivism without compromise" (acknowledging the possibility of true words outside the church, but refusing to thus be led into subjectivism, pluralism, or relativism).[42]

Beyond these articles and chapters, two monographs devoted exclusively to Barth's theology of culture have appeared, both once again drawing primarily from Barth's remarks on culture in *CD* IV/3 §69 (both will be discussed more extensively in chapter 2). The first, Robert Palma's brief *Karl Barth's Theology of Culture* (1983), suggests three stages in Barth's theology of culture: (1) the descriptive/dogmatic, which establishes a general theological understanding of culture, (2) the critical/analytical, which includes Barth's critical analyses of specific cultural forms, and (3) the constructive/normative, which provides a paradigmatic image of culture. Exploring the development of Barth's relationship to culture through "Church and Culture," "The Humanity of God," the Mozart essays, and *CD* IV/3, Palma demonstrates that Barth grew to take culture "less seriously but also more seriously" over the course of his career. The second book, Paul Metzger's longer *The World of Christ and the World of Culture* (2003), argues for a closer relationship between theology and culture in Barth's work. Though Barth does not allow culture to determine his theology, "each time Barth's theology underwent a transformation it was the result of his having turned to the Word in light of the events of his day and/or as a result of what he might say to the people of his day."[43] Metzger attempts

to re-imagine Barth's theology of culture through sacramental/christological concepts with an emphasis on Barth's doctrine of creation. He then develops a conception of the divine "commandeering" of human words (which elevates them without destroying their secularity) by linking the material from §69 with §72 on the sending of the community. While I agree with Palma's and Metzger's characterization of Barth's attitude toward culture, I will argue (in chapter 2) that Barth's increasing ability to take culture "less seriously but also more seriously," enabling him to appreciate secular culture in all its freedom and autonomy, ought not to be attributed to the passages in §69, but to his conception of eschatological hope, gratitude, and play.

"Theology and Popular Culture"

The development of the sub-field known as "theology and popular culture" was influenced by two trends in religious studies and theology. First, the later twentieth century saw a shift in interest in religious studies toward material culture. Religious studies scholars, employing anthropological and historical tools, began to focus on the "everyday," how religious ideas or images are conveyed through common objects and daily activities; in theology, this translated into an interest in "everyday theology."[44] Second, the earliest forays into popular entertainment came in the form of "theology and film," which borrowed tools from film studies in fields such as literary theory, cultural studies, political theory, and psychology. Theological engagements with film include viewing films evangelistically, spiritually, sacramentally, or redemptively, each of which explore movies with the idea that they can serve as a resource for faith.[45] David Jasper, however, has questioned whether Hollywood movies are really substantial enough to warrant theological exploration: "I would hesitate a little before I give assent to the claim that the issues raised by the Terminator movies are the issues explored by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. . . . These are books which burn with a fire of religious passion and the issues explored in them cannot be disentangled from that passion. The same cannot be said of James Cameron's movies."[46] Because of this deep-seated tendency among academic theologians to favor high culture, it was not until the mid-1990s that such studies gained acceptance enough to receive more formal recognition from the AAR and SBL (still focusing primarily on film).[47]

Like theology and film, theology and popular culture is undertaken with a variety of methods and assumptions, many of which overlap with theology and film. Elaine Graham identifies six categories at "the intersection of theology, religion, and popular culture": (1) *Screening the Sacred* includes traditional "Bible films" and other explicit depictions of religious figures or communities in

culture; (2) *Seeing Salvation* interprets cultural forms with the assumption that they may be "vehicles of encounter with the sacred"; (3) *You'll Never Walk Alone* sees popular culture as an expression of "spiritualities" that adhere to no organized religion; (4) *Meaning of Life* is interested in popular cultural forms that express existential questions about what it means to be human; (5) *Like a Virgin* explores cultural forms that employ sacred images or ideas in "post-religious contexts"; (6) *The Empire Strikes Back* examines how religious traditions employ popular media for purposes of outreach.[48] Gordon Lynch describes four approaches to popular culture in religious studies and theology. Some religious studies scholars are interested in studying the interaction of historical religions and religious groups with popular culture. Others are interested in whether elements in popular culture serve religious functions in society (for example, sporting events as ritual). Theologians, on the other hand, tend either to explore popular culture for the purpose of formulating a missiological response or to understand it "as a medium for theological reflection."[49] In developing his own theological approach, Lynch identifies four other ways that theologians in particular have approached popular culture:[50] (1) The Applicationist Approach[51] applies fixed theological/biblical truths as criteria for cultural forms; (2) The Correlational Approach[52] applies Tillich's method of correlation, which assumes that culture poses questions to which theology can provide answers, to the study of popular culture; (3) The Revised Correlation Approach[53] assumes, instead, that culture can generate insights and answers for theology; (4) The Praxis Approach[54] is associated primarily with liberation theologies, which use the promotion of human liberation as their central criterion. Lynch adopts a revised correlation model, which is "informed by the praxis model, reminding us that appropriate theological reflection should ultimately inspire ways of living and acting that are liberating and transformative."[55] Rather than correlating culture's questions to theology's answers, this approach expects questions and answers from both sides, producing, in Lynch's view, a more constructive engagement with culture. He then argues for a "theological aesthetics of popular culture," which includes asking whether cultural forms "make possible a sense of encounter with 'God,' the transcendent, or the numinous?"[56]

Kelton Cobb, on the other hand, adapts Tillich's earlier "depth" model, which "peers expectantly into the depths of cultural activity for novel stirrings of the unconditioned."[57] Borrowing from Tillich and cultural theory, he suggests three ways of defining "religion" for the purpose of engaging popular culture theologically. Religion1 is the Tillichian "surging of unconditioned sources beneath the surface" of cultural phenomena. Religion2 is the historical

religious tradition. Religion3 "refers to the way that the ideas and values of a particular religion2 come to be absorbed—but not lost—by the culture in which that religion is or has been dominant." Theology of culture is interested in religion1 and religion3, the latter enabling theology to alert "culture to the theological assumptions underlying some of its most treasured ideals."[58]

I contend, however, that viewing popular culture in terms of revelation or divine encounter or hidden theological meanings—whether through Tillich's later correlation model, his earlier depth model, or Barth's "true words" approach—misunderstands the purpose of cultural work and leaves theology on shaky ground. The framework I propose recognizes the theological significance of culture's very *secular* task and develops theological criteria *relevant* to that task.

Others in the field have drawn from a variety of resources to frame their analyses; for the most part, however, Barth is not one of them, for here as in the larger field of theology of culture, he is viewed as one who feels "that it is neither possible nor desirable for human culture to be able to contribute to a theological discussion."[59]

Defining "Popular Culture"

Before delving into the project ahead, it is necessary to explain my emphasis on popular *entertainment*, given the variety of competing definitions of "popular culture" today. Indeed, because there is no widely accepted definition, nearly every theological study of popular culture begins with an obligatory "what is popular culture?" section. Definitions range from the very broad to the relatively narrow and many scholars have questioned whether the term is of any value at all.

"Popular culture" has historically been defined in opposition to either "high culture" or "folk culture," against which it is understood as "lowbrow," "mass," or "commercial" culture. The earliest practitioners of popular cultural theory (associated with the Frankfurt School) viewed popular culture as mass culture, a product of the elite who utilize popular media to enforce ideologies that safeguard the status quo—popular culture is an opiate for the masses, churning out an endless supply of gruntled workers, who are presumed to passively consume the culture given them. On this view, popular culture (culture from above) destroys "folk culture" (culture from below), which is the genuine response of the people to their social conditions. At the same time that "popular" or "mass" culture was defined in opposition to "folk culture," it was also defined in opposition to "high" or "avant-garde" art, which Frankfurters like Horkheimer and Adorno understood in terms of the intellectual exertion such

art demands from viewers, provoking reflection and response. Popular arts require nothing of their viewers and, again, bring forth no protest against unjust social conditions. Here popular culture destroys high culture by exploiting art and culture "not in order to meet human needs and desires, but for the sake of profit."[60]

While the Frankfurt theorists and their progeny conceptualized high and mass culture in terms of activity and passivity, this approach has been criticized by, for example, feminist scholars like Patrice Petro, who object to its implicit assumptions about masculinity and femininity.

> The difference between art and mass culture—understood by means of a "natural" opposition between activity and passivity—has long been assumed in our theories of culture. And it is remarkable how theoretical discussions of art and mass culture are almost always accompanied by gendered metaphors that link "masculine" values of production, activity, and attention with art, and "feminine" values of consumption, passivity, and distraction with mass culture.[61]

Recognizing the difficulties presented by early conceptions of popular culture, scholars have increasingly sought definitions that can encompass both so-called "mass" and "folk" culture, moving beyond what they see as a simplistic construction of active/passive. Stuart Hall has suggested understanding popular culture through the concepts of "encoding and decoding." Producers of popular culture "encode" certain messages and ideologies into cultural forms, which consumers then *actively* "decode," often in ways that the producers did not intend. Viewers are not "blank screens," but thinking people who "are perfectly capable of recognizing the way the realities of working class life are reorganized, reconstructed and reshaped by the way they are represented" in the productions of dominant culture. Producers react by taking the messages that the consumers have decoded and altering them in order to encode their own message in a different form. Hall describes this as a "continuous and necessarily uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture, constantly to disorganize and reorganize popular culture."[62] Echoing (in non-theological terms) the eschatological orientation we will be adopting here (in which culture is understood as a "game," never fully achieved this side of the *eschaton*), Hall argues that popular culture becomes "a battlefield where no once-for-all victories are obtained but where there are always strategic positions to be won and lost."[63]

Others have located popular culture in terms of use, rather than materials. John Fiske advances a theory similar to Hall's, arguing that while "the resources—television, records, clothes, video games, language—carry the interests of the economically and ideologically dominant," these resources "are taken up and activated differently by people situated differently within the social system," thus distinguishing between mass culture (what the dominant produce for the masses) and popular culture (what the people make of those products): "Popular culture is made by subordinated peoples in their own interests out of resources that also, contradictorily, serve the economic interests of the dominant. Popular culture is made from within and below, not imposed from without or above as mass cultural theorists would have it. There is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control, that escapes or opposes hegemonic forces." What ordinary people want matters, and if cultural products "do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular."[64]

This variety of conceptual frameworks for understanding and defining popular culture is problematic. According to Harold Hinds, the lack of a widely accepted definition results in a lack of methodological focus. Though Ray Browne has argued for an inclusive definition of popular culture in terms of everyday life ("all aspects of the world we inhabit: the way of life we inherit, practice and pass on to our descendants; what we do while we are awake, the dreams we dream while asleep"[65]), Hinds does not see a definition this broad solving the problem. Instead, he suggests defining popular culture in terms of *popularity*: "those aspects of culture, whether ideological, social, or material, which are widely spread and believed in and/or consumed by significant numbers of people, that is, those aspects which are popular."[66] This definition can, in Hinds' view, overcome the kind of value judgments that have plagued the field.

> Popular culture commentators have subdivided culture into folk, elite, and mass; or into high, folk, mid, and mass; or high and popular; and so on. Popularity demands that it alone be considered as a criterion, not categories imposed by some extraneous value or social system. . . . By not prelabeling ideas or products, we avoid forcing the popular into conceptual straight-jackets which may have little to do with popularity. . . . Whether elite, folk, or mass in origin, its adoption by a certain level of the population will determine its association with popular culture.[67]

Though Hinds sees this definition as "common-sense," popularity is not the defining concept across the fields that study popular culture. Indeed, there is no such defining concept, which is precisely the problem, in Hinds' view. The history of the term, with its imprecision and often negative connotations, has led many to question its value altogether. For literary studies scholar, Barry Sarchett, "popular culture" implies a (typically negative) value judgment. He argues, however, that "the category 'popular' *makes no difference* in postaxiological literary studies, except as one more category among others to be interrogated" and he therefore sees a need for "the 'end' of a formally exclusionary 'Literary Studies.'"[68] Others question the value of the term because of inclusive definitions like Browne's. If popular culture comes to include anything from Hollywood movies to toasters, dreams, and postage stamps, then the term loses any descriptive value it may have had for previous generations of scholars. Even when restricted to entertainment, sports, and other leisure activities, its value is suspect. The vast array of media options flooding the market has led some to question the very idea of a "mass culture" (consider television alone, with the achievement of the five-hundred-plus channel cable universe and the quantity of additional content available on the web). Jim Collins rejects the very concept of a popular culture (along with mass, high, dominant, and so on) due to the variety of "conflicting modes of representation and divergent ideological positions,"[69] such that, in S. Frith's words, "any suggestion that we are all part of the same 'popular culture' is ludicrous."[70]

Scholars in theology and religious studies have faced similar struggles in their efforts to define popular culture, producing conceptions of the popular in both the narrower terms of entertainment/leisure and the broader language of the "everyday." William Romanowski, for example, explores popular culture in terms of the "popular arts" (film, music, television, and so on), while Lynch prefers the more inclusive language of the "everyday," and defines popular culture as "the shared environment, practices, and resources of everyday life." Exploring popular "texts"—such as television, movies, music videos, and so on—is important, but Lynch argues that "reading, watching, and listening to these popular texts is only one part of everyday life, in which other parts might consist of cooking and eating, caring for children or other dependents, spending time at work or with friends, having sex, tidying, mending or improving our homes, washing, dressing or daydreaming."[71] Limiting "popular culture" to popular texts overlooks the theological implications of these important everyday activities.

Lynch is also a representative of those who are questioning whether the term is of any real value, given its knotty history and socio-economic connotations.

> Using the term "popular culture" can have the implicit effect of reinforcing the ideologically-loaded binary of high/low culture and of perpetuating a sense of marginalization for scholars working the area of cultures of everyday life. Perhaps the use of the term "popular culture" may have been helpful at one stage in the academic study of religion in which it was important to focus attention more clearly on the significance of everyday culture resources and practices in late modern society. And it is probably true to say that the term "popular culture" still serves as an important role in conferences, academic associations and courses in conveying that interest in a particular range of cultural practices and resources are taken seriously there. But my sense is that the barriers and unhelpful assumptions generated by this term often out-weigh its value now.[72]

While Collins's argument against the idea of a mass or popular culture is based on the quantity and diversity of its products, David Morgan questions the term from the opposite perspective, holding these products to be "widely shared." Morgan asks, "given how pervasive these common forms of leisure, commerce, and entertainment are now, how widely shared they are, one must ask if 'popular culture' really means anything as critical nomenclature anymore? What's not *popular*?"[73]

Though I agree that the term is problematic because of its imprecise denotation and its elitist connotations, it is beyond the scope of this project to suggest and defend a new vocabulary for the field. I am interested in a very limited region of popular culture, based on what we might call the "popular" usage of the term: when one speaks of popular culture in a non-academic setting, associations are immediately drawn to movies, television, pop-music, advertising, video games, and so on. Even within the academic study of popular culture, scholars tend to focus on these "popular texts," including Lynch, in spite of emphasizing a broader and more inclusive definition of the term. While Lynch may be right that this approach overlooks other important aspects of everyday life, my sense is that defining the term too broadly simply renders it useless. I would suggest viewing popular culture and the "everyday" as two separate (though perhaps related) objects of study, since (a) there are already fields of scholarship devoted to several of Lynch's examples (for example,

having sex, caring for dependents, and so on) and (b) everyone from the world-renouncing hermit to the most elitist cultural theorist would admit to "cooking and eating . . . washing, dressing or daydreaming," though they might *not* admit to watching *American Idol* or *American Horror Story*. Though acknowledging the difficulties associated with the term, I will be using "popular culture" interchangeably with "popular entertainment," referring specifically to television, movies, popular music, celebrity, advertising, and so on.

To further limit the scope, the final chapters will focus exclusively on television. Theological explorations of popular culture have too often focused on film (even on obscure "films" as opposed to popular "movies") and thus on a genre that walks the line between popular culture and high art. In fact, Petro sees the success of film studies as a source of television's continuing neglect, which results from the "fear that the study of the vulgar, popularized medium of television would undercut the artistic and educational goals of film study within the university."[74] Ignoring television programming in favor of media that are perceived to be more legitimately artistic (and less commercial), like independent films and music, represents a pattern similar to the neglect of the popular in favor of "high culture" and fails to account for the technological and creative trends (such as the contraction of the movie industry and the proliferation of cable channels[75]) that have sparked discussions of "TV as art" and of television as a medium far more interactive than film (both of which will be examined in chapter 7). With the development of DVR technology, the availability of TV programming on mobile devices and the internet, and the expansion of On Demand and other customized services, there are more people watching more TV than ever before. Moreover, new technologies have not only given consumers more viewing options but have changed the way we interact with what we choose to watch. As I noted at the outset, with Twitter, YouTube, blogs, discussion forums, and so on, television is becoming more and more an interactive, relational medium, rendering arguments for television viewing as a passive activity increasingly problematic. But even aside from this, television is, for many, the primary form of what Barth calls "distraction or diversion" in American culture. From the theological perspective developed here, which will understand popular entertainment in terms of play, fellowship, and relaxation, it therefore requires even closer attention as to whether or not it genuinely contributes to human flourishing.

Notes

1. *Deadwood*, "The Trial of Jack McCall," Episode 1.5, first broadcast on 18 April 2004 by HBO. Written by David Milch and John Belluso, directed by Ed Bianchi.

2. "David Milch of Deadwood (Part 2 of 6)," YouTube video, 9:57, from a lecture given in a U.S.C. course on Religion, Media, and Hollywood on 24 January 2008, posted by "KnightChair" 18 August 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzZ-MxIV8wU.

3. "Matt Weiner Interview," by Karen Herman, *Archive of American Television*, 12 November 2010, http://emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/matthew-weiner.

4. "Digital Estate Planning" / "The First Chang Dynasty" / "Introduction to Finality" http://www.avclub.com/articles/digital-estate-planning-the-first-chang-dynasty-in,73676/#comment-676470415. "You're already accepted" doubles as a reference to the motto of the show's fictional college.

5. See: Mark Singer, "The Misfit: How David Milch got from 'NYPD Blue' to 'Deadwood' by way of an Epistle of St. Paul," *The New Yorker*, 14 February 2005; "David Milch of Deadwood (Part 2 of 6)," YouTube video, 9:57, from a lecture given in a U.S.C. course on Religion, Media, and Hollywood on 24 January 2008, posted by "KnightChair" 18 August 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzZ-MxIV8wU.

6. David Milch, "Discussion," Kelly Writers House, University of Pennsylvania, 26–27 April 2010. http://writing.upenn.edu/wh/people/fellows/milch.html.

7. William Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*, first edition (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 63.

8. Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 219.

9. See *CD* III/2, §45 ("The Basic Form of Humanity").

10. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open* (first edition), 61.

11. Which, in Barth's view, is a unity "in fellowship with God which includes as such the corresponding form . . . of a life of people in fellowship with one another." The Kingdom of God, Barth says, "is the institution of his perfect lordship in human relations and interconnections. It is the setting up of his salutary order in human life and fellowship. The kingdom of God is God himself in the act of normalizing human existence. It is thus God himself in the victorious act of overcoming the disorder which still rules humanity." [footnote] CL, 211f.

12. William Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007), 83–86.

13. James K.A. Smith, *The Devil Reads Derrida and Other Essays on the University, the Church, Politics, and the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), xiii.

14. Ethics, 218.

15. *CD* IV/1, 57.

16. Though Milch himself is Jewish, he sees Christian theological language as a valuable resource for exploring the meaning of entertainment and storytelling.

17. Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 111.

18. American Family Association, "Fox network inserts bestiality into family programming," 7 January 2010. http://www.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=2147490862.

19. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 251.

20. Seventy years ago the situation was much different. "A generation ago serious theological thinkers such as Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Buber, and many others, played significant roles in the contemporary disputes and discussions about the meaning and impact on society of politics, the arts, literature, science, and technology. Since that time dramatic changes have occurred in the social order. A whole new complex and interconnected social-cultural situation confronts theology—yet theologians seem to be rendered mute in face of it. The

silence of the theologians has consequences. Thinkers who do try to understand and to interpret what is happening in our world today do not look to theology to assist them in the task of making sense of our cultural and social lives." David Klemm and William Klink. "Constructing and Testing Theological Models," *Zygon* vol. 39, no. 3 (2003): 496.

21. ThSch, 262. (From "Concluding Unscientific Postscript.")

22. *Ethics*, 508.

23. *CD* III/4, 550–64; *Ethics*, 222f.

24. *Ethics*, 510.

25. Gabriel Vahanian, "Karl Barth as Theologian of Culture," *Union Seminary Quarterly* 28.1 (Fall 1972), 45.

26. Michael Novak, "Comment," *Union Seminary Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1972), 51.

27. Markus Barth, "Response," *Union Seminary Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1972), 53.

28. Ralph C. Wood, *The Comedy of Redemption: Christian Faith and Comic Vision in Four American Novelists* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 34f. The relevant chapter is titled, "Karl Barth as a theologian of the divine comedy."

29. Ibid., 33.

30. Ibid., 79.

31. It should be noted that Wood has since adjusted his view on Barth's theology, having "come to discern its problematic character when given communal expression" in the "present evil age." Ralph C. Wood, "A Response to Jessica N. DeCou," *Religion and Culture Web Forum*, University of Chicago Divinity School, 2011, 2f. (See chapter 7)

32. Timothy Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

33. Timothy Gorringe, "Culture and Barbarism: Barth amongst the Students of Culture" in *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection and Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney, 40–52 (New York: Routledge, 1996). Here he compares Barth's definition of culture with those of Raymond Williams, Walter Benjamin, and so on.

34. Timothy Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 19.

35. Ibid., 21. Cf. Barth, "Church and Culture," 348.

36. Gorringe, Furthering Humanity, 102.

37. Ibid., 102. Blues music, for example, arises from poverty and bears theological significance in its resistance to social injustice and its "celebration of ordinary life" (ibid., 66).

38. *Ethics,* 502. Italics original.

39. Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 168f. See also 179ff.

40. Ibid., 184.

41. For more on this description of Barth's Christology, see Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," in *Disruptive Grace*, 131–47. For his application of it to §69, see *How to Read Karl Barth*, 237ff.

42. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 278f.

43. Paul Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 33.

44. For example, arguing for a stronger engagement with "everyday" religious practices, Kathryn Tanner argued that "there is no point in academic theology's making a proposal for change if it does not address people where they already are theologically." Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology,* Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 85. On another interpretation of this concept, Kevin Vanhoozer sought "to teach Christians to get the theological lay of the land," compiling essays by "everyday theologians" (vs. academic theologians) in order to instruct readers on the practice of "faith seeking understanding of everyday life," especially in relation to "cultural texts and cultural trends." Kevin

J. Vanhoozer, "A Reader's Guide: How to Use This Book," in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 7 and 16f. Vanhoozer offers 10 "Guidelines for Everyday Theological Interpretation of Culture." (59f.).

45. Telford, "Through a Lens Darkly," 32ff. Approaching films evangelistically, see Ian Maher, *Faith and Film: Close Encounters of an Evangelistic Kind* (Cambridge: Grove, 2002); P. Fraser, N. Fraser and V. Edwin, *ReViewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000). Exploring films spiritually, see Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); B.P. Stone, *Faith and Film Theological Themes at the Cinema* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2000). Exploring films sacramentally, see Peter Fraser, *Images of the Passion: The Sacramental Mode in Film* (Trowbridge, Wilts: Flicks, 1998). Approaching films redemptively, see Christopher Deacy, *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001). "Looking for God" in film, see J. R. May, *New Image of Religious Film* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997); John May, ed., *Image and Likeness: Religious Visions in American Film Classics*, Isaac Hecker Studies in Religion and American Culture (New York: Paulist, 1992).

46. David Jasper, "On Systematizing the Unsystematic," in *Explorations in Theology and Film*, 238.

47. Jeffrey Mahan identifies three works from the 1960s and 70s as important precursors. McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, on the development of communication media, "created a context to think about the importance of popular entertainment media." Short's *The Gospel According to Peanuts* was written for a popular audience, but demonstrated a way of thinking about popular culture theologically. Jewett's *Captain America Complex* used a comic book character to reflect theologically on American attitudes toward the Vietnam War. These three, each in their own way, helped to pave the way for the theological study of popular culture in the context of an academic culture that "was still largely wedded to high or elitist culture." Jeffrey Mahan, "Reflections on the Past and Future of the Study of Religion and Popular Culture," in *Between Sacred and Profane: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, ed. Gordon Lynch (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 48f.

48. Elaine Graham, "'What We Make of the World': the Turn to 'Culture' in Theology and the Study of Religion," in *Between Sacred and Profane,* 69–71.

49. The discussion of these approaches can be found in Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 20–42.

50. The discussion of these four approaches can be found in Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 101–5.

51. For example, Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002); Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

52. For example, Deacy, *Screen Christologies*; Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with American Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

53. For example, David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Donald Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

54. For example, Anthony Pinn, *Noise and Spirit: The Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music* (New York: NYU Press, 2003); R. Beckford, *God and the Gangs* (London: DLT, 2004); M. Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon, 1996).

55. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 106.

56. Ibid., 190f.

57. Kelton Cobb, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63.1 (1995), 64. For a more extensive description of Tillich's earlier and later theology of culture, see fn. 45 in chapter 2, below.

58. Kelton Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 131.

59. Christopher Deacy, "Theology and Film," in *Theology and Film*, 4. Deacy makes a point similar to Metzger's (cited above), arguing that Barth's theological adjustments were influenced by cultural trends/events (ibid., 3). Detweiler and Taylor mention Barth very briefly in the introduction to *A Matrix of Meanings*, "borrowing at least a page" from Barth by working "with the Bible in one hand and pop culture in the other." [Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 10 (referring to a comment often attributed to Barth that one should do theology with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. See J. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), ix; Ingolf Dalferth, "Karl Barth's eschatological realism" in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 38.] But most make no mention of Barth at all, including Lynch and Cobb.

60. From J. M. Bernstein's Introduction to Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), 5. See also: Theodor Adorno, "How to Look at Television," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television* 8.3 (1954); 213–35; Theodor Adorno, "On Popular Music," in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9.1 (1941); Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002); Max Horkheimer, "Art and Mass Culture," in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9.2 (1941); Also, see the collection *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, ed. B. Rosenberg and D.W. White (New York: Macmillan, 1957), which includes essays from Leo Lowenthal ("Historical Perspectives on Popular Culture") and Dwight Macdonald ("A Theory of Mass Culture). Gorringe provides a useful overview in *Furthering Humanity*, 52–66. Cobb provides a concise overview of the Frankfurt School's positions (Cobb, *Theology and Popular Culture*, 45–51), as well as Paul Tillich's relationship to such views (ibid, 97–100).

61. Patrice Petro, *Aftershocks of the New: Feminism and Film History*, New Directions in International Studies (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 15.

62. Stuart Hall, "Notes on deconstructing the 'popular'" in *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy, (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 75. Stuart Hall has also, along with Paddy Whannel, differentiated between popular and mass culture in terms of quality: "the best cinema—like the most advanced jazz—seems to push toward high art: average films or pop music are processed mass art." Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (London: Hutchinson Educational, 1965), 78. "Popular arts" are those that operate within, while moving beyond, "mass culture." For a summary of this position, see John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 39–43. In a discussion of Hall and Whannel, Gorringe cites the "mass culture" example of Liberace, who condensed classical works based on "how many notes my audience will stand for." Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 55.

63. Hall, "Notes on deconstructing the 'popular,'" 76.

64. John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

65. Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture: Notes toward a Definition," in *Popular Culture Theory and Methodology: A Basic Introduction*, ed. Harold E. Hinds, Marilyn F. Motz, and Angela M. S. Nelson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 75.

66. Harold E. Hinds, Jr., "Popularity: The *Sin Qua Non* of Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture Theory and Methodology*, 363.

67. Hinds, "Popularity," 366.

68. Barry W. Sarchett, "The Joke(r) Is on Us: The End of Popular Culture Studies," in *Popular Culture Theory and Methodology*, 144. Italics original.

69. Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 109.

70. Simon Frith, Review of: *Uncommon Cultures* by Jim Collins, *Screen* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 233.

71. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 15.

72. Gordon Lynch, "Some Concluding Reflections," in *Between Sacred and Profane*, 162.

73. David Morgan, "Studying Religion and Popular Culture: Prospects, Presuppositions, Procedures," in *Between Sacred and Profane,* 21.

74. Petro, *Aftershocks of the New*, 14.

75. See Alan Sepinwall, *The Revolution Was Televised: The Cops, Crooks, Slingers, and Slayers Who Changed TV Drama Forever* (Lexington: 2012), 3–5.