

# Prayer, the Spirit, and Redemption

## *A Constructive Reading of Barth's Pneumatology*

In 1986, a novella was published under the title of *Karl Barth and the Buckwheat Flower* by Japanese writer Sakata Hiroo. This beautifully written story is about a countryside pastor who equally admires Barth's theology and Japan's traditional short poem, *tanka*. A *tanka* is usually composed of five uncomplicated units, so it is suitable for expressing one's private emotion, feeling, or thought in simple and natural language. The narrator of the story wonders how the pastor does not feel the contradiction between Barth's emphasis upon the Word of God and this personal and indigenized style of poetry. The pastor is humble, calm, and self-reserved, yet his simple preaching strangely exerts lasting, but not dramatic, influence upon the hearers of the Word (although there are not many members in his church). Because of his "Barthian" view on the gap between God and humanity, however, the pastor used to contend that prayer is not particularly important; rather, what is significant is to think and act in accordance to the Word, and he himself shows a deep interest in social issues. This novel, in my eyes, vividly captures enduring key motifs in Barth's theology: the priority of the Word, the possibility of genuinely free culture, the demanding nature of his message and rhetoric, the link between faith and ethics and other issues.

One thing to which Hiroo failed to do justice, however, is the fact that Barth took prayer very seriously throughout his career. This novel may mirror the lack of scholarly interest in and the widely circulated prejudice against Barth's view of prayer at the time.<sup>1</sup> However, Barth left a considerable amount

1. Hesselink's survey shows that monographs on Barth published before 1980 rarely mention the theme of prayer. See I. John Hesselink, "Karl Barth on Prayer," in Karl Barth, *Prayer: 50th Anniversary Edition*, trans. Sara F. Terrien (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 74–75. Hereafter *Prayer* will refer to Barth's *Prayer*.

of material on prayer and took it as a key theme in his theology.<sup>2</sup> The importance of prayer, for example, is articulated by Barth in one simple sentence: “To be a Christian and to pray are one and the same thing.”<sup>3</sup> In this light, this chapter attempts to show that prayer does indeed play an essential role not only in making sense of Barth’s overall argument on the God–human relationship, but also in associating his theology with the Christian life. More importantly, I will demonstrate that Barth discussed these promising themes mostly within the wider context of his treatment of the Spirit’s redemptive work. Most significantly, I will present Barth’s innovative interpretation of the Spirit’s sigh and prayer in Romans 8 as an enduring motif in my exploration of the interconnectedness of prayer, the Christian life, and the Spirit’s redemption.

To explore this possibility, I will first critically review two influential monographs on Barth’s pneumatology to search for an appropriate interpretive framework with which to read him. The next section, then, will turn to Barth’s unfinished doctrine of redemption in which he assessed the Spirit’s role in relation to the Trinity’s perfecting of creation and reconciliation. Finally, I will suggest that his beautiful and refreshing insights into the Spirit as the praying agency serve as an enduring key theme in his theology. This chapter’s initial study of Barth’s doctrine of redemption will offer a rich and comprehensive theological background against which the three distinctive modes of the Spirit’s act *ad extra* are discussed in the next three chapters.

## 1. BEYOND ROSATO AND THOMPSON: DISPUTED QUESTIONS IN BARTH’S PNEUMATOLOGY

Philip J. Rosato’s *The Spirit as Lord* (1981) and John Thompson’s *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (1989) are the two chief studies on Barth’s pneumatology published in English. They not only demonstrate significant analyses and insightful descriptions of Barth’s Spirit theology, but also provide very divergent interpretations. In this section, I will examine the ways in which Rosato and Thompson differently assess Barth and then identify the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

2. See, for example, *Prayer*, CD III/3, 264–88; CD III/4, 87–115; *ET*, 159–70. Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV, Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 85–109. Hereafter *CL*. Along with these academic works, he also left a number of sermons on prayer.

3. *Prayer*, 15.

1.1. BARTH'S PNEUMATIC TURN: ROSATO'S PNEUMATOLOGICAL  
IMPROVISATION

Since Philip Rosato's *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* appeared in 1981, it has been used as a primary guidebook for investigating Barth's Spirit theology.

This is the first book (at least in English-speaking countries) entirely devoted to Barth's pneumatology, with a thorough examination of the Barthian corpus. It has been influential on contemporary Barth scholarship not only because of Rosato's succinct summary, but also because of his bold claim that pneumatology is never superfluous but central in Barth.<sup>4</sup> Despite ongoing debate as to whether Rosato rightly construes Barth's intention, this book is still widely circulated and quoted by many scholars.

Rosato begins his study by introducing Barth's essay "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," published in 1968. In this essay, surprisingly, Barth states that "what I have already intimated here and there . . . would be the possibility of a theology of the third article, in other words, a theology predominantly and decisively of the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup> Confronting this tantalizing and promising statement, Rosato lifts his main question from this short, ambiguous, and unscientific essay—"Is Karl Barth a pneumatic theologian?" Rosato's answer is that pneumatology is a recurring theme in Barth's major works through the years, and "it becomes more explicit . . . in his publications dating from the year 1947."<sup>6</sup> In his *Dogmatics in Outline*, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, and *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century*, all appearing in 1947, Barth's references to the Spirit increased, and his interest in pneumatology intensified.<sup>7</sup> As he worked on these books, Rosato argues, Barth sharpened his conviction that the problems of nineteenth-century liberalism, Christian existentialism, and Catholic theology could be all traced back to improper conceptions of the Spirit. Instead of focusing on the concrete work

4. Philip J. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 3.

5. Karl Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," trans. George Hunsinger, in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 278. Hereafter *TS* will refer to *Theology of Schleiermacher*.

6. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 3.

7. At this point, in my view, Rosato overstated the importance of 1947. For instance, Barth's *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century* is based on his lecture manuscripts written in 1920s rather than his new work.

of the Spirit, they stressed the Spirit's abstract and universal presence in human existence and the church.

According to Rosato, Barth wished to give priority to the mediating role of the Spirit and sought to construct a biblical-pneumatic concept of mediation. In Rosato's view, Barth sought to fulfill these two tasks in and through a critical dialogue with Schleiermacher. Although Schleiermacher began his theology with anthropology, he attempted to produce a genuine theology of the Spirit. Nonetheless, for Rosato, Schleiermacher's theology ended with the human person, and thus he put human beings' faith at the heart of theology. Rosato argues that Barth extended his criticism of Schleiermacher to Christian existentialism and Roman Catholicism as well. Rosato writes:

Whereas Schleiermacher places man's consciousness as the center, Existentialism does so with the individual's apprehension of the Word of God, and Catholicism with the creature's participation in God's own being. Thus, Barth's expressly pneumatological reinterpretation of these theologies leads him to conclude that the validity of their latent intention is irreparably compromised by their particular anthropological blurring of God's Spirit and man's spirit: such an identity causes their anthropology to absorb Christology into itself.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to Schleiermacher's near equation of human faith with the content of theology, for Rosato, Barth's Spirit theology can be described as an ellipse with two foci—Christ and the Christian.<sup>9</sup> In order to prevent anthropology from absorbing Christology, Barth distanced the pole of Christ from the pole of the Christian, and endowed the Spirit with the function of holding the two in tension. Because of these two poles, Barth could save both the importance of Christology and that of Christians' faith at the same time.<sup>10</sup> This elliptical model of pneumatology functions as a main hermeneutical principle in Rosato's exposition of Barth's pneumatology from the first edition of *Romans* to the last volume of *CD*.

In contrast to his positive interpretation of Barth's pneumatology, surprisingly, the last two chapters suddenly expose Rosato's dissatisfaction with

8. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 15.

9. Here one may find Rosato's uncritical reading of Barth. In fact, Barth claimed that Schleiermacher's theology also has two poles. The problem is not about whether there are two poles, but about how the distance between them is conceived. See *PT*, 444, 457.

10. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 16.

Barth. Like other critics, or even more severely, Rosato claims that Barth's Spirit theology is underdeveloped and unbalanced in the sense that it lacks eschatological insights,<sup>11</sup> fails to see the free interaction between the divine Spirit and the human spirit,<sup>12</sup> and improperly downplays the element of natural theology.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Rosato's preference for Spirit Christology leads him to "improvise"<sup>14</sup> Barth's theology by revitalizing pneumatic Christology instead of Logos Christology,<sup>15</sup> although he mentions that Barth's basic Christological stance leaves little room for developing a Spirit Christology.

In short, Rosato's elliptical model offers a valid hermeneutical principle for understanding Barth's Spirit theology. In addition, he attempts to "improvise" Barth's pneumatology by opening possibilities of a refreshing interpretation and of conversing with other traditions, including Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, to which Rosato was more sympathetic. However, this is one of the reasons why Barth's own pupil, John Thompson, felt the necessity of writing his own study of Barth's pneumatology, one that would remain more faithful to Barth's "original" intention.

## 1.2. THE SPIRIT AS CHRIST'S ALTER EGO: THOMPSON'S RETURN TO CHRISTOCENTRISM

Distancing from Rosato's interpretation, John Thompson's *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* articulates what he saw as the secondary, but not superfluous, significance of pneumatology in Barth. Thompson declared: "Pneumatology is a very important aspect of theology but not the whole of it. It is integrated into and integral to the whole content of *Church Dogmatics* but is never its primary thrust."<sup>16</sup>

Thompson's belief that Rosato failed to properly understand Barth is a main motive for undertaking his own investigation,<sup>17</sup> but he also aims to rebut other critics who even regard Barth's theology as christomonism.<sup>18</sup> What

11. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 134–41.

12. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 141–48.

13. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 148–55.

14. Rosato intentionally utilized the term "improvisation," because this word resembles the word "improvement" on the one hand, and it connotes an impromptu, extemporaneous "variation" of the main melody, on the other. See Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 132.

15. See Philip J. Rosato, "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise," *Theological Studies* 38, no. 3 (1977): 423–49; "Spirit-Christology as Access to Trinitarian Theology," in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

16. John Thompson, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1991), 8.

17. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, vii.

Thomson reports is that in Barth, Spirit theology is always secondary after Christology (against Rosato), but that the Spirit's role is never superfluous but essential both in the economy of the Trinity and in the intra-divine relationship (against common criticisms of Barth).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, for Thompson, Barth demonstrated against liberalism, existentialism, and Catholicism that the Spirit is Lord, qualitatively different from the human spirit. It follows that Barth's theology is fundamentally Trinitarian, christological, and pneumatic at the same time, but the center is undoubtedly Christ. Thompson argues:

[W]hile it is true that Barth's theology represents an unparalleled christological concentration, it is for that very reason also primarily and essentially Trinitarian. This can be seen in the way the Trinity reemerges at particular points in the discussion and especially as it conditions the whole of the *Church Dogmatics*. It is also for the same reason pneumatological, since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Yet, as is clearly seen in Barth's treatment of all doctrines (including the Trinity), it is from the center in Christ—and the cross and resurrection in particular—that he begins and continues. The convergence and integration of Trinity, christology and pneumatology is clearly seen in another aspect of Barth's view of our knowledge of God.<sup>20</sup>

As the above quotation shows, Thompson sees it as a strength of Barth's theology that his doctrines of the Trinity, Christ, and the Spirit are not presented separately, but beautifully interwoven with each other, focusing on Christ's cross and resurrection. Correspondingly, Thompson's exposition of Barth's Spirit theology always relates to other essential doctrines, and the book devotes chapters to the Spirit and revelation, incarnation, Scripture, reconciliation, resurrection, the church, baptism, creation, ethics, and eschatology. Instead of the chronological approach in Rosato, Thompson approaches Barth thematically and tries to recapitulate Barth's own voice.

18. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 6, 11. Barth's theology has often been labeled as christomonism. For example, Paul Althaus in *Die Christliche Wahrheit* made the critique that Barth's approach, especially his views of the non-Christian world, was that of christomonism. Other contemporaries, including Brunner, Tillich, Niebuhr, and Bonhoeffer, also cast skeptical eyes on Barth's strong christocentric theology. About Barth's christomonism, see Paul Knitter, "Christomonism in Karl Barth's Evaluation of the Non-Christian Religions," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religions-Philosophie* 13 (1971): 99–121.

19. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 11.

20. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 3.

Mostly expository, however, this book rarely demonstrates innovative hermeneutical principles or refreshing insights. A well-rounded argument, it offers less sophisticated and thorough arguments, compared to his previous monograph on Barth's Christology, in which he explicates central themes of Barth's theology in the light of Christ's reconciliation. The latter book firmly contends that Christology is the center of Barth's thought, and that this is a nonnegotiable starting point: "The present work [on Christology] . . . is an attempt to let Barth be heard on a central (indeed *the* central) theme of his theology—the name and reality of the loving Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Therefore, theology must deal at every point with Jesus Christ in perspective, i.e. in relation to God, the universe, and man."<sup>21</sup> Thompson's book on Barth's Spirit theology is a sequel to his book on Christology, in the sense that his christocentric interpretation is repeated in a new clothing of pneumatology. In Thompson's reading of Barth, the Spirit is important, but Christ is dominant.

Although Thompson is well aware of the Spirit's *noetic* function in Barth, he also underlines that the overemphasis upon the *noetic* function risks interpreting Barth's pneumatology in an exclusively subjective way. Thompson seeks to protect the objective dimension of the Spirit's redemptive act by arguing that in Barth the Spirit not only unites the Father and the Son "ontically" in eternity, but also binds all humanity to Jesus Christ through whom God's eternal salvific bond is established. Moreover, Thompson intentionally places Christ's reconciliation before Christ's resurrection to emphasize the fact that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead in history had already worked with Christ in his "objective" reconciliatory work in eternity.<sup>22</sup> As a logical result, Thompson could argue that the Spirit always engaged in and constantly accompanied Christ's objective work. Thompson boldly unites the Spirit's work with Christ's objective work as follows:

It is clear from Barth's writings as a whole that Christ and Spirit are distinguished though one as divine in the eternal, triune being of God. . . . In this instance the Spirit is almost identical with Christ. This is an emphasis largely neglected in traditional pneumatology which tended to see the Spirit merely as the subjective side of God's revelation, the one by whom Christ is known. Here the Spirit is almost Christ's *Alter Ego*, his other self. The Spirit comes in Christ's absence or rather as Christ's new presence. The presence of the Spirit

21. John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1978), vii.

22. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 72–77.

is the presence of Christ and each is that of the living presence of God with men and women.<sup>23</sup>

What Thompson shows in the above quotation is that Barth ultimately protected the objectivity of the Spirit by closely identifying the Spirit with Christ. If Thomson rightly recapitulates Barth's own intention, however, he also comes close to conceding the critic's main point: Barth had no proper pneumatology.

In short, what remains unclarified in Thompson's account of Barth's christocentrism is the sense in which Barth could successfully secure a place for pneumatology in his theology. It is also unclear in Thompson whether Barth was really able to speak of the relationship between God and believers as a relationship of genuinely free subjects in the Spirit. Considering Thompson's presupposition, it is no wonder that the book concludes as follows: "Barth gives less place to human mediation than traditional Reformation thought and at times leaves the impression that mediation of others is almost set aside."<sup>24</sup> One may say here that, despite Thompson's effort to defend Barth, his strong reaction to Rosato ironically led him to leave almost no possibility for reflecting the distinctive work of the Spirit in Barth, as Rosato eventually did in his final assessment of Barth.

### 1.3. TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF BARTH'S SPIRIT THEOLOGY

Despite Rosato's and Thompson's extensive statements on Barth and their different presuppositions, they seem to reach simple agreement that Barth's pneumatology is subordinated to Christology and that he left almost no room to discuss human freedom, thereby turning our discussion once again to the following starting point: Did Barth really fail to develop a rich pneumatology? Conclusively speaking, in my view, they improperly represented Barth's pneumatology despite their monographs' indispensable and valuable influence. Despite their obvious differences, Rosato and Thompson both misread Barth, and there are at least four features common to both their treatments that cause this.

First, both Rosato and Thompson were well aware of the fact that Barth did not write the fifth volume of *CD*, which would have been about the Spirit's redemption, but neither of them explored whether Barth left significant

23. Thompson, *Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 189.

24. Thompson, *Christ in Perspective*, 210.



pneumatological material on the basis of which secondary interpreters might construct how the doctrine of redemption would have looked.<sup>25</sup>

Second, whereas Thompson paid little attention to the development of Barth's thought, Rosato utilized his chronological method in an uncritical manner. Accordingly, they could not do justice to Barth's subtle, sophisticated, and dynamic accounts of the Spirit. In particular, Rosato's claim that Barth's pneumatological turn took place in 1947 cannot sufficiently explain his increasing christocentric vision as it emerged with his doctrine of election in the 1940s. Moreover, Rosato's suggestion cannot account for the enduring importance of Barth's pneumatology during his Münster period (1925–30). In Thompson's case, he rarely referred to Barth's earlier writings in his research, failing to conceive of how the young Barth's pneumatologies play a vital role in constituting his mature theology.

In addition to these, Rosato's book was published in 1981, and Thompson's in 1991, so they could not engage in the critical debate about the dis/continuity in English-speaking Barth scholarship that was especially provoked by the appearance of McCormack's *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* in 1995. Von Balthasar's well-known study on Barth in 1951 provides a succinct and insightful overview of the development of Barth's thought to the effect that his theology moved from "dialectic" to "analogical" after his engagement with Anselm.<sup>26</sup> McCormack critically questions this paradigm, which nearly dominated Barth scholarship for over forty years, arguing that Barth's (supposedly) decisive turn to analogy was not as radical as his ex-Jesuit friend suggested and that his dialectical motif was more complex and exerted longer influence than widely assumed.<sup>27</sup> Although not every scholar agrees with McCormack's thesis, he has certainly invited any reader of Barth to think critically about "how Barth changed his mind" through the years.<sup>28</sup> However, Thompson's claim that Barth was a thoroughly christocentric theologian

25. For example, Oh and Biggar have presented a constructive interpretation of Barth's view of redemption mainly based on Barth's posthumous work. See Peter S. Oh, *Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology: A Study in Karl Barth's Analogical Use of the Trinitarian Relation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006); Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

26. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992).

27. Some theologians criticized McCormack's thesis because of his failure to grasp von Balthasar's nuanced comparison between the young and the mature Barth. They even claimed that von Balthasar was also aware of the continuity in Barth's theology. See Stephen Wigley, "The von Balthasar Thesis: A Re-examination of von Balthasar's Study of Barth in the Light of Bruce McCormack," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 3 (2003): 345–59; Reinhard Hütter, "Barth between McCormack and von Balthasar: A Dialectic," *Pro Ecclesia* 8, no. 1 (1999): 105–9.

throughout his life risks overlooking the developmental process of Barth's pneumatological thought, whereas Rosato merely repeated and expanded von Balthasar's thesis.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, their uncritical and less nuanced interpretations resulted in their equally ambiguous and unqualified view of the relationship between Christ and Spirit and of the place of the Spirit within the doctrine of the Trinity.

Third, their lack of insight into Barth's ontology caused them to overlook crucial theological implications embedded within his pneumatology. Although Barth was a well-known critic of metaphysics, recent scholars demonstrate that he did not abolish the place of ontology, but sought to present a properly and distinctively theological ontology in the light of Trinitarianism and of the biblical concept of covenant.<sup>30</sup> In particular, they claim that his ontology serves as a crucial hermeneutical principle for evaluating the fruitful God-human relationship and as a foundation for the Christian life.<sup>31</sup> However, it seems that Thompson had no interest in Barth's ontology. Although Rosato named Barth's idea of the "being" of ecclesial life as a "metaphysics of faith,"<sup>32</sup> he could not fully conceive of its deeper meaning to the effect that it serves as the basis for constituting free, responsible, and historical human agency. Moreover, in my view, Rosato's term "metaphysics of faith" risks misrepresenting Barth's own intention, because it gives a misleading impression that the subjective faith of humanity is the basis of theological ontology. It should be noted that the early Barth claimed that "[the doctrine of the Spirit] becomes understood in the category of an ontological thinking."<sup>33</sup> Without sufficient reflection on this

28. Barth briefly summarized the development of his theology, albeit incompletely in *How I Changed My Mind*. The radicalness of McCormack's proposal lies in his claim that Barth was not a good interpreter of his own theology, and thus McCormack tried to say more explicitly what Barth implicitly proposed.

29. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 15.

30. See, for examples, Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 140; Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (London: SPCK, 1997), 44; Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John B. Webster, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 76; Bruce L. McCormack, "Grace and Being: The Role of God's Gracious Election in Karl Barth's Theological Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92; Paul T. Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 10; Timothy Stanley, *Protestant Metaphysics after Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger* (London: SCM, 2010), 93–235.

31. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, 1–2.

32. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 125.

33. *HC*, 72.

statement, one risks narrowing down the scope of the Spirit's redemptive work in Barth's theology.

Fourth, and finally, Barth repeatedly claimed that a proper Spirit theology should be an exegesis of biblical pneumatologies. One may rightly say that Barth's whole theology takes the Bible seriously, and that his other doctrines are also heavily dependent on his creative interpretation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Barth strongly emphasized the importance of biblical exegesis in his pneumatology, with special attention to the meaning of eschatological redemption presented in the New Testament.<sup>34</sup> In particular, throughout his career, he did indeed take Romans 8 as the heart of the biblical view of redemption and used this text, along with other biblical sources, as a basis for his pneumatological reflections. He once told his students that "Redemption' means more than 'reconciliation,' and it has to do with the work of the Spirit. See Romans 8!"<sup>35</sup> However, both Rosato and Thompson did not seriously engage in Barth's interpretation of the Bible in general and Romans in particular, and this remains a poignant weakness in their assessment.

In contrast to Rosato and Thompson, my research on Barth's Spirit theology includes often-neglected texts on the Spirit's redemptive work, presupposes the dis/continuity issue in recent Barth scholarship, highlights the ontological dimension of his Spirit theology, and pays special attention to his exegesis of the Bible. In order to express Barth's concern for the Spirit's redemptive work, especially, I will coin the new terms "pneumatic prayer" and "prayerful pneumatology," which derive from and denote Barth's repeated linking of the Spirit's intercession with the significance of prayer, as beautifully presented in Romans 8.

## 2. THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION AND PNEUMATIC PRAYER

This section will examine Barth's doctrine of the Spirit within the wider context of his view of redemption. To explore this comprehensive topic without marginalizing the Trinitarian dimension of his thought, I will first assess Barth's view on the nature and boundary of a proper Spirit theology. I will then turn to his doctrine of eschatological redemption, according to which the Father and humanity are united in Christ precisely through the Spirit's mediation. The final section will explore the deeper logic and implication of Barth's pneumatology by investigating how he conceived of the Spirit's intercessory prayer as the heart

34. See *CD I/1*, 467.

35. Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, ed. John D. Godsey (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), 53.

of the doctrine of redemption. These surveys will lead us to investigate the constitution of praying agency in the next section.

2.1. THE SPIRIT AS THE LORD: PNEUMATOLOGY WITHIN THE LIMIT  
OF THE WORD?

The major prompt for Barth's pneumatological reasoning was that he clearly saw the problem of nineteenth-century pneumatology: that it marginalized the deity of the Spirit and improperly overlooked the biblical accounts of the Spirit's concrete work.<sup>36</sup> Because of neo-Protestantism's "desire . . . to enforce the problem of man in his relation to God,"<sup>37</sup> argued Barth, the Spirit was conceived mostly in terms of the idealization of the human spirit, the infinite's abstract presence in the finite, the medium for God's identification with creation, and the principle for actualizing the divine will in and through the state. In addition, the Spirit's *ad extra* act risked becoming a general process of God's movement in history, and thus the divine freedom was arguably understood in terms of necessity, as remarkably shown by Hegel.<sup>38</sup> Although Barth resisted these pneumatological suggestions, he was not naïve enough to claim uncritically that we should return to the premodern milieu, or simply to ignore the modern discovery of the human spirit in terms of free and ethical subjectivity. In this sense, his pneumatology should be investigated in the light of his endeavor to rehabilitate a proper theology of *the Spirit of God* on the one hand, and to facilitate human freedom within the Spirit's concrete work on the other.

As discussed above, shortly before his death in 1968, Barth speculated that his own previous approach to Schleiermacher had rather undermined the possibility of a theology of the Spirit.<sup>39</sup> What is less well known is that he had been exploring such ideas since the Göttingen period. His lectures on Calvin (1922) and Schleiermacher (1923/1924), for example, demonstrate his attempt to rediscover a right relationship between the Word and the Spirit and its implications for the Christian life.<sup>40</sup> Barth later mentioned that both Calvin and Schleiermacher showed him that Christian theology is not concerned with one single exclusive center, but deals with the two, God and humanity, in their unity-in-difference.<sup>41</sup> These studies certainly allowed Barth to clarify his

36. See Barth's study of the development of pneumatology in *CD I/2*, 250–57.

37. *CD I/2*, 208.

38. See Barth's criticism of Hegel's view of freedom in *PT*, 206.

39. Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," 278.

40. Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 77–78, 158. Hereafter *TC*. See also *TS*, 13–48.

41. *PT*, 444.

Trinitarian thinking and sharpen his idea on pneumatology before his first dogmatics cycle in 1924/25, in which the Spirit is conceived as follows:

God himself is not one spirit among others, something spiritually finite, as he obviously would be if there were intermingling or marriage or even identification between him and our spirits. . . . God's relation to us is not accidental. It is necessarily contained and grounded in God's being. All that the Father does and the Son does, the Spirit does with them. . . . We have stressed again and again that the outward works are not divided, and here again, in the third article, this principle is important. The turning to us is not something subsequent, something episodic. God himself, the Creator and Redeemer, stands or falls with what takes place as the divine Yes to us in the outpouring and reception of the Holy Spirit in time.<sup>42</sup>

Here one may see Barth's basic pneumatological assumptions. First, the Spirit can neither be identified with the human spirit in history, nor submerged under the Father or the Son within the Trinity. Second, although the Spirit is a distinctive divine identity, the formula *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* prohibits separation. Third, the Spirit's act is inseparably linked to our capacity for experiencing God's gracious "Yes" in history. Fourth, this work of the Spirit *pro nobis* is not accidental or supplementary, but the reality ontologically rooted in the Trinity's *ad intra* and *ad extra* operations. It follows that, for Barth, the Word and the Spirit are not exclusive of, antithetical to, or competitive with one another. Insofar as their mutual involvement and presupposition are properly addressed, a theology of the Holy Spirit is not only possible, but also necessary as a theology of the Word. This tantalizing insight eventually resulted in Barth's deeply suggestive vision of the Trinitarian nature of theology, as it appeared in his Münster lecture on nineteenth-century Protestantism (1926).<sup>43</sup> In his critical appropriation of Schleiermacher, especially, Barth suggested:

Trinitarian thinking compels theology . . . to be completely in earnest about the thought of God in at least two places: first, at the point where it is a question of God's action in regard to man, and, secondly, at the point where it is a question of man's action in regard

42. *GD*, 127–28.

43. Webster highly praised this passage, because it can counter against criticisms, as mostly raised by social trinitarian thinkers, that Barth failed to do justice to the threeness of God. See John Webster, *Barth's Earlier Theology: Four Studies* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 115.

to God. . . . *It cannot seek to have merely one center, one subject, just because its subject is God.* To the extent that it sought to resolve itself into a mere teaching of God's action in regard to man, into a pure teaching of the Word, it would become metaphysics. And to the extent that it sought to resolve itself into a teaching of man's action in regard to God, into a pure teaching of the Spirit, it would become mysticism. The one, however, would be just as little a pure teaching of the Word of God, as the other would be a pure teaching of the Spirit of God. *A pure teaching of the Word will take into the account of Holy Spirit as the divine reality in which the Word is heard, just as a pure teaching of the Spirit of the Son will take into account of the Word of God as the divine reality in which the Word is given to us.* It was with this thought in mind that the Reformers propagated the teaching of the Word in its correlation with faith as the work of the Holy Spirit in man.<sup>44</sup>

Because what the Bible attests is a God who establishes, enters into, and glorifies the relationship with humanity, the center of theology cannot be pinpointed exclusively either on God or on humanity. Furthermore, because Christianity is not merely a kind of monotheism but Trinitarian, the framework of theology should be comprehensible and flexible enough to witness God's speaking to us in the Word and our hearing of it in the Spirit alike. Accordingly, the work of the Spirit should not be surveyed in isolation from the Word, and vice versa. Just as a theology of the Word inevitably involves a place for pneumatology, so a theology of the Spirit is correlated with Christology. As Busch points out, what is presented here is the proper guideline of a theology of the Word and that of the Spirit alike,<sup>45</sup> but Barth eventually opted for the former in the light of the Reformers' emphasis upon the Word.<sup>46</sup>

During his Münster lectures on Protestant theology, Barth claimed that the Reformers "powerfully confronted the Word of God with the human correlate of faith, even though this correlate had its basis entirely in the Word of God and was created and sustained by the Word of God."<sup>47</sup> Their theology of the Word could do justice to the twofold center of theology by keeping the distance between the objective revelation and the subjective appropriation of it.

44. *PT*, 444–45 (emphasis added).

45. Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 220.

46. See *TC*, 158; *PT*, 445; *CD II/2*, 252.

47. *PT*, 457.

By contrast, although Schleiermacher made a sophisticated distinction between the Spirit and human consciousness, “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.”<sup>48</sup> In contrast with the criticisms often made of Barth later, here Barth is arguing that pneumatology, far from collapsing into a mere subjectivization of revelation or faith,<sup>49</sup> actively preserves the necessary difference.<sup>50</sup>

The other crucial lesson Barth learned from the Reformers is the unity of faith and life, and dogmatics and ethics, although he acknowledged that, unlike Calvin, Luther hesitated to make the explicit link between them. In this respect, the Reformed tradition encouraged Barth to think that “by the Holy Spirit the work of God in Christ is the origin and goal of the Christian life.”<sup>51</sup> Due to his strong reaction to neo-Protestantism’s ethicization of theology, however, Barth wished to differentiate Calvin’s moralistic tendency from that of liberal theologians.<sup>52</sup> As Webster has rightly suggested, in Barth’s eyes, the eschatological character of Calvin’s theology was what prevented Calvin’s ethical concerns from overriding the priority of the Word.<sup>53</sup> In addition, I propose, Barth saw that Calvin’s pneumatology plays a key role in doing justice both to the centrality of the Word and to the importance of Christians’ moral action. For Barth, Calvin always linked the Spirit with the Word, illustrating that the Spirit not only interprets the Word for human beings, but also enlightens them, and convinces them to live according to it.<sup>54</sup> Although the present reality is still not completely structured by the Word, the Spirit convinces us that “the truth of God is so certain for us that it is totally impossible that what his holy Word promises should not be fulfilled.”<sup>55</sup> Thus the Spirit’s work of eschatological redemption and the Spirit’s relationship to the Word

48. *PT*, 457.

49. It is true that Barth severely critiques the subjectivization of faith by liberal theologians’ pneumatology. However, as Stanley Grenz shows, the biblical view of the Spirit itself can expose us to this danger by emphasizing the Spirit’s inspirational and illuminative roles for believers. Grenz argues that the risk is “real,” but it is “not inevitable.” See Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 388–89.

50. *CD II/2*, 252; *PT*, 457. This is a main reason Barth defended the Western *filioque*: because of its clear conception of the third person of the Trinity as the Spirit of the Son.

51. *TC*, 77.

52. See *TC*, 121–22, 386.

53. John Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth’s Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 33. About Barth’s reading of Calvin’s theology as eschatological, see *TC*, 154.

54. *TC*, 158.

55. *TC*, 277.

intersect; the Spirit generates zeal for the fulfillment of God's promise and brings hope into the Christian life. As I will discuss soon, this eschatologically colored and pneumatologically oriented vision of the Christian life is a central motif in Barth's doctrine of redemption.

Barth's pneumatology is too complicated and extensive to be surveyed from a single perspective. Nevertheless, Barth's writing on the Spirit proceeds from a conviction that the Spirit is properly divine, rather than from any liberal equation of the divine Spirit with the human spirit, and that leads us into constructing a pneumatology. In addition, for him, pneumatology's fundamental relation to, and unique distinction from, Christology can be properly addressed only in the wider context of Trinitarianism. In this respect, the next subsection will explore Barth's vision of the Spirit's redemption in relation to the Father's creation and the Son's reconciliation.

## 2.2. BEING AND BECOMING GOD'S CHILD: THE SPIRIT'S ESCHATOLOGICAL REDEMPTION

The deity of the Spirit is the nonnegotiable starting point of any decent pneumatology in Barth, but this does not explain what the role of this divine reality is. In light of the Trinitarian formula *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, Barth always treated the three modes of being in the Godhead in their unity and warns that one should not develop an independent doctrine of the Spirit. At the same time, he also underlined the distinctiveness of the Spirit's redemption, which cannot be assimilated to the Father's creation or the Son's reconciliation. The *Creator Spiritus* brings about a new form of God-human relationship by creating human freedom for God. Barth wrote "the fact that there are Christians, men who have this freedom, is no lesser miracle than the birth of Jesus Christ of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, or than the creation of the world out of nothing."<sup>56</sup>

Against Barth's vision of the Spirit's redemption, however, one may question how Jesus Christ's reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) can be differentiated from the Spirit's redemption (*Erlösung*), because the term "redemption" has been mainly attributed to Christ's salvific work since Paul.<sup>57</sup> While working on the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth seemed to acknowledge the limit of the term redemption.<sup>58</sup> In the mid-1950s, for example, he explained it to his students as

56. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: SCM, 1949), 139. Hereafter *DO*.

57. See, for example, Ephesians 1:1-3:29. About the Christian understanding of Christ's redemption and its pneumatological implication, see Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 97-110.

58. In this respect, Biggar proposed in his critical evaluation of Barth's ethics that "I prefer to call the final act 'sanctification,' since that title expresses the nature of the act, namely, the growing of spiritually