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The Development of Barth's Ethics from the First *Epistle to the Romans* to *Church Dogmatics* I/1

In Barth's early thought, two major aspects are of particular ethical significance. To begin with, Barth attributes great significance to the notion of sacrifice and repentance, which the literature on Barth has not sufficiently noted.[1] In order to keep this critical, negative dimension from dominating ethics, Barth eventually developed the actualistic concept of revelation.[2] This is the roadmap for this

1. For example, the section on *Rom* II in David Clough, *Ethics in Crisis: Interpreting Barth's Ethics*, Barth Studies Series (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 3–42 does not take note of the prominence of the term *sacrifice*. The textual basis for this overall claim consists especially of *Rom* II, *GD*, lectures such as "Der Heilige Geist und das christliche Leben" (1929) and Barth's lecture cycle on ethics (1928–9; 1930–1).
2. In contrast to this, the priority of the gospel over against the law was a new initiative, which is not part of this chapter. In *GD* and *Ethics*, there are at best hints of Barth's later rearrangement of the relationship between gospel and law.

chapter's discussion of Barth's major works from the first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans* (henceforth *Rom* I) to *CD* I/1.

From Sacrifice to Revelation: The Actualistic Concept of Revelation

The emphasis on sacrifice in Barth's early work is part of a charged issue in the political contexts of Barth's work. The notion of sacrifice was already very popular in the Weimar Republic, and the prominence of the term was about to increase in highly explosive contexts.[3]

On the one hand, Barth's call for sacrifice is directed against political ideologies. On the whole, the turbulent political background of the years 1917–20 are of particular importance for Barth's early work. The revolutionary ideologies and events in Russia, Switzerland, and Germany 1917–19 especially come to mind.[4] Barth's

3. See Emanuel Hirsch, "Kurzer Unterricht in der christlichen Religion," in *Das kirchliche Wollen der Deutschen Christen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Grevemeyer, 1933), 17–20, at 17: God "testifies for God's self in our sense of a call to unconditional obedience and unconditional service, to complete sacrifice and commitment." The "Church movement of German Christians in Thuringia" argued, "No era was more replete with parables of [Christ's] eternal sacrifice than our lineage, than the Third Reich. . . . Sacrifices by millions at the front." Gerhard Niemöller, *Die erste Bekenntnissynode der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche zu Barmen: Geschichte, Kritik und Bedeutung der Synode*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 24. See also Paul Althaus, *Grundriß der Ethik* (Erlangen: Merkel, 1931), 108 (parentheses by Althaus): "In history as a vocation to *commitment* (being granted to die), we experience the parable and preparation for the Kingdom of God that demands our very selves; in history as the place of the *contrast* (obligation to kill) we look out for the coming of the Kingdom of God."

4. Timothy Gorringe, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 292–7. Notable events included the October Revolution 1917, followed by unrest in Switzerland, and the general strike in Switzerland in 1918. Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon/Oxford University Press, 1997), 185–9. The Weimar Republic was founded in 1919 amid revolutionary unrest: an uprising in Berlin (*Spartakusaufstand*), inspired by the Communist Party, was put down by violent means, with the ensuing murder of Communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The same year witnessed the initiation of the Third International in 1919, of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919, the failure of a right wing coup d'état in Berlin in 1920 (*Kapp-Putsch*), as well as the suppression of a communist uprising in the Ruhrgebiet in western Germany. The Weimar Republic continued to be shaken by instability, in the assassination of foreign minister Walther Rathenau in 1922

explicit political statements from the early years are supportive of democracy, while the relation he draws between theology and politics is complex, even paradoxical. If the critique of ideologies is articulated as a general call to sacrifice public claims and supposedly higher justifications, however, the effect on political life in the Weimar Republic was the opposite from Barth's intention. His message was likely to weaken moderate, democratic forces. For example, Barth's categorical critique of anything vaguely resembling an ideology also affected the Tambach conference in 1919. The organizers sought to gain support for the German Democratic Party (DDP) among Christian circles, who often hankered for a restitution of the monarchy and its alliance of throne and altar.[5] Barth's critique of *any* religious element sustaining political conviction, however, contributed to a power vacuum that was capable of being exploited both by radicals and by those conservative Protestant circles for whom Barth's harsh critique of theopolitical attitudes was beyond the pale theologically. These Protestants would indeed turn out to be a crucial voting block for Hitler.[6]

Already in Barth's early theology, Christology is the key to how Christians are supposed to act. Especially *Rom* II portrays Christ as the crucified one, who manifests humanity's sin. The salvific event of the resurrection is beyond demonstration and can only be seen

and the so-called Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, a failed coup d'état in which Hitler played a leading role.

5. Barth presented the influential lecture "The Christian in Society" ("Der Christ in der Gesellschaft") at the Tambach conference. The organizer, Otto Herpel, also had socialist leanings, but the journal he edited, *The Christian Democrat: Weekly Journal for the Protestant Home*, was not yet geared in that direction. Barth, "Der Christ in der Gesellschaft. 1919," in *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten: 1914–1921*, ed. Hans-Anton Drewes, Barth-Gesamtausgabe (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2012), 546–98, at 546 (editor's introduction). Founded in November 1918, the DDP is commonly characterized as both liberal and left-leaning, but even Max Weber was among its founding members. Together with the Social Democrats, it was the most outspoken advocate of the Weimar Republic among the political parties of the time.
6. Jürgen W. Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (München: Beck, 1991), 169–88; 251–6. See Karl Löwith's statement to a similar effect below.

in the negation of all worldly entities. Barth vigorously highlights Jesus Christ's humiliation. In spite of inner developments, the ethics of *Rom* II results in a negative ethics of self-withdrawal. Believing in the crucified Christ, Christians ratify their condemnation as sinners, albeit justified sinners. In the face of this charge of sinfulness, ethics corresponds to a theology of the cross by instructing one to practice sacrifice and repentance. Although Barth also attempts to give relative theological justifications for a particular kind of political action, this is decisively overshadowed by the critical vigor of the message of the cross. What Barth has in mind specifically is restraint in the public debates in Germany and Switzerland. Barth's call for a sacrificial stance rooted in the cross emerges only as he revises the positions he took in previous prominent writings. *Rom* I and the Tambach lecture, "The Christian in Society" (1919, henceforth: "ChrSoc"), by contrast, highlight "the force of the resurrection." Admittedly, *Rom* I already warns against a "war of the good ones with the evil ones."[7] It is precisely the rejection of ideological thought that drives Barth's transformation of his previous positions. Yet even *Rom* II, his most influential work at the time, cannot be seen as a satisfactory conclusion in this regard.

In the mid-1920s, a modification of a one-sided ethics of sacrifice and repentance began to take shape, as he emphasized that the gospel works not only as a "power of death," but as Jesus Christ trumps this dynamic in an extraordinary act of revelation and command. As this event remains a radically contingent, elusive act, this concept both questions and affirms the negative view of creation and history.

This dialectical dynamic is only overcome with a consistent concept of the gospel's priority over the law. To begin with, developments in the 1920s point in this direction, but the plot

7. *Rom* I, 43.

thickens only with the lectures "Die Not der evangelischen Kirche" ("The Affliction of the Protestant Church," 1931) and "Das erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom" ("The First Commandment as a Theological Axiom," 1933). A milestone was then reached with the Barmen Declaration (1934) and "GL" (1935). This chapter focuses on the point before Barth's thought began to move in this new direction, his writings from *Rom* I to the ethics lectures (held in Münster in 1928–9 and in Bonn in 1930–31).

"The Christian in Society" and the First Edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*

Barth's lecture "ChrSoc," held in Tambach (1919),[8] is characterized by dialectical thought in ethics. Barth criticizes the practice of giving directly religious reasons for public action. It is especially what he calls the "hyphens," as in a "Christian-social" and "religious-social" orientation of ethics, that try to attenuate the ethics of autonomous secular systems in a Christian vein.[9] This leads to a tension between two positions: on the one hand, Barth's critique of religion considers directly Christian justifications for action "presumptuous."[10] On the other, a religiously motivated critique of ideologies refuses strictly secular ethical norms, as in the argument for strict autonomy of the economic and political spheres. Barth castigates the combination of spiritual and worldly concepts, as in the catchphrase "religious-social"[11] or in the intention "to employ the fundamental principles of

8. Barth, "The Christian in Society," in *The Word of God and Theology*, trans. Amy Marga (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 31–70 ("ChrSoc"). The lecture was given for the Vereinigung der Freunde des Christlichen Demokraten (Association of the friends of the *Christian Democrat*), supporters of a political journal sympathetic to the German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei) that tried to win over Christian circles for the young Weimar Republic. Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft: 1919–1979: Geschichte, Analysen und aktuelle Bedeutung von Karl Barths Tambacher Vortrag* (Munich: Kaiser, 1980), 7.
9. "ChrSoc," 37.
10. Ibid., see 38.

Jesus' way of being as maxims for any and every public . . . formation of society"[12] as a secularization of Christ and a clericalization of society. It will be seen how this continues a concern Barth brought up in *Rom* I.[13] On the one hand, a strictly secular ethics is destined to perish.[14] On the other hand, partial Christian traditions cannot be pitted against a secular ethics: "Christ's death is always for the benefit of the others, for those on the outside as well."[15] As understandable as the intention guiding all "hyphenation" theologies in their attempt to overcome a strict "autonomy of culture, of the state, of economic life"[16] may be, it cannot be carried out in any straightforward way. By contrast, Barth calls for greater attention to God's current action in history, to which Christians should respond in appropriate secular activities. For appropriate, sober action has the capacity to be a parable of the kingdom of God.[17] Christian responsible action in society is supposed to ask what secular societal processes result in parables of the kingdom of God. There is a particular divine promise for such a task, for even while their action takes on a secular form, Christians are moved by the power of the resurrection.[18] For "the Christian" is active in society in such a way that it is not Christians, but Christ who works in them.[19] Christ's work in them is

11. Ibid., 37.
12. Ibid., 39, Marquardt, *Christ in der Gesellschaft*, 9.
13. Barth, "ChrSoc," 38, 40. See also *Rom* I, 517: "The same insight, which is supposed to keep you from rashly secularizing the divine, must now also keep you from rashly clericalizing yourselves, from pursuing a clear conscience in an escape from the world and an aloof isolationism."
14. "ChrSoc," 39.
15. For this translation see Barth, "Der Christ in der Gesellschaft," in *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten: 1914–1921*, 557. Revised translations of "ChrSoc" are indicated with reference to Barth, "Christ in der Gesellschaft."
16. Barth, "Christ in der Gesellschaft," 561.
17. "ChrSoc," 54–8.
18. "ChrSoc," 44.
19. Ibid., 36.

transcendent vis-à-vis their religion. This is the ambiguity of Christian action, its limitation and its authority.

The difficulty in Barth's ethical concept is that God's concealed action must be of such a kind that the necessities imposed by secular societal spheres, such as economics, politics, law, etc., are reconciled with Barth's skepticism toward the world. In order to do justice to his conviction that "*We* stand more deeply in the 'No' than in the 'Yes,'"[20] Barth must show how God's concealed action remains truthful to the eschatological difference between the kingdom of God and the world, while still being compatible with the demands of specialized spheres of secular society.

It is no accident that Barth's notion of God's action remains vague in "ChrSoc": it is not just "*another thing*, not just *any* other thing, but the *wholly other* thing of the kingdom, the kingdom of *God*."[21] God's action is not limited to a negation of the status quo, but free to affirm certain aspects in sovereign independence. But at the same time, "the kingdom of God approaches in its *attack* upon society."[22] The affirmation of worldly standards of excellence can be in agreement with God's transcendent action in the world, but there is nonetheless a great danger that "our gaze upon the Creator through the lens of an affirmation of the world can become the mere reflection of the creature upon itself."[23] Barth hopes to address this concern not with criteria of ethical agency, but by asserting self-evidence: "But isn't it actually evil to take this possibility—as possibility—much too seriously? . . . We draw our *life* from the power of the resurrection. . . . We *are* moved by God. We do know God. The history of God is happening in us and toward us. . . . The history of God is *a priori* a

20. Ibid., 60.
21. Ibid., 65.
22. "ChrSoc," 61.
23. Ibid., 54.

victorious history."[24] That raises the question, however, in what sense "*we* stand more deeply in the 'No' than in the 'Yes.'" Yet Barth draws the surprising conclusion: "After all, why should we not know what to do, *sub specie aeternitatis*? . . . We cannot do much, but we can do one thing. It is a thing not done by *us*. For, what can the Christian in society do except follow closely that which is done by *God*?"[25]

The affirmation of God's action in the world constitutes a commonality between "ChrSoc" and the preceding *Rom* I, to which the discussion will now turn. In both works the "power of the resurrection" features prominently.[26] The "dynamics" of the resurrection are "inexhaustibly active in our lives."[27] Due to this shared notion, *Rom* I and "ChrSoc" also equally affirm the self-evident character of the ethical. "'What am I to do?' Answer: first of all, stop asking!"[28] The misguided attempt to translate Christian theological concepts directly into a worldly agenda is already in view when *Rom* I warns of a "secularization" of eschatology and a "clericalization" of the world. Action is properly Christian, argues *Rom* I, if Christians act in a prereflexive way. The flip side of this account of moral agency is a restriction of the Christian ethos to the private realm, however.

By contrast, "ChrSoc" proposes a concept for a Christian social ethics. According to the Tambach lecture, God is also at work outside of the church, so that Christian ethics does not in principle enter a *terra incognita* when explicitly addressing moral issues in wider society. It is true that "ChrSoc" shares the rejection of an explicitly

24. Ibid., 50–51, see 66.
25. Ibid., 68–9.
26. *Rom* I, 14, 22, 54, 77, etc.
27. Ibid., 221; see 170, 203, 213, 219, 261, see McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 201.
28. *Rom* I, 517. Ingrid Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis: Ein Beitrag zur Grundfrage der neuen Theologie Karl Barths*, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 97 (Munich: Kaiser, 1985), 103, calls a correspondence of Christian action to God's action a "dynamic, ambiguous prototype of the analogy of faith."

Christian politics of *Rom* I. Yet the social ethics of "ChrSoc," with its notion of a secular parable to the kingdom of God, attempts a dialectical solution to a problem that *Rom* I was unable to solve. While *Rom* I sees God's organic activity in the church overcoming the contrast between God and world, this approach cannot reconcile the Christian life with an ethics of the public life; politics and the economy, for example, follow a different logic than a religious one.[29]

According to *Rom* I, the power of the resurrection is clearly limited to the congregation. In the first place, *Rom* I attaches fundamental importance to baptism, which it calls a "stronghold of the new world."[30] Baptism is the "warrant that . . . the work of God's redemptive will is no human, all too human tower of Babel."[31] On the one hand, *Rom* I emphasizes that faith and life in the Holy Spirit are not human options by nature. On the other hand, this negative aspect can also appear in a positive way: while it is not true that Christians possess the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit does exercise power over Christians.[32] Describing the work of the Holy Spirit as the organic growth of the church presents little problem to Barth. For this reason, *Rom* I should not be read as the document of a *critical* actualism according to which faith is only a reality of the moment, while its lack would already be felt in the next moment.[33]

29. *Rom* I, 509.
30. Ibid., 214; see 212 about the sacraments: "It is the objective, creative word of God. . . . Due to this content, baptism is a sacrament, does not only signify, but is the new creation."
31. Ibid., 368.
32. Ibid., 307, 337.
33. That the deficit is experienced as such in the next moment is only the best case, which is a problem with the actualistic reading of *Rom* I advocated by McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 145–7, 156–7, 164–5. Yet according to *Rom* I, 449, attaining belief in Christ in every new moment is nothing fundamentally difficult. Along these lines see *Rom* I, 344 (see Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 105). The certainty of the Spirit's presence also in the future creates new problems. Precisely for this reason, *Rom* I, 449 insists that Christians must not consider faith their own achievement. What human beings lack in natural habitual potential is made up for, almost too easily, by word and sacrament. See also Herbert Anzinger, *Glaube und kommunikative Praxis: Eine Studie zur 'vordialektischen' Theologie Karl Barths*, Beiträge zur evangelischen

The sacramentalist foundation of *Rom* I can lead, however, to quietism: if Christians engage in confrontation, they compromise the power of the resurrection.[34] Christians are beyond good and evil;[35] their hope of redemption "cannot become the subject of the discipline of 'ethics.'"[36] Barth is resolutely against a "tactics of the Kingdom of God" (*Gottesreichstaktik*), which would result in the "Godlessness of the good cause." *Rom* I thus adopts Hermann Kutter's polemics against Leonhard Ragaz's religious socialism.[37] The truth of Christianity degrades into the "idea of the 'war of the good against the evil'"[38] when translated directly into political action. There must not be any Christian "insistence on being right in principle" (*Rechthaberei*).[39] These critical thoughts constitute a fundamental cause in *Rom* I (which *Rom* II will maintain).[40] The sensitivity to problems in religious action is indeed clear-sighted. However, Barth combines it with a problematic response. Christians are not supposed to employ the "method of the world" instead of the "method of the Kingdom of God."[41] They should not deal with either political or legal questions.[42] Power is evil and politics is violence. Christians

Theologie 110 (Munich: Kaiser, 1991), 202. Moreover, an actualistic reading of *Rom* I leads to the problems of how to avoid the kind of religious individualism against which *Rom* I is directed.

34. *Rom* I, 492.
35. Ibid., 493.
36. Ibid., 507, see also 250.
37. According to ibid., 493 (editor's note), the expression "godlessness of the good cause" (*Gottlosigkeit im Guten*) is taken from another commentary on Romans: Hermann Kutter, *Das Bilderbuch Gottes für Groß und Klein* (Basel: Kober, 1917), 200. Kutter and Barth are critical of Leonhard Ragaz's religious socialism. Ragaz himself commented that the criticism of his position in *Rom* I hit "the center." Markus Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz und der religiöse Sozialismus: Eine Biographie* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1968), 2:251.
38. *Rom* I, 43.
39. Ibid., 394, see also 388: "The rejection of the Christ was not a deed of viciousness and passion, but a peak performance of Israelite religiosity and morality."
40. Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 107.
41. *Rom* I, 499. See also Timothy Gorringe, "Karl Barth on Romans," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, eds. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 590–608, at 597–8.

must be reminded that "your nation state is in heaven (Phil. 3:20)."[43] Christian political action can, at the most, consist in refusing any religious qualifications of the state[44] and in hoping for a silent "absorption of the divine atmosphere by all people (in the Christ!)."[45]

To be sure, *Rom* I is already markedly critical of religion. Christ was crucified, of all people, by the pious.[46] Nonetheless, the difference between church and world is fundamental for ethics in *Rom* I.[47] Barth highlights the power of God's action at the expense of human activity, thus replacing religious activism with quietism. Christians are, Barth asserts, crucified and risen with Christ, so that they are no longer characterized by religion and morals but by God's influence.[48] Thus they do not advocate particular Christian concerns in public debates.

Nevertheless, if any distinctly Christian public positioning is criticized as religion or morality, one must wonder if a blanket refusal of such positioning can escape Barth's charge. For a "tactics of the Kingdom of God" to be theologically superior to a "method of the world," a true dialectical sublation rather than a simple contrast would be necessary. However, *Rom* I reverses the leading sign that characterizes religious socialism, and what used to be a position similar to Ragaz's religious activism becomes quietism, and no less

42. Ibid., 504, 506.
43. Ibid., 503, see 501–2.
44. Ibid., 505.
45. Ibid., 508. On the political circumstances at the end of World War I, see McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 186–9. In the interest of national safety, the Swiss parliament granted significant new powers to the administration in 1914. As a consequence, working hours were increased, child labor was facilitated, and the recruitment of the youth for the military was legalized. The Socialist Party called for a general strike in 1918, which, aiming at reform within the existing democratic system, remained peaceful, yet also created the danger of further political destabilization—which was also true of the intransigent action of the administration.
46. *Rom* I, 365, 388, 422.
47. Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 104 asks critically, too, "Is the '*organ of discernment*,' so boldly called '*feeling*,' . . . indeed entirely safe from confusion with religious feeling, the liberal, immediate synthesis 'starting from the human person'?" See also ibid., 108.
48. *Rom* I, 262.

religious at that. Admittedly, *Rom* I rejects any escalation of public debates through Christian claims to higher authority. Yet neither can Christian traditions, in Barth's new reading, contribute to a constructive solution to conflicts. As if theology and ethics could be cleanly separated, Barth counsels that the only meaningful political position is that of the "extreme left. But as for the details, you need to consult an ethics."[49]

In the meantime, when ethical decisions can no longer be deferred, he advises an "ethics of the stuck situation" (*Ethik der verfahrenen Situation*).[50] This concept resembles what Luther's theory of God's two kingdoms envisages for holders of public offices.[51] In the face of difficult public decisions, this ethics appears rather fatalistic: inevitably, practical necessities sometimes lead to problematic results.[52] Yet for political action, God's forgiveness can be factored in across the board: "Your sins, including your political sins, are forgiven then."[53] Certainly Barth is against religious support for violent ideologies—patriarchal authorities must be "*starved out with respect to religion*."[54] Yet the assurance of a blanket forgiveness of political sins does not inspire a critical spirit. Instead, it runs the risk of ideological collaboration when extreme political measures are presented as necessities of a sober realism. Advocacy for sustained social justice, peace, or democracy are not an issue in *Rom* I. Even the calmness of the problematic quietism is at risk when Barth asserts that believers would first "develop an organ that feels the action of the

49. Ibid., 508.
50. Ibid., 495.
51. See Wilfried Härle, "Luthers Zwei-Regimenten-Lehre als Lehre vom Handeln Gottes," *Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie* 1 (1987): 12–32, at 16.
52. See also *Rom* I, 493: "Unfortunately, some things are necessary that would not be necessary!"
53. Ibid., 510.
54. Ibid., 507–8.

Spirit and to respond. . . . You will obey the commandment of the moment . . . *now* the Spirit is speaking!"[55]

A concept of social ethics in *Rom* I that seems to offer an alternative to prereflexive action and the "ethics of the stuck situation" is the Christian admonition in intra-Christian affairs.[56] The question of right action shows the elusive character of the Spirit, which now constitutes the necessity of leaving all ideologies behind in favor of a sober admonition. This contradicts the fundamental approach of *Rom* I, however, even pointing out some of its shortcomings. After all, *Rom* I argues for a renewed gift of the Spirit in word and sacrament, so the only legitimate admonition would be to call for participation in the worship service.

In comparing *Rom* I and "ChrSoc," it is an innovation that "ChrSoc" calls extraecclesial activity capable of becoming a "parable." *Rom* I does mention parables but focuses on a piety within the church that, outside of this realm, takes on a prereflexive stance that is not explicitly Christian.[57] While action in worldly terms with a "parabolic" intention avoids the reduction of Christian ethics to the ecclesial realm, it remains open to discussion and correction. Christian ethics can thus enter into dialogue with other academic areas. Since Barth considers worldly events and rationalities capable

55. Ibid., 485–6.

56. Ibid., 463. On the "Christian admonition," see Anzinger, *Glaube*, 198–210. This passage is less than clear about the contrast between the intraecclesial function of the admonition—after all, in contrast to idealism, Christians must not create their own laws (cf. Anzinger, *Glaube*, 198–9)—and the statement that this admonition has the "recognition of unredeemed reality" in view (*Rom* I, 241; Anzinger, *Glaube*, 203). "Directed at people who do not yet fulfill the presuppositions of ch.s 5–8, but even with regard to ourselves—insofar as those presuppositions have perhaps not been actualized yet—this Christian admonition cannot appear any other way than as a very peculiar form of *law*" (*Rom* I, 464).

57. Link characterizes "ChrSoc" as a decisive turn in Barth's thought, as it is the first time that Barth refused, publicly and in principle, building theology on the foundations of religiosity. Christian Link, "Bleibende Einsichten von Tambach," in *Karl Barth in Deutschland (1921–1935): Aufbruch—Klärung—Widerstand*, eds. Michael Beintker, Christian Link, and Michael Trowitzsch (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005), 333–46, at 338–9.

of becoming a parable of God's reign, he leaves the ecclesiocentric approach of *Rom* I behind. In part, this change may be due to the fact that the village pastor of *Rom* I has suddenly attracted a lot of attention and is now, in "ChrSoc," challenged to address a specialized group of theologians, politicians, and social reformers. Neither will the genre of an exegetical commentary do in addressing the ethical topic "The Christian in Society." In this new and challenging context, it is a shrewd measure for "ChrSoc" to characterize God as "entirely different." This description of God's action is not entirely absent in *Rom* I,[58] yet there the contrast is with specific, individual phenomena of the pious life rather than with the entire realm of human experience. *Rom* I still argued that one might do justice to the one who is "entirely different . . . by an uncompromising commitment" in opposition to "what is important in the world."[59] It is only in "ChrSoc" that Barth characterizes God's activity as *totaliter aliter* (entirely different) or impinging "vertically from above."[60] Then again, "ChrSoc" does argue, "We *are* moved by God. We do know God,"[61] yet it negates a direct correspondence between human and divine action; the similarity does not extend beyond that of a parable.[62] This new approach in "ChrSoc" is also directed against the sacramentalism and the problematic ecclesiality of *Rom* I.

Much can be singled out for praise in the social ethics of "ChrSoc." The notion of worldly action serving as a parable of the kingdom helps Christian ethics to enter into a dialogue with the sciences

58. There are nine passages, which are not especially striking: *Rom* I, 131, 172, 190, 206, 361, 431, 443, 453, 468.
59. Ibid., 467.
60. "ChrSoc," 42. In *Rom* I, the expression "from above" twice refers to political authority in contrast to those thus governed (502, 512) and only once to God in clear distinction from creation (577). The expression "vertically from above" does not occur in *Rom* I.
61. "ChrSoc," 51.
62. "All that is transitory is *but* a parable" (ibid., 55): Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, part 2, act 5 (Barth's italics).

and other academic endeavors. The emphasis on worldly parables justifies its critique of a clericalization of the world with reference to the cross. This aspect will also characterize certain strands of Barth's later ethical work. "CS" (1938) deals, for example, with a correspondence between a just constitutional democracy and the very creation of justice and right in Christ's work of reconciliation. The lecture "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" ("CCCC," 1946) highlights the "analogical capacities and needs of political organization."[63] The notion of secular words being a parable resurfaces in the "doctrine of lights" (*CD* IV/3 §69.2 114–16). *CL* will (1959–61) argue that only a human "movement *analogous* to that which we ask and expect from God" is in accordance with the petition "Hallowed by thy name."[64] These statements do not, however, merely repeat the concept of a parable, but refine it in a way that reflects the gravity of human sin as revealed on the cross. Further, a dialectical mode of thought that either recommends the importance of worldly expertise or critiques it on theological grounds may help reduce prejudice in controversial ethical questions. This is in contrast to a partisanship that advocates in principle either a particular rationality and an ethos of a particular social sphere, or is fundamentally committed to a countercultural stance.

If we take a closer look, however, at the critique of religion that stands out in "ChrSoc," a greater difficulty emerges. To begin with, "ChrSoc" articulates a critique of a particular religiosity. Barth argues that human action must be oriented toward God's action, which is neither restricted to inspiring the human religious consciousness

63. "CCCC," 168. See also *CD* IV/2, §67.4: the legal system is a continuum that allows for a constructive dialogue between church and "world," in spite of all specific differences. Barth's objection to a clericalization of the world also causes him to critique all directly Christian justifications of political decisions as well as the establishment of Christian political parties: "CCCC," 182.

64. *CL*, 169.

nor an exclusively ecclesial stance.[65] Thus Barth's ethical approach relativizes a theology of consciousness often associated with Schleiermacher.[66]

Nonetheless, Barth does not leave behind the methodological orientation toward religiosity. After all it is a religious judgment that, according to "ChrSoc," discerns God's action in the world. Although the lecture reacts critically against a theology of consciousness, it is also in keeping with a theology of consciousness in describing the cross as "a critical 'No' and a creative 'Yes' upon the content of our consciousness."[67] Immediately after Barth's presentation of the lecture, his reaction against religious experience was faced with the objection that even Barth's own ethical concept rests on a religious foundation—"that is, at that moment at which Christians gain certainty *where* they had seen the living God at work."[68] Faced with this ambiguity in "ChrSoc," it is worth noting that the two theological concepts that Barth critiques, both the strongly ecclesial focus of *Rom* I and Schleiermacher's theology of consciousness—whatever else may be said about them—at least offer guideposts that help us discern a potential act of God. According to *Rom* I, God is not at work in the legal system or in politics, and is certainly outside of the realm of confrontation; according to

65. "Precisely for this reason, the *knowledge* of God is essentially the *history* of God and no mere event in our consciousness" ("ChrSoc," 45, see also 46).

66. Schleiermacher is one of the few theological authors "ChrSoc" names explicitly. Although God's action results in the subjective reaction on the human part, Barth argues, this must not be used as a new basis for theological insight about God. "And the movement of life unveiled in Jesus is not some kind of new piety" (Barth, "ChrSoc," 43–4). With this statement Barth draws the conclusion from another point he made, with which, however, Schleiermacher would indeed agree: "The Immediate, the Origin, will never be experienced as such" (ibid., 43). See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. Hugh R. MacKintosh and James S. Stewart (New York: T&T Clark, 1999), §4.1, 12–13.

67. Barth, "Christ in der Gesellschaft," 557.

68. Thus, one of the organizers of the Tambach conference, Otto Herpel, wrote about the lecture. O. H. [*sic*], "Berichte und Urteile über die Tambacher Konferenz vom 22.–25. September 1919, I.," quoted after Marquardt, *Christ in der Gesellschaft*, 27. See also ibid., 34–5.

Schleiermacher, theology is not dealing with an act of God that supposedly consists in anything other than the religious inspiration of consciousness.[69]

"ChrSoc," by contrast, hardly offers any guidance for discerning a historical act of God at all—even the rejection of sloppy work leaves the question for criteria open. The greatest problem of "ChrSoc" is therefore that God is portrayed in broad strokes as power within history, which, however, Barth describes only very vaguely as "entirely different." It is of course not a new thesis that Barth's early work speaks of God only vaguely, rather than deriving critical and constructive theological guidelines from the biblical testimonies to God's revelation in Christ. Yet in "ChrSoc," this risks confusing the most diverse historical developments with God's action. This problem is compounded by Barth's description of the cross as "the power that moves . . . the world."[70] As God is active in history in a way that cannot be clearly distinguished from any other human activity, Barth's emphasis on the marked difference between God and the world (*totaliter aliter*) no longer offers any leverage in the critique of events that are contrary to divine intentions. The characterization of God's work as "*a priori* a victorious history"[71] can increase the danger of identifying God with the powers that be.[72] Hans Bader, for example, perceived "ChrSoc" as an encouragement in his opinion that religious socialism is "not a human cause in which we are

69. See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §4.4, 17: "Now our proposition is in no wise intended to dispute the existence of such an original knowledge [i.e., knowledge about God that precedes the 'feeling of absolute dependence'], but simply to set it aside as something with which, in a system of Christian doctrine, we could never have any concern."

70. "ChrSoc," 66.

71. Ibid., 51.

72. This interpretation emerged in Otto Herpel's paraphrase of the lecture; see Marquardt, *Christ in der Gesellschaft*, 25–6. Marquardt considers this a "misunderstanding in terms of a theology of history" (ibid., 26), but does not offer reasons for his dismissal. For an extreme variation on Herpel's understanding in terms of a theology of history, see Hans Ehrenberg's take on "ChrSoc" below.

engaged, but God's activity, to which we can only give ourselves up."[73] Even more explosive is Hans Ehrenberg's preface to "ChrSoc." The philosopher from Heidelberg was in fact the editor responsible for Barth's first contact to a wider readership.[74] His preface reflects on Barth's lecture: "How full of parables to the heavenly history worldly history is!"[75] He looks back to the war that just ended, interpreting the suffering of the German people as a parable of Jesus' suffering on the cross. In the same way that God once bought humanity for God's self by means of Jesus' blood, thus God bought the unfaithful German people once again through the bloodshed of World War I.[76] The commonwealth emerging from the ruins now promises "resurrection." Since the misery of the battlefield is a parable, according to Ehrenberg, the readers of Barth's lecture should bear in mind: "Thus we must indeed give ourselves up truly."

A crucial idea of the lecture thus remains worryingly vague. During World War II, for example, Heinz Eduard Tödt, who would, after a military career in World War II and some soul searching, go on to become an influential ethicist, found consolation in the

73. Bader wrote that religious socialism "is not a human affair in which we are involved, but God's action, to which we can only devote ourselves." *Vertrauliche Mitteilungen für die Freunde des 'Neuen Werks'* 3 (1919), 6, cited after Marquardt, *Christ in der Gesellschaft*, 31.

74. Hans Brakelmann, *Hans Ehrenberg: Ein judenchristliches Schicksal in Deutschland: Leben, Denken, Wirken 1883–1932* (Waltrop: Spenner, 1997), 95.

75. Hans Ehrenberg, "Geleitwort," (preface) in Barth, *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft: Eine Tambacher Rede: Mit einem Geleitwort von Hans Ehrenberg* (Würzburg: Patmos, 1920), iii–vi, at iii (dated November 1919). See Eberhard Busch, "Antworten, die zu Fragen wurden: Die Bedeutung des Tambacher Vortrags für K. Barths eigenen Weg," in *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft: Tambach 1919–1994*, ed. Wilhelm Ebting (Reinhardsbrunn, 1994), 9–21, http://tinyurl.com/lkmv2gm, ch. 2: "Hans Ehrenberg . . . felt that [Barth's lecture] gave wings to his identification of the turn from the old epoch to the new with the German 'now.'" Busch refers to a letter of Barth's to Thurneysen, in which Barth reported his disconcertedness about a statement of Ehrenberg that he does not mention. Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–1921*, ed. Eduard Thurneysen, Barth-Gesamtausgabe (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1973), 421. But still Barth's precise position on Ehrenberg's preface remains unclear. According to Barth, Ehrenberg wrote "a preface to my lecture, which I returned to him with urgent censoring notes" (Barth's letter to Thurneysen, Nov. 11, 1919, in *Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21,* 351).

76. Ehrenberg, "Geleitwort," iii; in the following see also ibid., iv.

prayer, "Thy will be done," after his brother had died in battle.[77] The positive evaluation of technical expertise in Barth's lecture in particular makes a theology of history especially explosive. It was this amalgam that contributed significantly to the destructive power of the Nazi regime.[78] I hasten to add that "ChrSoc" was not responsible for the failure of the Weimar Republic and much less for Nazi atrocities. But these events nevertheless illustrate the potential inherent in the lecture. Faced with this danger, Barth's assurance that the analogy always works "from above to below, and never the other way around"[79] is too abstract to be helpful. Many natural theologies—including Barth's own book *Fides quaerens intellectum*—in fact consider themselves theologies of revelation,[80] and the categories by which one interprets the biblical witness to revelation often seem to be plainly "in the text." Barth's reminder about the right "direction" of our understanding presupposes a clearer understanding of the divine that would render the necessity of worldly analogies unnecessary in the first place. Barth's later work would modify this understanding of God's action in history by speaking of God's commandment instead. At the same time this

77. Heinz Eduard Tödt, *Der verlorene Haufe: Fünf Jahre an den Fronten des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (typescript, 1991), 35, cited according to Wolfgang Schuhmacher, *Theologische Ethik als Verantwortungsethik: Leben und Werk Heinz Eduard Tödts in ökumenischer Perspektive,* Öffentliche Theologie 20 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009), 59.

78. A characteristic of the National Socialist regime was the employment of young, technically talented specialists with a high degree of motivation and professionalism in their limited areas. See Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Holt/Metropolitan, 2009), 14–16, William Sweet, "The Volksgerichtshof: 1934–45," *Journal of Modern History* 46 (1974): 314–29, at 321: "There is no need to assume that the Volksgericht's members were radical Nazis deliberately undermining traditional law." Yet the death penalty was their verdict in almost 50 percent of the cases (see ibid., 326). The problem of technically solid work under totalitarian conditions is also illustrated by a statement of former imperial arms minister Albert Speer: "It is part of history that in those days I was in all earnest convinced that as the Arms Minister my work was only technical, but not political." Stephan Schlak, "Ordnung und Revolte: Helmut Schelsky und Jean Améry," Intellektuelle Gegenpole, pt. 4, May 24, 2009, Deutschlandfunk, http://bit.ly/dCRt5o.

79. "ChrSoc," 67.

80. See Introduction, n39. This is von Balthasar's notion of *analogia entis*.

preserved a highly contingent factor in answering the question of how to judge the morality of Christian action. The present discussion of "ChrSoc" raises the question, however, of how Barth avoids the ideological abuse of the contingent factor in his thought. "ChrSoc" only mentions the cross twice; with such a reference, however, Barth might have emphasized much more strongly how controversial and contested God's action in the world can in fact be.[81] Certainly, the lecture does not intend to weaken the loyalty Barth himself felt for the young Weimar Republic, or even his political leanings toward the left.[82] Yet once one professes to be faithful to a perceived divine action in history without more precise theological criteria, one weakens the critique of the "war of the good against evil" that Barth articulated in *Rom* I.[83] However, *Rom* II will repeat the protest against a "war between good and evil."[84] This makes it necessary to ask for proper theological guidelines for action. This presupposes that—as significant as Barth's critique of religion is indeed—the religious character of Christian faith cannot be dismissed out of hand. One of Barth's texts most critical of religion, *CD* I/2, §17, does recognize the religious character of faith by calling Christianity the true religion, in the sense in which even sinners are justified by grace.[85] This is based on a theological orientation toward the incarnation: by becoming incarnate in Christ, God does not exclude the risk of being confused with other deities. "God's revelation is in fact God's presence and thus God's *hiddenness* in the world of human *religion*. Because God reveals himself, the divine particular is hidden in a human universal, . . . and

81. See the references to the cross in "ChrSoc," 36, as a critique of ecclesiocentrism and 51 as an indication of God's love of the world.
82. McCormack, *Barth's Theology,* 201.
83. *Rom* I, 43.
84. *Rom* II, 653.
85. See Garrett Green's new translation: Barth, *On Religion: The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion*, ed. and trans. Garrett Green, T&T Clark Theology (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

thus the *divinely unique* in something merely *humanly remarkable*."[86] This makes a constructive discussion of potential religious illusions inescapable. By contrast, *Rom* II chooses a different path in trying to rule out a confusion of the true God with idols.

The Second Edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*

The second edition of *Romans* has been characterized as part of the new expressionist wave in German intellectual life, a description that does justice at least to its vigorous rhetoric, its use of paradox, and its harsh criticism of traditional authorities.[87] The mode of argumentation is indeed highly paradoxical, often gesturing toward the ineffable with the back and forth of a passionate argument. Since Barth kept sending on a constant flow of manuscript pages directly to the printer for publication while still writing,[88] there is a grain of truth even in his ironic comment: "The cornucopia of these dialectics will never be exhausted and emptied. The book will be unbearable, and already now I am having compassion with those readers that will have to follow all the windings of this meandering river."[89] In addition, a "tone of anger"[90] is apparent in many places. To what extent the book will develop a consistent thrust with which it might achieve a particular impact requires careful analysis.

When Barth presented some of the crucial new ideas in the lecture "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas" in 1920, speaking of God as "completely different," of revelation as a "limit" to humanity and its impact as the "wisdom of death,"[91] Adolf von Harnack reacted with

86. Barth, *On Religion*, 35 (*CD* I/2, 282).
87. This is the motivation for Barth's theological stance in this period suggested between the lines by Wilhelm Pauck, *Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity?* (New York: Harper, 1931), 18–19.
88. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Eugene: Wipf & Stock: 2005), 117.
89. *Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21*, 485 (May 13, 1921, Barth commenting on Romans 7).
90. McCormack, *Barth's Theology,* 243.

consternation.[92] An important contributor to the "Manifesto of the Ninety-Three German Intellectuals" (1914), which rallied German intellectuals around the German cause in World War I, Harnack personified, like few others, the scholarly achievements and creative energy, but also the ideological blinkers that characterized German liberal Protestantism in the Wilhelmine empire.[93]

Even against this backdrop, *Rom* II is more than merely a child of its time.[94] The trenchant critique of bourgeois theology dressing up the ideologies of the time should always remain a thorn in the flesh of theological ethics. Yet how far does the theological authority of its ethical vision reach in fact? To what degree is *Rom* II influenced by its perceived opponent, specifically in how its critique of ideology is calibrated?

The difference between "ChrSoc" and *Rom* II is obvious from a new understanding of a central term of the lecture: the parable. *Rom* II uses the concept in a new sense by highlighting Christ's cross, which goes hand in hand with a stronger critique of moral positions. In addition, *Rom* II quotes the statement of skepticism toward worldly rationality from "ChrSoc"—itself almost a literal

91. Barth, "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas," in *Word of God and Theology*, 71–100, at 87, 74, 93.
92. Eberhard Busch, *Barth: His Life from Letters*, 115. Von Harnack appeared out of touch with reality to Barth, while other representatives of this generation of scholars treated him with condescension (ibid.). See Hans-Anton Drewes, "Die Auseinandersetzung mit Adolf von Harnack," in *Karl Barth in Deutschland*, eds. Beintker et al., 189–204.
93. On the "Manifesto" and its role in Barth's turning away from liberal Protestantism, see Wilfried Härle, "Der Aufruf der 93 Intellektuellen und Karl Barths Bruch mit der liberalen Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 72 (1975): 207–24, Drewes, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 191–2. Drewes (ibid., 193) illustrates in what sense *Rom* II was directed at the foundations of Wilhelmine intellectual life: "In reality, presumably we must understand the entire *Epistle to the Romans* as an open contradiction to the way historical texts and documents were dealt with, which in the generation before Barth nobody developed in such an impressive degree or practiced as brilliantly as Harnack did."
94. Paul D. Jones argues that "the conspicuous pressures of the time exerted less influence on his theological work than one might think." "The Rhetoric of War in Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans: A Theological Analysis," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 17 (2010): 90–111, at 91.

quotation from *Rom* I, which *GD* II is going to repeat again: "*We* stand more deeply in the 'No' than in the 'Yes.'"[95] Yet in keeping with the special attention to the cross in *Rom* II, an even stronger critique of culture results. Jesus is a "purely negative entity for us."[96] While the effect of the resurrection power provides fresh orientation to Christian moral action according to *Rom* I, thus disqualifying the old human—all too human—behavior at the same time, *Rom* II retains merely this negative aspect: God is "the pure negation."[97] Nonetheless, the new edition elaborates consistently on the previous one insofar as the latter was unable to offer clear criteria for a distinction between the new ethos of the congregation and the morals of the old eon, putting in jeopardy the refusal of the old eon.[98] *Rom* II negates the positive interpretation of the analogy. The negation of a positive revelation and the revelation of God's abiding hiddenness now replace what previously Barth viewed as an "organic" growth of the congregation towards a fulfillment of God's will.[99] The new development has also been described as an analogy.[100]

95. "ChrSoc," 60; *Rom* II, 620: "*We* are standing more *deeply* in the 'No' than in the 'Yes.'" See already *Rom* I, 216: "Perhaps it is the case that now we are standing more deeply in the 'No' than in the 'Yes.'" See again *GD* II, 244: "Wir *stehen* tiefer *im Nein als im Ja*."
96. *Rom* II, 147, see 147 ("in the secret of his greatness, which is entirely negative for us"), 150–51, 218 ("The doctrine of Christ's threefold office obscures and weakens the focus of the New Testament view [of Christ's death]. There is no independent second or third aspect *besides* this one and only, this exclusive meaning of Christ.") See also 524: "We must recall the most serious of all symptoms: it was the church—not the world, but the *church*—which crucified Christ."
97. Ibid., 194.
98. Thus also Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 108, 121–2. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth und die Pietisten: Die Pietismuskritik des jungen Karl Barth und ihre Erwiderung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1978), 88–90, lists further commonalities between *Rom* I and *Rom* II (God as the objective reality critically confronting the world; faced with this critique, all differences between pious and secular pale; the relationship between world and God is to be viewed in strictly eschatological terms).
99. See Busch, *Barth und die Pietisten*, 90–91. See *Rom* II, 194, *pace* McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 255.
100. Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 143, calls this "*analogy of the cross*" the "primeval form" of the "*analogia fidei*, which Barth develops after 1930." McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 12, observes that a differentiation between different kinds of dialectics in Barth's early work makes it impossible to maintain a blanket decrease of "the dialectics." On dialectics in the early Barth,

But the fallen world resembles God's new reality only insofar as the old world negates itself; there can be no positive analogy.

Arguing for an integration of even the deepest skepticism into a true dialectic, which would result in a relative analogy to the kingdom of God in *Rom* II, one might point to a statement like this: "To the extent that the religious or the anti-religious gesture puts the emphasis on pointing beyond itself, its questionable character is relativized and absolute skepticism loses its right."[101] But this statement requires careful analysis. Does Barth truly succeed in making a relative, constructive case against his vigorous denial of the human reality?

When arguing for the positive nature of God's relation to the world, an "absolute skepticism" cannot be reconciled dialectically with the kingdom of God. Barth argues it is negated and "loses its right." In making a positive case for a dialectic, any "absolute skepticism" must be watered down to mere ambiguity. Indeed, proponents of a dialectic discern a relative, not an absolute message of judgment in *Rom* II: "The 'No' is not absolute, even if it is total."[102]

If, in turn, God's judgment of the world is absolute, one cannot argue that it is outweighed by God's positive relation to the world, which would disregard the categorical nature of God's judgment. But then again the refutation of this world is so vigorous in *Rom* II that it is hard to see how anything might be salvaged to constitute, even in all relativity, a valid parable of the kingdom of God. Barth repeatedly calls the negation of this world "absolute,"[103] "pure,"[104] an

see Michael Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der 'dialektischen Theologie' Karl Barths* (Munich: Kaiser 1985), 25–31.

101. *Rom* II, 188.

102. Cornelis van der Kooi, "Karl Barths zweiter Römerbrief und seine Wirkungen," in *Barth in Deutschland*, eds. Beintker et al., 57–76, at 67.

103. *Rom* II, 112.

104. Ibid., 188, 194, 199.

"*absolute* assault."[105] God's judgment is the "most radical finishing off of history."[106] Thus the dialectic fails since Barth attempts to forge it by disregarding the categorical nature of the antithesis. Death is not grace "as long as it is merely a relative negation."[107] "But God's judgment is the end of history, not the beginning of a new, second history. History is finished off, it is not continued. What remains after judgment is not only distinguished and separated from the state of affairs before judgment in a relative way, but absolutely."[108] How could we fail to suspect that that which is deemed, in all relativity, an analogy or parable, is in fact just another religious illusion? After all, God is "absolutely different from all that is light, power, and good for us."[109] If God's judgment is absolute, we literally do not have the words to hint at a hope beyond judgment.

In a clear rejection of the old eon, Barth calls Jesus' death "the critical negation of all life concerns."[110] How can Barth's gesturing toward a new hope beyond be anything else than a "life concern" as well, if the critical edge of *Rom* II is to be taken seriously? Barth seemed to underestimate this fact, for example when "ChrSoc" polemicized against religious concerns, but still ended with the question, "What can the Christian in society do than follow closely that which is done by *God*?"[111] This quite rightly provoked the critique among his listeners that Barth's own positive vision also rested on a religious foundation—"that is, at that moment at which

105. Ibid., 581.
106. Ibid., 112.
107. Ibid., 268.
108. Ibid., 111. If, however, the dialectic were hypothetically consistent, what would be gained in the final synthesis? The quotation continues, "The final subjection to the wrath of God is faith in God's righteousness: and then God is known as the Unknown God."
109. Ibid., 157.
110. Ibid., 220. See 380–81: Jesus came "into this system which we can ultimately only interpret in biological categories, into this system which is ultimately only open to an understanding in economic and materialistic terms, which we call history."
111. "ChrSoc," 69.

Christians gain certainty *where* they have seen the living God at work."[112] Yet "ChrSoc" also advocated an "*absolute* criticism of life." However, this implies precisely the opposite of what the lecture then goes on to assert: "We can recognize the *analogy* of the *divine* in the *worldly* things that surround us."[113]

Rom I argued that this concern is indeed exempt from God's judgment: "Of that which we are in and of ourselves (Rom. 7:25b)—of that question ('The Christian and Sin') o let fiends of hell hold nightly converse!"[114] In *Rom* II, by contrast, precisely "that question" is of the utmost importance. Maintaining its critical edge, *Rom* II does not recognize a fundamental renewal of Christian morality in the power of the resurrection. Repeatedly, Jesus' cross is said to imply that a "parable" of the resurrection consists in nothing less than physical death.[115]

As religion does not lead us out of sin, God's sending God's Son "can only be circumscribed in the strongest negations."[116] Barth speaks of the "force with which the resurrection works death."[117] While he calls the resurrection "the positive entity in the most pronounced sense,"[118] under worldly circumstances, this position can only assert itself in its negative flip side. In the message of the resurrection, God reveals God's self as "the unknown God living in light so brilliant that no human can approach him."[119] Facing a

112. Thus, one of the organizers of the Tambach conference, Otto Herpel, about the lecture. O. H., "Berichte und Urteile über die Tambacher Konferenz," 1, quoted after Marquardt, *Christ in der Gesellschaft*, 27. See also ibid., 34–5.
113. "ChrSoc," 56.
114. *Rom* I, 308, an allusion to P. Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus* and a quotation derived from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Iphigenia in Tauris.*
115. *Rom* II, 280: "'Death [becomes] the only (the only!) parable of the kingdom of heaven." See also 220, 230, 619.
116. Ibid., 381.
117. Ibid., 271. Barth attributes also to the resurrection what in 2 Corinthians Paul attributes to the perverted law as opposed to the Spirit. See also 293, 278–9.
118. Ibid., 270.
119. Ibid., 74.

radical alienation between God and world, Barth arrives at drastic statements: the human world is "chaos" in the pejorative sense, life is doomed and utterly senseless: "human life is an illusion," a "union with God" is real only "beyond birth and death."[120] God and world are in no sense positively related. The "righteousness of God" "is the denial of the human person."[121] More positive statements about the hope for the Spirit and redemption are categorically relativized in order to nip in the bud even a faint appearance of a worldly triumph: "The promise kills the human person and everything human, so that they live for God. The church, of all things, must not evade this dying. It is precisely the dying that really lives by this promise, in the reflection of the fulfillment that approaches eternally, beyond life and death."[122] Faced with the world in which Jesus appeared, the father of Jesus Christ is characterized by a radical worldlessness.[123] The contradiction that this God is present nonetheless in Christ is resolved with the statement that Christ embodies the radical critique and negation of the world. A divine presence in the world that is more than fleeting and paradoxical is beyond *Rom* II. Admittedly, *Rom* II does call God the origin (*Ursprung*) of the world. Yet its fall is so radical that even this origin is incommensurate to the world. Now God can face the world only as entirely different.[124] In comparison to

120. Ibid., 60. The affirmation of a relation with God "beyond birth and death" (see also 76) is a fundamental negation of creation. See also 284, 430, 630.
121. Ibid., 202.
122. Ibid., 470–71. Cornelis van der Kooi, *Anfängliche Theologie: Der Denkweg des jungen Karl Barth (1909–1927)*, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 103 (Munich: Kaiser, 1987), 194 adduces *Rom* II, 470 to argue that Barth articulates a careful sense of hope. Yet the quotation above follows on the heels of that passage, negating any hope for this life.
123. McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 244 approvingly cites Ruschke's judgment that a statement may be one-sided and still true. Werner M. Ruschke, *Entstehung und Ausführung der Diastasentheologie in Karl Barths zweitem 'Römerbrief'* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987), 6. Yet in the same breath, McCormack judges, "Above all, the second edition is radical in its one-sidedness," like "all heresies worth their salt."
124. This is not in contrast to Barth's statement, "God's judgment and righteousness warrant God's most authentic immanence precisely in God's true transcendence" (*Rom* II, 162; see Busch, *Barth und die Pietisten*, 92). God is immanent to the world only as its primal origin, from

the cross, mention of Christ's physical resurrection is rather disparate at best,[125] as is the view that "this is what *krisis* means: negation and affirmation, death and life of the human person."[126]

Although the main impulse of *Rom* II is aggressively negative, a helpful aspect can nonetheless be seen in Barth's typical nature metaphors. To begin with, *Rom* II virtually always highlights the negative side of the experience of nature:

> How come modern people have this strange longing to experience the glaciers . . . the desert, the North Pole . . . the abyss of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, the terrible events of the past millions of years . . . the longing to experience and know a thousand things, which human persons would indeed not wish to experience and know, if they are immediately concerned with life itself, in an unbroken spirit.[127]

Barth thus deals with the topic of the sublime, sensitive to what Friedrich Schiller saw evoking both "woefulness" and "joyfulness."[128] A partner in conversation with Schiller was another intellectual lodestar of the young Barth, Immanuel Kant.[129] The notion of the

which, however, the world has become alienated. The "radicalism" of God's negation of the world must be understood "entirely radically." The negation cannot subsist alongside anything positive (*Rom* II, 160). The concept of God as the origin of the world is so radical that even the most pronounced contrast between God and world does not alter this relation—which thus must be conceived of in *entirely* abstract terms. Christians "are not relieved from the obligation to carry the *entire* burden of sin and the *entire* curse of death" (61).

125. See, for example, *Rom* II, 280. But see also 283–4: "The concept of the *resurrection* emerges with the concept of *death*, which means, however, with the concept of the end of all historical things as such. Christ as the physically *risen* one is always face-to-face with the physically *crucified* Christ and nothing else. . . . He is revealed and visible as the new human person . . . to the extent that he has given up on all visible, human, historical possibilities . . . in order to die. ... His resurrection is the non-historical event par excellence. . . . Obviously, *we* are *not* the ones who call this life 'our' life; obviously, this knowledge can be concrete only as the knowledge of our death."
126. *Rom* II, 101. However, the "negation" of the world must be complete, as is made clear shortly before, see 99–100.
127. Ibid., 420–21.
128. Friedrich Schiller, "Concerning the Sublime," in *Essays*, trans. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom, The German Library (New York: Continuum, 1993), 70–85; Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 257–62.

sublime resurfaces in Rudolf Otto's influential phenomenology of religion *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), which Barth had read "with considerable pleasure" in 1919.[130] *Rom* II, by contrast, interprets the sublime exclusively as calling the human person into question: "The understanding of what is characteristic of God is lost: the awareness of the ice crevice, the polar zone, the zone of desolation."[131] A critical perspective on the sublime is relevant since, for example, fascination and terror have often been experienced simultaneously in war. Tödt, for instance, described his experience of World War II in such terms.[132]

Part of the reason that *Rom* II is especially preoccupied with negating the sense of awe arising out of the experience of terror in nature is that *Rom* II advocates a priority of the law over the gospel, as will be argued in greater detail below. We might ask whether the experience of terror in nature or in history opens the door to a "natural theology," if indeed God's judgment precedes God's mercy. Later in his theological development, Barth would respond by rejecting the priority of the law. *Rom* II, by contrast, negates any legitimacy of the interest in the terrors of nature or history in the first place.

On the whole, the worldview of *Rom* II—a renunciation of "every hope in *this* world and in *this* heaven"[133]—resembles that which Hans

129. According to Kant, the sublime challenges the mind to abstract from inclinations, thus provoking freedom. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), 121.

130. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936, German 1917). Barth, letter to Thurneysen (June 3, 1919) in *Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21*, 329–32, at 330.

131. *Rom* II, 76, see 291, 470.

132. Tödt, *Der verlorene Haufe,* in Schuhmacher, *Verantwortungsethik*, 53. See Tödt, 181/ Schuhmacher, 54: "Negating this 'aesthetic' side of the war would be unrealistic and, for those that have experienced it, hypocritical."

133. *Rom* II, 100.

Jonas described as gnosis.[134] To what extent does the gnostic mindset considers sacraments, mysticism, and ethics meaningful in a dark world, or do they give way to nihilism? Jonas argues that these are

> secondary questions compared to the more urgent discovery that the fundamental approach of *any* existential ethics which might be possible in this area stipulates radical *negation* rather than the development within the natural and the human dimension. This creates . . . a lack of relationship, which does not tolerate any active subject of continuous self-realization to replace the passive subject of "dying" and "rebirth," of discontinuous transformation.[135]

It is certainly relevant at this point that Barth's categorical, critical language does not protect him from the impression that he negates the material world: "That which 'is' must be recognized as that which is not, so that that which is not can come into view as that which is."[136] The most striking parallel between *Rom* II and gnostic thought, however, is the gnostic notion of the transcendent redeemer who imparts knowledge by appearing in the world and then disappears

134. See Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 41. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, SJ, Communio Books (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 71, also calls *Rom* II gnostic. Compared with Christoph Markschies's more historically minded typology of gnostic literature, there is no ontological hierarchy of divine figures, including a demiurge, and no distinction of classes among humans in *Rom* II. *Rom* II may even call God the Creator of the universe, although this remains highly abstract. See Christoph Markschies, *Die Gnosis*, Beck'sche Reihe (Munich: Beck, 2001), 25–6. By contrast, Hans Jonas characterizes the subsumption of both matter and spirit in the realm of futility as the difference between gnosis and Platonism (see below).

135. Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Die mythologische Gnosis*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 200; see 144–5: "The great equation 'world = darkness' (*kosmos—skotos*) arises out of a new experience of the world, of which it is the most condensed expression. It is of an entirely different, constitutive universality than the notion 'body = grave' (*sōma—sēma*) that emerged from Greek culture, in orphism, yet which nonetheless could be integrated into a positive worldview . . . 'psyche' itself, now understood no longer in contrast to the lowly matter of the body, is conceptualized with withering clarity as a function of that dark cosmos. Human will, once it is faced with the options presented by the world, feels that with any self-actualization through choosing one of them, repeatedly reveals nothing other than its slavery to the world as such."

136. *Rom* II, 194.

into the transcendent realm—thus indicating God's worldlessness.[137] Hans Urs von Balthasar summarized the theological problem with *Rom* II thus: "We see how the very heart of Christianity, its most crucial doctrine, the Incarnation, becomes impossible."[138] Even sympathetic readers of *Rom* II such as Michael Beintker, Bruce McCormack, and Cornelis van der Kooi concede this latter point.[139]

At the same time von Balthasar's interpretation of *Rom* II is less than balanced in at least one respect. He argues that *Rom* II views the world in a fundamentally critical way, mostly as an independent entity vis-à-vis God. Yet von Balthasar takes Jesus' death on the cross fully into account only in the last section of his book on Barth, considering it the necessary consequence of the world's futility. *Rom* II, however, views the cross not only as the consequence of the world's futility, but primarily as its revelation: Christ "bridges the distance between God and the human person by ripping it open."[140] In spite of the one-sidedness of *Rom* II, it is a positive aspect that the cross is not romanticized and "adorned with roses."[141] Instead, the harshness of the cross is perceived as the blunt consequence and sign of alienation. Although the realization of scandalous suffering induces a reflex in Barth that negates the world that imposes such suffering, at the same time we are warned against belittling the

137. See Markschies, *Gnosis,* 25, 73, 92, Jonas, *Gnosis*, 124–6, 408.

138. Von Balthasar, *Theology of Karl Barth*, 72.

139. Cornelis van der Kooi, "Barths zweiter Römerbrief," 70, 75, McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 264.

140. *Rom* II, 53. Von Balthasar's interpretation of *Rom* II alludes to the cross only on 70, 72.

141. This image by Goethe, which corresponds to ideas in Luther and Hegel, was picked up, for example, by Hans Joachim Iwand: "The cross is the absolutely incommensurate dimension in God's revelation. It has become too much used to us, we are hardly stumbling against it anymore. We adorned the scandal of the cross with roses. We turned it into a theory of salvation. But that is not the cross. . . . Hegel defined the cross, saying, 'God is dead.' Presumably he was right in identifying the night of true and ultimate separation from God, which cannot be interpreted." Hans Joachim Iwand, "Tod und Auferstehung: Christologie II, Bonn 1959," in *Christologie: Die Umkehrung des Menschen zur Menschlichkeit*, eds. Eduard Lempp and Eberhard Thaidigsmann (Gütersloh: Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 291–433, 407. See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Die Geheimnisse: Ein Fragment": "Es steht das Kreuz mit Rosen dicht umschlungen. / Wer hat dem Kreuze Rosen zugesellt?"

passion. To be sure, this aspect is explicated in a one-sided way: Jesus "is the End of the human person."[142] While the crucified Christ is the "transparent image," the "incognito" of God's new world,[143] the cross is also the sign of the "the absolute (and not just a relative) otherness of God."[144] The hidden God is revealed in the Son and still remains the hidden God ("correcting here what was written in the first edition of this book"[145]). For the Son reveals the hidden God in a world that in the cross turns out to be the world of death. To be sure, it is theologically legitimate and necessary to speak of God's revelation of God's hiddenness.[146] The fundamental difficulty in *Rom* II, however, is that God's hiddenness, along with God's judgment on humanity, eclipses the revelation of the gospel. It is for this reason that von Balthasar's judgment about creation in *Rom* II is right after all: "Though the world (which is faced with the word of God) is certainly something and not nothing, it looks so forlorn and hopeless under this harsh glare [in *Rom* II] that one might as well wish it did not exist."[147] In the cross, the negation, the reality of God's salvation takes on worldly form, while in its nonworldly, eschatological form it is real in Christ's resurrection. In the face of the

142. This phrase occurs in *Rom* II, 206, 258, 689. 50 calls Jesus the "end of time."
143. Ibid., 442.
144. Ibid., 222 (Barth's parenthesis).
145. Ibid., 595.
146. See Eberhard Jüngel's emphasis on human joy in God's revelation, which crucially includes an abiding hiddenness, in "The Revelation of the Hiddenness of God: A Contribution to the Protestant Understanding of the Hiddenness of Divine Action," in *Theological Essays* II, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast (New York: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2014), 120–44, "Die Offenbarung der Verborgenheit Gottes: Ein Beitrag zum evangelischen Verständnis der Verborgenheit des göttlichen Wirkens," in *Wertlose Wahrheit: Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens*, Theologische Erörterungen III (München: Kaiser 1990), 163–82, at 169. In Jüngel's essay, however, the sense of joy about God's revelation, in which certain aspects remain hidden, is jeopardized by his adherence to Luther's fundamental conviction that God kills in order to make alive (ibid., 173; 1 Sam. 2:6), a statement that also plays an important role in *Rom* II. Jüngel seeks to redress the balance by negating a dark side in God (Jüngel, ibid., 195–6). This leaves God's undialectical being at variance with God's dialectical action, which emphatically includes "gruesome aspects" (ibid., 174, 175).
147. Von Balthasar, *Theology of Karl Barth*, 94 (trans. rev.).

fundamental and definitive negation of the world, the salvific aspect of the cross can only be expressed in an escapist way. Thus one can only embrace salvation indirectly in accepting its shadow side, the cross, as the critical negation of oneself.[148] Ultimately, however, *Rom* II does not simply wish for the world to cease to exist, but argues that Christians, as part of the world, must symbolize the necessary passing away of the world in their own lives. For this reason, faith is not a positive testimony to another reality, but a "void."[149] Only in negating themselves and affirming the fundamental weakness of their epistemological powers can Christians assume a posture that is appropriate vis-à-vis God. With human self-negation, the proper correspondence to Christ's cross that acknowledges God's reality within the confines of what is radically distinct from God, *Rom* II transcends a mere antithesis of human opinions and God's reality, articulating a relationship that is, however, of an utterly critical kind.[150] This is what Barth calls the primary ethical activity.

148. *Rom* II, 217 goes to great lengths to argue for embracing salvation in spite of judgment: "Love of God is the impossible act in which the creature loves the creator; the condemned one loves the judge; the vanquished, even the slain one loves the enemy; the sacrifice loves the priest who sacrifices it—only because God, *as* all of this and *in* all of this, is God, and because it would be still more impossible not to love God."

149. Ibid., 49, 56, 59, 86, etc.

150. According to Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 129, it is Christ's cross that constitutes an analogy between world and God. Yet certainly the critical edge of the negation must not be overlooked: "No descriptive analogy can capture the holiness of the primal origin and end" (*Rom* II, 549). God's positive relation to the world is real, but it cannot take on concrete form in the world; the negation of all worldly possibilities points to this fact, which thus, in this negative form, might be said to point indirectly to something positive. McCormack highlights the analogy of the cross at times (McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 8, 261, 340). Yet what he considers decisive (ibid., 252) is that the resurrection was a spatio-temporal event, even if not according to the standards of what is possible in this world. Thus, McCormack interprets *Rom* II in the sense that the *resurrection* creates an analogy between historical entities and God, in contrast to Spieckermann's preoccupation with the analogy of the *cross*. This former kind of analogy is, however, of an actualistic nature (ibid., 254; 262). The resurrection takes place in spite of the stark contrast between world and God. Indeed *Rom* II, 280 speaks of Christ as "the bodily, physically, personally risen one." In this *Rom* II breaks through the problematic contrast of immanence and transcendence. On the whole, however, the interest of *Rom* II is not in a positive relationship, but in the establishing of difference, calling the resurrection "the non-historical event par excellence" (284). Jesus' life is compatible with human history only in the

One crucial passage in which Barth argues for the utterly critical stance as the only appropriate one *coram Deo* (before God) is the interpretation of Romans 6. In a letter to Eduard Thurneysen, Barth called this chapter "the axle around which the entire letter revolves."[151] According to Rom. 6:4, Christians should "walk in newness of life" in order to correspond practically to being buried with Christ in baptism. Barth's previous interpretation in *Rom* I called baptism the warrant for the truth and the reality of the eschatological renewal of the present life. However, in a letter Barth now calls this view "surprisingly useless."[152] *Rom* II, by contrast, presents the aorist subjunctive *peripatēsōmen* ("[now] let us walk," Rom. 6:4) as a future subjunctive, which supposedly implies the strict transcendence of the new life.[153] In this world, the future will never become the present. This leads Barth to coin a new grammatical concept, a *futurum resurrectionis*, or *aeternum*, "future of the resurrection," or "eternal future."[154] In consequence, the new eschatological life does not have any temporal extension.

sense of a "*futurum resurrectionis*" (270, see below). McCormack omits Barth's explicit restrictions in quotations from *Rom* II (see *Rom* II, 271 in McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 258; *Rom* II, 284 in McCormack, *Barth's Theology*, 257). As Jesus' resurrection is nonhistorical, so is the new ethos of Rom. 6:4 nonhistorical. This is the "deadly [*sic!*] and incommensurable power of the Resurrection," which "protrudes into my *continuing in sin*" (*Rom* II, 271). By contrast, van der Kooi, "Barths zweiter Römerbrief," interprets the new life in *Rom* II in a strictly forensic sense, but he argues that *Rom* II retreats to a different dimension than that of history, which has remained "a weakness" (ibid., 70).

151. *Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21,* 477 (March 18, 1921).

152. Ibid.

153. *Rom* II, 270. See Barth's letter to Thurneysen from March 18, 1921 (*Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21,* 477). By contrast, Ernst Käsemann comments on Rom. 6:4, "The aorist subjunctive possibly replaces a logical future. . . . Yet the eschatological futures in vv. 5b and 8b are against this. . . . The verb *peripatein* should call attention to the fact that the apostle expects our resurrection only in the future and, as vv. 12–23 show, sees in the new obedience an anticipation of it and the sign of the already present reality of its power." Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 166–7.

154. *Rom* II, 270–72. Barth writes openly to Thurneysen that an exegetical predicament was the mother of invention (*Barth-Thurneysen-Briefwechsel 1913–21*, 477, March 18, 1921). See Beintker, *Die Dialektik*, 41–5: *Rom* II is characterized by a "dehistoricization of the salvific event, which is palpable throughout" (ibid., 44).

> The "walking in newness of life" characterizes of the new "I," which has been created anew in Christ, as being allowed, able, obliged and willing. It confirms my citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20) and constitutes the vitality of my life, which is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). The "walking in newness of life" is the invisible center of perspective and pole of relationship, the judgment which the invisible aspect of my life brings upon the visible aspect, the threat and promise, which—in a non-concrete, a-temporal manner—is valid beyond *all* concrete and temporal events of "my" life. It is valid *beyond* all of them because and to the extent that world is world, time is time, and the human person is human. The eternal future of my "walking in newness of life," which, in radical exclusivity, protrudes into my "continuing in sin" as the deadly and incommensurate power of the resurrection, is the meaning and, at the same time, the critique of my temporal being, thinking, and willing.[155]

Barth builds on this presupposition when he argues that Christians *are* new persons "only if the *futurum resurrectionis—we shall live*—presupposes a new 'we' as the reverse of dying with Christ."[156] Thus, the new ethos is not a positive presence, but objection to the old. In accordance, Barth understands Rom. 7:6—"But now we are discharged from the law" (*katērgēthēmen tou nomou*)—to say that the current ethos continues to be under categorical judgment; Christians are "liberated" from the law, however, insofar as they do not attribute any ultimate importance to the current state of affairs.[157]

His interpretation of Rom. 6:4 set the course for this view. In that verse, however, the question is less how plausible the "aspect" of a *futurum resurrectionis* may seem; the fundamental problem is that there is no such thing as a future subjunctive in Greek, whatever the

155. *Rom* II, 271. On the new life protruding (*hineinragen*) into life in sin like a rock, see Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 120 ("On Nature as a [Force]"): "Consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks . . . the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place." On Barth's engagement with the subject of the sublime, see above. Barth's re-configuration of the sublime aims at subverting any theological import of the experience of nature, thus restoring God's judgment as the only sublime event in the theological sense of the term.

156. *Rom* II, 284.

157. Ibid., 327.

aspect.[158] The verb is an ingressive aorist. Paul chose this aspect to convey that the new "walking" is becoming a reality not in some future, much less in some unattainable future, but right now.

In the face of this "eternal future," there is a remarkable—and, ironically, oft-quoted—comment of Barth's from 1940 that looks back to *Rom* II:

> It was due to the inner and outer circumstances of these years that the divine No of judgment, now understood as a No directed both to the present position and to all possible and attempted religious and cultural developments, had to be expressed more loudly, and certainly more clearly heard, than the gracious Yes that we believed we genuinely heard, and genuinely wished to express, from the end, the real end, of all things.[159]

Rom II argued for a relation of God to time that seemed posttemporal, but was in fact supratemporal. By contrast, *CD* II/1 argues, "The conceptions of God's pre-temporality, supra-temporality, and post-temporality have all to be emphasised in their different ways. But they are not to be played off the one against the other, as if God could be better known and were to be taken more seriously under one of these forms and less so or not at all under another."[160]

It is remarkable, however, that, as late as 1940, even this self-critical comment fails to go to the heart of the matter. Barth now refines God's extratemporality, but he cannot bring himself to attribute temporal being itself to God. This is the decisive problem already in *Rom* II, according to which God is temporal in Christ only insofar as God leaves the temporal mode of existence behind in the cross.

158. Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), 15. There is no textual variant to the aorist, according to *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed.

159. Barth, *CD* II/1, 634.

160. Ibid., 631.