

The Verdict of the Father and the Generation of the Son

Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead? The simple answer is “God.” But for those who confess the deity of Jesus Christ, this simple answer alone will not do. On the one hand, the deity of Jesus Christ seems to entail that he raised himself from the dead. But then, was he really dead if he could raise himself? On the other hand, we could further specify that God *the Father* raised Jesus Christ. But then, is Jesus Christ not fully God if he is excluded from the act of resurrection? What is needed is an account of the triune God at work in the initiating act of Easter: one that takes seriously the identification of God the Father as the one who raised Jesus Christ, yet without consequently denying the unity of God or the deity of Jesus Christ. Barth provides such an account in “The Verdict of the Father” (*CD IV/1*, §59.3).

The thesis of this chapter is that (a) Barth strictly appropriates the act of raising Jesus Christ to God the Father, yet in a way that does not exclude the distinctive participation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and (b) according to Barth, in this act the triune God corresponds to himself, that is, God the Father’s raising of Jesus Christ is grounded in the Father’s eternal generation of the Son. These two claims together underscore that Easter is an act of free grace; it is grounded in nothing but the movement and act of grace that takes place in God himself. Such a Trinitarian theology of the raising of Jesus Christ, with its *patrological* focus, takes the first step in the development of the overall thesis of this book: that the triune God is the subject and basis of Christ’s resurrection.

THE TRANSITION OF THE HUMILIATED SON OF GOD

In order to understand Barth’s Trinitarian doctrine of Christ’s resurrection, we must place it in the context of Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation. Within the structure of *CD IV/1–3*, the subsections devoted to Christ’s resurrection

perform a *transitional function* and bear a *Trinitarian form*. I will substantiate this claim by first briefly surveying the place of Christ's resurrection within the structure of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in general. Then I will discuss the transitional function of §59.3 within *CD IV/1* in particular. The purpose of these remarks is to place the systematic analysis of the remainder of this chapter within its proper literary context.

THE TRANSITIONAL SUBSECTIONS OF IV/1–3

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is developed over four part-volumes. The first three are structured along parallel lines, with five sections (or "paragraphs") in each part-volume. Barth builds this threefold structure through a unique coordination of three traditional christological loci: the two natures, the threefold office, and the two states. The five sections within each volume correspond to traditional loci as well: Christology, hamartiology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and the Christian life.¹ The ordering is at points peculiar to Barth, and the material exposition is thoroughly revised from his christocentric standpoint. On account of this standpoint, it should come as no surprise that the christological sections at the head of each part-volume are by far the largest and exercise perspectival control over the remaining topics.

Of particular interest is where Barth places his doctrine of Christ's resurrection. The final subsection of each christological section is dedicated to a reflection on Christ's resurrection. At first glance, this appears quite traditional and thus unremarkable. Where else would one treat Christ's resurrection than at the end of Christology before turning to other topics? It must be granted that Barth is following the linear narrative form of Scripture and the Creed by proceeding from Christ's incarnation through his death to his resurrection. But we must not let this smooth narrative shape obscure the architectonic function of these subsections.

*The function of these subsections is transitional.*² Barth places his discussion of Christ's resurrection where he does in order to speak of Christ's transition to us. Topically, Barth transitions from Christology proper to its anthropological effects and consequences (sin, ecclesiology, etc.).³ On account of his radical

1. Eberhard Jüngel describes, charts, and discusses the structure of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in *Karl Barth, a Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 46–51.

2. The transitional function of Christ's resurrection is R. Dale Dawson's central interpretive thesis in *The Resurrection in Karl Barth* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007). Jüngel also notes the significance of these "transitional concepts" in *Karl Barth*, 50.

3. *CD IV/1*, 284: "But before we enter on this series of further problems . . . we must engage in a kind of transitional discussion. . . . What is the connexion between these new problems and our previous

christocentrism, Barth regards such a transitional discussion as necessary. He has developed his Christology and soteriology in such a way that one cannot avoid wondering whether there is any room left for us. The life history of Jesus Christ *is* the history of reconciliation. He “took our place.”⁴ In him the covenant between God and humanity is fulfilled. What could possibly come after such a finished, perfect work?

In the light of the risen Jesus Christ we see that God wills a further history beyond this fulfillment of the history of the covenant. At Easter, Christ’s life of obedience unto death is opened up to us. The risen Christ himself makes room for us. He supplies his own transition to us, so that we are not left to our own devices, trying to bridge the ugly ditch between history and faith on our own.⁵ His living self-attestation makes possible our attestation of him. Bearing witness to this opening up—this transition—is the function of Barth’s subsections on Christ’s resurrection.⁶

Over the course of IV/1–3, Barth develops this same basic transitional argument from three different perspectives. In each subsection, he develops the transitional argument in a manner congruent with the christological motif of the part-volume in which it is found. So, in IV/1, Barth speaks of Christ’s resurrection as the *Verdict* of the Father, corresponding to the judicial language of the first form of the doctrine of reconciliation. In IV/2, Barth describes Christ’s resurrection as the *Direction* of the Son, corresponding to the moral focus of the second form of the doctrine of reconciliation. In IV/3, Barth discusses Christ’s resurrection as the *Promise* of the Spirit, corresponding to the teleological orientation of the third form of the doctrine of reconciliation. In

questions and answers? How are we going to proceed to build on this christological basis? . . . With what right can we speak of our sin, of our justification, of ourselves as a community and of our faith, in the light of what Jesus Christ is and has done for us? How does He come to us or we to Him?”

4. CD IV/1, 273. Here Barth summarizes the fourfold “for us” of “The Judge Judged in Our Place” (§59.2).

5. Barth alludes to and occasionally names Lessing in the context of these transitional discussions.

6. Joseph Mangina is formally correct when he identifies “participation” as the theme of Barth’s transitional discussions in *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 51–89. However, his material account of Barth’s understanding of participation is skewed. He claims that Barth “found himself compelled to abandon their [his liberal teachers’] anti-metaphysical prejudices” (83). The truth is Barth remained anti-metaphysical throughout his theological development, and his understanding of participation in the risen Christ is decidedly anti-metaphysical, insofar as the mode of our participation is *witness*: we share in the risen Christ’s own active self-attestation. For more on the meaning of participation in Barth, see Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry in Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009). Neder’s critiques of Mangina are insightful and persuasive (*ibid.*, 97, 114).

each case, the transitional subsection moves the argument from Christology proper to its anthropological/ecclesial consequences by bearing witness to Christ's resurrection.⁷

However, unlike the preceding Christological subsections, *the transitional discussions of Christ's resurrection bear a Trinitarian form*. Instead of a dialectical inversion of Christological themes (for example, "The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country" vs. "The Homecoming of the Son of Man"), we find a Trinitarian pattern: the Verdict of the *Father*, the Direction of the *Son*, and the Promise of the *Spirit*. In fact, this is the only instance of Trinitarian parallelism in the sectional titles of *CD IV*. This is not meant to imply that these are the only relevant Trinitarian texts within Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, but it does indicate that these are major resources for understanding Barth's mature doctrine of the Trinity.

This Trinitarian parallelism is not mere window dressing. It highlights the Trinitarian structure of Barth's doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Read together in light of this parallelism, the common thesis of all three subsections is that the subject and basis of the transition from Christ to us is the triune God. The grammar of the risen Christ's transition to us is Trinitarian, and the ground of this transition is the triune God who corresponds to himself in this act.

The Trinitarian form of Barth's argument in these subsections supports the transitional function of Christ's resurrection within the doctrine of reconciliation. By identifying the triune God as the subject and basis of the act of transition, Barth removes any sense in which we are left to our own devices in trying to bridge the gap between Christ and us. In other words, Christ's transition to us is a work of *grace*. The Trinitarian grammar and ground of Christ's resurrection underscores this soteriological point.

BEYOND-THE-CROSS: THE PROBLEM OF TRANSITION IN §59.3

Now that we have discussed the transitional function and Trinitarian form of Christ's resurrection within *CD IV* as a whole, let us turn to §59.3 in particular. The whole of §59.3 is dedicated to answering one main question: Is there room for us sinners after the conversion of the world that took place on the cross? Is there a "genuine beyond" the crucifixion, one that includes us without canceling the seriousness of the cross?⁸ The short answer is yes. Because God

7. Barth signals the structural significance of these transitional discussions in his overview of the doctrine of reconciliation by organizing his discussion of the anthropological side of reconciliation ("The Being of Man in Jesus Christ," §58.2) around these three concepts: verdict (pp. 93–99), direction (pp. 99–107), and promise (pp. 108–22).

raised Jesus Christ from the dead, there is a genuine beyond-the-cross event, one that makes room for us without overturning what took place on Good Friday. On Easter, the humiliated Son of God was revealed and justified by God the Father and comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Barth expands this answer by deriving from Easter five conditions of a genuine beyond-the-cross event: it must be (1) an act of *God*, (2) a *new* act of God, (3) an act positively *related* to the act of crucifixion, (4) an event *in space-and-time*, and (5) an act *united* with the cross as an event within the one history of Jesus Christ. Barth organizes §59.3 around these five points, showing how Christ's resurrection meets each of these conditions.

Since Barth has derived these conditions from the actuality of this particular event, his argument seems to lack suspense.⁹ However, the movement of thought over the course of the five points is full of tension, as he *begins by stressing the sharp differentiation between cross and resurrection before moving to their deep unity*. Barth argues that the raising of Jesus Christ is a free act of divine grace, not a necessary sequel to the cross. So the suspense and even surprise of Easter morning is highlighted in Barth's exposition, even while the overall trajectory of his argument points toward the interconnection and unity of cross and resurrection.¹⁰

8. CD IV/1, 297. Barth's question in this subsection is a critical appropriation of the modern faith and history question. The real problem is the confrontation between our true, reconciled being in Jesus Christ crucified and our sinful being. In the modern period, this problem takes the form of the problem of faith and history. Barth takes seriously this "problem of time," or "Lessing's problem," but regards it as an evasion of the real problem when considered abstractly. Barth signals the distinction between the real problem and this evasion by the line break on page 323 of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Band IV, 1 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), hereafter *KD IV/1*. This line break is unfortunately missing in the standard English translation (CD IV/1, 294). Despite this distinction, however, Barth does not simply set aside the problem of faith and history as a pseudo-problem, as suggested by R. D. Dawson in *The Resurrection in Karl Barth*, 96–98. Rather, Barth *sublates* the problem: he affirms its relevance, negates its evasiveness, and transposes its temporal aspect into the higher problem of transition. For Barth's use of the Hegelian pattern of sublation, cf. George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 98.

9. In fact, this is a common pattern in Barth's theology, both within particular subsections and over the course of large blocks of material. Barth often briefly introduces the solution at the head of an argument in order to develop the problem on its basis. He then proceeds to develop the solution in detail. This pattern of thought is as an expression of his christocentric methodology.

10. The differentiated unity of cross and resurrection is the central theme of Klappert's analysis of §59.3 in *Die Auferweckung des Gekreuzigten: Der Ansatz der Christologie Karl Barths im Zusammenhang der Christologie der Gegenwart* (Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), 287–397.

It is important to stress this movement of thought because it corresponds to the Trinitarian grammar operative in this subsection.¹¹ Barth begins with the differentiation between cross and resurrection, in the context of which he appeals to the differentiation between the Father and the Son. As Barth moves to the positive relation and unity of cross and resurrection, he appeals to the unity of the Father and the Son in the Spirit. Barth's Trinitarian theology of Easter thus serves his overall transitional argument. Consequently, the Trinitarian reflections of §59.3 are not merely "tacked on" to an unrelated argument, but are incorporated into the structure of Barth's movement of thought.

The point of departure in this movement of thought manifests the *patrological focus* of §59.3. God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead, the Son participating in this act only as the object and recipient of the Father's grace. Such a patrological focus befits the Christology of IV/1: the way of the obedient Son of God led to death, and so God the Son in his humiliation stands in need of God the Father's act to release him from death. In other words, the Trinitarian form of §59.3 serves its transitional function within the structure of IV/1. Keeping this context in mind, let us now turn to an analysis of Barth's Trinitarian grammar of the raising of Jesus Christ.

THE TRINITARIAN GRAMMAR OF THE RAISING OF CHRIST (§59.3)

Who is the subject of Christ's resurrection? For Barth, the first answer is "God the Father." Christ is the one who *was raised*. Thus in §59.3 Barth speaks first of the raising of Jesus Christ by God the Father, and only secondarily of Christ's own arising. In my exposition, I will begin by discussing at length the sense and significance of appropriating the initiating act of Easter to God the Father. Then I will turn briefly to the sense in which both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit participate in this act.¹² The purpose of this section is to substantiate the

11. This movement of thought fits a Trinitarian pattern identified by Eberhard Busch in *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 44: "In the dogmatics Barth views each of the themes he addresses as an aspect from which to reflect on the being of God in his Word and work. He structures his train of thought, with a certain freedom and yet with a recognizable constancy, with a three-step sequence, in both small and large contexts. This threefold step is obviously an implication of the way he understands the doctrine of the Trinity. As a rule he speaks first of the subject of the divine Word and work, then of the act, and finally of the goal. Again and again his train of thought seeks to correspond to God's movement to humanity, to his turning to humanity and of humanity, in order to disclose himself to the human and the human to him." The first three points of §59.3 correspond roughly to Busch's three-step structure: (1) subject: God the Father raised Jesus Christ; (2) act: God declares his verdict concerning the cross; and (3) goal: Jesus Christ is present with his community in the time between the times. Although I do not follow this pattern, this rough correspondence corroborates my analysis of §59.3.

claim that *Barth strictly appropriates the act of raising Jesus Christ from the dead to God the Father, but in a way that does not exclude the distinctive participation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*. This claim is significant for two reasons: (1) it shows that Barth does in fact have a Trinitarian grammar of Christ's resurrection,¹³ and (2) it sets the stage for the argument of the third major section of this chapter, concerning the Trinitarian ground of the raising of Jesus Christ.

GOD THE FATHER

In the first instance, the subject of Christ's resurrection is God the Father. It is important for my overall argument that Barth *begins* by appropriating Christ's resurrection to God the Father. Positively, this is the proper starting point because all acts of God are *initiated* by the Father. We are not speaking of the Father in abstraction from the Son and the Spirit, but as the source of the divine act of resurrection. Negatively, if one were to begin with the activity of Jesus Christ, then reference to the action of God the Father on Jesus Christ is rendered superfluous. This is one of the weaknesses of the traditional view that Christ's resurrection was logically necessary due to his deity. Barth blocks the docetic tendency of this view by appropriating the initiating act of Easter to God the Father. The depth of the incarnate Son's obedience unto death is manifest in this: he stands in utter need of God the Father's gracious act of raising him from the dead.

There are three dogmatic reasons why Barth appropriates the raising of Jesus to God the Father. The first is that Easter is an exclusively *divine* act initiated by God the Father. The second is the *newness* of God's act of raising. The third is the *creative* character of Christ's resurrection. The first two reasons are laid out in Barth's first two points of §59.3, respectively. The third reason is a recurring theme throughout §59.3.

How does this Trinitarian form of Barth's doctrine of the raising of Jesus Christ serve its transitional function? Barth's appeal to the Trinitarian differentiation of Father and Son serves to emphasize the differentiation between cross and resurrection. The initiative of God the Father in the act of raising corresponds to the *revelatory* function of Christ's resurrection. The

12. In anticipation of ch. 3, it is worth noting the inversion of the movement of thought between §59.3 (from God the Father to Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit) and §64.4 (from Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to God the Father).

13. *Pace* Jürgen Moltmann, who claims that Barth's doctrine of the Trinity prevents him from perceiving the Trinitarian relations operative in the Easter event, in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), 61–65, 83–90, 139–44.

newness of God the Father's act of raising corresponds to the *juridical* character of Christ's resurrection. Easter's connection to creation corroborates the previous two points as well as supports the temporal and historical aspects of Barth's argument. God the Father raised the crucified Christ in order to reveal himself in him, to pronounce his verdict upon him, and to confirm himself as Creator and Lord. These aspects of Christ's resurrection as a distinct act that follows his crucifixion are intensified and explicited by appropriating this act to God the Father.

RESURRECTION AS REVELATION

According to Barth, the raising of Jesus Christ was a divine act of revelation. The revelatory function of the resurrection distinguishes it from the crucifixion. Christ's resurrection from the dead is an act of *God*, whereby God reveals himself in Jesus Christ. Easter is the primal revelation. The obedience of the Son of God that was fulfilled on Good Friday has been revealed on Easter. Whereas the former is an act of God with a component of human action, the latter is an act of God alone. In order to develop this point, Barth draws on the Trinitarian grammar of Easter. It is God *the Father* who raises his Son Jesus Christ from the dead, initiating a new history beyond the cross. Since (a) the Father is the initiator of divine revelation, and (b) Christ's resurrection is the primal revelation, then (c) God the Father is rightly spoken of as the initiator of Christ's resurrection. This move substantiates my claim that Barth attributes the act of raising Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Barth's first point in §59.3 is that "the raising of Jesus Christ . . . is . . . an act of *God*."¹⁴ Per his usual pattern of thought, Barth begins with the divine *subject* who acts in the event under investigation.¹⁵ Of course, to say that the raising of Jesus is an act of God does not set it apart from any other event worthy of theological study. The raising of Jesus shares with the "preceding event of the cross" its character as an act of God.¹⁶ In fact, this was the whole point of the preceding subsections: that God himself acts in Jesus Christ's life of obedience unto death (§59.1), and thereby executes his gracious judgment (§59.2). Like the cross before it, the subject of Christ's resurrection is God.

14. *CD IV/1*, 330, translation revised and original German emphasis restored; cf. Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Band IV, 1 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 330, hereafter cited as *KD IV/1*.

15. E. Busch, *The Great Passion*, 44: "As a rule he speaks first of the subject of the divine Word and work."

16. *CD IV/1*, 300.

What differentiates the cross and resurrection is not whether God was the acting subject, but whether God was the *sole* acting subject. The raising of Jesus, unlike his death, is a work performed solely and exclusively by God, without any accompanying human action. The crucifixion was exclusively ordained by God, but it was fulfilled with the participation of human agents.¹⁷ Not so the resurrection. The resurrection was ordained *and fulfilled* by God alone: “The happening on the third day which followed that of Golgotha is the act of God with the same seriousness, but it is unequivocally marked off from the first happening by the fact that it does not have in the very least this component of human willing and activity. Not merely in purpose and ordination, but in its fulfillment, too, it is exclusively the act of God.”¹⁸ This difference in agency—an act of God with a human component on the one hand and an exclusively divine act on the other—constitutes the first and decisive difference between the cross and the resurrection.¹⁹ As we shall see, this difference cannot be coherently asserted without recourse to the Trinitarian grammar of Easter.

Having begun by asserting this difference, Barth then substantiates his assertion. *The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an exclusive act of God because it is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.*²⁰ Here is Barth’s argument in a nutshell: since (a) resurrection is revelation, and (b) revelation is an act of God alone, therefore

17. CD IV/1, 300: “As the judgment of God, the event of Golgotha is exclusively the work of God. Its fulfillment is ordained by God even in detail. But all the same it has a component of human action—both obedient and good on the one hand and disobedient and evil on the other.”

18. CD IV/1, 300.

19. Barth compares this exclusivity to the work of creation, a point to which I will return below (cf. “Resurrection as New Creation”)

20. This is Barth’s second and decisive reason. Prior to this, he notes a true but inadequate reason. This reason is anthropological: dead people don’t *do* things. The dead are not subjects who can perform acts. “An event which continues the being of man after death cannot be the result of the will and activity either of the man himself or of other men. To be dead means not to be. Those who are not, cannot will and do, nor can they possibly be objects of the willing and doing of others. ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν is not one possibility of this kind with others. Where it takes place, *God and God alone* is at work” (CD IV/1, 301). But this anthropological reason for attributing the raising of Jesus exclusively to God (the Father) is inadequate. In fact, to entertain the implications of this human impossibility for too long could easily slip into natural theology, albeit of a negative sort. To speak of human impossibility is not the same as speaking of divine possibility, “for to talk of that which is impossible to man is not by a long way to speak of God” (CD IV/1, 301). Barth does not deny the truth contained in this line of thought, especially if it is a truly *theological* anthropology of resurrection. But the anthropological reason must not compete with the strictly theological reason: that divine self-revelation is by definition an exclusively divine act. For an account of the subjectivity of the Father in the Easter event that relies more on this anthropological argument, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 203–17.

(c) resurrection is an act of God alone.²¹ The logic of this argument is *prima facie* valid. What may not be so obvious is the truth of its premises. Within the immediate context, Barth offers a brief explanation of and substantiation for these two premises.

The revelatory function of Christ's resurrection emerges from his reading of the New Testament. According to Barth's interpretation of the narrative logic of the Gospels, God himself was present and active in Jesus Christ and so was revealed in him, but the apprehension of this revelation was not mediated to the apostles until the forty days of Easter. Barth draws on the simple exegetical observation that the Easter appearance stories are *revelations*, and argues that they reveal not only who he is but also who he was, casting light on the previously hidden reality of God in him. All anticipations of this apprehension (for example, the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan) are exceptions that prove the rule.²²

The identification of revelation as an exclusive act of God also emerges from Barth's reading of the New Testament. In the Easter narratives, Jesus Christ's self-revelation does not rely on the human agency or ingenuity of his apostles. Rather, Jesus calls them by name, opens their eyes, and even knocks them off their horses. It was not until the element of human willing was removed, as it was in the resurrection, that a genuine and trustworthy revelation could be received: "In a strange way this perception was unattainable by the disciples as long as they had the opportunity for it, as long as it seemed to be attainable, as long as the happening still had that component of human willing and action, and could to that extent be accepted and understood by them."²³ Revelation in its most basic form is an exclusive act of God, and the most basic form of revelation is Christ's resurrection.

So, since resurrection is revelation, and since revelation is an exclusive act of God, then resurrection is an exclusive act of God. Although I have recapitulated Barth's brief supporting evidence for the two premises of this

21. *CD IV/1*, 302: "The perception was mediated to them when on the third day, Easter Day, He came amongst them again in such a way that His presence as the man He had been (had been!) was and could be exclusively and therefore unequivocally the act of God without any component of human will and action; that it was and could be understood by them only and exclusively as such, exclusively and therefore unequivocally as the self-attestation of God in this man without any co-operation of a human attestation serving it."

22. *CD IV/1*, 302. In this context, Barth mentions only Peter's confession, but these three events are consistently cited together (cf. *CD I/2*, 114; *CD III/2*, 478–80; *CD IV/2*, 135–41).

23. *CD IV/1*, 302.

argument, it would be misleading to think that the evidence supplied in this context exhausts the whole of Barth's support for these premises. Why? Because these premises can be found among the basic constellation of convictions Barth came to during his break from theological liberalism that he retained throughout his career.²⁴ Thus the full substantiation of these premises can only be found in Barth's work as a whole. The expression of these convictions within "The Verdict of the Father" is representative, and so for our purposes we can be satisfied with a presentation that stays within this context.

There are two important implications of the fact that Barth introduces the concept of revelation to support his claim that the resurrection is an exclusive act of God. First, it shows that Barth continued to identify revelation as a crucial function of resurrection. Even as he sought to overcome his earlier tendency to reduce resurrection to a function of revelation, Barth never displaced the revelatory character of Christ's resurrection.²⁵ Second, it shows that Barth remained committed to the irreducible subjectivity of God in his revelation. God truly reveals himself in Jesus Christ without being made into a mere object of knowledge to be "read off" the history of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁶ God's irreducible subjectivity in his revelation was protected by means of a thoroughgoing eschatological interpretation of Easter during Barth's Romans II period.²⁷ But from the *Göttingen Dogmatics* forward, Barth deployed the

24. Both themes (the irreducible subjectivity of God in his revelation and the resurrection as the primal revelation) saturate both the first and second editions of Barth's Romans commentary, as well as other writings from this early period. See the evidence supplied by Bruce L. McCormack, in *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 161, 198, 212, and 251–58.

25. Over the course of his career, Barth sought to overcome his earlier reduction of resurrection to a function of revelation. As he puts it, the resurrection "was not . . . something merely formal and noetic" (CD IV/1, 301). Christ's resurrection is not merely the noetic counterpart to the cross (CD IV/1, 304).

Christ's resurrection is both noetic and ontic; it has a formal and material side. These sorts of lines are certainly aimed at Rudolf Bultmann, with whom Barth is engaged in "an intensive, although for the most part quiet, debate" throughout IV/1 (CD IV/1, ix). But it must be recalled that many of Barth's critiques of Bultmann are also directed against his earlier theology, e.g., his self-critical reflections in *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II, Part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 634–36, hereafter cited as CD II/1. However, this self-critique does not imply that Barth rejects the revelatory function of Christ's resurrection. Revelation remained an important function of Christ's resurrection from the beginning of Barth's break from liberalism until the day he died. There was significant development here, but development along a consistent trajectory.

26. Bruce McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 28–29.

27. Per the developmental paradigm advanced by Bruce McCormack in *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 21–22; noted also in idem, *Orthodox and Modern*, 29–31.

doctrine of the Trinity in his argument for the subjectivity of God in his revelation.²⁸ God is the initiator, act, and result of revelation, that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So it is fitting that in §59.3, after appealing to the concept of revelation, Barth turns to a Trinitarian analysis of Christ's resurrection.

The deity of God in his Easter revelation calls for a Trinitarian analysis. For Barth, God the Father is the initiator of divine revelation. So if Christ's resurrection is the primal form of divine revelation, then God the Father is the initiator of Christ's resurrection. The initiating act of Easter, the *raising* of Jesus Christ, is rightly appropriated to God the Father. This appropriation does not exclude the distinctive participation of the Son and the Spirit, for the raising of Christ does not exhaust the richness of the Easter event. Christ also *arises* and is *present* to the end of the age. But the initiating act of this manifold event rests wholly with God the Father.

This assertion appears in the final fine-print paragraph of Barth's first point, where he restates in Trinitarian terms the claim that the raising of Jesus Christ is an act of God. But Barth does not simply apply a ready-made doctrine of the Trinity to Easter. In fact, Barth warns against a careless application of Trinitarian dogma to the subject of the resurrection: "we must also be careful how to handle the thought (which is *correct* not merely in the sense of later Trinitarian theology) that Jesus Christ as the Son of God was associated with the Father as the Subject of His own resurrection. The New Testament does not put it in this way."²⁹ Note that Barth does not outright reject the participation of the Son of God in his resurrection—a point I will return to later. But he does place a stern warning here against a careless application of the Trinitarian dogma to the raising of Jesus Christ.

Instead of such careless Trinitarian theologizing, Barth develops an exegetical argument for appropriating the raising of Jesus Christ to God the Father. Barth begins by citing Gal. 1:1 and Rom. 6:4 as underlining the fact that "the Subject of the resurrection is not simply θεός, according to the regular usage, but θεός πατήρ."³⁰ These are by no means the only New Testament

28. Again per McCormack's paradigm; cf. *Göttingen Dogmatics*, §5; *Christliche Dogmatik*, §9; *CD IV/1*, §8.

29. *CD IV/1*, 303, original German emphasis restored (*KD IV/1*, 334).

30. *CD IV/1*, 303. Barth does not identify any references for the "regular usage," though there is little disputing that the raising of Jesus is consistently attributed to "God" in the New Testament. He is probably not referring to the Easter narratives in the Gospels, which make few references to God the Father's raising of Jesus, focusing rather on Jesus' own agency in his self-disclosure. Instead, he is likely referring to Paul's regular usage along with that of other NT epistles, and perhaps also the pattern of the speeches in the book of Acts. For more on the dogmatic significance of identifying "God" in the New

texts that attribute the raising of Jesus to God the Father; rather, they are representative of a larger pattern. However, Barth's selection of texts from Galatians and Romans is not incidental. *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 is controlled by the juridical metaphor, so it befits the context to cite texts from the Reformers' favorite epistles.³¹

By contrasting texts that identify simply "God" as subject with those that identify "God the Father" as subject, Barth indicates that Christian proclamation from its inception cannot avoid some kind of differentiation between God as the one who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and the Son of God as the one who was raised in Jesus Christ. Simply speaking of an undifferentiated "God" in this case will not do; further specification is required. The theological task set by such texts is to develop this specified differentiation with clarity and consistency.

Barth takes up this task by first addressing some problematic passages. Barth cites two Johannine texts that seem to attribute Christ's resurrection to himself (John 10:18; 11:35). He argues that (a) these texts can be interpreted in a sense that does not contradict those that attribute his raising to God the Father, and (b) these texts must be interpreted in dialectical juxtaposition to other texts (Johannine and otherwise) that place Jesus Christ within the sphere of God the Father's raising while still attributing the act of raising wholly to the latter.

Barth cites three such texts: John 5:26; Rom. 1:4; and Philippians 2. John 5:26 shows that the life the Son has in himself is in fact "given to him by the Father," who has life in himself.³² Romans 1:4 says Jesus Christ "in His resurrection from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . was characterized, designated, declared to be the Son of God."³³ Accordingly, Jesus' status as the Son of God is declared in his resurrection, and yet he is not the subject of this declaration. Barth emphasizes that the verb for "designated" (ὀρίσθεις) is in the passive voice. Finally, and most decisively, Philippians 2 sets in clear contrast the Son's self-emptying and self-humbling unto death on the one side, and God's exalting of him and giving to him the name above every

Testament as the Father, see Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations*, Volume I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 79–148.

31. Of course, these references could simply come from Barth's immersion in Galatians and Romans as he prepares for his forthcoming doctrine of justification (§61). But, as we shall see below ("Resurrection as Justification"), Barth deploys juridical concepts in his doctrine of Christ's resurrection. So these texts are selected not only because they attribute the raising of Jesus to the *Father*, but also because they point to the *verdict* pronounced by the Father in raising Jesus from the dead.

32. *KD* IV/1, 334, emphasis original.

33. *CD* IV/1, 303.

name on the other. Barth places emphasis on the word “God” (*Gott*) in verse 9 as the acting subject of Christ’s exaltation, and on the verb “given” (*geschenkt*), for which he supplies the Greek word (ἐχαρίσματο), with its connotations of grace, as indicating Christ’s position as the recipient of God’s grace.³⁴

In light of the significance of the first stanzas of the Philippian hymn in “The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country” (§59.1), it is fitting that Barth would complete the christological section of IV/1 with a reference to the final stanzas of that hymn. Such fittingness is not only a matter of formal symmetry, but also a material consequence of the Christology developed in §59.1. Since the mystery of the deity of Jesus Christ is that the true God became truly human and died as such, it follows that “the one whole Jesus Christ, very man and very God, was dead and buried.”³⁵ This means that not only as man, but also as God, we must speak of Jesus Christ as dead and buried and so standing in need of God the Father’s gracious act of resurrection.³⁶

God the Father’s act of raising Jesus Christ is not Barth’s only word on the subject, but it is the certainly the first word. It is fitting that this would be the first Trinitarian move Barth would make, given that his first point about Easter is that it is the basic form of revelation and therefore an exclusively divine act of revelation. As such, the initiative of Easter lies wholly with God the Father. But all this talk of the activity of God the Father is not intended to exclude talk of Jesus Christ as the subject of his resurrection. I will develop this idea below.³⁷ At this point, it is necessary to see the purpose of Barth’s appropriation of the act of raising Jesus Christ to God the Father: Barth prohibits docetism by appropriating the initiating act of Easter to God the Father. In Christ’s death, all possibilities for further action are removed. But God the Father acts in raising him from the dead. All subsequent action on the part of the risen Jesus Christ and us with him is based on the initiating act of God the Father.

Why does Barth so emphasize the subjectivity of God the Father in this context? The short answer is *grace*.³⁸ According to Barth, the free grace of Easter

34. *KD IV/1*, 334.

35. *CD IV/1*, 303. “Gestorben und begraben war der eine ganze Jesus Christus, wahrer Mensch und wahrer Gott” (*KD IV/1*, 334).

36. Earlier in his career, Barth did appropriate the raising of Jesus Christ to God the Father: “God the Father acts on Him and through Him by raising Him from the dead” (*CD I/1*, 387). However, he did so only with reference to “the man Jesus of Nazareth” (*ibid.*). What is new in IV/1 is the claim that God the Father raised Jesus Christ in his divine-human unity.

37. See “The Receptivity of the Son.”

38. *CD IV/1*, 304: “The comprehensive relevance of the resurrection, its redemptive significance for us, depends upon its being what it is described in the New Testament, God’s free act of grace.”

can only be expressed in terms of this Trinitarian grammar. God's free grace is shown in that the Father raises his Son Jesus Christ from the dead. Humanity's receptivity of divine grace is shown in that Jesus Christ did not raise himself but was raised by God the Father. This sets up the argument of a later section concerning the ontological ground of Christ's resurrection: God the Father's act of free grace is grounded in the movement and action of grace within the triune God. But before we turn to this matter, I must further explicate Barth's Trinitarian grammar of the raising of Jesus Christ.

RESURRECTION AS JUSTIFICATION

The raising of Jesus Christ was not only a divine act of revelation, but also a *new* divine act of *justification*. When understood in the light of its juridical character, the resurrection is further distinguished from the crucifixion. Christ's resurrection from the dead is a *new* act of God, in which God freely justified himself, his Son Jesus Christ, and us in him. When developing this distinction in terms of the juridical rubric operative throughout *CD IV/1*, Barth continues to draw on the Trinitarian grammar of Easter. It is God the *Father* who acts justly in raising his Son Jesus Christ from the dead. This is set in contrast to the crucifixion, which was the fulfillment of the loving obedience of the *Son* in his relation to the Father. In order to advance his overall transitional argument, Barth *differentiates* the resurrection from the cross by exposing the *juridical* character of Christ's resurrection along *Trinitarian* lines. This move further substantiates my claim that Barth appropriates the act of raising Jesus Christ to God the Father.³⁹

Why does Barth turn from revelation to justification? Scripture, of course, leads him to discuss the raising of Jesus Christ as our justification: "he was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). But why does he turn to justification at this point in his argument? Barth believes that the judicial character of Christ's resurrection more clearly differentiates Christ's resurrection from his crucifixion. Although revelation remains a leading motif for describing Christ's resurrection, it does not exhaust the meaning of Easter. Resurrection ought not to be reduced to a function of revelation.⁴⁰ As "an autonomous, new act of God," Christ's resurrection is "not, therefore, the noetic converse of [the cross]; nor is it merely the revelation and declaration of its positive significance and

39. Gerald O'Collins says regarding Barth's doctrine of Christ's resurrection that "penal substitution theology requires relegation to the museum of theology" ("Karl Barth on Christ's Resurrection," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26:1 (1973): 95). I consider Barth's use of juridical language to conceptually re-describe not only Christ's death but also his resurrection as evidence that forensic categories can be adapted and expanded rather than merely set aside.