

**VERY GOD, VERY MAN: A THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF
KARL BARTH'S CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

by

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For my parents.

From a young age you installed a love for God and love for understanding.
You taught me to think and why to think, allowing me to work out much of
my early theology around our dinner table.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”
Matthew 18:20

ABSTRACT

In opposition to the historical context of twentieth-century human centered religion, Karl Barth argues for a theologically based anthropology, fixing human self-knowledge on divine revelation and so constructing his understanding of humanity from within his Christology. In founding his concept of humanity on the reality of Christ, Barth is able to avoid the twin pitfalls of optimistic and pessimistic descriptions of humanity in the surrounding zeitgeist.

Barth's anthropology depicts the existence of true humanity as it is only made possible and represented by the person of Jesus Christ, who is simultaneously God for humanity and humanity for God. For Barth, this is humankind as it was created to be. This thesis examines Barth's corpus to answer the question: Does a coherent theological treatment of humanity exist throughout Barth's corpus, as it is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ?

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INTRODUCTION

Few theological concepts have more pragmatic significance than one's doctrine of humanity. A theological anthropology expresses an individual's understanding of himself or herself in relation to God. It also gives expression to God as He is in relation to humanity and to creation. In this, a theological anthropology prioritizes the expression of God, above an expression of humanity. As such, a theological anthropology expresses an individual's understanding of himself or herself in relation to God after it has given expression to God as He is in relation to His creation, which includes humanity. A theological anthropology seeks to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "What is my purpose?" by first answering the question "Who is God?" and "What is His intent for humanity?"

In opposition to the historical context of twentieth-century human centered religion, Karl Barth argues for a theologically based anthropology. He fixes human self-knowledge on divine revelation and so constructs his understanding of humanity from within his Christology, as is found in volume III/2 of his *Church Dogmatics*.¹ Barth's proposed description of humankind appears less pessimistic about the state of humanity when compared to his earlier writings. For example, early on Barth describes humanity as a riddle,² existing in a state of *Krisis* that marks an "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and humanity.³ This state of *Krisis* is one wherein "Man cannot escape his

¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. T.F. Torrance (New York: T & T Clark, 2009) vol. III/2. The *Church Dogmatics* will be shortened to *CD* henceforth.

² Karl Barth, *The Word of God & The Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), 197.

³ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 10-11.

humanity, and means limitation, finitude, creaturehood, separation from God.”⁴ By founding his concept of humanity on the reality of Christ in the *CD*, Barth is able to avoid the overly optimistic descriptions of humanity that were evident in the scientific, philosophical, and theological views of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Many of these perspectives saw religion as a false start for anthropological description or as the human action of liberation from nature’s blind necessity. By contrast, Barth’s perspective is able to avoid the pessimism and anthropocentric views of existentialism, while borrowing the concept of the possibility of being and non-being as the mutually opposing polarities that mark the human experience and condition.⁵ At the same time Barth avoids the overt optimism of his liberal Protestant forbearers. In this Barth is able to avoid the two pitfalls of overly optimistic and overly pessimistic views of humanity, all the while taking the phenomenon of the human seriously.

Barth overcomes these two tensions – either to elevate the human over and against God or to degrade the divinely created human – by deriving his understanding of humanity from the one figure of Jesus Christ who is both God and human, being “God for man”⁶ and “man for God.”⁷ On the basis of a Christologically centered theological

⁴ Barth, *Word*, 189-190. This proposal will attempt to avoid terms that have come to be regarded as sexist. Following others in Barth studies, where this can only be done with the use of clumsy circumlocutions and artificial construction, the English term “man” will be used, with an understanding that this gender specific term is being used as a translation of the generic German term “*Mensch*”, see translator’s notes in *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 69. The *Göttingen Dogmatics* will be shortened to *GD* henceforth.

⁵ Carl Michalson, “What is Existentialism,” in *Christianity and the Existentialists* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 10-11. Barth succeeds in overcoming many of the weaknesses of modern anthropology and its emphasis on rationality and noetic realities as central features of humanity. In this, Barth stands along side philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, in that he does not make interiority fundamental to what it means to be human. John Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 42.

⁶ *CD* III/2, 218. While the following references are from the 2009 T & T Clark Study Edition, this document retains the “Black Book” pagination for the sake of standardization within Barth studies.

⁷ *CD* III/2, 203.

anthropology,⁸ Barth is able to pronounce that in Jesus “God stands before man and man stands before God.”⁹ In light of this reality, Barth states that as Savior, Jesus serves as real man because “He is the creaturely being who as such not only exists from God and in God but absolutely for God instead of for Himself.”¹⁰ And so, “speaking of this one man Jesus results in speaking for all men.”¹¹ This is possible for Barth because “the ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus.”¹² He is, as such, “real” or the authentic form of the human. This means that the conclusions of autonomous human self-understanding are not necessarily false, but they cannot offer a full description of humanity.¹³ As a result of this relationship between God and humanity, Barth’s concept of Christological anthropology appears novel within the western Christian tradition,¹⁴ offering an alternative to the concept of fractured, destructive and dying humanity offered by western popular society.¹⁵ As such, Barth’s concept stands as a description of humanity that is both true to

⁸ It is significant to note that while there have been many anthropologies that have appealed to the field of theology, Barth develops a distinct approach, by proposing a theological description of humanity based upon the person of Christ. In this, theology has traditionally understood the *imago Dei* in light of the human, while Barth understands the human, in light of the *imago Dei*, which is Christ. Barth’s “theological” anthropology does not simply use theological terms, but first looks to Christ to derive an understanding of the human. Thus, any attempt to understand anthropology based first upon human experience is “tantamount to reading a clock backwards.” Archibald Spencer, *Clearing a Space for Human Action* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 2003), 179.

⁹ CD II/2, 94. In light of this reality, Barth’s theological anthropology is a Christological theological anthropology, as a result this project will refer to Barth’s theological anthropology simply as a Christological anthropology.

¹⁰ CD III/2, 133.

¹¹ CD III/2, 133.

¹² CD III/2, 132.

¹³ CD III/2, 123.

¹⁴ While Barth’s Christological anthropology is not singular within the history of theology, as he borrows heavily from influences such as Athanasius, his application of this concept within the modern theology, particularly modern Reformed theology, is novel.

¹⁵ This may be seen best in the literary work by Douglas Coupland, *Life After God* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1994). Charles Taylor acknowledges the continual shortcomings of western society since the enlightenment to create a human environment for human interaction, a reality that has often been marked by “orgies of grotesque inhumanity,” a reality that has only becomes more apparent since the earlier

the biblical narrative and the theological tradition generally, both within Barth's specific Reformed context as well as the greater western Church tradition.

The Scholarly Debate

While anthropology is a significant field of study in theology generally – in its attempts to answer the question “what does it mean to be human?” – Barth's understanding of humanity in light of God comes to be the central anthropological definition, as Michael Parsons points out, there is significant credence to understanding the whole of Barth's theology as framed by the dynamics of “*Gott-Mensch*” or God-human antithesis.¹⁶

The Catholic theologian and friend of Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, has suggested that there exists a change in Barth's conception of humanity from his earlier to his later works. This change, he proposes, is rooted in the move toward a greater focus on Christology. For von Balthasar, this shift occurs early in the *Church Dogmatics*, i.e., in Barth's transition from speaking of “the Word of God,” to replacing it with the central concept of “Jesus Christ, God and man.”¹⁷ Von Balthasar goes on to suggest that this movement ultimately marks a transition in how Barth conceives of the human and human knowledge of God.¹⁸ It is this perceived change that allows Emil Brunner to claim that within the pages of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* volume III/2 there exists a theology

twentieth century. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 138.

¹⁶ Michael Parsons, “Man Encountered by the Command of God: The Ethics of Karl Barth” *Vox Evangelica* 17, (1987): 50.

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edwards T. Oakes, S. J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 115.

¹⁸ von Balthasar, *Theology*, 115.

radically different than in earlier work, i.e., that *CD* III/2 reveals a discontinuity within Barth's work. For Brunner, this discontinuity centers on Barth's concept of humanity.¹⁹

The idea of a change to an anthropological centre in Barth's theology leads many to misunderstand Barth's thought. Daniel Price, who perceives a significant shift in Barth's concept of anthropology, notes that Barth's anthropology in *CD* III/2 "has traveled a long way from his second edition of the *Epistle to the Romans*."²⁰ Many saw Barth's apparent change as a turn from dialectical thinking to analogical thinking, a turn that many in North America labeled as a turn towards a "Neo-Orthodox" position.²¹ This perceived change in Barth's theology marked perceptions of Barth's theology, particularly in North America, which were significantly influenced by both von Balthasar's and Brunner's reading of Barth's work. Such an influence is apparent in Arnold Come's comment that Barth's view of anthropology must be critically guarded against by the preacher for fear that it "might make all preaching pointless and powerless."²² As well this perception of a change in Barth's theology allows individuals such as Robin Lovin to suggest that in Barth's early work the divine "No" of God – God's condemnation of human action – "precludes any attempt at moral convictions" within Barth's theological system.²³

However, it must be noted that Archibald Spencer, by using genetic-historical readings of Barth's work, reveals that the theologian gave serious attention to the ethical human reality, the ability of humanity to live in light of God, prior to the *CD* and that

¹⁹ Emil Brunner, "The New Barth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (June 1951): 123-124.

²⁰ Daniel Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 7.

²¹ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), viii.

²² Arnold Come, *An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 52.

²³ Robin Lovin, "Karl Barth: The Ethics of Obedience" in *Christian Faith and Public Choices: The Social Ethics of Barth, Brunner, and Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 23.

“the root of his doctrine of ‘theoanthropology’ can [already] be discovered in germ here in his early ethical writings.” Spencer is referring to the 1922 article “*Das Problem der Ethik in der Gegenwart*.”²⁴ While the *Römerbrief* is marked by a decided emphasis upon the “No” of the *Krisis* inaugurated by God in the world, this does not prevent the “Yes” of God from appearing, for the “Yes” emerges from the “No.”²⁵ Thus, regardless of this transition, it is not a surprise to see glimpses of the Christological grounding of anthropology in Barth’s writing as early as *The Epistle to the Romans*.²⁶ Spencer’s work highlights the consistency that exists within Barth’s theology from the very beginning.

McCormack is also very clear in his seminal work that “the ‘turn’ to a ‘neo-orthodox’ form of theology which is usually thought to have taken place with the *Church Dogmatics* is a chimera. There was no such turn.”²⁷ This current project seeks to examine and confirm McCormack’s statement in relation to Barth’s anthropology – that, in Barth’s anthropology from *The Epistle to the Romans* through to the close of his *Church Dogmatics* Barth remains consistent in his Christological grounding of anthropology. McCormack rightly pushes back against von Balthasar and his perceived turn in Barth’s theology, which McCormack sees as being rooted in “a decided tendency to give to methodological questions a prominence that they simply did not have in Barth’s development when that development is viewed genetically.”²⁸ Yet, in his attempt to overcome the influence of von Balthasar’s “turn,” McCormack himself overlooks the significant scholarship that existed previous to his own work, which also perceived and

²⁴ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 6-7.

²⁵ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 42.

²⁶ As Spencer points out this continuity between Barth’s anthropological concepts in *Romans* and that of *CD III/2* means that “the suggestions of a dichotomy between the early dialectical Barth and the later analogical Barth requires serious reconsideration.” Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 7.

²⁷ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, vii.

²⁸ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, viii.

supported his general thesis of consistency. McCormack's work is largely marked by a refusal of any apparent movement within the large canon of Barth's work following *The Epistle to the Romans*, thus producing a static figure, in which there are no major changes, yet there is no room for changes in tone, accent of emphasis.

At least as early as 1989, McCormack's thesis projecting the danger of overlooking Barth's consistency, is evident in the work of the British theologian John Colwell. Colwell aptly perceives the unity within the whole of Barth's work and the critical importance that such recognition holds. As Colwell states "When this inherent continuity of Barth's theological development is not recognized the degree of change in emphasis between the writing of *Romans* and the later volumes of the *Church Dogmatics* can be greatly over-estimated."²⁹

Themes of Barth's consistency are also apparent as early as 1954 in the writing of the Dutch theologian G. C. Berkouwer in his understanding of the interconnection of the negative and positive aspects of Barth's concept of *Krisis*. The catastrophe of rejection is interwoven with the grace of election. Even in this early work, Berkouwer highlights the need to read Barth's theology holistically in that it "must *from its inception* be characterized as triumphant theology which aims to testify to the overcoming power of grace."³⁰ As a result, Berkouwer points out that "we do not find in [Barth's theology] a transition from crisis to grace, or from disjunction between God and man to fellowship

²⁹ John Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1989), 22.

³⁰ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Harry Rower (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 37. Emphasis added.

between them, but rather a relationship between these polarities which Barth was concerned to set forth in varying emphases and accents.”³¹

The distinguished scholar, as well as translator and editor of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, T. F. Torrance, also notes the Christological anthropology that is seen in volume III/2 stands not as an addition to Barth’s earlier works, but as a direct result of the core of his theology from his early period following his rejection of the liberalism of his predecessors. In examining Barth’s early theology, Torrance states that there is no “new Barth” – as suggested by Brunner – instead “the ‘Christian humanism’ of the new man expounded by Barth in the various parts of his third volume belonged to the very essence of his main theme.”³²

Barth’s consistency in anthropology, that includes the resounding “No” so clear in *The Epistle to the Romans* as well as the “Yes” that is so evident in CD III/2, is based upon Barth’s Christology. As Wolf Krötke points out, for Barth, human existence is defined by the theological doctrine of the “the *en-* and *anhypostatis* of the human nature of Jesus Christ [this view means that] this man only existed at all because God united himself with him.”³³ For Barth this union of God and humanity in the human Jesus Christ is based upon the doctrine of election. Jesus Christ, being fully human and fully divine, is elected by God and in this act God elects humanity generally. Verne Fletcher shows, the Christological election of humanity “does not mean denying man but rather causing him, in his humanity, to participate in the divine life, by ‘appropriating human nature into the

³¹ Berkouwer, *Grace*, 37.

³² T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 23. This quotation, while directly in line with McCormack’s thesis, stands in stark contrast to McCormack’s accusation that Torrance and others forced the spurious change upon Barth’s theology. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, viii.

³³ Wolf Krötke, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (New York: Cambridge University press, 2007), 163.

unity of His own.”³⁴ This act of election of the God-man Jesus Christ creates a unique relationship between God and humanity, in which “the humanity of God englobes [*sic*] elected humanity.”³⁵

Barth’s Christocentric concept of anthropology is both historically unique and yet stands within a long tradition, particularly within Protestant theology, of theological anthropology that attempts to use Christ as a defining factor in anthropology in the election of humanity. As Colwell suggests, because Barth uses election as the Christological determinant of humanity, it means that he stands within a wide tradition that includes Luther, Calvin, and Arminians alike. However, unlike Luther and the later Arminians, Barth is able to conceive of humanity without jeopardizing the doctrine of election itself “in the attempt to remove the blemish of a hidden decree.”³⁶ Barth also overcomes the perception of election, as associated with traditional Reformed concepts of election that centre on exactly this secret decree and seemingly, a secret rejection.

Krötke notes that “Barth sets out in an interpretation of the doctrine of election, one of the most genuine accomplishments of his theological thinking, and at the same time a place at which essential decisions about the structure of theological anthropology are taken.”³⁷ Barth’s concept of election means that “In the man Jesus, the eternal triune God has elected all human beings as His covenant partners in a free act of the overflowing of his love.”³⁸ As a result of this self-binding of God with humanity, Christians are able to

³⁴ Verne H. Fletcher, “Barth’s Concept of Co-humanity and the Search for Human Community.” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 9 (July 1967): 42.

³⁵ Fletcher, “Barth’s Concept of Co-humanity and the Search for Human Community.” 43.

³⁶ Colwell, *Actuality*, 235-236.

³⁷ Krötke, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology”, 163.

³⁸ Krötke, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology”, 163.

take history seriously as history comes to be understood as that which takes place must be understood as being grounded in the eternity of God.³⁹

It is this concept of election that is unique to Barth in modern theology, as it allows for the freedom of the human to be anchored in the one place in which it is safe from the subjectivity of humanity – in the humanity of God. This divine source of human freedom overcomes one of the significant struggles of theological anthropologies — that is the apparent conflict between divine and human freedom. As Gunton notes, “As Jesus is the one free creature simply because of his relation to God, so it can be for us.”⁴⁰

Barth’s Christological anthropology stands within theological scholarship as both significant and provocative. As Krötke points out, Barth’s Christological anthropology is at “first glance very provocative ... because it does not at first appear to show how it can be connected with what we already know generally about the human being. And without such a connection, all statements of theological anthropology are in danger of hanging isolated in space, simply incomprehensible outside of theological discourse.”⁴¹ For this reason any exploration of Barth’s anthropology must take into account such connections and thus seek to connect Barth’s theological anthropology with the lived experience of daily life in order to stand as both comprehensible and significant.

However, it is critical to note that Barth’s Christological anthropology means that the full divinity of Jesus Christ does not displace His full humanity. Instead both stand side by side. This relationship allows humanity to truly encounter God. As Cynthia Rigby shows “Jesus Christ’s humanity reveals the value of all humanity, in all of its varieties

³⁹ Krötke, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology”, 163.

⁴⁰ Colin Gunton, “The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature” In *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays* ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61.

⁴¹ Wolf Krötke, “Karl Barth’s Anthropology”, 158.

and particularities, *because* it is manifested in a particular person with particular characteristics.”⁴² This reveals the significance of Barth’s theological anthropology against the backdrop of Enlightenment concepts of humanity that surrounded Barth’s work. As Joan O’Donovan points out, human identity and freedom are not subjective realities bound to the person – thus susceptible to sin – but objective realities established in relationality with God. This is because “Barth does not identify the person with self-determining subjectivity, with decision, but with the actuality of God’s decision, made in, through, and for the sake of his Son.”⁴³ As a result, human actuality “transcends sinful subjectivity as a divinely given humanity extended to all children of Adam.”⁴⁴

In light of the above discussion, it may be helpful to highlight the reality that while Barth’s theology did not experience the radical change proposed by von Balthasar, Brunner, and others, it must be seen to change in accent, tone, and emphasis – a reality that must be seen against the radical social, cultural, and theological differences that existed between the penning of the first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans* to the close of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*. As a result of this unity of Barth’s work throughout his career, without uniformity, it is important to take note of the recent words of Hans Vium Mikkelsen that:

the difference between the early and late Barth expresses a change in the theological accent. With the help of a highly expressionistic language the early Barth stresses the gap between God and the human being. The later Barth emphasizes in his Christology, especially in the teaching of the atonement in *CD IV*, how God,

⁴² Cynthia Rigby, “The Real Word Really Became Real Flesh: Karl Barth’s Contribution to a Feminist Incarnational Christology” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1998), 9-10.

⁴³ Joan O’Donovan, “Man in the Image of God: The Disagreement between Barth and Brunner Reconsidered,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 no. 4 (1986): 456.

⁴⁴ O’Donovan, “Man in the Image of God”, 456.

despite this gap, has revealed himself for human beings in the man Jesus from Nazareth.⁴⁵

Yet, this change in accent is not a change in substance or grounding. It is in this understanding of unity within Barth's work without an enforced, external uniformity that this project seeks to explore the theological anthropological concept of Karl Barth.

Research Question

Barth's Christological description of humanity, as it is described in §44, depicts the existence of true humanity as it is only made possible and represented by the person of Jesus Christ, who is simultaneously God for humanity and humanity for God. For Barth, this is humankind as he or she was created to be. This thesis looks at Barth's description of humanity in order to answer the question: Is there a coherent theological treatment of humanity throughout Barth's corpus, as it is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ?

Thesis Statement

This thesis seeks to demonstrate a significant consistency throughout Barth's corpus beginning with *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, and *The Word of God and the Word of Man* through to his CD, chiefly CD III/2 §44, with regard to his unique Christological anthropology.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hans Vium Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 25.

⁴⁶ While Barth's lectures contained within *The Word of God and the Word of Man* span the period preceding, through, and following Barth's penning of *The Epistle to the Romans*, this project will begin with an examination of *The Epistle to the Romans* before turning to the content of the lectures within *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. This has been done for two particular reasons. The first reason for this ordering is that much of the content of *The Word of God and the Word of Man* that is examined in this thesis is either subsequent or follows after *The Epistle to the Romans*. Second, *The Epistle to the Romans* is the significant and best-known work of Barth's early career. The theories of von Balthasar and others discussed above are largely based upon a comparison of *The Epistle to the Romans* and the later *Church Dogmatics*, because of this *The Epistle to the Romans* is the most significant and well known of the three early works discussed in this project and thus it deserves pride of place.

Methodology

This project, building upon the work of Bruce McCormack, will proceed along the lines of a genetic-historical method, seeking to explore Barth's writing in its own literary and cultural context.⁴⁷ This method seeks to explore the themes of Barth's theology within their historical context and throughout the development of the theologian's work. Moving forward, I align with Spencer in assuming that "Barth's break with his liberal heritage in 1914 constitutes the only fundamental break in his theological development."⁴⁸ As a result, this project will trace Barth's concept of humanity as it continues to be developed and expressed throughout his writing career.

Procedure

This project seeks to understand Barth's writing from within its own context. In agreement with John Webster, this project acknowledges development throughout Barth's writing career, but argues that "the direction of Barth's later work is present *in nuce*"⁴⁹ as early as the lectures entitled *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Thus, Barth offers a cohesive theological treatment to the concept of humanity throughout his writing career. In addition, I will offer a definition of "theological anthropology" as well as a description of the various concepts of anthropology that were present during the twentieth century and contributed to the worldview from which Barth wrote.

Moving forward, it will be necessary to examine selected writings from Barth's career that represent his early concept of anthropology. Therefore, I will look to *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, and *The Word of God and the Word of*

⁴⁷ McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, ix.

⁴⁸ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 3.

⁴⁹ Webster, *Moral*, 30-31.

Man for this portion of my study. This study will explore Barth's concept of humanity within his early theological writing that followed his revolt from his liberal education in 1914 in order to see how these writings avoid the twin pitfalls of optimism and pessimism. This is significant in that it is widely noted that these writings are marked by Barth's concept of "the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity."⁵⁰ This dissention or differentiation is marked by the reality that "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth,"⁵¹ humanity acts as a sort of anti-god, as a foil, against God and being the opposite of God, as Barth states

the world is the world, in spite of the mercy of God by which it is enveloped and established. When we tolerate, accept, and affirm ourselves, we affirm the existing course of the world; and in so doing we do not glorify the omnipotent God, but confirm the condemnation which has already been pronounced over us, and establish the justice of the divine wrath.⁵²

This project will also require an examination of various anthropological concepts that are detailed in key areas of the *Church Dogmatics* leading up to and following Barth's discussion of the Christological concept of humanity that is developed in §44. Therefore, this study will seek to explore Barth's concept of Christological anthropology in the wider enterprise of his *Church Dogmatics*, including in the areas of creation, revelation, election, and the tension that exists between theological anthropology⁵³ and the phenomena of the human, this being humanity as it is experienced.

In order to complete this project, I will examine Barth's concept of humanity as it is presented in §44 of his *CD*. This section of the project will describe the context, content, and significance of his Christological description of humanity, before concluding with the

⁵⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 10.

⁵¹ Barth, *Romans*, 10.

⁵² Barth, *Romans*, 84.

⁵³ Anthropology as Barth describes it is a God revealed description of humanity.

implications for Barth's theological anthropology throughout his later writing.

Throughout my analysis, I will highlight the contributions that Barth has made to theological anthropology through his development of the concept of the "real man" in §44 in order to highlight the significant benefit this doctrinal understanding offers for the twenty-first century, before finally highlighting any problems that may arise out of this study with regard to Barth's Christological description of humanity.

Finally, I will offer a summative comparative analysis to briefly detail my findings. This comparison will seek to highlight the developments, differences, and the congruencies within Karl Barth's anthological concepts throughout the material covered in this project.

The primary goal of this thesis is to confirm Barth's use of Christology as the basis for his understanding of anthropology throughout his career.⁵⁴ Examining Barth's Christological anthropology not only highlights the gift of an extraordinary theologian in this particular area of study, but it has significant implications for the life of the church and the individual believer and will be highly beneficial for individuals devoted to Christian ministry to better understand humanity in light of the person of Jesus Christ.

⁵⁴ This thesis project has two closely connected side goals that should occur as a result of this heightened discussion within the community of Barth scholarship. The first is an elevated awareness of the significant theological benefits of a Christological anthropology, as seen within the writing of Barth and within the wider community of theological study. The second is that of pastoral ministry. As G. C. Berkouwer points out in reference to Barth's life and works, it is impossible to separate his "pastoral" and "formal" theology. Berkouwer, *Grace*, 38.

CHAPTER 1: BARTH'S EARLY WRITING

Karl Barth's theology is often viewed in light of his *Epistle to the Romans*. Few other texts have altered the theological landscape since the time of the Reformation and has been criticized thereafter for its strong views of humanity. Some scholars suggest that Barth leaves humanity in subjectivity and angst following mighty negations of the divine "No" of God.⁵⁵ Others conclude that Barth believes the very image of God is affected by sin.⁵⁶ In this interpretation, humanity is utterly ruined by the fall and stands under divine judgment as rejected.

However, Barth's early writings as a whole – *The Epistle to the Romans*, his collection of essays entitled *The Word of God and Word of Man* and his posthumously published first round of dogmatic lectures *The Göttingen Dogmatics* – propose a theology of humanity that moves beyond this simple rejection. From 1916 - 1921 Barth succeeded in radically changing the conversation of Western Protestant theology, particularly with regard to the concept of theological anthropology. Daniel Price suggests that during this time Barth called for "a major paradigm shift in theological anthropology: one from seeing the human being as an individual defined by innate faculties to seeing the person as a dynamic-interpersonal agent whose faculties arise only as they exist in relation to others."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Come, *Introduction*, 154. Loving *Faith*, 23. As Gerhard Forde states "Unfortunately, most people never get beyond the might negations [of Romans], and so never saw the light. They read *Romans* to mean, 'Turn out the light, the party's over.' However, the message behind it all was really, 'The light of the coming days is dawning, the party is about to begin!' But, as always, perhaps, darkness was preferred to the light—how does it go? —' because their deeds were evil' (John 3:19)" Gerhard Forde, "Does the Gospel have a Future? Barth's *Romans* Revisited", *Word & World* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 74.

⁵⁶ Price, *Anthropology*, 117.

⁵⁷ Price, *Barth's Anthropology*, 117.

This chapter explores Barth's theological concept of anthropology as it existed in the early phase of his career, which followed his rejection of Liberal theology.⁵⁸ At this point in time Barth turned to a theology that for him was truly *Theo*-logy—thoughts and speech about God, one that took seriously the person and work of God as it was revealed in the Scriptures. Thus, Barth's understanding of humanity is not an anthropo-theology, but a Theo-anthropology.⁵⁹ It is a concept of humankind that is radically shaped by the person and work of Christ. The three examples of Barth's early writings referred to above are examined in order to comprehend Barth's theological anthropology and the Christological realities that define it. Subsequent to his break with liberal theology, Barth treated anthropology as a consequential doctrine, for which a Christological foundation was necessary. This decision distanced his concept of humanity from thinkers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, who saw anthropology as a natural bridge between theology and human self-reflection.⁶⁰

The Epistle to the Romans

The Divine “No”!

Following the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,⁶¹ popular ideas of Barth's anthropology continually and solely emphasize the divine “No!” pronounced against

⁵⁸ Torrance, *Early Theology*, 33. It is this anthropocentric theology that Barth works to rethink throughout his career, starting with *The Epistle to the Romans*.

⁵⁹ In that God is not understood in light of who humanity is, but humanity is understood in light of who God is. Karl Barth, “Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century” in *The Humanity of God*, trans. Thomas Wieser (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 11. In this these two terms denote the ordering of understanding and the epistemological foundation for each worldview. An anthropo-theology, as exemplified in the work of Schleiermacher, looks first to humanity in order to understand God. Conversely, a Theo-anthropology first finds meaning in who God has revealed himself to be and then applies this knowledge to produce a knowledge of humanity.

⁶⁰ John Webster, “Creation and Humanity,” in *Barth* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 95.

⁶¹ Von Balthasar's exposition of Barth's concept of humanity, particularly in the period of *The Epistle to the Romans*, suggests that Barth understands humanity as “nothing but a cavity, a minus sign.” von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 69.

humanity by God. This “No” is His condemnation. It is the declaration of humankind’s inability to gain salvation and thus their ultimate damnation. Critical to hearing Barth correctly is the recognition of this emphasis as it counters humanity’s optimism regarding itself, which was particularly strong in the years leading up to the First World War and Barth’s writing of *The Epistle to the Romans*. As such, an investigation of Barth’s concept of humanity must begin here. All of what the theologian has to say about humanity, particularly in *The Epistle to the Romans*, is set against the background of this divine condemnation, by the divine “No” spoken against humanity.

Beginning in the first paragraph of his commentary on Romans, Barth underscores the sinful reality of humanity,⁶² which results in the paradox of apostleship, the contradiction of a man *sent* by God.⁶³ Barth perceives that all human certainty is cast into doubt when Paul, *the theologian par-excellence*, stands outside and below the mission that he was called to. This image of Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, who exists only because of God’s divine work, shatters all possible concepts that build up the human.⁶⁴ The image of Paul illustrates how Barth conceives of humanity as a result of the central theme of his dialectical thinking: the tension between God and man. Bruce McCormack terms this as Barth’s *realdialektik*.⁶⁵ The dynamic between the wholly other God and temporal humanity results in the “recognition that man is not God.”⁶⁶

⁶² For Barth, like his predecessor Calvin, sin is to be understood as unfaithfulness. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), I, 2, I, 244.

⁶³ Barth, *Romans*, 27-28.

⁶⁴ This again echo’s the word of Calvin who states that “He who thinks he has his own righteousness misunderstands the severity of the law.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, XIV, 777.

⁶⁵ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 18. This *realdialektik* is the reality of God’s simultaneous divine veiling and unveiling of Himself in human language.

⁶⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 150.

Barth's dialectic casts humanity under a shadow of sin in comparison to the radiance of the Divine. Humanity cannot promote itself or seek justification on its own. Barth explains that "when we tolerate, accept, and affirm ourselves, we affirm the existing course of the world; and in so doing we do not glorify the omnipotent God, but confirm the condemnation which has already been pronounced over us, and established the justice of the divine wrath."⁶⁷ Humanity may have a goodness unto itself; yet, against the image of God, this human goodness is but darkness in the light of God.⁶⁸

Barth's pronouncement of the depravity of humankind is complete. In a manner that is not unlike the most radical of ultra-reformed minds, Barth considers humanity as marred by the destruction of sin. The whole of human thought and action fails to exist in the manner it was created to.⁶⁹ This conception of humanity's fallibility, in opposition to God's infallibility, as depicted in his "Wholly Other" description, can be seen against the backdrop of the destructive path that Barth's mentors followed in their endorsement of Kaiser Wilhelm II's "blank cheque" against Serbia. As Barth states in *Romans*,

all human activity, negative and positive, is radically questionable and insecure. We must, then, recognize the ambiguity of our ambiguity, the death of our wisdom of death; we must make it evident that no man, not even the humble, upright, broken man, has any right-ness; that all the busy *deeds of the body* must be, not checked, nor limited, nor directed into a new channel, but, in their full activity—mortified.⁷⁰

Humanity as a whole acts – as Kaiser Wilhelm did by responding to the assassination of the Archduke of Austria – in arrogance and hubris. This reality of mortification means

⁶⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 84. In this Barth echoes the words of John Calvin who state that "we must always return to this *axiom*: the wrath of God rest upon all so long as they continue to be sinners." Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, XI, 751, emphasis added.

⁶⁸ For Barth, like Athanasius, true goodness emanates solely from God, thus it is impossible for any sort of innate goodness to exist outside of God.

⁶⁹ In this Barth again echoes Calvin who states that truly, they [Calvin's Roman opponents] should have understood that men's whole righteousness, gathered together in one heap, could not make compensation for a single sin." Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, XIV, 780.

⁷⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 294.

that Barth, along with Augustine and the sixteenth-century Reformers, is able to echo the words of Paul in that “there is none righteous, no, not one.”⁷¹ Barth sees this as evident within the history of humanity.⁷²

This depravity means that humanity is unable, both individually and collectively, to escape the wrath of God, which is justly poured out because of unjust human action. For Barth, humanity is unable to act in this world to justify itself, either temporally or eternally, for “There is no magnificent temporality of this world which can justify men before God.”⁷³ As a result of this thinking, Barth has been accused of accepting a nihilism and a degradation of humanity or at least embodied humanity, which Barth clearly sees: “Men are men, and they belong to the world of men: *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*.”⁷⁴

In *Romans*, Barth sees the humanity of this world as shattered by the difference that stands between God and humanity, which affects every aspect of human life. “The man of this world knows only the groaning of creation and his own groaning.”⁷⁵ Humanity is bound to this groaning as long as it fails to turn away from “the *vanity* of [our] existence and upon the dialectic of its contrasts, and does not refuse to perceive the relativity and

⁷¹ Barth, *Romans*, 86.

⁷² For Barth, the Gospel is not simply moral aspirations for humanity, nor is it truth that can be read alongside other human truth; rather, “it sets a question-mark against all truths.” Barth, *Romans*, 35. By this definition, the Gospel calls into question all other knowledge and it stands as the test of all knowledge for the Christian. Knowledge cannot be affixed to the Gospel, nor can Gospel language be affixed to a concept, for the Gospel critiques all knowledge and all concepts. Here Barth stands inline with Calvin who states that “it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face...For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy—this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 1, I. 37.

⁷³ Barth, *Romans*, 56.

⁷⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 56. Barth’s view of sinful humanity is similar to that of Calvin’s, wherein he “insists that when man was deprived of the spiritual image, that entailed the corruption of his whole nature, of mind and all, so that there was nothing in the heart of man but perversity.” T. F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 90.

⁷⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 318.

home-sickness of everything.”⁷⁶ This relativity and homesickness is not simply theoretical, but is a real human experience that is “concrete, observable, and tangible.”⁷⁷ Such vanity, homesickness, and brokenness are most apparent because of the Incarnation wherein God enters humanity as fully God and fully man. God knows what humanity has experienced and what it means to be other than under this “No”. As Willie James Jennings states “because it is God who has entered into the life of the human creature, we see the absolute depths of human misery.”⁷⁸

It is important for Barth that this “No”, be grounded in human action or inaction. The “No” pronounced by God against humanity is because “men fall prey first to themselves and then to the ‘No-God’. First is heard the promise –*ye shall be as God!* – and then men lose the sense for eternity. First mankind is exalted, and then men obscure the distance between God and man.”⁷⁹

However, Barth’s concept of the divine “No” is far from the pessimism in which it is often read. Barth is clear in saying that the “No” has a greater purpose. God’s “No” stands as “The standard by which men are measured is not of this world. It is eternal, as God is; it is itself God,”⁸⁰ and thus His action. This “No” exists within God’s greater action for humanity, “God seeks continually that men should be open to Him and to Him only. By dissolving us, He establishes us; by killing us, He gives us life.”⁸¹ The distance

⁷⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 318.

⁷⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 318.

⁷⁸ Willie James Jennings, “Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision in the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth” (PhD. diss., Duke University, 1993), 66.

⁷⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 44. In this concept of humanity, Barth stands strikingly close to his predecessor Calvin who conceives of knowing God and being in the image of God as so reciprocally interwoven, that as a result, human attempts to know God out of one’s own *imago dei*, resulting in makes one’s self equal to God, because it means that he is in the *imago dei* of himself. John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, trans. John King, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 99-100.

⁸⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 61.

⁸¹ Barth, *Romans*, 61.

between Barth's concept of humanity and pessimism or nihilism is apparent when he states that:

The recognition of the need of the forgiveness of sin has nothing in common with pessimism, with contrition and the sense of sin, or with the 'heavy depression' or the 'preachers of death' (Nietzsche); it has no relation to eastern asceticism contrasted with the merriment of the Greeks. The need of forgiveness of sin might in fact be regarded as Dionysiac with enthusiasm, were it not that it can be placed in no such human category. True negation is directed as much against the denial of this life as it is again the acceptance of it.⁸²

Barth's "No" is not an ultimate negation. It is a necessary reality for God's work: God's work is displayed in Christ. It is Christ who, as the fully human man, displays this "No" most clearly in His crucifixion. It is for this reason that Barth is continually pointing to Matthias Grünewald's *The Crucifixion*⁸³ as it highlights the ultimate expression of the divine "No" against humanity. Jesus Christ, fully man, crucified. "*In the likeness of sin-controlled flesh* God sent His son, and thereby – spake the death-sentence over sin in the midst of the flesh."⁸⁴ Barth understood that both the Incarnation and the crucifixion were critical to the reunion of humanity with God. In the crucifixion Christ destroys the reality of sin among humanity. "The death of Christ dissolves the fall by bringing into being the void in which the usurped independence of men can breathe no longer. It digs up the invisible roots of visible sin, and makes Adam, the man of the 'No-God', a thing decayed and gone."⁸⁵

It is here, within the divine "No", that Barth's Christological anthropology is already present. The "No" pronounced against humanity is experienced and personified in Christ, being fully human, through His death upon the cross. And yet it is not the final

⁸² Barth, *Romans*, 101.

⁸³ Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1515, Unterlinden Museum, Alsace, France.

⁸⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 280.

⁸⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 193.

word spoken regarding humanity. Already here in *Romans*, Barth reveals the Chalcedonian accents in his Christology by explaining, “to be human is to be united to Christ, then sin cannot be definitive of human beings.”⁸⁶ Humanity is defined in Christ, not only in His death, but in both His life and in His resurrection that result from His Incarnation.

The Divine “Yes” of Christ

For Barth, it is exactly this divine “No” that leads to the divine “Yes”, even in the period of *The Epistle to the Romans*. Just as the crucifixion is necessary for the resurrection, so the “No” must be pronounced against humanity to make way for the divine “Yes”. The Gospel stands as the “No” against man, but it is also a transition. “The man who apprehends its meaning is removed from all strife, because he is engaged in a strife with the whole, even with existence itself.”⁸⁷ Humanity is able to experience peace with God by being put into enmity with the fallen reality. Thus, redeemed life exists as a paradox for the individual. “Men are forgiven by God only when He condemns them; life rises only from death; the beginning stands at the end and ‘Yes’ proceeds from ‘No’.”⁸⁸

God’s “No” must be announced so that His “Yes” will have true meaning. Without the divine condemnation of the Gospel, salvation appears meaningless. This reality is of utmost importance through the period that surrounded Barth’s early writing. The popular

⁸⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 102 The Chalcedonian Definition of the Christian faith describes the “Lord Jesus Christ to be one and the same Son, perfect in divinity and humanity, truly God and truly human, consisting of a rational soul and a body, being of one substance with the Father in relation to his divinity, and being of one substance with us in relation to his humanity.” “The Chalcedonian Definition of the Christian (451)” in *The Christian Theology Reader*, ed. Alister McGrath, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 281-282. It is from this definition that Barth propels Barth to see Jesus Christ as clearest description of both God and humanity. Because Jesus is fully human, He provides to be a window for Barth to the humanity as we were created to be. While Barth, as previously seen, is influenced by Athanasius, the concept of Christ as being perfect in humanity, as both the perfect human and the basis for humanity, while being in one substance with “us”, highlights the influence of Chalcedon upon Barth.

⁸⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 35.

⁸⁸ Barth, *Romans*, 112

optimism surrounding humanity, which would ultimately be shattered by two world wars, camouflaged the significance of the true optimism of humanity, the divine “Yes,” in the reality of the hollow human-centered concepts of progress. This perceived human progress ignored the divine “No” and thus failed to ground human hopes in reality. In order to understand the splendour of the Christological “Yes”, Barth clears away the anthropocentric clutter through the use of the divine “No”, spoken to Christ as well as the whole of humanity. The dialectic between the “No” and the “Yes” of God must be established in order to express their true meaning. Once the dialectic is established between the “No” and the “Yes”, between the “old” and the “new” human, “we can concentrate our attention on the ‘old’; not, of course, for its own sake – since it does not exist in itself but only in relation to the pre-eminence of the ‘new’ – but in order that we may thereby be enabled to decipher the law of the new world.”⁸⁹ Barth’s expression of the divine “No” reveals the darkness of human life, but this is not darkness for darkness sake; it is to fully express the splendour of the light of the divine “Yes.”

For Barth, God’s “No” and “Yes” – both of which are acts of God’s grace – are bound together; “Men are forgiven by God only when He condemns them; life rises only from death; the beginning stands at the end, and ‘Yes’ proceeds from ‘No’.”⁹⁰ Thus the individual experiences this justification not in the self but in Christ. For this reason Barth asks “*Are ye ignorant that the pre-eminent ‘Yes’ of God refers not to the man as long as he liveth, not to me, but to the new man who has passed from death to life?*”⁹¹ Barth is suggesting that human justification is always guaranteed within the strictest limitation on

⁸⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 166.

⁹⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 112. The Christological image here cannot be ignored, just as Christ can only rise after crucifixion, so humanity can only experience the life of forgiveness following the death of condemnation.

⁹¹ Barth, *Romans*, 232.

human freedom. However, in this limitation humans experience death through Christ, who has died to the law and set us free. Thus, humanity is joined to and represented in the humanity of Christ that died on Golgotha.⁹²

This “No” and “Yes” is the *Krisis* of humanity.⁹³ The realization of one’s situation within this “Yes” and “No” is a realization of God’s just and grace-filled judgment.

“*Through Jesus Christ* men are judged by God. This is their *K[risis]*, but it is both negation and affirmation, both death and life. In Christ there has appeared an end, but also a beginning, a passing to corruption, but also a becoming new; and both are for the whole world and for all men.”⁹⁴ It is this act of judgment that is His mercy.⁹⁵ Humanity’s situation must be understood negatively, revealed by God, in order for the mercy of God to be seen in its full glory, revealing what humanity can become in Christ.

Once this dialectic is understood and seen in Christ, the wonder of the Incarnation and the resurrection is apparent. For Barth, the resurrection stands as a barrier of human existence, which becomes the hope of humanity’s existence. This thinking pushes Barth to state that: “The barrier marks the frontier of a new country, and what dissolves the whole wisdom of the world also establishes it. Precisely because the ‘No’ of God is all-embracing, it is also his ‘Yes’.”⁹⁶ Because this barrier of life is also a Christological establishment of life, it becomes the source of human hope; in that “We have therefore, in the power of God, a look-out, a door, a hope; and even in this world we have the

⁹² Barth, *Romans*, 232-233.

⁹³ *Krisis* is the reality of the “infinite qualitative distinction” between God and humanity. Barth, *Romans*, 10-11.

⁹⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 69.

⁹⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 41.

⁹⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 38.

possibility of following the narrow path and of taking each simple little step with a ‘despair which has its own consolation’.”⁹⁷

God’s pronouncement of reconciliation upon humanity is not a cause for human pride but rather human humiliation at the recognition of the *realdialektik*.⁹⁸ God has pronounced a “Yes” over humanity in His faithfulness, but it is based upon His “No,” rather than being based on human pride or human work. Therefore, “this new relation between God and man can occasion no fresh delusion or deceit, for it is based upon a criticism so radical as to exclude all human boasting.”⁹⁹

Barth’s dialectic approach can never be described as a dualism. In response to such an objection, he explains, when pondering the relationship between the old man under the divine “No” and the new man who exists under the divine “Yes”

we must not allow ourselves to drift into dualism, as though grace and sin, ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, were simply two contrasted factors. The important characteristic of this mortal and sinful body is that it has been rendered questionable, assaulted, overwhelmed, and discovered, by the *crucifixion of the old man - that we should no longer serve sin*.¹⁰⁰

If a dualism should appear between the old man of Adam and the new man of Christ it is “not metaphysical but dialectical. The dualism exists only in so far as it dissolves itself. It is a dualism of one movement, of one apprehension, of one road from here to there.”¹⁰¹ In this Barth rejects the sort of dualisms that are common within Christian concepts of anthropology. It is common to separate sinful Adam from the perfect Christ, dividing humanity—with groups assigning the border between the two in ways that benefit one’s

⁹⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 38.

⁹⁸ This *realdialektik* is the dynamic that exists between the Wholly other God and the temporal humanity that results in the recognition that God is God and humanity is not. McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 18.

⁹⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 126.

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 208.

¹⁰¹ Barth, *Romans*, 177.

worldview or theological program—creating two distinct classes of humanity. However, Barth is clear, any separation of humanity into classes or segments across the lines of Adam and Christ, is a myopic view of humanity that does not take into account the full reality of humanity.

Humanity United with God

Because of the cataclysmic results of sin, humanity is utterly bereft of an ability to truly perceive self-understanding. Individuals may be able to view their physicality in a mirror, but are unable to decipher any sort of real understanding; the ontological reality is hidden behind a veil. Currently humanity sees only through a glass dimly.¹⁰² This haze means that true anthropological understanding is bound up in knowledge provided by God, knowledge revealed in Christ. In order to understand oneself, an individual must search out the knowledge of God, a search that appears to be an impossible task because of the vast distance between God and humanity—both morally and metaphysically, However, the Incarnation means that “God must not be sought as though He sat enthroned upon the summit of religious attainment. He is to be found on the plain where men suffer and sin.”¹⁰³

Barth’s Christology must be understood as being directly influenced by the fifth century Council of Chalcedon in his description of Jesus Christ as both truly God and truly human. This Chalcedonian character is witnessed in *The Epistle to the Romans*, Barth’s understanding of Christ as bringing God into contact with humanity in a way that provides them with knowledge and reconciliation. Humanity comes to know itself in

¹⁰² 1 Corinthians 13:12.

¹⁰³ Barth, *Romans*, 132.

Christ. As fully God, “the life of Jesus is perfected obedience to the will of the faithful God.”¹⁰⁴ As fully man, Jesus “stands among sinners as a sinner; He sets Himself wholly under the judgment under which the world is set.”¹⁰⁵ In consequence, God, as man in Christ, does the impossible, “He takes His place where God can be present only in questioning about Him.”¹⁰⁶ This means that Christ, through His death on the cross, takes up the “No” that is pronounced upon humanity by God and in His resurrection shares God’s “Yes” with humanity.¹⁰⁷

A recognition of Christ as truly divine and truly human radically shifts one’s understanding of humanity as a whole. Humanity is not to be understood as a “fleshly machine,” a diabolical deceiver, or something to be overcome; instead, as John Webster rightly points out, “to be human is to be united to Christ.”¹⁰⁸ The Incarnation means that divine understanding of the human being does not exist in an ethereal realm, but in the here and now of human life.

The Christological Reality of Faith

The “Yes” that God pronounces over the individual is the result of faith and ushers the believer into a new life, a life as the real man. It is in faith that the dead man becomes alive in Christ. Having wrath spoken against them, they become alive. “We believers see the invisible. We see the righteousness of God in His wrath, the risen Christ in the crucified One, life in death, the ‘Yes’ in the ‘No’.”¹⁰⁹ For Barth, the life of faith results in an apparent paradox that can only be dwelt in by the faithful work of God.

¹⁰⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 97.

¹⁰⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 97.

¹⁰⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 97.

¹⁰⁸ Webster, “Creation,” 99.

¹⁰⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 156. It is important to note that while Barth sees this transition from life to death as utterly significant and wholly transformative, it is not ultimate. The human who walks his or her own path

Joseph Mangina points out that Barth borrows from his Marburg heritage, particularly in his early writings, wherein faith is more than simply assent to the Bible or church doctrine, but rather it involves the whole individual in a life of faith, as a *person*.¹¹⁰ The faith that makes this transformation possible is more than a simple human action. It is more than trust placed in a chair when one is reclining upon it. Faith that brings the individual into contact with the divine “Yes” is itself rooted in God.

The believer is the man who puts his trust in God, in God Himself, and in God alone; that is to say, the man who, perceiving the faithfulness of God in the very fact that He has set us within the realm of that which contradicts the course of this world, meets the faithfulness of God with a corresponding fidelity, and with God says ‘nevertheless’ and ‘In spite of this’.¹¹¹

The human faith that Paul discusses in Romans and that Barth understands as transformative for humanity is itself rooted in God’s action. Human righteousness, gained through faith in God, is first based in God’s faithful action. This means that faith itself is not a human work, faith cannot be accounted as works righteousness. True faith is “faith which is not a work, not even a negative work; not an achievement, not even the achievement of humility; not a thing which exists before God and man in its own right. Faith is the ground, the new order, the light, where *boasting* ends and the true righteousness of God beings.”¹¹² This concept of faith means that “whether we say *of the faithfulness of God* or ‘of the faith of men’, both are the same.”¹¹³

Barth’s concept of faith, even in his early phase of writing, is highly Christological, for faith is grounded in Christ’s action alone. This is supported by Barth’s understanding

outside of the path of faith “asks that he may continue in sin and be like God no longer. He is dissolved by the claim God makes upon him.” Barth, *Romans*, 193. This dissolution occurs in that such a choice results in the individual ceasing to be truly human in the face of the true God.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 32.

¹¹¹ Barth, *Romans*, 39.

¹¹² Barth, *Romans*, 110.

¹¹³ Barth, *Romans*, 42.

of the Greek phrase πιστεως Ἰησοῦ as a genitive of possession, which means that the faith that justifies “is grounded upon the faithfulness which abides in Jesus.”¹¹⁴ Right standing before God is the ability of humanity to stand before God. Righteousness becomes possible in that “the righteousness of God is manifest through his faithfulness in Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁵ This means that the very foundation of this new humanity – of the “Yes” of God in the life of the individual – is Christologically grounded. Faith influences every aspect of experience and action in this new humanity and it is made possible, exemplified for, and provided to the individual through the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. Such faith is exemplified in the life of Abraham, who God encountered and was given faith by God, which “he encountered as divine righteousness.”¹¹⁶ This transaction is counter to human action and human reality; it is effective because of its freedom, a freedom that can only exist in the authentic action of God.

For Barth, to live in faith means to live as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This act of worship is an act of faith resulting from a realization of the *realdialektik*, humanity’s position before God.¹¹⁷ True worship occurs as a result of the subjectivity of humanity when faced with the certainty of God. Life as a living sacrifice means

¹¹⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 104. Barth clearly expresses this in his translation of Romans 3:26. Later in 1956 Barth states in a lecture entitled “The Humanity of God” that Christ’s faithfulness acts awakens the corresponding faithfulness of His Partner in humanity, in order that such faith amongst humanity may take place. Karl Barth, “The Humanity of God” in *The Humanity of God*, 48. Barth’s view can be seen to stand along side that of the more recent N. T. Wright *Justification* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 117, as well as James Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 43-44. For a more full discussion see Richard Hays *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 249-97.

¹¹⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Barth, *Romans*, 121.

¹¹⁷ In light of this, Barth’s concept of faith appears remarkably different than the isolationist concept of faith seen in the writing of Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard understands that true faith is always “absolute isolation.” Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans Alastair Hannay (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1985), 106. By contrast, Barth understands faith to be absolute dependence on and relationality with God.

surrender; it means an unconditional gift; it means the renunciation of men in favour of God. If men are themselves the object to be surrendered, renounced, and given up, their sacrifice can mean nothing less than the relentless acknowledgement of that questionableness and confiscation which occurs when they are confronted by the unfathomable God.¹¹⁸

This faith is unlike any human reality. The faith that is provided by Christ can only be seen as Christ's, given to humanity, in that "He provides faith with content which is not a thing in time; if it were a thing, it would be nothing but a void and a negation. He is the miraculous factor in faith, its beginning and its end."¹¹⁹ This faith is a possibility because of Barth's Chalcedonian Christology. The two natures of Christ mean that while Jesus is "equal with God, and on His account God reckons righteousness to the believer He is the subject of faith, which 'religious experience' [human action] reaches after and longs for, but never finds."¹²⁰ Because Jesus is both fully God and fully human, He can stand as both the subject and object of this faith, faith that is true because of its divine origin but expressed in humanity.

True Humanity's Identity and Reality

When humanity encounters the reality of faith, the result is a radical transformation because of the encounter *in* Christ. This Christological encounter is unlike any human experience, either within human contact or via contact with the rest of creation. Humanity elected by God means that humanity is bounded by Christ.¹²¹ Barth suggests that this encounter with Christ, who is the "miraculous factor in faith,"¹²² causes the individual to produce true beauty, "as a tumbler sings when it is touched, so we and our world are

¹¹⁸ Barth, *Romans*, 431.

¹¹⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 158.

¹²⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 158. While the emphasis of Christ as the existence of goodness among humanity is certainly a result of an Alexandrian influence upon Barth, largely through Athanasius, here the impact of the Chalcedonian definition of the Christian faith is apparent in its statement that the Son is "perfect in divinity and humanity." McGrath, 281.

¹²¹ Fletcher, "Barth's Concept of Co-humanity and the Search for Human Community", 43.

¹²² Barth, *Romans*, 157.

touched in faith by the Spirit of God.”¹²³ God’s transformative work and subsequent renewal cannot be the result of a noetic acquisition, a change in lifestyle, or an increased moralism. Humanity, individually or collectively, cannot bring about this encounter with faith. It is only Christ’s own work that stands as true faith. Humanity cannot improve itself in order to become Christ-like; it cannot follow Christ to exalt its being or transform its nature, Christ alone brings about a different humanity. Barth explains “when [Christ] is brought into the picture, it is discovered that we cannot introduce Him thus, either by *bringing* Him *down*, or by *bringing* Him *up*. For Christ is not the exalted and transformed ideal man. He is the *new man*.”¹²⁴ Therefore, the individual who has experienced this transformation and continues to experience it cannot confuse the source and location of this justification. “The man who loves God can never ask ‘Is it I?’ or ‘Is it Thou?’ Such questions are relevant only in the context at which the Apostles formulated them at the Last Supper. The Lord knoweth His own. He knows the prisoner to be free, the sinner righteous, the damned blessed, and the dead alive.”¹²⁵

The work of God is always found completely in God, and yet humanity stands within a paradox. While Paul is a new man, he cannot be separated from the man he was. Paul has been transformed, yet paradoxically, Saul continues to stand behind him. The sinner has been made righteous, but he remains a sinner, who has been redeemed and made righteous. Hans Vium Mikkelsen suggests that the new man “is the human being who is not first and foremost looked upon as a sinner, but who is first and foremost

¹²³ Barth, *Romans*, 157.

¹²⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 378.

¹²⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 324.

looked upon as a redeemed sinner.”¹²⁶ Thus, the reconciled human exists in paradox, experiencing life as *simul iustus et Peccator*.¹²⁷

While faith works to re-new humanity – creating reconciled sinners – it is impossible to by-pass the reality that humanity, even the individual bounded by Christ, may exist as a reconciled sinner, but remains a sinner. This is the great tension of the Christian life. Grace may bring humanity to an end, but this end lacks finality. Barth explains that,

We cannot, if we are honest, describe this conflict as the victory of grace. At best, the truth of God and the truth of sin are ever balanced against one another as ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. But this is no radical transformation of human existence from life to death and from death to life; and in this experience of conflict we are not existentially at God’s disposal; for the reality of God still remains something which is distinct from the reality of human *lusts*.¹²⁸

While this sinfulness continues to exist alongside the transformed life, it must be “recognized as the relativity of this life.”¹²⁹ The life of the new human encounters the mortal body “as existence encounters non-existence.”¹³⁰ The truly human being stands in the light of Christ and is constituted in a new subject and forms a new predicate.¹³¹ However, this clear “Yes” also contains a “No.” Christ’s action of drawing humanity near is dialectical in that “by *his blood* we are justified; as enemies we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son.”¹³²

Faith in Christ transforms the individual, who becomes the new man, and yet man remains the old man. Reconciled humanity experiences the true transformative power of

¹²⁶ Mikkelsen, *Reconciled*, 123.

¹²⁷ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 283.

¹²⁸ Barth, *Romans*, 212-213.

¹²⁹ Barth, *Romans*, 210.

¹³⁰ Barth, *Romans*, 210.

¹³¹ Barth, *Romans*, 164.

¹³² Barth, *Romans*, 164.

the gospel “now,” while also waiting for the death of un-reconciled humanity in the “Not Yet” of Christ. The reconciled individual exists today, but “the *old man* is also mankind, humanity, and the world of men. Each particular man is therefore doubly conditioned. He is conditioned, on the one hand by that which dissolves his particularity, and on the other, by that which affirms it.”¹³³ Faith creates a new person who at the same time exists in a state as they were before faith. The former self denies true reality while the new self affirms the true reality of the created individual.

In this dialectical reality between the old man and the new man, Barth sees hope for the future in God’s righteousness. However, it is not a hope based in human action or on human possibility, but in the full realization of the righteousness of God. For Barth, this means it is a future reality as opposed to a future possibility. The full transformation is a present reality to God, but a future reality for humankind. Thus, “the Messiah is the end of mankind, and here also God is found faithful. On the day when mankind is dissolved, the new era of the righteousness of God will be inaugurated.”¹³⁴ Barth speaks dialectically even here of Christ, the Messiah, who is the end of humankind. Christ has marked the end of humanity, but the realization of this reality is yet to occur. This means that humanity has experienced renewal and is fully enveloped by Christ in time. Christ defines the new current reality for humankind, for they are a new creation, while already having their *telos* established.

Humanity in Christ Alone

Throughout his *Epistle to the Romans*, Barth clearly argues that it is by Christ that humanity gains true theological and anthropological understanding. Christ is fully God

¹³³ Barth, *Romans*, 164

¹³⁴ Barth, *Romans*, 97.

and fully man. Jesus Christ enables humanity to participate in divine grace,¹³⁵ to be renewed and reconciled. In Christ, through faith, humanity is cast in a new light, the light of “new man,” which re-instates the beauty and creatureliness of humanity, redefining human relation and human-divine relation. The restoration of relationships is made possible because Christ restores the human-divine relationship. This existence has been the goal that humanity has sought after in various efforts, yet it is in Christ and Christ alone that these possibilities become realities.¹³⁶ Barth concludes that “God is true: He is the Answer, the Helper, the Judge, and the Redeemer; not man, whether from the East or from the West, whether of Nordic stock or of biblical outlook; not the pious nor the hero nor the sage; not the pacifist, nor the man of action; not even the Superman — but God alone, and God Himself!”¹³⁷ God is the only source of true human fulfillment.

Freedom of the Christological Human

The Christological reality of humanity as discussed thus far creates a distinct freedom that is available to the individual through their connection with Christ. This freedom is possible because of Christ’s two natures. Jesus Christ exists in divine freedom because of His divine nature and is able to communicate and confer this upon humanity because of His humanity. Humanity can only experience its true nature in coming to terms with their creatureliness and responding to it. Nigel Biggar points out that “actual, sinful humankind ... contradicts real humanity. By aspiring to either the autarkic or the

¹³⁵ Barth, *Romans*, 220.

¹³⁶ In this Barth rebukes the seventeenth-century humanist thinking of Hugo Grotius and John Lock, which has been immensely influential throughout Western society. Following Grotius the West has often seen “Human beings [as] rational, sociable agents who are meant to collaborate in peace to their mutual benefit.” Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 159.

¹³⁷ Barth, *Romans*, 80.

autonomous forms of moral mastery, they defy their creatureliness, turning away from responsibility to the Creator and so closing their ears to the Word of God.”¹³⁸

Barth’s perception of human freedom, wherein one has a divine causality, is discomfiting to individuals in the third millennium. For all the lip service to post-modern and post-liberal thought, popular concepts of freedom remain staunchly modern. Biggar points out that Barth’s concept of freedom is best understood in line with Stephen Clark’s assault of the “liberal” notion of freedom,¹³⁹ which suggests that it is “the freedom to choose from a position of spiritual neutrality ... [and] Barth’s point is the same: apart from subordination to God, the human creature is oppressed by the ‘lordless powers.’”¹⁴⁰

For Barth, true freedom is divinely possible. This freedom is not only a possible reality of this renewed human life, it is the essential meaning of it.¹⁴¹ This freedom is first and foremost found in the pleasure of God. In addition, it can have no other foundation, after all “It is the freedom of the will of God in men.”¹⁴² Like Rousseau, Barth views this freedom as the natural state of humanity; however, unlike enlightenment thinking, this freedom is not sourced within humanity, but in God. Barth makes this distinction clearly

¹³⁸ Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 10.

¹³⁹ Clark, among others, chastises modern liberalism’s concept of freedom based upon an independent Ego or I. For Clark, the Ego cannot exist without a relationship to the other, thus freedom cannot exist outside of a relationship with and dependence upon the other. Thus, liberal freedom strains and denies human reality and human relationality. Pragmatically, liberty ultimately devolves into totalitarianism. As the sociologist David Martin points out “The theme of individualism, (or individuality), and the collective, (or the communal), encounters paradoxes plaguing all our visions of political promise. To the extent that power is devolved downward to individuals or community it reproduces and reinforces the existing pattern of difference and privilege, whereas to the extent it is concentrated upward in the market or the state it creates over mighty and potentially corrupt ‘masters of the universe. Paradigmatically all power to the people ends up with all power to Kim Jung Il, while the invocation of the freedom of the market ends up with all power to Bernard Madoff. To quote Scripture ‘their end is destruction’.” David Martin, *The Future of Christianity* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 45.

¹⁴⁰ Biggar, *The Hastening*, 4-5.

¹⁴¹ Barth, *Romans*, 504.

¹⁴² Barth, *Romans*, 220.

in suggesting that “The freedom of God confronts men neither as a mechanism imposed upon them from outside nor as their active and creative life. The freedom of God is the pure and primal Origin of men: the Light, the presence of absence of which renders their eyes brightness or darkness — the Infinite, by the twofold measurement of which they are great or little — the Decision, by which they stand or fall.”¹⁴³ As such, freedom is the mark of the renewed life and to stand outside of this divine freedom or refuse this divine freedom means to refuse to exist in new life and thus to remain as the old, sinful man, the man condemned to death.

The Christian Life

Already in Barth’s famed 1921 commentary on Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, he exhibits a Christological understanding of anthropology. While the accent of Barth’s theology changes throughout his writing career, the emphasis upon incarnational Christology that Bruce McCormack preserves as appearing after the period of Barth’s two commentaries on Romans has already taken root, particularly in relationship to humanity. In *The Epistle to the Romans* Barth perceives humanity as a result of its sinful denial of its reality before God. Humanity is condemned before God. Yet, through the union of God and humanity in Christ Jesus, God takes this “No” upon Himself and gives His divine “Yes” to humanity. For Barth, this interaction means that humanity – through faith provided and made real in Christ – is able to encounter a new life that is reconciled.

It is the life lived in and through Christ. Therefore, the Christian life and the freedom

¹⁴³ Barth, *Romans*, 355. This concept of freedom is extremely foreign to many who have been so deeply ingrained with modern liberal concepts, raising concerns about “forced freedom” or “God controlled freedom”, as if such a concept of freedom is a denial of actual freedom. However, freedom should not be confused with independence. It is here that Barth’s concept of freedom is congruent with Vernard Eller when he states that “God’s arky, his will for us, is never anything extraneous to ourselves but precisely that which is most germane to our true destiny and being Rather than a heteronomous imposition, God’s arky spells the discovery of that which is true to myself and my world.” Vernard Eller, *Christian Anarchy: Jesus’ Primacy over the Powers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 3.

offered to humanity already appears in stark contrast to the Pelagian concept of human freedom that leaves humanity as a willing machine.¹⁴⁴ Echoing Paul's words, Barth explains that this life can only be "Christ who lives in me."¹⁴⁵

Summary

The concept of humanity, as it is expressed in Barth's early work *The Epistle to the Romans*, stands against anthropocentric action and instead expositis the condemnation of human action for the purpose of viewing it in light of the person and work of God. Even at this early stage in Barth's writing career, the divine "No" stands as the establishment of a theological understanding of humanity. Even here in *Romans*, Barth affirms the possibility and actuality of an authentic, objective knowledge of humanity, only as it is subsequent to the knowledge of God.¹⁴⁶ Even here in *The Epistle to the Romans* Barth outlines the Christological reality of true humanity. It is first revealed by humanity's condemnation, but continues to reveal the in truly human reality of the faithful Jesus Christ, the possibility of truly human life through faithful living in the faithfulness of Christ, and the resulting freedom. For Barth, like the earlier Augustine,¹⁴⁷ the self and humanity is created and re-formed by Christ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Gunton, "The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature" in *Barth*, 49.

¹⁴⁵ Galatians 2:20 (NRSV).

¹⁴⁶ Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality*, 19.

¹⁴⁷ At least according to Matthew Drever's reading of Augustine. For Augustine, "the self is first created and then re-formed by Christ . . . the authentic self is not the self in full possession, power and knowledge of itself, but the self created in the image of the Trinity, possessed by God, and empowered through Christ." Matthew Drever, "The Self Before God? Rethinking Augustine's Trinitarian Thought" *Harvard Theological Review* 100, no. 2 (April 2007): 235.

¹⁴⁸ For Augustine, humanity is created in the image of the Trinity, where Barth understands Christ as the image that humanity is created in. Drever, 235.

The Word of God and the Word of Man

The Word of God and the Word of Man is a compilation of speeches presented between 1916 and 1932. The collection covers the period of time preceding Barth's first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*. During this time, Barth also served as a pastor in Safenwil, up to his professorships in Göttingen, Münster, and Bonn. As such, this work provides an integral aspect to the development of Barth's thought. Barth himself admits that "as the reader takes his way between the first and last of these addresses he will find the landscape changing."¹⁴⁹ Changes are present in style, ideas and material, but the theological foundation does not change. Barth's framework continues to be based upon the *realdialektik*, the reality that is revealed between God and humanity in Christ. This consistent questioning of human self-knowledge is nowhere more apparent than in Barth's developing concept of theological anthropology.

The Problem of Humanity

Already in 1916 Barth saw the failure of the Cartesian worldview, wherein humanity was understood to be self reflective and able to discern truth about itself, able to diagnose its collective limitations, and create solutions. At this point, Barth perceives an anxiety that humans experience because of their disconnect from God. This anxiety does not allow the human to reach outside of itself beyond the apprehension it feels, to ground its knowledge upon the knowledge provided by God. Instead, as fallen humanity, "we come to our own rescue and build the tower of Babel."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Karl Barth, Introduction to *Word*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Barth, "The Righteousness of God," in *Word*, 14.

In this early phase of his writing career, Barth believes that humanity stands in tragic error that fundamentally defines humanity. Humanity longs for truth and righteousness that can only be found in God. While humanity searches for this truth, “we do not let it enter our lives and our world — we cannot let it enter because the entrance has long since been obstructed. We know what the one thing needful for us really is, but long ago we set it aside or put it off till later ‘better times—in the meanwhile make ourselves sicker and sicker with substitutes’.”¹⁵¹ God stands near to humankind providing a way to true humanity, but its sickness, its experience, causes it to be fearful.¹⁵² Thus the problem of human sinfulness is not distance between God and humanity, but a problem of pride in which humanity is unwilling and unable to rely upon God to mend this gulf.

For Barth, humanity stands as a question. Therefore, an explanation of what is humanity can only be available in humanity, yet it is removed from humanity’s reach. The very place that humanity must look to find self-understanding is the place that its understanding is the most uncertain. In order to answer this question humans do “not cry for solutions but salvation; not for something human, but for God, for God as [their] Saviour from *humanity*.”¹⁵³ The answer to the question of humanity can only be Christ. Any other answer, any other attempt to answer the question of humanity that does not have the perspective of God and humanity is less than complete. Any answer that lacks the full scope of humanity is not an answer at all. While humanity may hold a certainty, a possibility, and reality of knowledge, even self-knowledge, all such certainty and knowledge is eviscerated in the face of God’s truth. “When God is present we cannot

¹⁵¹ Barth, “The Righteousness of God,” in *Word*, 15.

¹⁵² Barth, “The Righteousness of God,” in *Word*, 16-17.

¹⁵³ Barth, “The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry,” in *Word*, 190.

longer maintain the balance of our certain creature-hood; we can no longer appeal to ‘reality’ when *reality* is bursting forth from ‘reality’.”¹⁵⁴

The Transformation of Humanity

Humanity finds itself under condemnation, under the divine “No” of God. Humanity is unable to grow past or ignore this reality. The question that faces humanity is one of change or transition. How does humanity move from death to life? Who is bold enough and omniscient enough to resolve the difficulty from a height above the “Yes” and the “No?”¹⁵⁵ Such questions imply an answer. It is only God who stands above humanity’s reality, able to move its existence from one of death to one of life. Such a transformation is possible because of the work of Christ, who has experienced both the “No” and “Yes”, death and life. For this reason, God — through Christ — is able to share this reality with humanity.

“The *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead is the power which moves both the world and us, *because* it is the appearance in our corporeality of a *totaliter aliter* constituted corporeality.”¹⁵⁶ The union of divinity and resurrected humanity means that Christ provides the means and the mode of the life that humanity was created for. At this point in Barth’s thinking, Christ brings humanity to encounter the Wholly Other in a way that had never been experienced since the fall. The Wholly Other stands not as a judge casting doubt on humankind but as a life giving reality within it.

While the union of God and humanity is unique, this life giving reality is not something that God brings into humanity from outside, nor is it something that has never been experienced before or an aspect that humanity was not intended to experience. “The

¹⁵⁴ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 318.

¹⁵⁵ Barth, “The Problem of Ethics Today,” in *Word*, 151.

¹⁵⁶ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 323.

new life revealed in Jesus is not a new form of godliness,”¹⁵⁷ but it is a form of humanity that had long since been forgotten. It is for this reason that Paul and John “are interested not in the personal life of the so-called historical Jesus but only in his resurrection.”¹⁵⁸ For Barth – particularly in this early phase of his writing, even more so within the context of his *Pre-Romans* work – the resurrection is viewed as a chief description of humanity.¹⁵⁹ It is the resurrected Christ that becomes, enables, and portrays humanity as it was created to be. Thus, the resurrected life is the truly human life, as it is the life of one man, Jesus Christ. “Resurrection is the *one experience of man* Actual experience begins where our alleged experience ceases, in the crisis of our experiences, in the fear of God.”¹⁶⁰ This means that the experience of truly human life is limited to the life of Christ.

Such a limitation appears to be a blockade, mitigating the possibility of this human experience to the God-man Jesus Christ. True life is not the experience of *the Christians*, but *the Christian*. “Not the multitude of the baptized, nor the chosen few who are concerned with Religion and Social Relations, nor even the cream of the noblest and most devoted Christians we might think of: the Christian is *the Christ*.”¹⁶¹ Christ may have renewed humanity, but this renewed man at first appears to be locked in the particular person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Humanity, however, is not separated from *the* human. Christ is united to man through faith. There is the reality of “Christ *in* us”. Christ unites with humanity creating the possibility of true life for all. Contact with the resurrected Lord changes the

¹⁵⁷ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 285-286. As Archibald Spencer notes, it is here in the essays “The Righteousness of God” and “The Christian’s Place in Society” that Barth develops a Christological grounding for human agency that finds a distant echo in *Church Dogmatics* III/2. Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 122.

¹⁵⁸ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 286.

¹⁵⁹ This is contrary to Ritschlian modes of thought that emphasised the “Historical Jesus”.

¹⁶⁰ Barth, “Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas,” in *Word*, 94.

¹⁶¹ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 273.

individual by providing a perspective on human life that otherwise is out of reach. This enveloping of humanity means that “there is in us, over us, behind us, and beyond us a consciousness of the meaning of life, a memory of our own origin, a turning to the Lord of the universe, a critical “No” and a creative “Yes” in regard to all the content of our thought, a facing away from the old and toward the new age – whose sign and fulfillment is the cross.”¹⁶² “Christ in us” means that humanity stands not on the outside, devoid of meaning, but that Christ works to bring humanity into contact with true life, through His life. Sin is a human reality, but sin means that justification is possible through Christ.¹⁶³

Summary

Even in this early stage of thinking, Barth sees that only a Christological conception of humanity, a concept of sinful humanity redeemed through the person and work of Christ, is able to take seriously both the reviled and redeemed aspects of humanity. Barth sees this Christological conception of humanity as avoiding the extremes of both optimistic and pessimistic anthropological concepts. It is his Christological anthropology that is able to withstand the short sightedness of optimistic progress, as seen in the work of Friedrich Naumann. Barth saw Naumann’s approach as a wild goose chase ending in madness. Barth’s Christological anthropology was also able to stand up against the nihilistic views of humanity that emphasized damnation and failure and reduced humanity to *ad absurdum*.¹⁶⁴

The essays in *The Word of God and The Word of Man* are clearly developed from the *realdialektik* between God and humanity. As a result, Barth develops various aspects of his concept of humanity, which continually develops against the backdrop of God and

¹⁶² Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 274.

¹⁶³ Barth, “The Problem of Ethics today,” in *Word*, 172.

¹⁶⁴ Barth, “The Christian’s Place in Society,” in *Word*, 324.

man. It is because of Christ that humanity stands condemned and with the possibility of a transformed life simultaneously. The common voice of the speeches tells of true humanity as christologically shaped. Therefore, true humanity in *The Word of God and The Word of Man* can only be a christological humanity.

The Göttingen Dogmatics

The Göttingen Dogmatics is a significant document in evaluating and exploring the development of Barth's writing. Published posthumously, this incomplete piece stands as Barth's first attempt at dogmatic exploration, which began while he served in his first Professorial appointment at Göttingen. *The Göttingen Dogmatics* is the mid-way point between Barth's thought within *The Epistle To The Romans* and the later *Church Dogmatics*. As such, it reveals alternative emphasis¹⁶⁵ and developments, but ultimately congruencies throughout Barth's career.

The Göttingen Dogmatics demonstrates both developments and congruencies in Barth's theological concept of humanity in comparison with both *The Epistle to the Romans* and the later *Church Dogmatics*. Daniel Migliore points out in the English introduction to this work that "There are two notable differences between the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and the *Church Dogmatics* in the doctrine of humanity,"¹⁶⁶ yet neither of these two significantly impact Barth's definition of humanity, but instead reveal changes in the expression of Barth's core definition of humanity. First, *The Göttingen Dogmatics* lacks a discussion of the creation of male and female, as seen in the later *Church*

¹⁶⁵ This is due largely to the different nature of the document as lectures in dogmatic theology.

¹⁶⁶ Daniel Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures in Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion," in Barth, *GD*, XLVII.

Dogmatics. Second, Barth, in line with *The Epistle to the Romans* puts primacy upon fallen humanity before discussing true humanity.¹⁶⁷

The State of Humanity

Throughout *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth affirms Immanuel Kant's assertion that direct knowledge is impossible, particularly direct knowledge of God. This impairs humanity's ability to know itself. True self-perception is a human impossibility. Barth states that the problem of humanity is the impossibility of human perception of the other. Humanity cannot recognize truth within someone outside of itself. Objective comprehension is the goal of human relationship, yet there exists an ambiguity within the relationship. It is this that is for Barth the problem of man.¹⁶⁸

Humanity, as it is perceived apart from God, stands as a problem, as a contradiction even. The problem is that an anthropology without revelation is only a description of humanity without a true knowledge of humanity. This problem means that anthropology that does not stand in light of two necessary realities, first the condemnation of God's judgment and then the justifying work of God's salvation, fails to be accurate. "God's revelation ... is the answer to our question how we can overcome the contradiction in our existence, which we have to view not as our destiny but as our responsible act, and which we know that we cannot overcome. But we know ourselves in this regard only as God makes himself known to us. We would not ask about God had not God already answered

¹⁶⁷ Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures," in Barth, *GD*, XLVII-XLVIII. While it is noted that the chapter within *The Göttingen Dogmatics* that focuses upon anthropology falls into the second volume, a volume that has yet to be published in English, the content of the first volume provides significant information regarding Barth's concept of humanity at this phase, particularly §6 "Man and His Question". Barth states that this paragraph deal *a priori* with what he will deal with *a posteriori* in volume II. Barth, *GD*, 69-70.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Barth, *GD*, 136-137.

us.”¹⁶⁹ This means that humanity cannot know the truth of God or of itself without God’s revelation. However with revelation, which is the second reality, God provides a true image of humanity, as it is and as it has been created to be.

This true, God-given, anthropological knowledge is both a result of and the solution to the problem of humanity. The anthropological knowledge provided by God is the result of “God’s revealing of himself to man, His making Himself known out of His hiddenness, presupposes that man is separated from God but should not be so, revelation being a repairing of the damage [of sin].”¹⁷⁰ God is able to do this, to provide humanity with self-knowledge, because of His ability to penetrate the other, to objectively perceive the other, and to do it unimpeded by sin. God knows humanity because of Christ’s human existence, thus he not only stands above humanity, perceiving it in macro, but stands as humanity, perceiving it in micro. Christ perceives humanity as both subject and object.

It is this understanding of the subjective nature of human knowledge that Barth accuses modern theology for failing to perceive. Barth explains, “the bad thing about the modern theology of experience is that it builds its certainty about God upon something that is given in the human subject when the only thing that is given in this subject, even in the believer, is the question.”¹⁷¹ Therefore, Barth concludes that humanity cannot

¹⁶⁹ Barth, *GD*, 69. In this he echoes John Calvin, of whom Barth always saw as a theological father, when Calvin binds the knowledge of God and knowledge self together. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006) I,1,I, 35, I,1,XV, 183. For Calvin “Man can have true self-knowledge only when he knows God truly, and when in knowing God he so images Him as to be what he was made by God to be.” Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 14. This reality exists for Calvin because “we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy – this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly and impurity.” Calvin, *Institutes* I,1,I, 37.

¹⁷⁰ Barth, *GD*, 72.

¹⁷¹ Barth, *GD*, 67. Barth perceives this tendency within modern theology as the bases for Feuerbach’s Epithet that the secret of theology is that it is anthropology. Karl Barth, Introduction to *The Essence of Christianity*, by Ludwig Feuerbach, trans George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), xxiv. This inversion is thus radicalized in the post-humanistic a/theology that perceives that the death of God, which is

perceive truth about God or humanity without a special divine work. Instead “to be real, our certainty about God must always lie in God’s hands.”¹⁷²

God reveals truth regarding humanity; this means that God provides an accurate anthropological description in His revelation. God answers humanity’s question of “Who am I?” in His revelation, answering humanity’s problem. And yet Barth is quick to point out that “the revelation of *this* God, as his answer to pilgrim man, cannot be confused or mixed with man’s question, because no matter in which person [of the Trinity] he reveals himself, in virtue of the unity of his three persons he escapes every attempt of man to identify him with himself.”¹⁷³ While Christ is both fully God and fully man and communicates truth about God and humanity to humankind, Christ’s divinity can never be equated with His humanity. God’s revelation remains mysterious to humanity. The question may be answered, but the human question cannot be confused with God’s divine answer. Barth recognizes the danger of such an equation and suggests that it leads toward the annihilation of both God and man.¹⁷⁴

Barth suggests that there are many aspects that form the human experience. Humanity may be marked by bourgeois class, a desire for peace and security, a proletarian impulse for justice against the capital class or for privacy, for political, economic, and ecological sustainability, yet none of these realities are truly human. Any human aspect may be understood to define humanity, but these do not mark true

made possible in this inversion of anthropology and theology, is “at the same time the death of the self.” Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20.

¹⁷² Barth, *GD*, 67.

¹⁷³ Barth, *GD*, 96.

¹⁷⁴ This is exemplified in the work of Mark C. Taylor. Taylor suggests that such an equation creates an *imitatio Christi*. Therefore, “the self is actually an image of an image, an imitation of an imitation, a representation of the a representation, a sign of a sign. By becoming a copy of a copy, the self paradoxically becomes *itself*.” Taylor, *Erring*, 40. It is this sign of a sign that ultimately will lead Taylor to the utter deconstruction of humanity.

humanity, nor do they create true humanity. “People are all these things” after all, “but not the *human* in them.”¹⁷⁵

The Dialectic Reality of Humanity

For Barth, the revelation of God provides a dramatic alteration in human self-perception. Upon encountering revelation, Barth suggests that “we are forced to say that we may not and cannot understand him except in relation to God.”¹⁷⁶ It is only in God’s revelation that humanity can perceive a true anthropology, an anthropology that is shaped first and foremost by theology.¹⁷⁷ It is only in a theological definition of anthropology that one is able to perceive humanity as both sinner and saint, as both fallen and justified. Yet this understanding is available only in and through God’s revelation, outside of which humanity is continually framed in either overly optimistic or pessimistic terms. Each of these frameworks fails to take seriously an aspect of human reality. Humanity “stands between Scylla and Charybdis. Between two truths that make each other, and man as a third thing between them, impossible.”¹⁷⁸ Yet, it is Christ who makes this reality possible.

Barth’s expression of this third possibility is available only because of God.

Humanity can be established as paradox – between humanity lost and humanity saved –

¹⁷⁵ Barth, *GD*, 70.

¹⁷⁶ Barth, *GD*, 80.

¹⁷⁷ This is not to deny the concepts of humanity that are offered by the social sciences. As Stuart McLean points out, for Barth, these fields study God’s creation “and it would be strange if investigation of it did not yield insights into who man is. The fact, however, is that the sciences of man and philosophical anthropology have set forth a wide spectrum of views of man’s nature—all the way from B.F. Skinner to the existentialists, each with ‘convincing’ evidence and large followings. The question for Barth is *what* norm or criteria should be used to judge among them.” Stuart McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 27. It is this norm, the reality of a God-connected humanity that Barth is seeking to establish. Daniel Price thus noted the benefit that is offered to non-theological descriptions of humanity by Barth’s theological anthropology in that “Barth’s theological reflection on human nature can provoke a thoughtful rapprochement between theology and the human sciences, stimulating a careful delineation of both the similarities and differences between the disciplines.” Price, *Anthropology*, 9.

¹⁷⁸ Barth, *GD*, 77.

because God overcomes it. “God overcomes the contradiction by himself becoming man and by creating faith and obedience in us by his Spirit. But because this is exclusively *his* possibility, to say this is to say that *man* has no possibilities in this direction.”¹⁷⁹

Humanity remains in paradox, but a paradox without contradiction. Therefore, Barth suggests, “The Christian concept of man becomes unambivalent only when it ceases to denote a mere relation and begins to denote what happens *in* the relation.”¹⁸⁰

This concept of man, existing in an impossibility between two distinct realms, is possible and a reality. Humanity exists under God’s “No” and “Yes,” under the weight of damnation and support of reconciliation because of God’s work. For this reason, one’s understanding of true humanity begins not with humanity’s “ungodliness or ignorance or incomprehension or contraction [but with] the presupposition that man knows, understands and accepts God’s Word.”¹⁸¹

Jesus Christ, God for Man and Man for God

While humanity exists as a question, as a contradiction, “Christ is the answer to the question of man because he is God, and yet he is man, providing full perception of humanity.”¹⁸² This shows not only Barth’s full acceptance of Chalcedonian terminology in his first round of dogmatic lectures, but the fundamental nature they play in his Christology and subsequently his anthropology. For Barth the Incarnation is fully divine and fully human. These two realities exist so that they cannot be united or mixed

¹⁷⁹ Barth, *GD*, 78.

¹⁸⁰ Barth, *GD*, 77; emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ Barth, *GD*, 85. As such Barth stands within the tradition of Calvin who suggested that the condemnation of the Law, God’s “no”, was required to stand against humanity in order to highlight the role of Christ the Mediator, who establishes God’s “yes” for humanity. Calvin, like Barth, understands that this prodigious nature of Christ’s work is only apparent to humanity after it has heard God’s Word and its condemnation of humanity Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 2, VIII, 367.

¹⁸² Barth, *GD*, 155.

together, yet they also cannot be detached.¹⁸³ To speak of the man Jesus is to speak of the divine Christ and to speak of the second member of the Trinity is to speak of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Barth shows not only an acceptance of this creedal language, but sees a need for it in the problem of humanity. If Christ is not human He could not have entered into humanity and perceived human experience as human experience. If Jesus is not God He would have fallen under the same problem of the rest of humanity, unable to escape the self and removed from any sort of transcendent experience or knowledge. Jesus Christ can act as God in the act of revelation, and because of His humanity He can provide, within that revelation, a true knowledge of humanity.

For Barth, the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is a divine-human reality. While Jesus experienced human life, He was never removed or denigrated from the divine life of the Holy Trinity. Jesus Christ was fully human, united with God, true God.¹⁸⁴ As Barth states, “This idea, the idea of humanity, and this individual who incorporates it, cannot for a single moment be abstracted from their assumption into the person of the Logos. The divine subject who united himself with them makes them revelation.”¹⁸⁵ God, the Son, exists within the reality of Jesus Christ and, for Barth, never ceases to be the second member of the Trinity. Humanity is known by God and knowable to humankind because this man was God.

¹⁸³ Barth, *GD*, 138-139.

¹⁸⁴ Already here in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth firmly stands against Schleiermacher in asserting the reality of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully human and existing in these natures in eternity. In contrast, Schleiermacher affirms that Christ existed as human only as “the Son of God only took up human nature into His Person.” Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christians Faith*, eds. M. R. Macintosh and J. S. Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 395. Schleiermacher was forced to consider Jesus’ existence as such because he understood the divine and human natures as diametrically opposed “the human nature as finite and capable of suffering, and the divine as infinite and impassable.” Jacqueline Marina, “Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153.

¹⁸⁵ Barth, *GD*, 157.

While the features of Christ's divinity have received significant attention, an understanding of Christ's humanity has often been overlooked. It is significant to ask how is it that God has been united to humanity? Moreover, if Jesus Christ was fully human, how is it that God is able to provide knowledge from that experience which is universally beneficial to all of humanity? The latter question is of particular significance for feminist and Womynist theologians as they attempt to relate Jesus' early male experience with the experience of life had by "the second sex".¹⁸⁶

For Barth, Jesus Christ is fully human; however, this does not mean that the union of the Divine with humanity is simply God united to an individual. "The incarnation, the production of the God-man is not the union of the Logos with a human person but with human nature."¹⁸⁷ This means that God did not merely unite with a man, a Jewish man from the late second temple period who lived under Roman rule, but that God, in the union of God and humanity united with humanity as a whole. Barth appears to be suggesting that the mystical God, being the creator of humanity, united in the person of Jesus Christ with the essence of humanity. This essence, from a human perspective, also appears to be a mystical essence, which is indiscernible apart from Christ Himself, who as Creator has access to this essence.

The humanity that the Son assumes in the Incarnation is a nature that is common to all human persons. Barth is clear to articulate that "the substance of man This human nature is now compressed into one individual, *natura en atomo*."¹⁸⁸ As a result of this the feminist theologians and the Womynist theologians share a human reality with Christ. Similarly, a middle-class boy from the suburbs of twenty-first century North America and

¹⁸⁶ Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).

¹⁸⁷ Barth, *GD*, 163.

¹⁸⁸ Barth, *GD*, 156-157.

an impoverished girl of no social standing, who lives in an under-developed nation, equally experience a shared humanity with Jesus Christ, the God-man. It is for this reason that God is able to reflect a truly human knowledge into the lives of those who seek it in faith.¹⁸⁹

For Barth, God must become human in order to reveal Himself to humanity, even as the hidden God because “all the distinction, objectivity, and non-revelation comes into focus and becomes unambiguous only in the problem of man. It is in human beings that we meet the epitome of the I which is not here but there, which we cannot reverse, which I cannot penetrate and grasp from within as *I* become *he*.”¹⁹⁰ If Christ did not become human, God would not be able to redeem humanity from the outside; if Christ did not become human, humanity would be unable to gain a full image of itself through God’s self-revelation.

Christological Anthropology and Christological Election

Barth’s theology stands firmly within the Reformed tradition, even while he was writing in the Lutheran context of Göttingen. As it develops, his anthropology is greatly shaped by the concept of election. Both Barth’s anthropology and his concept of election continue to be highly Christological. However, already within the Göttingen round of lectures, Barth’s anthropology is shaped by his concept of election.

Contrary to many contemporary concepts of election within the Reformed tradition, Barth’s concept is explicitly anti-modern, even here in his early writing. Moreover, his

¹⁸⁹ It is because of this concept of a shared humanity that Cynthia Rigby is able to use the theology of Barth towards “a feminist incarnational Christology. Cynthia Rigby, “The Real Word”, 5. Rigby concludes that using Barth’s incarnational Christology supports relational living by revealing the depth of God’s participation in human existence, the uniqueness of the Christ-event ensures the value of humanity in all of its particularities, and Jesus’ use of substitutionary agency, within a representational framework, upholds the humanity of all, including minority groups. Rigby, “The Real Word,” 290.

¹⁹⁰ Barth, *GD*, 136-137.

concept of theology is not individualistic, but communal. It is for this reason that Barth states “who is elect? Not the individual, but the whole mystical Christ, that is, Christ with his own, Christ as the head and Redeemer of the church.”¹⁹¹ This has anthropological effects for Christ because in election Christ not only elects to redeem humanity, but He stands for humanity as the elected. Following the Synod of Dort, Barth sees the “institution of Christ as Mediator and Head of the elect, their effectual calling and drawing to him, their justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification”¹⁹² as having significant anthropological implications. Humanity is justified, sanctified, preserved and glorified because Christ stands as their head, as God for man and man for God. As such, Christ reveals true humanity to both God and humanity.

The God-Man and Our Humanity

Barth is clear in his first round of dogmatic lectures that humanity is re-created when it is engaged by God’s revelation. Christ, in revelation, places before man a knowledge of God and self that transforms the individual into the human that they were created to be.¹⁹³ However, humanity remains sinful, only able to cry “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”¹⁹⁴ Yet the work of Christ places humans in a renewed situation wherein they “reach the place which sets in direct juxtaposition the cry: ‘Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!’”¹⁹⁵ This means that while the believer’s humanity has been transformed “we know that we cannot equate this new, regenerate person ... with ourselves.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Barth, *GD*, 463.

¹⁹² Barth, *GD*, 463.

¹⁹³ Barth, *GD*, 155.

¹⁹⁴ Barth, *GD*, 349.

¹⁹⁵ Barth, *GD*, 349.

¹⁹⁶ Barth, *GD*, 127.

The Divine has encountered humanity; however, renewal is a continual process. At this point Barth sees the reality of renewal and even appears to point to the experience of renewal in this life, yet this experience does not appear complete. Humanity that has experienced renewal has yet to be renewed in full. This experience of “Now” and “Not yet” means that the Christian experiences life as *simul iustus et peccator*.¹⁹⁷

From within his Reformed tradition, Barth perceives God encountering humanity as a result of divine election. Christians are elected in Christ, but “the elect in Christ are not plucked out of the mass of perdition, out of rejection, in such a way that they are no longer sinners or mortal, or that they are totally or even partially lifted out of the darkness of human existence. Election does not give rise to any island of the blessed or Pharisaic corner of the righteous in the world.”¹⁹⁸ Election in Christ does not mean that the Church is removed from the world or that Christians escape the very real human experience of pain, sorrow, and separation. Instead, election in Christ means that those who are chosen by God “belong to their faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹⁹⁹

Summary

In these Göttingen lectures Barth admits that his anthropology appears similar to modern conceptions of humanity developing from Schleiermacher in its optimism regarding the future of humanity, but it has two fundamental distinctions. First, he deals with sin prior to grace, treating it as a reality as opposed to an excuse. Barth understands the sinful reality of humanity, like more fundamentalist concepts of sin, to be that a reality. However, Christ’s work alters this reality so it is not final. Therefore one may speak of sinful humanity, but in coming to know sinful humanity the individual also

¹⁹⁷ “At once righteous and a sinner.” Muller, *Dictionary*, 283.

¹⁹⁸ Barth, *GD*, 465.

¹⁹⁹ Barth, *GD*, 465.

encounters God's grace.²⁰⁰ Second, Barth's emphasis is in opposition to that of optimistic modern conceptions of humanity, and most importantly his "circle" works in the opposite direction. Barth begins with God before considering humanity, creating a theo-anthropology. Modern liberal thought began with humanity before turning to consider God, creating an anthro-po-theology.²⁰¹

Barth begins to develop his theo-anthropology in volume I of *The Göttingen Dogmatics*. This concept can be seen as a continuation of the concept that is developed in *The Epistle to the Romans* and is illustrated throughout *The Word of God and The Word of Man* lectures. Barth's anthropology of *The Göttingen Dogmatics* has a particularly Christological structure, while using a significant amount of *theological* terminology, as compared to *Christological* terminology.²⁰² His apparent step away from Christological language is only apparent at the surface level, for all references to the Triune God in *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, particularly in reference to humanity, are references to Christ. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that Barth communicates a Christological anthropology by way of theological language in *The Göttingen Dogmatics*.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Barth's early writing in relation to his doctrine of anthropology. In doing so, it underscores the Christological implications for Barth's understanding of humanity in his career as early as 1916. In agreement with John Webster, this Christological focus transforms anthropology from a natural bridge

²⁰⁰ Barth, *GD*, 80.

²⁰¹ Barth, *GD*, 80.

²⁰² In *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth often discusses humanity in connection with God. Both in *The Epistle to the Romans* and later in *Church Dogmatics*, Barth will speak of humanity in connection with Christ. It is my suggestion that in *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth's use of "God" refers to the Triune God, which includes, and may be synonymous with, the second member of the Trinity, as opposed to referring solely to God the Father, the first member of the Trinity.

between God and man to a consequential doctrine.²⁰³ As early as *The Epistle to the Romans* Barth exploits a reversal of the process of anthropological development, beginning with divine revelation rather than human knowledge. This re-evaluation allows Barth to take seriously the problem of humanity while avoiding defeatism. He neither surrenders humanity to the fall, nor to blind optimism, but rather emphasizes the possibility of transformation from death to life in Christ. It is for this reason that Ingolf Dalferth can state, “from the publication of his *Epistle to the Romans* in 1919 ... Barth did not waver on this fundamental point: the reality to which theology refers is the eschatological reality of the risen Christ and the new life into which we are drawn by the Spirit.”²⁰⁴

Barth continues to develop his Christological concept of humanity, most notably in § 44 of volume III/2 of his *Church Dogmatics*.²⁰⁵ Yet, the Christological groundwork for humanity is already laid here in *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, and in volume I of *The Göttingen Dogmatics*. It is Christological footing that allows Thomas Torrance to point to the error in both Emil Brunner’s “The New Barth”²⁰⁶ and Hans Urs von Balthasar’s perceived turn to analogy and the anthropological adoption of natural theology in Barth’s thought.²⁰⁷ Therefore, Torrance is correct in stating that “the ‘Christian humanism’ of the new man expounded by Barth in the various parts of his third volume [of his *Church Dogmatics*] belonged to the very essence of his main theme [of his theology].”²⁰⁸

²⁰³ Webster, “Creation,” 95.

²⁰⁴ Ingolf Dalferth, “Karl Barth’s Eschatological Realism,” in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21.

²⁰⁵ See chapter 4.

²⁰⁶ Brunner, “The New Barth,” 123.

²⁰⁷ von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 153-155.

²⁰⁸ Torrance, *Early Theology*, 23.

CHAPTER 2: ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE OPENING OF *CHURCH DOGMATICS*

Introduction

Barth spent over thirty-five years crafting his third and final, though incomplete, round of dogmatics.²⁰⁹ In *Church Dogmatics* Barth emphasizes the role of divine revelation in theological knowledge more stringently than in his earlier works, such as *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Word of God and The Word of Man*, and *The Göttingen Dogmatics*. Despite McCormack's downplaying²¹⁰ of the changes within the methodology and content of these earlier works compared to the *Church Dogmatics*,²¹¹ there is a marked increase in the clarity of the *realdialektik* between God and humanity, as well as "the removal of 'false' conceptions of the human agent."²¹²

The differences between Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and his earlier work may be a point of contention for some, yet it is without doubt that his *Church Dogmatics* stands as a true *magnum opus*. It is the goal this of chapter to explore the presence of Barth's theological anthropology within the early sections of his *Church Dogmatics*, which leads

²⁰⁹ Earlier Barth abandoned what has come to be known as *The Göttingen Dogmatics* as well as his yet-to-be translated *Christian Dogmatics*.

²¹⁰ As a result of McCormack's correct efforts to overcome von Balthasar's errors of perceiving multiple significant transitions and conversions within Barth's writing, McCormack within his work *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* appears to over react, disallowing for any growth, change, or variation within Barth's writing, even in ways that are fundamentally congruent with Barth's Christological basis of his theological program.

²¹¹ McCormack asserts that "the differences between the *Christliche Dogmatik* and *Church Dogmatics* I/1 and I/2 are simply not great enough to require beginning anew." McCormack *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, 15. For McCormack, the chief reason why Barth restarted his dogmatics was due to historical coincidences, the disintegration of relations between Barth and his earlier theological comrades (Gogarten, Bultmann and Brunner), and dramatic changes of political landscape within Germany in the elections of September 1930 that saw the rise of the National Socialist German Workers Party. McCormack suggests that these results "moved Barth to distance himself in as public a way as possible from his former friends. What better way than to exaggerate the distance separating his own theology in the present moment of 1931 from the theological way he had followed throughout the twenties (and thereby the theology which he had promoted together with Gogarten et al)?" McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, 15.

²¹² Spencer, *Clearing A Space*, 247.

to volume III.2, particularly §44. It also seeks to highlight the continuity of these volumes with Barth's earlier work. It also marks the continued development of his Christological anthropology through the lens of the various modes of theology covered in the preceding volumes, a concept "that was present *in nuce*"²¹³ in Barth's earlier work. These concepts are explored particularly through the lens of the three major doctrines of volumes I through III.2 of *Church Dogmatics*: revelation, God and creation.

Humanity in Barth's Doctrine of Revelation

Revelation as the Source of Theology and Anthropology

Similar to Barth's earlier writings, volume I/1 of his *Church Dogmatics* rejects the certainty of Descartes.²¹⁴ However, Barth's denial of human-derived knowledge does not preclude the possibility of human certainty, only the anthropocentric source of it. Theological knowledge comes to be a reality of human certainty, even self-certainty, although it is not a self-derived self-certainty.

For Barth, divine revelation is truth. However, this truth is not a humanly defined category, instead it stems from the very nature of God, who is its source. God's revelation is truth because God is truth. Humanity cannot ascribe meaning to God's revelation; they can only stand under it. For this reason Barth states that "the fact of God's Word does not receive its dignity and validity in any respect or even to the slightest degree from a presupposition that we bring to it. Its truth for us, like its truth in itself, is grounded absolutely in itself."²¹⁵ Fergus Kerr thus describes Barth's anthropology as leading us "from the Cartesian self to Christ's humanity,"²¹⁶ and as a

²¹³ Webster, *Moral*, 30-31.

²¹⁴ That being a certainty based solely on human reason and human answers to human questions.

²¹⁵ Barth, *CD* I/1, 196.

²¹⁶ Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 24.

result humanity comes to understand itself not through self-critical thought or self-certainty, but in the knowledge that is given by God.

Humanity that lacks revelation lacks self-perception. Humanity's knowledge outside of revelation is so limited that it is unable to recognize its own limitations. In light of this reality, Barth concludes, "Revelation itself is needed for knowing that God is hidden and man blind."²¹⁷ Revelation acts as the wind to blow away the chaff of human knowledge. Therefore, "there can be no point in trying to maintain man's self determination in some way, even dialectically, over against the determination of man by God."²¹⁸ Without God's revelatory act, humanity fails to perceive the extent of its own brokenness and the corruption of its perception. "The Word of God tells us that we are created by God out of nothing and held up by Him over nothing."²¹⁹

Truth is rooted in God and provided to humanity by God. In this case truth is the co-knowledge of God and humanity. From this rationale, human self-knowledge then either systemically oversells or undersells humanity.²²⁰ It is for this reason that Eberhard Jüngel recognizes Barth's perception wherein "humankind can never receive its due as long as it seeks it within itself."²²¹ In this early stage of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* he clears the way of all possibilities of humanly sourced knowledge because divine revelation casts a shadow of doubt over human knowledge, particularly human knowledge of God. Yet, Hans Vium Mikkelsen states "the primary function of revelation

²¹⁷ Barth, *CD* I/2, 29.

²¹⁸ Barth, *CD* I/1, 200.

²¹⁹ Barth, *CD* I/2, 40.

²²⁰ Humanity understands itself as either a sort of superhuman, full of hubris and an arrogant concept of infallibility, believing in their ability to accomplish any task, even self understanding, or human understanding leads to an understanding of utter fallibility, that humanity lacks the ability to act for itself, as though it were a log floating upon the sea.

²²¹ Eberhard Jüngel, "The Royal Man" in *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 128.

is not to disclose what the human being *cannot* say about God. In the [*Church Dogmatics*] (as in the *Epistle to the Romans*) God remains the [W]holly [O]ther, but here it becomes clear that the [W]holly [O]ther is defined positively (in terms of its own independent content) and not negatively (in terms of what it is not).”²²²

God’s Word of revelation, that is Jesus Christ, stands as the source of all knowledge of God and the related knowledge of humanity.²²³ God’s revelation in His Word also stands as the limit of all knowledge of humanity. Human beings are unable to establish a knowledge of themselves that is outside what God has revealed to them.²²⁴ In Jesus Christ humanity comes to know for certain what creation is, who the Creator is, and what it means to be the creation of this Creator.²²⁵ As such, “The very man who knows the Word of God also knows that he can bring no capability of his own to this knowledge, but has first to receive all capability.”²²⁶ Humanity holds the possibility of self-knowledge but this possibility exists only because it receives both the method and content of that knowledge from Christ. God’s revelatory act not only provides the light of divine

²²² Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 45. As Mikkelsen points out, any attempt to describe humanity solely on negative terms, via negative theology, is “an inconsistent way to avoid anthropomorphically structured theology, as it makes itself fully dependent on what it negates.” Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 45).

²²³ Again, Barth is not suggesting that all knowledge of humanity is derived in revelation, but that knowledge of humanity as a whole (what humanity is) is sourced in revelation. Barth can be seen as standing in the shadow of Calvin, who understands the angel of the Lord, who appears throughout the Old Testament, as the Word of God, Jesus Christ. As such, “the orthodox doctors of the church have rightly and prudently interpreted that chief angel to be God’s Word, who already at the time, as a sort of foretaste, began to fulfil the office of Mediator.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 1, XIII. 133.

²²⁴ In this Barth follows the work of Athanasius who states that “When God the Almighty was making mankind through His own Word, He perceived that they, owing to the limitation of their nature, could not of themselves have any knowledge of their Artificer, the Incorporeal and Uncreated.” But instead provided knowledge of His Word, that is Christ. Athanasius, *The Incarnation of the Word of God*, trans. Penelope Lawson (New York: The MacMillians Company, 1946), 37-38.

²²⁵ Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits*, 54.

²²⁶ Barth, *CD I/1*, 197.

knowledge within the experiences of the individual, but in this casts shadows upon the possibility of true human self-knowledge.²²⁷

Revelation casts doubt on the possibility of a true general anthropology based on human knowledge. Thus, Barth writes, “it is not for us to know in advance what we are on the ground of a general anthropology. We are what the Word of God tells us we are. We are flesh.”²²⁸ Similar to his explanation in *The Epistle to the Romans*, Barth pronounces a “No” against all humanly ascertained knowledge. While humanity is flesh, their realization of this is not the terminus of human knowledge, but the inauguration of it. Humanity cannot be understood outside of flesh, however, “that is what God’s Word Himself becomes in His revelation.”²²⁹ Human beings encounter God as they are, because of His action to stand as they stand. Because of this “the noetic and ontological determination of man is, from beginning to end Christologically centered. We cannot know man first and then understand Jesus Christ in light of this self-knowledge. Rather, to know man is first to know the man Jesus and then to define all humanity in light of this prior knowledge.”²³⁰ The Incarnation stands as the gateway to and the means of human knowledge of the Triune God, and humanity is grounded in God’s truthful nature, as seen in Christ. All other knowledge of humankind is cast into doubt.

²²⁷ Mikkelsen points out that Barth’s theological centre of revelation is able to avoid the two major pitfalls of contemporary theology: fundamentalism and relativism. Fundamentalism is a claim that the authority of the Bible is based on a literal understanding of it, “where the Bible is read as the answer to all our questions in a way that does not take its own context and historical embeddedness into account.” Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 3. Interpretation is either abandoned or used as a synonym for translation. This means that there is no possibility of the perception of change either in the message or in God. Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 3). Relativism, on the other hand, is the view that no religion can claim to be the true religion, such claims are to be seen as imperialism and tolerance is the singular aspiration. Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 4.

²²⁸ Barth, *CD I/2*, 40.

²²⁹ Barth, *CD I/2*, 40.

²³⁰ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 264.

For Barth, “the procedure in theology, then, is to establish self-certainty on the certainty of God, to measure it by the certainty of God, and thus to begin with the certainty of God without waiting for the validating of this beginning by self-certainty.”²³¹ Therefore, attempts at Cartesian proofs of existence, particularly of God, spiral back into the Cartesian metaphysics of the self.²³² Divine revelation means that humanity is set free of continual doubt, which as a result of human fallibility drives humanity into self-destructive and nihilistic agnosticism.²³³ In His revelatory work, God not only provides humanity a knowledge of the Divine as a result of His perfect self-perception, but also a knowledge of humanity, streaming from God’s perception of His creations as it truly is. For this reason, humanity can have anthropological certainty because it is first of all theo-anthropological certainty.

God’s freedom to reveal Himself in the Incarnation makes a way for humanity to come into an understanding of God and His creation. Revelation is the beginning of true human knowledge. There can be no other starting point for anthropological knowledge than revelation. The existence of humanity in both faith and obedience to the Word of God is a direct result of God’s work of revelation through the Incarnation without overlooking humanity’s sinful reality.²³⁴ God and His action become the basis of human self-knowledge. It is for this reason that Stuart McLean notes that while “most theologians start with man, then demonstrate how he is related to God, and finally show how he is related to other men Barth begins with God’s freely-given relationship to

²³¹ Barth, *CD*, 196.

²³² Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 8.

²³³ Unlike Narcissus, Cartesian questioning leads to a drowning of the self, not because of a recognition of one’s beauty, but because of a reaching out to secure the image of one’s self in the reflective pool. Cartesian doubt ultimately plunges humanity into a deadly encounter with the perception of the self, unable to secure complete knowledge of the self it plunge deeper and deeper into its watery grave.

²³⁴ Barth, *CD* I/2, 206.

man which can be ignored or forgotten by man, but not destroyed.”²³⁵ Thus Barth does not create an anthropo-theology but a theo-anthropology.

This theologically centred form of anthropology allows for three unique benefits in understanding humanity. First, it is not necessary to pit one “centre” of human self-determination against another.²³⁶ Second, there is not the “fundamental distrust and suspicions that is often found in the history of theology” regarding these “centres.” Instead, they are understood and respected for the human reality that they are, yet are not saddled with the responsibility of forming the definition of humanity.²³⁷ Third, individuals need not turn themselves inside out searching for the true centre and meaning of humanity because human meaning and self-understanding is in God’s revelatory act.²³⁸

Human Reality in the God-Given Reality

In humanity’s encounter with revelation, Barth suggests that they experience a reflection of true humanity. However this is not simply a hypothetical or abstract description of humanity that may exist, but a reality that has, does, and will continue to exist in the person of Jesus Christ.²³⁹ It is this reality that opens the door for human action, true human action because of the action of God in His Word. “If God is seriously involved in experience of the Word of God, then man is just as seriously involved too. The very man who stands in real knowledge of the Word of God also knows himself as existing in the act of his life, as existing in his self-determination.”²⁴⁰ Even in this early phase of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, it is in this act of revelation that self-determination

²³⁵ McLean, *Humanity*, 23.

²³⁶ Barth, *CD I/1*, 202. These “centres” stand for various forms of humanity that have been understood to form the basis of what it means to be human such as experience, will, conscience, and feeling, against other forms.

²³⁷ Barth, *CD I/1*, 202.

²³⁸ Barth, *CD I/1*, 203.

²³⁹ Barth, *CD I/1*, 198.

²⁴⁰ Barth, *CD I/1*, 200.

becomes possible, not because of human action, but because of human action that is made possible by divine action. Simultaneously, Barth is working to clear away humanly derived certainty, and point to the possibility and reality of a divinely derived human certainty.

In consequence, humanity gains agency for action based upon the reality of faith within humanity. Barth explains:

Man exists as a believer wholly and utterly by this object. In believing he can think of himself as grounded, not in self but only in this object, as existing indeed only by this object. He has not created his own faith; the Word has created it. He has not come to faith; faith has come to him; faith has been granted to him through the Word.²⁴¹

Recall that Barth does not see faith as a human-derived reality, but a reality that is gifted to humanity by God. Faith is what makes human agency a reality, but such a faith can only be grounded upon the faith of Christ.²⁴² For this reason Barth views humanity as the “subject of faith. Man believes, not God. But the fact that man is this subject in faith is bracketed as a predicate of the subject God.”²⁴³

Christological Humanity in Volume I of *Church Dogmatics*

The possibility of human knowledge exists exclusively because of the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man. Humanity is offered revelation and true human experience because in Jesus there exists the unique reality of true God and true humanity. In the Incarnation God crosses the boundary that marks Him as the Wholly Other and becomes wholly like humanity, as they were designed to live. God moves “in general terms,

²⁴¹ Barth, *CD I/1*, 244-245.

²⁴² In *CD I/1*, Barth more clearly states what he has earlier hinted at: his adoption of the “*Genetivus mysticus πιστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*.” Barth states that “*πιστις* denotes the state created by God’s revelation in Christ, the being of Christians, their being ἐν Χριστῷ, by which they are put in a position to achieve for their part the knowledge of God or of Christ as the Kyrios, the reality of man in which this achievement is an event.” Barth, *CD I/1*, 228.

²⁴³ Barth, *CD I/1*, 245.

between His own existence and the existence of that which is not identical with Himself.”²⁴⁴ This means that God is able to transcend difference in Christ, knowing humanity, revealing humanity to humanity, and creating the possibility of the human experiencing humanity as it was created. In this act of transcending difference, it must be noted that “it is not that God is still God *despite* humiliating Godself for us in Jesus Christ; it is that God is *precisely* God in the humiliation for us in Jesus that incarnation brings.”²⁴⁵

Humanity stands in a sickness because of its separation from God. However, the sickness may be hidden behind an aspect of soundness, strength, and victory, yet God’s work of revelation shows it to be sickness, weakness, and defeat.²⁴⁶ With Christ “God plunges us into this despair when He reveals Himself to us, when His Word is made flesh and the judgment of our flesh by the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes and ear and therefore kindles our faith.”²⁴⁷ In this revelation the human is struck by the utter failure of his or her actions and knowledge. To be human is to be “liable to die, and if nevertheless we live in the midst of death This is the meaning of flesh This is the real meaning of man.”²⁴⁸

It must be noted that Barth understands this questioning not as a disposal of humanity, but a clearing of the clutter to indicate the true human reality that God intended

²⁴⁴ Barth, *CD I/2*, 31. It is important to note the words of Paul Nimmo: “It is not that God is still God *despite* humiliating God-self for us in Jesus Christ; it is that God is *precisely* God in the humiliation for us in Jesus Christ that incarnation brings.” Paul Nimmo, “Barth and the Christian as Ethical Agent: An Ontological Study of the Shape of Christian Ethics” in *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth’s Ethics*, ed. Daniel Migliore (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 223.

²⁴⁵ Nimmo, “Barth and the Christian as Ethical Agent,” 223. Later in 1956, Barth will refer to this as “the humanity of God” which is means “God’s relation to and turning toward man.... It represents God’s existence, intercession, and activity for man, the intercourse God holds with him, and the free grace in which He wills to be and is nothing other than the God of man.” Karl Barth, “The Humanity of God, 37.

²⁴⁶ Barth, *CD I/2*, 428.

²⁴⁷ Barth, *CD I/2*, 372.

²⁴⁸ Barth, *CD I/2*, 40.

in creation. Through this encounter with Christ, humanity experiences death, but this experience of death brings about true human life. This truly human life is possible because this flesh, this life of death, was the humanity that Christ assumed.²⁴⁹ When humanity's eyes are opened, "the Christian life begins. We are born and live as the children of God. And then we are real men who really love."²⁵⁰

As early as volume I of *Church Dogmatics*, Barth points out that this encounter with Christ is what makes the seemingly impossible statements of the Sermon on the Mount and Scripture, as a whole, possible for humanity. "By the Spirit who is the Lord [those who follow Him] are 'changed into his (Christ's) likeness.' The result is, therefore, that they become a mirror of the glory of the Lord."²⁵¹

Humanity's Freedom and God's freedom

In the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* Barth continues to build on the concept of divinely-based human freedom by highlighting the Christological basis of this human freedom, as it is viewed within a Chalcedonian framework. Human freedom exists because of God's freedom and is made possible by the Incarnation of God as human. The uniting of God and human in the person of Jesus Christ means that sinful humanity can enter into divine freedom. In the Incarnation "God is not prevented either by His own deity or by our humanity and sinfulness and from being is free for us and *in* us."²⁵² In the Incarnation God reaches beyond his otherness and our sinfulness to share with humanity

²⁴⁹ Barth, *CD* I/2, 40.

²⁵⁰ Barth, *CD* I/2, 372-373.

²⁵¹ Barth, *CD* I/2, 278.

²⁵² Barth, *CD* I/2, 2.

His freedom. Humanity stands in the possibility of freedom, but a freedom that is rooted solely in God.²⁵³

In this Christological reality Barth answers the question: “In what freedom of man’s is it real that God’s revelation reaches us?”²⁵⁴ Therefore, he opens §16 by stating that “To become free for God we must be convinced that we are not already free. We must make room for the miracle of acknowledging the Word of God. The Word of God comprises in itself the necessary negation.”²⁵⁵ In this Barth proclaims that humanity is offered freedom by God,²⁵⁶ but within this freedom there is a “No” pronounced against human pride and humanly-derived agency. God offers freedom for humanity, but this freedom cannot stand along side of human attempts at freedom, One must either ignore the Divine’s offer or deny their fleshly desires of autonomy.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ In this concept of freedom, Barth overcomes the common problem of modern understandings of human freedom, which perceives freedom as the absence of order or nature that shapes the self from outside, in that such modern conceptions of freedom face the problem of “relating freedom to a situation.” Webster, *Moral*, 155. Additionally, Charles Taylor points out that modern liberal concepts of human freedom are understood as “something men win though to by setting aside obstacles or breaking loose from external impediments, ties, or entanglements. To be free is to untrammelled, to depend in one’s actions only on oneself.” Taylor, *Hegel*, 155. Such modern concepts of freedom can be seen as a notion of freedom that has no content. Taylor, *Hegel*, 155. Following Barth’s theological concept, freedom retains content because of its divine source. This divine source means that such freedom is able to by-pass or overcome the bane of political liberalism of late; the clash of personal freedoms. This clash seen in “multicultural” societies throughout recent history has resulted in a situation in which, as noted English scholar Terry Eagleton notes, “the nation’s liberal values ... undermin[e] the liberal values it sought to protect [in the first place].” Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 150.

²⁵⁴ Barth, *CD I/2*, 204.

²⁵⁵ Barth, *CD I/2*, 258. Like Hegel, Barth sees such liberal concepts of freedom as superficial because they fail to probe the question *why* individuals make the choices they do. However, unlike Hegel’s concept of freedom being rooted in a recognition of a common human ability for reason, Barth perceives freedom as been rooted in God’s revelatory act. It is only when humanity stands under the crisis can it be free. Peter Singer, “Hegel, G.W.F.” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (New York: Oxford University press, 1995), 314.

²⁵⁶ Barth’s concept of freedom is unique, in that true freedom is not freedom to choose good or evil, as it is for Calvin (Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 2,II, 259), but a freedom to exist as truly human.

²⁵⁷ Jesse Couenhoven wonders if divine freedom in Barth’s mind is something quite different than what he has in mind when he speaks of human freedom. As a result of this question he ask if there might not “Therefore be significant ways in which Barth’s theology implies that divine and human freedom are not properly considered analogous at all?” Jesse Couenhoven “Karl Barth’s Conception(s) of Human and Divine Freedom(s)” in *Commanding Grace: Studies in Karl Barth’s Ethics*, ed. Daniel Migliore (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 239. In light of this question, John Webster’s reading is very helpful. Webster

When individuals accept the reality of the *realdialektik* and its affect on our human freedom, they can enter into the freedom made possible by the Incarnation. “God’s freedom for us men is a fact in Jesus Christ” Barth exclaims.²⁵⁸ Humanity no longer struggles against oppression to create freedom. Freedom is not found at the end of a bayonet, in courtroom decisions or as a result of royal assent, but because of God’s openness for humanity in Christ. As Barth suggests Christ’s “existence is God’s freedom for man. Or *vice versa* God’s freedom for man is the existence of Jesus Christ.”²⁵⁹ In this case, just as God entered into human created-ness in Christ, humanity also has the possibility of entering into God’s divine freedom, freedom that does not counter the human reality or stand in opposition to the freedom of the other, but is based upon the truth of who God is. Such a theological concept of freedom shows, as John Webster points out, “the lie that liberty is unformed and unconstrained self-actualization In evangelical freedom I am so bound to God’s grace and God’s call that I am liberated from all other bonds and set free to live in the truth ... Evangelical freedom is thus freedom from the powers that inhibit me (including, and especially my own powers).”²⁶⁰

points out three significant aspects of Barth’s freedom. First, Barth’s freedom must be read in a multi-layered or dialectic way (which holds in tension the following three attributes: 1) “*God’s freedom is His very own*. It is the sovereign grace wherein God chooses to commit Himself to man. Thereby God is Lord as *man’s* God.” 2) “*Man’s freedom is his as the gift of God*. It is the joy wherein man appropriates God’s election. Thereby man is God’s creature, His partner, and His child as *God’s* man.” 3) Ethics for the Evangelical life is “the reflection *upon the divine call to human action*” that is implied by the gift of this freedom.) Second, Barth does not attempt to construct a better set of terms for the problem of freedom, but worked towards a “disciplined description of Christian discourse, normatively found in Holy Scripture.” Third, Barth’s concept of human freedom is that it is a “the matter of human freedom is *spiritual in character*.” Webster, *Moral*, 100-102.

²⁵⁸ Barth, *CD* I/2, 25.

²⁵⁹ Barth, *CD* I/2, 25.

²⁶⁰ John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 92-93. It is for this reason that later, in 1953, Barth will state in a lecture entitled “the Gift of Freedom” that “seen from the vantage point of the free gift of God, the concept of unfree man is a contradiction in itself. Unfree man is a creature of chaos, a monster begotten by his own pride, his own laziness, his own lies.” Karl Barth, “The Gift of Freedom” in *The Humanity of God*, trans. Thomas Wieser, 76.

Humanity as Rationality and Embodiment

Anthropological concepts of conservative theologies, particularly those influenced by English Puritanism and German Pietism, tend to emphasize the mortification of the flesh, which results in the downplaying and a damnation of humanity. Such tendencies cast off of the physical and temporal aspects of humanity in the hopes of a perfected spiritual or eschatological future reality. Liberal theologies that are based on modern concepts of enlightenment view humanity as perfectible, but perfectible in and through a particular aspect of humanity related to rationality wherein humanity can overcome the current weakness of itself. Most often this is related to an aspect of human embodiment. Both liberal and conservative anthropologies do violence to the individual, downplaying human embodiment and other aspects of the human experience that are part of the existential reality of human life.

Here in the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* Barth stands against both conservative and liberal denigrations of human reality in understanding human flesh as a reality of human embodiment and human experience, but not the sum of either of these two categories. Barth explains that “Flesh, of course, signifies man, humanity or man-ness, but not in such that by this designation a fuller content is added to a conception of man already familiar or to a conception which can be acquired from other sources.”²⁶¹ Human reality is in part a reality of the flesh, thus our fleshly experience cannot be denied, ignored, or separated from intellectual or spiritual aspects of humanity. Spirit and body are bound up in a single individual and thus each continually affects and dialogs with the other. In this understanding, flesh is not denied in revelation nor is spiritual reality denied in everyday life. Because of this union, Barth understands that the “man

²⁶¹ Barth, *CD* I.2, 40.

who is flesh is man who faces God and so already in himself man in spiritual reality, man whom God's revelation encounters."²⁶² Because of this interplay between body and soul, spirit and flesh, Mangina suggests that

Barth is able to honour that which ironically eludes many modern doctrines of personhood: the peculiar contours of our individual stories in their social worlds. Barth is less interested in the dynamics of the self than he is in the common world of action and social institutions in which people live out their sometimes heroic, more often unspectacular, but always interesting lives.²⁶³

Humanity in Relationality

Finally, in the first volume of *Church Dogmatics*, Barth is highly critical of isolationist tendencies within enlightenment thought.²⁶⁴ He understands that no human is an island, and that based on Scripture humanity is always grounded on a dependence and a relationship with God. Barth explains, "The method prescribed for us by Holy Scripture not only assumes that the entelechy of man's I-ness is not divine in nature but, on the contrary, is in contradiction to the divine nature. It also assumes that God is in no way bound to man, that His revelation is thus an act of His freedom, contradicting man's contradiction."²⁶⁵ Humanity exists in a social reality with one another because it is first of all based on a social relationship with God. "Seeing then that the life of the children of God is a dependence upon the incarnate Word, it is a common life a Church community."²⁶⁶ In this Barth already understands the Christian life as a true possibility

²⁶² Barth, *CD* I.2, 44. In this Barth follows Athanasius who describes humanity as properly understood as being created by God "as an embodied spirit." Athanasius, *Incarnation*, 29.

²⁶³ Mangina, *Christian Life*, 14.

²⁶⁴ An example of this is seen in Barth's critic of G. Wobbermin and Heinrich Scholz in volume I.1. Here Barth states that in his grounding of humanity and human certainty in the "I-experience" results in a reality that may lead one to ask if "this cartesianism is really as impregnable as it usually purports to be even of this philosophical plane." Barth, *CD* I/1, 195.

²⁶⁵ Barth, *CD* I/2, 7.

²⁶⁶ Barth, *CD* I/2, 17.

and reality, but as one of dependence, both upon God for His revelation and the community formed by His revelation.

Summary

In the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* Barth conceives of humanity as existing in context of both a divine “No” and a divine “Yes.” This “Yes” is established through the work of the “No” and allows humanity to stand as truly human, as a human that is in a right relationship with others and with God, in true freedom that is based on God’s provision of freedom in Himself. Mangina points out that “In *Church Dogmatics* I/1 one sees him deploying a technical vocabulary that will allow him to hold together both God’s sovereignty in revelation and the reality of human response. To put it quite simply, if there is real knowledge of God there has to be a real knower.”²⁶⁷ This means that humanity is established in the act of revelation, it is revelation that is the source of true human knowledge, both of God and humanity. God acts to reveal Himself and thus establishes humanity ontologically and noetically in this act of revelation.

In the revelation of God humanity comes to understand its situation as utterly sinful but also its relationship to God through Christ. This relationship is made possible in faith, established in the faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ. Already here in volume I of his *Church Dogmatics* Barth is able to discuss the reality of a Christologically grounded humanity, a humanity that is able to experience true freedom, and a humanity that is understood as encompassing the entirety of the human, both body and soul. This human reality is finally understood in its social reality, a reality that exists first between God and humanity, as a result of God’s actions, which allows for pro-social human activity in Christ.

²⁶⁷ Mangina, *Christian Life*, 35.

Humanity in Barth's Doctrine of God

Election as the Means and Possibility of Barth's Christological Anthropology

Barth's concept of election marks his greatest innovation in the area of theology, which as Colin Gunton notes, "led to one of the most remarkable transformations in the history of theology."²⁶⁸ Barth's unique perspective on election offers a reformation of the traditional Reformed concept. As a result, Barth's anti-individualistic perspective will continue to shape theology into the foreseeable future.²⁶⁹

For Barth, election is viewed as being thoroughly Christological, which has significant implications in his anthropology, as his Christological doctrine of election makes possible his Christological doctrine of anthropology. Election stands as the concept that allows Barth to take seriously humanity's existential struggle in a fallen world and humanity's divinely-given reality of a reconciled existence. It is for this reason that the present section of this chapter seeks to explore Barth's Christological concept of election and the subsequent effects it has on his Christological anthropology.

Barth discusses election as early as volume I/2 of his *Church Dogmatics*,²⁷⁰ however, he most clearly introduces and discusses this concept in §32 through to §35. Barth masterfully introduces the reader to his Christological concept of election in the introductory statement of §33 when he writes: "The election of grace is the eternal

²⁶⁸ Colin Gunton "Forward" in John Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1989), 1.

²⁶⁹ Bruce McCormack, "Grace and Being: The Role of God's Gracious Election in Karl Barth's Theological Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92. McCormack notes that while there may be significant doctrinal development in other areas within Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, "none could have the sweeping significance for the shape of his theology as a whole which the modifications in his doctrine of election had," McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, 462.

²⁷⁰ Most particularly in §17, "The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion" and particularly §17.3, "The True Religion." Karl Barth, *On Religion: The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion*, trans. Garrett Green (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man to participation in His own glory.”²⁷¹ In this statement Barth clarifies that God as Christ, in His freedom, elects to stand for sinful humanity and in doing so elects to redeem humanity from its sinfulness. Already Barth hints toward an anthropological possibility of renewed humanity as a result of God’s election of Christ as a representative of humanity. Divine grace is, for Barth, the grounds upon which election is based. Furthermore, McCormack explains, “for Barth, both the humiliation of God and the exaltation of the human have their ontological ground in the divine election of grace.”²⁷²

“[I]n its simplest and most comprehensive form” Barth writes, “the dogma of predestination consists, then, in the assertion that the divine predestination is the election of Jesus Christ.”²⁷³ While this statement appears to have little to do with anthropology, a fuller understanding of Barth’s overall concept begins to emblazon anthropological realities of this idea. This statement comes to significance in that God as Christ stands as the electing God as well as Christ who stands as the one whom God has elected. While this concept may appear to be a radical departure from traditional conceptions of predestination, it is grounded in Chalcedonian Christology, wherein “the name of Jesus Christ has within itself the double reference: the One called by this name is both very

²⁷¹ Barth, *CD* II/2, 94.

²⁷² Bruce McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 237.

²⁷³ Barth, *CD* II/2, 103.

God and very man. Thus the simplest form of the dogma may be divided at once into the two assertions that Jesus Christ is the electing God, and that He is also elected man.”²⁷⁴

Christ’s two natures mean that Christ not only stands as the God who chooses but the human who stands chosen by God. This appears to radically counter the more individualistic concepts of election that have traditionally marked the Reformed landscape. However, Barth notes that this shift is the result when one takes seriously Christ’s two natures as fully God and fully human. When this happens it “crowds out and replaces the idea of a *decretum absolutum* (absolute decree),”²⁷⁵ which is traditionally conceived of as election.²⁷⁶ Predestination for Barth cannot be simply God choosing humanity as is traditionally seen in Reformed thought,²⁷⁷ rather it is Christ standing as the chosen one and the chooser.²⁷⁸ John Colwell accurately sums up Barth’s doctrine of election by suggesting that it “informs us that God, who has determined Himself to be the electing God in Jesus Christ, has determined Himself also to be the elected man in Jesus Christ.”²⁷⁹ For the believer “election is election to a way of life.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴ Barth, *CD II/2*, 103.

²⁷⁵ Barth, *CD II/2*, 103.

²⁷⁶ For example see J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 149-151, as well as Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 109-125.

²⁷⁷ For an example see Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thompson (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 154.

²⁷⁸ Barth pinpoints the location of the variation between his concept of election and the broad Reformed tradition’s concept as represented by the writing of Calvin. Barth points out that “the electing God of Calvin is a *Dues nudus absconditus* (purely hidden God). It is not the *Dues revelatus* (Revealed God) who is as such the *Dues absconditus* (hidden God), the eternal God. All the dubious features of Calvin’s doctrine result from the basic failing that in the last analysis he separates God and Jesus Christ, thinking that what was in the beginning with God must be sought elsewhere than in Jesus Christ. Thus with all his forceful and impressive acknowledgement of the divine election of grace, ultimately he still passes by the grace of God as it has appeared in Jesus Christ.” Barth, *CD II.2*, 111. Thus the significant differentiation between Barth’s and Calvin’s concept of election stands in the fact that for Calvin election is an action of God in His hiddenness, while for Barth, God elects in His act of revelation.

²⁷⁹ Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality*, 246.

²⁸⁰ Webster, *Holiness*, 80.

Humanity, Election and Relationality

Barth's anti-individualistic concept of election takes its strongest root in an ecclesiological understanding. As Barth opens §34 he states that "The election of grace, as the election of Jesus Christ, is simultaneously the eternal election of the one community of God by the existence of which Jesus Christ is to be attested to the whole world and the whole world summoned to faith in Jesus Christ."²⁸¹ As such, God's election of humanity is first and foremost an election of His community of faith. Humanity is elected in Christ and stands as elected within the Church community.²⁸² This ecclesiological election means that the individual stands chosen by God, but only in their association with the elected body of believers, which is the body of Christ. It is in this Christological community, and only in this community, that real humanity is made apparent to the surrounding world. The message the Church has to communicate to the world is the Gospel, and the truth of humanity in light of the Gospel; this is because "man elected by God is man made participant by God in eternal salvation. It is this man whom God's community in its perfect, its Church form can reveal."²⁸³ The elected individual is thus elected as part of the elected ecclesial community. Individual identity cannot be based on isolated definition, but instead the relationship with the human category, which

²⁸¹ Barth, *CD II/2*, 195.

²⁸² Later in the same volume Barth points out that "If it is the case that this orientation of the Church's doctrine of predestination certainly did not arise apart from the earlier ways of secular individualism, it is equally certain that as orientated in this way the doctrine is not merely one of those factors which have paved the way for Pietism and Rationalism within the Church itself." Barth, *CD II/2*, 308. For Barth this concept of individualized election, is not exclusively tied to the theological tradition of the past, but with the philosophical milieu that surrounded the development of this thought. In this individualistic concepts of election are based upon the adoption of presuppositions that were based upon secular individualism. Thus Barth points out that this concept of election would not have developed in its trajectory if not for the writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the younger F. D. E. Schleiermacher, Søren Kierkegaard, Henrik Ibsen, and Friederick Nietzsche. Barth, *CD II/2*, 308. As a result, the interplay between philosophical descriptions of humanity and human freedom and theological descriptions of divine election become apparent. These thinkers, as well as others were not only shaped by their respective Reformed theological setting, but also worked to shape it.

²⁸³ Barth, *CD II/2*, 265.

includes various social realities as well as the Church. The individual exists only in relationship to humanity as a whole.²⁸⁴

Election and Divine-Human Agency

Barth's concept of election has significant ramifications for his doctrine of anthropology. This concept of election has two significant results for Barth's doctrine of anthropology. The first anthropological result is the possibility of human freedom as well as clarity of understanding where previously there was only obscurity; second, this concept of election overcomes a two-fold obscurity that results from the question mark Barth posed against humanity

First, God's election of humanity in Christ means humanity receives agency. As a result of God's choosing of humanity, humanity enters into the freedom of God, and thus is able to respond to God, choosing God. Within this framework, human agency²⁸⁵ and action²⁸⁶ is Christologically grounded in God's election of humanity. As such, humanity is able to choose God, or conversely to reject God, because God first chose us.²⁸⁷

Humanity can choose to live for God, to be truly human, or not. Ultimately this choice only occurs subsequent to and because of God's choosing for us.²⁸⁸ In §34 Barth shows that there is a relationship between election and electing, or God's choosing and humanity's choosing. "The election of man is his election in Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ

²⁸⁴ Barth, *CD* II/2, 313.

²⁸⁵ Agency being the means and ability for humanity to act.

²⁸⁶ Action resulting from the agency provided by God. The Christological grounding not only creates the possibility of human action but also but also grounds the reality of the individual's implementation of agency bringing forth action.

²⁸⁷ It is for this reason that Barth explains that the election of Christ means that God enters into a compromise, in that He stand only to lose, while humanity stands only to gain. Barth, *CD* II/2, 162.

²⁸⁸ Barth, *CD* II/2, 193.

is the eternally living beginning of man and the whole of creation. Electing means to elect ‘in Him’. And election means to be elected ‘in Him.’”²⁸⁹

Second, this concept of election overcomes a two-fold obscurity that results from the question mark Barth earlier posed against humanity. While humanity’s fall causes a significant rift of knowledge, obscuring knowledge of both God and humanity, this Christological concept of election provides “a single and known form to the unknown God and unknown man.”²⁹⁰ While humanity continues to stand under the shadow of ignorance cast by sin, humanity is able to encounter divinely revealed truth of both God and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the single point where humanity encounters both God and humanity, displayed at a human level. This side of the *parousia*, humanity is unable to step out from under this shadow, but the light of divine truth cuts through it, emblazing humanity in truth.

Election and Community

This ecclesiological aspect of Barth’s election means that real humanity is a communal existence. True humanity cannot exist void of relationships with others but only as part of the community that God has established.²⁹¹ True humanity is humanity existing in relationship, first with God and then with fellow humanity. To exist as human means existence interwoven with another.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Barth, *CD* II/2, 195.

²⁹⁰ Barth, *CD* II/2, 147.

²⁹¹ Here Barth’s foreshadows what he will clearly announce in volume III.2 “*si quis dixerit hominem esse solitarium, anathema sit* (If anyone will have said that man is solitary, let him be anathema).” Barth, *CD* III/2, 312.

²⁹² Here Barth’s concept of anthropology is a direct affront to much

For Barth, Christ must stand as both subject and object, as both elector and elected, as a result of Scripture, and it is here that the anthropological outcomes of this concept become apparent in a radically Christological fashion.

If the testimony of Holy Scripture concerning the man Jesus Christ is true, that this man does stand before God above and on behalf of others, then this man is no mere creature but He is also the Creator, and His own electing as Creator must have preceded His election as creature. In one and the same person He must be both elected man and the electing God.²⁹³

This dual role of Christ means that He is

the object of the eternal divine decision and foreordination. Jesus Christ, then, is not merely one of the elect but *the* elect of God. From the very beginning (from eternity itself), as elected man He does not stand alongside the rest of the elect, but before and above them as the One who is originally and properly the Elect.²⁹⁴

Christ, as the eternally elected, stands as the eternal man, the human that defines humanity. In this definition, humanity is not simply that which is experienced in temporal reality, but it is the life of Christ and it was realized in Christ's earthly life. Humanity stands elect in Christ because Christ has been elected and stands for humanity generally.

Moving forward, human life on earth is a reflection of true humanity, though it is marred by humanity's sinful temporal reality. Barth is able to be positive about humanity and human nature in eternity. However, Barth's optimism has nothing to do with human work, but with Christ's reality. As Barth states "For teleologically the election of the man Jesus carries within itself the election of a creation which is good according to the positive will of God and of man as fashioned after the divine image and foreordained to the divine likeness (reflection)."²⁹⁵ Thus, the individual stands in the possibility of goodness when it stands in the shadow of Christ; sinfulness thus is the refusal of

²⁹³ Barth, *CD* II/2, 116.

²⁹⁴ Barth, *CD* II/2, 116.

²⁹⁵ Barth, *CD* II/2, 122. In this Barth takes Paul's use of *πασι* seriously in Titus 2:11 when he states Paul states that "for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to *all*. (NRSV) Emphasis added.

humanity to stand in this shadow. However, when humanity steps out and defines its own reality in its own image, in this humanity it thus acts as God.

Sin, for Barth, is a denial of true human reality²⁹⁶ that results in a break in the relationship between God and humanity and subsequently a break in the relationship between fellow humans. However, there is the possibility, in and through this Christological election, of redemption of humanity. Christ's work on the cross "when God chose as His throne the malefactor's cross, when the Son of God bore what the son of man ought to have borne, took place once and for all in the fulfilment of God's eternal will, and it can never be reversed."²⁹⁷ God both elected and rejected Jesus Christ as both God and human. In Christ humanity was elected by God and while God rejected the divine Christ. Through this act of divine rejection Jesus Christ paid the price no human could, while remaining truly human.

Because of Christ's substitution, Barth recognizes that

there is no condemnation — literally none — for those who are in Christ Jesus. For this reason faith in the divine predestination as such and *per se* means faith in the non-rejection of man, or disbelief in his rejection. Man is not rejected. In God's eternal purpose it is God Himself who is rejected in His Son.²⁹⁸

This rejection means that God is able to elect humanity and humanity is able to stand again as true humanity because of the work of Christ on the cross. This does not mean that fallen humanity no longer exists, for Adam's fall remains a reality for Barth.

Humans, even redeemed humans, are still sinners. However, all of this is outweighed by the power of Christ's resurrection because of the power of human life that has overcome

²⁹⁶ Because sin is the refusal of humanity to stand in its own reality sin is thus an ontological impossibility.

²⁹⁷ Barth, *CD* II/2, 67.

²⁹⁸ Barth, *CD* II/2, 167.

the ultimate result of sin, that is death. Barth states “as the result of this resurrection they belong already to the vanished past.”²⁹⁹

The Possibility of Rejection

Barth sees election as a Christological openness of God to humanity, however, he does not deny the possibility of rejection of the election. Humanity can exist in a form that does not conform to the truly human image of Christ. While the concept of rejection within predestination (damnation), has caused great strife and stress among believers, communities, and theological traditions, Barth conceives of rejection in a form that uniquely retains both divine and human freedom.

God has elected humanity in Christ into freedom in order to enter into or to choose, relationality with God. Humanity can choose to reject God, which is a rejection of God’s freedom for humanity. John Colwell describes this action as an act of resisting election,

the man who resists his election in Jesus Christ is the man who refuses his pardon by attempting to turn it into judgment and condemnation. God still says Yes to him but he can only hear this Yes as a destructive No. He hates and despises the grace of God, he will not live by it, he only receives it as non-grace, as wrath and as judgment.³⁰⁰

It is for this reason that Barth states “a ‘rejected’ man is one who isolates himself from God by resisting his election as it has taken place in Jesus Christ. God is for him; but he is against God. God is gracious to him; but he is ungrateful to God.”³⁰¹ For this reason rejection is linked to isolation, a fracturing of relationship, but a fracturing that the individual instigates. “The man who is isolated over against God is as such rejected by God. But to be this man can only be by the godless man’s own choice.”³⁰² Separation

²⁹⁹ Barth, *CD II/2*, 173.

³⁰⁰ Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality*, 255.

³⁰¹ Barth, *CD II/2*, 449.

³⁰² Barth, *CD II/2*, 306.

from God, following his work of redemption is a possibility, but it is always a result of human action.³⁰³ For Barth, like Emil Brunner, “Sinful man remains ‘a person’ – that is, a responsible subject – but is ‘an anti-personal’ person.”³⁰⁴

As a result of the social nature of election, true humanity can never exist outside of the relational aspects of this election. To be human in Barth’s eyes is always to be in relationship, first with God and subsequently with fellow humans. Any human being that exists outside of this communal reality exists outside of the realm for which it was created to exist. Humanity that exists outside of this divinely provided experience of relationship ceases to be truly human and thus in-human.

The Consequences of Human Rejection of Divine Humanity

As a result of his concept of election and the social and ecclesial realities of it, Barth perceives the isolation of the individual as a supreme danger, not only eternally, but also temporally. Barth understands non-social concepts of humanity as isolating and godless, which can lead to a de-humanization through various political concepts of humanity that degrade the whole human in favour of emphasizing a particular aspect of human reality. As Barth pronounces “let the ‘individual’ take warning! He has the power to be isolated and godless The godless man is ripe for every kind of authoritarianism and collectivism, as for every other dishonouring, perversion and destruction of his

³⁰³ It is at the point of the actuality of humanity’s status as rejected becomes convoluted in Barth’s writing. Barth states that humanity “can only be potentially rejected.” Barth, *CD* II/2, 349. It appears at this point as though Barth conceives of this human initiated rejection as an act that will bring humanity to the point of crisis, and thus an understanding of their need for election and redemption.

³⁰⁴ O’Donovan, “Man in the Image of God,” 437.

human existence.”³⁰⁵ Barth perceives that it is this dangerous possibility as the source for destructive socio-political constructs that deform humanity.³⁰⁶

Summary

Barth’s work on the doctrine of God within the second full volumes of his *Church Dogmatics* contains significant aspects of his anthropological concept, namely the distinctive doctrine of election. The concept of election is strongly anti-modern and thus overcomes many of the weaknesses that are contrived from an individualistic mind-set. For Barth, election is first and foremost the election of the one individual Jesus Christ. It is in this one man, who stands as the essence of humanity, that the whole of humanity experiences election in and through the election of the ecclesial community. Within God’s election there is always election to choose, a choice to respond to God’s divine election.

God’s choosing of humanity means that humanity is able to enter into truly human freedom, a freedom that is true to humanity’s created reality. This freedom means that humanity is given agency through God, and this agency first means that humanity is able to respond to God, to choose in light of God’s choosing. Moreover, humanity is able to truly know itself, divine election and subsequent divine revelation means that humanity is

³⁰⁵ Barth, *CD* II/2, 318.

³⁰⁶ Writing this volume at the close of World War II, Barth positioned his conception of humanity as firmly counter to both Communist and Fascist conceptions, the two powerful ideologies in the world at the time. Barth perceived that communism understood the true nature of humanity to be found in production, while fascism conceived of humanity constituted solely by terms of race, language, and history. Barth, *CD* II/2, 312. Barth’s warning of the dangers of these two particular concepts of humanity that surrounded him at the time of his authorship of *Church Dogmatics* II/2 are just as appropriate in the early twenty-first century. While contemporary consumerism may not feed into the mentality of a totalitarian state or collective action, it does isolate the individual from the social reality that humanity was created to experience. Understanding humanity solely in terms of consumers devalues all human action outside the ability and willingness to purchase goods and services. As well the rise of radical environmental and right winged Darwinist views that equate humanity with an animal nature overlooks the unique status of humanity as existing in relationality with each other and ultimately with God.

able to overcome the limitations of human knowledge, and divine revelation allows humanity to comprehend both God and itself as they truly are.

God's election of humanity is an invitation for humanity to choose Him. As such, God's election creates the possibility of human rejection. Rejection of God severs the divine human relationship as well as inter-human relationships. Because of the loss of relationship with God, humanity loses sight of the divinely revealed truth about themselves. This human rejection of the divine election ultimately results in the loss of self-perception and understanding.

In this framework, true human reality, relationality, freedom, and agency are the results of divine election. Humanity exists in the freedom to choose because God first chose humanity. The concept of divine election continues as a theme throughout Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, particularly surrounding humanity's reality as created, as seen in his doctrine of creation.

Barth's Anthropology in The Doctrine of Creation

In volume III of his *Church Dogmatics* Barth considers the doctrine of creation. Creation as it truly exists in light of the revelation of the Creator. Barth first discusses the relationship between God, humanity, and creation generally in III/1 before turning his attention to the reality of humanity in light of His revelation in III/2, which reaches its zenith in his discussion of the reality of true humanity or "Real Man" in §44.3. It is the lead up to §44.3 that this section examines, first by discussing the Christological concept of humanity within Barth's description of humanity's relationship to the rest of creation, and humanity's relationship to God in creation.

Christological Humanity in Relationship to the Creator and Creation

The Creation as a whole exists under both a divine “No” and divine “Yes,” which are both a reality, connected but not obliterating each other. The created world exists under rejection as a result of the fall. The natural world, alongside humanity, thus suffers the dramatic results of the fall; the created world is exposed to the horrors of war, death, and pollution. “The necessary rejection of everything which by His own nature God cannot be; and consequently the necessary rejection of everything which again by His own nature God cannot will and create, and cannot even tolerate as a reality distinct from Himself.”³⁰⁷ Yet, this rejection is Christologically tied to God’s redemption of it. “But the power of this twofold No is only the recoil of His equally twofold Yes: His Yes to Himself and to the reality which, although not identical with Him, was willed and created by Him.”³⁰⁸ In this God brought about the redemption of creation, through His redemption of humanity. God’s redemption of created humanity through the human Christ is also God’s redemption of creation as a whole because of humanity’s status among creation.³⁰⁹ In this way humanity and creation as a whole cannot be seen as having a nature of sin. While creation is marred by humanity’s sin, it is also, more importantly, marked by God’s redemption in humanity.³¹⁰

All of creation is made good through God’s relationship to it in His creation of it. By this dynamic the creature receives actualization and justification in the fact that God

³⁰⁷ Barth, *CD* III/1, 330.

³⁰⁸ Barth, *CD* III/1, 330.

³⁰⁹ Barth, *CD* III/1, 370.

³¹⁰ This two-fold reality allows Barth to overcome and critique the pessimistic descriptions of creation of both Marcion and the later German Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who both conceived of creation as evil. Barth suggests that while these two thinkers did not hold the same concepts of humanity or creation they both these two start and finish at the same location, which is tied to both other their docetic Christologies. Barth, *CD* III/1, 335-337.

creates it.³¹¹ This means that because of creation's relationship to God it truly exists. Creation is not an illusion but reality. "If we are the creation of a real Creator, we ourselves are real."³¹² Humanity gains an understanding of itself as it truly is only when it considers who it is in light of God. Such a divinely rooted humanity allows Barth to stand at a distance from optimistic descriptions of humanity³¹³ without surrendering all of creation to a pessimism that was apparent in the second-century heterodox theologian Marcion and the nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.³¹⁴

All throughout Barth's description of humanity, the divine "No" brings about the possibility and reality of a divine "Yes." It is here, in Barth's doctrine of creation where Barth now announces the "Yes" over the "No". "God created man to lift him in His own Son into fellowship with Himself. This is the positive meaning of human existence and all existence. But this elevation presupposes a wretchedness of human and all existence which His own Son will share and bear."³¹⁵ Both elevation and wretchedness, the "Yes" and the "No," are Christological in that Christ "will share and bare"³¹⁶ this wretchedness

³¹¹ Barth, *CD* III/1, 340.

³¹² Barth, *CD* III/1, 346. In this statement Barth stands against the epistemological system of Rene Descartes, who suggested that certainty of reality existed in one's ability to doubt. Barth critiques Descartes use of "presupposing the validity of doubt in his statement that We know, for it is quite obvious and Descartes himself expressly says so, that in fact he never does doubt these presuppositions, and this being the case he invalidates the proof of his own existence which is based upon this doubt." Barth, *CD* III/1, 362. Here Barth also stands at a great distance from his German contemporary Martin Heidegger, both of whom can be seen as rejecting and rebelling against the scholastic natural theology that surrounded them in late nineteenth and early twentieth century German theology and philosophy. While Barth understands humanity as revealed in the one human, Christ, Heidegger portrays a radically anti-humanistic concept of meaning, and thus humanity, being encountered in nature. "one is simply a place-holder—the site where Nature discloses itself." Kerr, *Immortal Longings*, 66.

³¹³ Here Barth critiques eighteenth-century style anthropocentric optimism. Barth notes that this project emphasized humanity's ability to overcome the ills of the world, as riddled with a fundamental error: "The whole optimistic thesis obviously depends on the legitimacy and force of this mode of entry. But this mode of entry is purely and simply an act of human self-confidence The classical man of the 18th century has this self-confidence, or he believes as if he had. The optimistic thesis stands with his absolutism (*L'état, c'est moi*). For its sustaining it does not really need either the universe or God." Barth, *CD* III/1 410.

³¹⁴ Barth, *CD* III/1, 335-337.

³¹⁵ Barth, *CD* III/1, 376.

³¹⁶ Barth, *CD* III/1, 376.

for the elevation of humanity and creation. For Barth, the whole of creation has a Christological reality in that “everything is created for Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, from the very outset everything must stand under this twofold and contradictory determination.”³¹⁷ Christ is thus the reason for creation and creation thus shares in the results of both rejection and reconciliation.

It is in this reconciliation that Barth already hints at the possibility of human volition as a result of the covenant relationship between humanity and Christ. Humanity is able to understand and act in light of Christ’s revelation of its human reality.³¹⁸ Christ makes a way for humanity to act that is true and real as a result of the truthful divine-human acts of the divine-human Christ.

Humanity in Creation

Barth conceives of humanity as the chief of all creation,³¹⁹ but he does not place humanity at the centre of the universe. Such a thought does not deviate from Barth’s theocentric theology in which humanity exists because of its relationship to God. Humanity exists as ruler and caretaker of creation because of God’s work of revelation to humanity through His Word.³²⁰ Humanity thus exists in relationship with God as a result of God’s work. Similarly, it exists in relationship with the surrounding creation because of God’s work. Created humanity shares the status as created because of God’s work. God created man and women as well as fish in the sea and birds of the air.³²¹ An analogy may be seen in the solar system: humanity stands as chief among the other planets, but

³¹⁷ Barth, *CD* III/1, 376.

³¹⁸ Barth, *CD* III/1, 383-384.

³¹⁹ Psalm 8:4-8.

³²⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 3.

³²¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 3.

humanity along with the rest of creation circles the sun, which is God. This reality holds two truths for humanity that they cannot escape. First, humanity is linked to the rest of creation through its status as creature; that is, created by God. Second, humanity is linked to God and dependent upon Him because their foundation is in Him.

Barth's description of humanity in the world, as "Man in the Cosmos" leads up to Barth's definitive description of true humanity, "Real Man" in §44. This current description of humanity is concerned with "the man who in the cosmos is confronted by another reality, and who is more conscious and sure of its true and genuine reality the more he is conscious and sure of his own humanity and therefore his own reality by the encounter of man with man and God and man."³²² Here Barth is not attempting to describe a cosmology, a scientific description of the scientific realities of creation,³²³ but to describe creation as God has revealed it.³²⁴

Barth's description of humanity as the object of theological knowledge continues to define humanity in light of the *realdialektik* in the lead up to his description of humanity as it has been called to exist in Christ. This dialectic, the gap that stands between humanity and God, has been apparent throughout Barth's description of humanity since *The Epistle to the Romans*. Barth's point remains strikingly similar to the resounding "No" of *Romans*, for when "man is truly and seriously viewed in the light of the Word of God, he can be understood only as the sinner who has covered his own creaturely being

³²² Barth, *CD* III/2, 4.

³²³ Barth states that the attempt to explain the world in scientific terms from revelation is a corruption of both the science and the divine revelation. "By the nature of its object, dogmatics has neither the occasion nor the duty to become a technical cosmology or Christian world-view." Barth, *CD* III/2, 6. This does not mean that dogmatic descriptions of creation cannot be allied with various world-views and cosmologies, as it "has never yet engendered its own distinctive world-view, but in this respect has always made more or less critical use of alien views." Barth, *CD* III/2, 7.

³²⁴ Barth, counter to much of North American theology of the twentieth century, states that "the exact science of man cannot be the enemy of the Christian confession." Barth, *CD* III/2, 24.

with shame, and who cannot therefore stand before God even though he is the creature of God.”³²⁵ However, it is important to note that it is humanity that *covers* its reality in sinfulness and that the essence of humanity is not sin but is affected by humanity’s act.³²⁶

While humanity’s sin does not completely obliterate humanity’s essence, it does completely obscure it from human reflection. This is a continuation of Barth’s view of humanity as “covered” by sin in *Romans*. Though humanity’s essence remains intact, it is continually filtered through sinfulness.

We do not have in any case the direct vision of a sinless being of man fulfilling its original determination. There is no point at which we are not brought up against that corruption and depravity ... [thus] it must be our aim to view [humanity] in the light of the Word of God, and therefore as the sinner which he is in his confrontation with God.³²⁷

As Barth has shown throughout his writings, humanity continues to exist in a reality that is utterly marred by sin. Humanity must stand under the “No” of God. “On the one side, the embracing perception shows us that man is sinful, and indeed totally radically sinful.”³²⁸ However, this sinful reality is not the sum of human reality, as humanity is created in the image of God and thus is never removed from the reality of God’s grace, through Jesus Christ. “If man is the object of divine grace, his self-contradiction may be radical and total, but it is not the last word that has been spoken

³²⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 27.

³²⁶ Barth condemns all discussion of human essence as equated with sin in his discussion of the Lutheran theologian Matthias Flacius, who understood the doctrine of original sin, that is after the fall, to have become humanity’s very substance; thereby subsuming all that is human. “Flacius called original sin and only one – the theological – form of human substance. What he rightly rejected was the idea of the synergists (and later the Formula of Concord) that it was merely an *accidens* (accident). It this Aristotelian terminology was adopted, sin could only be called the theological form of man’s substance.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 27. For Barth, humanity’s essence was created good and stands in the light of redemption, while existing under the shadow of sin. God’s power in His creation remains while the devil’s power also remains apparent. Humanity stands both under the “No” of sin and the “Yes” of God’s redemption. Barth agrees with the sixteenth-century Lutheran Formula of Concord, which Barth suggests “rightly emphasised against Flacius. Glory must be given to God by distinguishing His work and the creation of man from the devil’s work which has corrupted him.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 28.

³²⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 29.

³²⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 31.

about him.”³²⁹ Humanity, in sin, turns from God, but is never removed from the possibility and power of God.

For with God and from God he has a future which has not been decided by this self-contradiction he must inevitably incur, but which by the faithfulness and mercy of God is definitely decided in a very different way from what he deserves. If he is the object of God’s favour, his self-contradiction may be radical and total, but it cannot even be the first word about him.³³⁰

Human sinfulness may be total, but it is not supreme, “For the fact that he covered his creaturely being with infamy cannot mean that he has annulled or destroyed it.”³³¹

Barth shows that in God there is a future for humanity; however, this future is not the anthropo-centric future of modern optimism, but of a theo-centric realism.³³²

The arrogance of all attempts not to take sin as seriously as God Himself takes it is one thing, but its true corrective does not lie in the false humility of a resignation which would take it seriously in a way in which God Himself obviously does not, but in the true humility of faith which is satisfied with, and adopts itself to, the way in which God Himself takes it seriously.³³³

Humanity should not be defined by sin, but any attempt to define humanity outside of God’s work is itself sin and thus a fractured description of the human. In this Barth takes sin seriously, without surrendering the human over to its power. Humanity is made whole, but only when seen through the humility of Christ.³³⁴

It is in looking to Jesus Christ that humanity gains a clear understanding of itself. Following Barth, any full and true description of the essence of humanity must be a Christological description of humanity. Barth suggests that not only is anthropology a

³²⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 31.

³³⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 31.

³³¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 31.

³³² It is an understanding of what life truly is in light of God’s divine revelation.

³³³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 37.

³³⁴ This relationship between God and humanity restores dignity to humanity, a dignity that is divinely given and allows theological anthropology, particularly Reformed forms of theological anthropology to move beyond the disgust that Cynthia Rigby perceives as steaming from an over emphasis upon humanity’s total depravity. Rigby, “The Real Word Really Became Real Flesh”, 15, 130.

possible result of Christological contemplation, but that “we cannot really look at Jesus without – in a certain sense through Him – seeing ourselves also.”³³⁵ Barth’s Chalcedonian framework means that anthropology is the only possible result of Christological reflection. Humanity cannot separate itself from the image that it has been made in. “In Him are the peace and clarity which are not in ourselves.”³³⁶ Such clarity is possible in Christ because “in Him is the human nature created by God without the self-contradiction which affects us and without the self-deception by which we seek to escape this our shame. In Him is human nature without human sin.”³³⁷ This clarity provides an image of who and what humanity was created to be, *real* humanity, which Barth will cover in the next paragraph of his *Church Dogmatics*. To this point, Barth has Christologically cleared away the sinful clutter of human existence and paved the way for a discussion of what is possible for humanity.

Summary

In the initial sections of volume III³³⁸ of his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth discusses the reality of humanity in the context of creation as a whole and humanity’s relationship to God as His creation. These two themes, building upon Barth’s work in previous volumes most notably on the topics of revelation and elect, provide him with the ability to discuss true humanity in §44.

In this section Barth views the whole of creation as existing under the reality of the dialectic that exists between it and God. Creation groans under the weight of the divine

³³⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 48.

³³⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 48. In this Barth follows Athanasius who states that “the good God has given [humanity] a share in His own Image, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness.” Athanasius, *Incarnation*, 38.

³³⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 48.

³³⁸ Barth, *CD* III.1, §40-43.

condemnation, however, this is a groaning that exists within the context of God's redemption that God has initiated within humanity and thus within creation as a whole. Barth's description of humanity in this section is based on his understanding of both creation and humanity existing under the divine "No," just as it did for Barth in his *Epistle to the Romans*. Furthermore, in both compositions, the "No" brings about the possibility and reality of the divine "Yes."

Humanity exists as the chief of all creation, yet humanity is not the centre of creation. It exists instead in this role because of its unique relationship to God, because God created humanity in His image and stood alongside humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. This relationship restores to humanity the dignity that God created them with.

Barth's concept of a restored humanity opens up the possibility of a humanity that is not defined by sin, but defined by its relationship to Christ, and thus it can exist in a truly human reality. It is at this point that Barth's work reaches its zenith allowing Barth to move ahead in §44 to positively define human in light of the person of Christ, which is "real man" or true humanity.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the continued development of Barth's anthropological concepts throughout his *Church Dogmatics* leading up to §44. While the theological accents may have changed,³³⁹ Barth's work in these sections of the *Church Dogmatics*³⁴⁰ has continued to develop the concepts that appear, what John Webster suggests "was present *in nuce*" in his earlier writing, most notable *The Epistle to the Romans*.³⁴¹

³³⁹ Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 25.

³⁴⁰ Barth, *CD* I/1-III/2, §43.

³⁴¹ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 30-31.

In his doctrine of revelation, Barth develops a concept of humanity that rejects Cartesian self-derived certainty, in favour of a concept of humanity based on the divine revelation of the Incarnation of the divine human Christ.³⁴² As a result, human self-understanding continues to be a possibility, but a possibility that is only available as result of God's work. Humanity comes to understand itself only when it encounters itself in light of Christ's relationship to them. When humanity comes to understand itself in relationship to Christ, humanity is able to understand itself as free. Such a freedom is radically different than liberal concepts of individual removal of limitation, rather it is a divinely created possibility. This Christological understanding of anthropology also means that humanity must be understood as rational and embodied, but that neither of these defines humanity as a whole. Finally, this Christological revelation means that humanity is defined relationally and cannot be estranged either from God or its social realities without destroying the image from which it was created.

Within the context of Barth's doctrine of God he describes how anthropology should be considered a result of God's person and work. Barth describes the anthropological reality that is created as a result of God's election of humanity in and through Christ. Jesus Christ, who is God, elects Himself as the human, which allows humanity generally to share in God's grace. For Barth, this election of humanity is brought into relationship with God, through the two natures of Christ. When Christ creates an openness to humanity, it provides an opportunity for human agency. This agency means the possibility of humanity to act for God as well as against God. In this

³⁴² While the Cartesian self finds its identity in self pondering and self doubt through the fog of self delusion and insecurity, which inevitably leads to a questioning of the self and a crisis, Barth's Christological self finds meaning in the active revelation of one who is wholly human and wholly perfect.

act against God, humanity isolates itself from God, ceasing to be the truly human.

Election means that God overcomes the question mark posed by the *realdialektik* between God and humanity, that we have seen throughout Barth's description of humanity in light of God.

Finally, Barth describes his Christological anthropology in relationship to creation. Barth is clear that all creation, including humanity, is based upon its status as created. This means that while human sin marks the whole of creation, it remains to be defined by and in light of the Creator. Barth perceives that humanity stands above all creation because God dwells in human form in Christ. Yet, humanity cannot ever see itself as removed from its status as created. It has a shared status with the entire cosmos because of its shared Creator. It is this relationship that has brought about the redemption of humanity and creation and has created the opportunity for humanity to envision the truly human reality, in the "real man" of Christ.

CHAPTER 3: HUMANITY AS THE CREATURE OF GOD

In §44 Barth depicts true humanity as a reality that exists in a manner capable of responding to God's election. Humanity's response is a personal and responsible action that proves itself capable of fulfilling God's electing call upon the human.³⁴³ Volume III/2, §44 in particular, represents a pattern of argumentation that is fundamental to Barth's anthropology, but also to his dogmatics as a whole. Carrying this observation further, Webster suggests that it is "namely the conviction that as creator and creature God and humanity are neither identical nor absolutely uncreated but rather realities which exist in an ordered relation of giver and recipient of life and grace."³⁴⁴

The idea of humanity's ability to respond to God's election seems at first to counter Luther's doctrine of *Sola Gratia*. This apparent conflict stems from perception that Barth views humanity as having the ability within itself to bring itself into the salvation that God offers. But, such a perception mitigates the Christologically conditioned concept of humanity that Barth has already showed throughout the previous volumes of *Church Dogmatics* as well as his earlier *Epistle to the Romans*. Humanity's ability to respond to God is grounded in the election of true man, the person of Jesus Christ. Subsequently, there is a provision of faith for humanity, which allows the individual to encounter the divine freedom that God shares with humanity in Christ. Such Christological aspects of Barth's anthropology illuminate the possibility of *the* human to act for all humanity, allowing humanity to enter into His life. As a result of being with Christ, the truly Christian life is the life of Christ, the real man.

³⁴³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 55.

³⁴⁴ John Webster, "Creation and Humanity," 101.

This chapter explores Barth's euphoric discussion of "Man as the Creature of God" as it is found in §44 of *Church Dogmatics*. Maintaining Barth's intended outline, this chapter is made up of three significant sections beginning with a discussion centred around what it means for Christ to stand as the image of humanity before God in order to understand how Christ exists as the truly human individual. Next, this chapter will explore Barth's definition of human phenomena – humanity in general – in light of his Christological emphasis. Finally, this chapter explores Barth's ultimate description of humanity, which is based on the ontological determination that is grounded in the one man Jesus Christ. This chapter will seek to explore the core of Barth's Christological anthropology. Through this exploration this chapter will seek to explain what it means that Jesus Christ exists as fully human before God and what does this reality mean for humanity generally.

Jesus, Humanity for God

§44 further develops Barth's Christological anthropology.³⁴⁵ As such, Barth seeks to outline the form, character, and limits of what he terms "real man."³⁴⁶ When discussing true humanity, Barth speaks of humanity as "a creature of God."³⁴⁷ In this way, Barth discusses true human nature that is revealed in Christ.³⁴⁸ It is this Christ whom the Nicene

³⁴⁵ Barth emphatically continues that at no point, even here at the description of humanity, "we must desist from any attempt to give a direct answer to the anthropological question, and apply the Christological basis of anthropology." Barth, *CD III/2*, 55.

³⁴⁶ Barth's term is man is intended to be universal and not necessarily particular male-ness. Because of this, this chapter will use the term true humanity, in place of real man, when possible. It should be understood that within the context of this study, "true humanity" and "real man" are terms that are seen as interchangeable.

³⁴⁷ Barth, *CD III/2*, 55.

³⁴⁸ Barth is able to describe humanity as such because of the transcendent nature of the God-man Jesus Christ. In this Barth follows Athanasius who states that: "through this union of the immortal Son of God with out human nature, all men were clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection. For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all." Athanasius, *Incarnation*, 35. Athanasius was ultimately concerned that it was "the truly divine Son of the Father who became man and as man lived a

Creed describes as Very God of Very God, as well as the Chalcedonian's definition that he is also "being of one substance with us in relation to his humanity, and like us in all things apart from sin"³⁴⁹ as stated in the Chalcedonian definition.³⁵⁰ Christ lived a fully human life, thus "He is a man among men and in humanity."³⁵¹

Mikkelsen proposes that Barth's Christological anthropology attempts to balance both Alexandrian and Antiochian types of Christology, wherein the deity and humanity of Christ is equally contributory.³⁵² By this principle Barth is able to view anthropology as dependent upon divine relationality that exists within the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, God exists in a relationship with the truly human. As Calvin earlier stated in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "Only [H]e who was true God and true man could bridge the gulf between God and ourselves."³⁵³

Instead of looking at the experience of human phenomena, Barth urges thinkers in their descriptions of humanity to "desist from any attempt to give a direct answer to the anthropological question, and apply the Christological basis of anthropology."³⁵⁴ As a

human life, ultimately dying on the cross and rising bodily from the dead." Thomas Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1988), 81. This has three significant outcomes for Athanasius, which are later echoed here in Barth's writing. First, it must be the true Son of God who is human, second it must be true humanity that is the Son of God as there is no value in upholding the divinity of the Son if that Son is not actually human, nor is there any value in holding to the Son's humanity if He is not also God. Third the Son of God must *truly be* human. "Here the concern is that the Son of God in 'becoming' man must actually terminate in the truth that he ontologically *is* man. Man is what the Son of God is." Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 81-82.

³⁴⁹ "The Chalcedonian Definition of the Christian Faith (451)" in *The Christian Theology Reader*, 3rd ed. ed. Alister McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 281.

³⁵⁰ In light of this Chalcedonian understanding, Daniel Migliore notes that "Karl Barth is arguably the most creative defender and reinterpreter of Chalcedon among twentieth-century theologians." Daniel Migliore, "Christology in Context: The Doctrinal and Contextual Task of Christianity Today," *Interpretation* 49 (1995): 243.

³⁵¹ Barth, *CD III/2*, 55. In this Barth asserts that Jesus Christ was a man, a true man. Barth does not suggest, like popular descriptions of Jesus, that He is either milquetoast or a lout or a Superman. To suggest that Christ is anything other than a true human who lived a truly human life would be to enter into the docetic error. Barth, *CD III/2*, 58.

³⁵² Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 148.

³⁵³ Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 2, XII, 464.

³⁵⁴ Barth, *CD III/2*, 55.

result, Barth looks to Scripture for descriptions of Jesus Christ, which stand as the basis for his definition of true humanity.³⁵⁵ Barth explains, “One answer which immediately presents itself is that the nature of man is to be observed and established in its history as determined by Him.”³⁵⁶ This answer, given by Christ, means that true human nature as well as history is shown in Christ alone. Scripture provides an image of humanity as it was created to exist, living on earth. The Gospels, as well as Scripture broadly, serve as descriptions of human action on earth as it has not been experienced in the whole of human history since the fall of humanity. It is in the Gospels that humanity can and must look to find accurate descriptions of the life they were created to live.

Within the Gospel narratives, Jesus speaks of Himself as “I am,” “primarily and predominantly as the Way: not as the beginning or the end of the Way; but as the Way itself Hence He does not stand as Subject somewhere behind or alongside this coming; He is Subject as this coming takes place.”³⁵⁷ In this explanation “the Way” is the current and continual life that humanity is called to; it is life in Christ. Furthermore, Barth takes Jesus’ words seriously when he describes Himself as ζωή or life. Jesus’ life is the life humanity is called to live and brought into through the faithful work of God. This life is not a life that is “self-sufficient but the life which imparts itself and redeems from death.”³⁵⁸ In Jesus’ “I Am” titles, Barth sees the human reality of life that is true humanity.

³⁵⁵ Barth looks chiefly to 1 Corinthians 1:30 and John 14:6. In these Barth sees the concepts of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, as well as “the Way” as not simply being ideas but as all referring to a history established in Christ. Barth, *CD III/2*, 56.

³⁵⁶ Barth, *CD III/2*, 55.

³⁵⁷ Barth, *CD III/2*, 56.

³⁵⁸ Barth, *CD III/2*, 56.

Continuing to follow the language of Chalcedon, Barth perceives no separation between the human and divine aspects of Christ. While Christ exists as fully God, He is also fully man. Because of this union “there is no neutral humanity in Jesus, which might give Him the choice of not doing what He does, or of doing something different in its place.”³⁵⁹ As a result, all of Christ’s actions were fully human actions. Christ could not move outside of humanity and thus His life. Jesus reveals the specific determinations and features of humanity. Yet because Jesus is the subject of these determinations and features of humanity, “He is not conditioned or limited by them. But in so far as humanity is His it is He who transcends and therefore limits and conditions these features and determinations.”³⁶⁰ Humanity does not serve as a burden to Christ, in that His very essence is the humanity that collectively human beings were created to inhabit. Instead the work of Christ,³⁶¹ along with His human existence, is not alien or imposed upon Him, but results from His essence. As a result, it is impossible to separate Christ’s works from His person.³⁶²

Self-Care in True Humanity

Humanity is supremely and utterly described by the life of Jesus Christ in Barth’s theology. Jesus, like all humans, experienced strife, struggle, and fatigue. However, while humanity seeks pleasure for itself in order to overcome the results of these experiences, “Jesus as a creature finds life and nourishment in the fact that He stands in this relationship with the Creator.”³⁶³ It is in this way that Christ lives the true life of the

³⁵⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 57.

³⁶⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 59.

³⁶¹ Work pertaining to that which He does for and on behalf of God. In this Barth differs from Calvin who suggests that the life of Christ is in actuality an earnest denial of the human self. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, VII, 691.

³⁶² Barth, *CD* III/2, 61.

³⁶³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 64.

creature. Jesus, as a true creature exists in glory, though it is not a humanly derived glory. Rather, Jesus exists in divine glory that is endowed to Him because “He stands so utterly in the service of God.”³⁶⁴ Relationship and service do not tax the person of Jesus, but rather provide His nourishing daily bread.

While Jesus, as a human, stands within the inner relationship of the Godhead, He is not obliterated but substantiated through this relationship. Sinful humanity cannot see God and survive, but true humanity thrives in this perichoretic relationship. Barth admits, “oddly enough this mystery of the participation of Jesus in the Godhead is not at all the dissolution but the very foundation of His true humanity.”³⁶⁵ In this relationship true humanity finds its consummation in relationship with God. Not that Christ stands as sinful humanity, but that He exists as the humanity we were created to be, as part of this Christ stands beside and before sinful humanity. For true humanity, love and service are not a strain, but a state of homeostasis. This being with God in the world is what humanity was created for. Just as humanity’s first parents walked in the Garden of Eden with the Lord, so true humanity exists in a state of rest and sustenance in His relationship with the other members of the Triune God.

Christological Humanity within the Cosmos

Having described *the* Christological human as He exists in the world, Barth sets out to describe the distinctive characteristics of this Christological human among all of creation within the entire cosmos. Barth creates a list of six unique traits that build upon each other and sums up his framework for a description of true humanity among creation that is both Christological and anthropological. These six features are derived from

³⁶⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 64.

³⁶⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 66.

Scripture's description of the real man Jesus Christ, and they allow individuals to conceive what a truly human life in this world looks like.

First, Barth points to Christ's two natures as the basis for understanding what true humanity is. He writes, "It would be impossible to see and think about man, i.e., the man Jesus, if we did not at once see and think about God also This cannot be said of any other creature."³⁶⁶ Moreover, Barth is convinced of Christ's status as true humanity because of His identification with true divinity. While this notion seems to separate Christ from humanity as a whole, it is a separation of degree as opposed to genre.

Second, true humanity is distinguished from all of creation by the fact that there exists a unique relationship between God and true humanity, a relationship wherein God works in and through this human. Barth articulates that "He wills and works in man, in this man for each and every man. He is the Saviour of men, their eternal and almighty, their unique and totally Saviour."³⁶⁷ In the relationship that exists between God and the human, true humanity is not simply a state of being, but an action. The action is an act of both salvation and revelation. Thus, the relationship between God and true humanity is not solely for the benefit of the individual, but also for the benefit of all human beings. In this relationship God's history of deliverance is enacted and becomes knowable throughout humanity.

Third, God's willing and working in and through Christ for the salvation of humanity does not cause a loss of God's divine freedom. It is this act of divine freedom as well as divine love that marks Jesus Christ as the true human. True humanity is seen as the place where divine freedom and love dwell in creation. It is these free, loving, actions

³⁶⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 68.

³⁶⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 68-69.

of God that establish the story of history among humanity. As a result, history is a story that “must be understood *a priori*, indisputably and axiomatically, as a divine human history.”³⁶⁸ By consequence, true humanity must be understood first in light of this history of God’s work before there is any attempt to understand a description or investigation of humanity. True humanity is first and foremost a reality that is conditioned by its relationship with God and the work that God accomplishes in and through it.

Fourth, Jesus Christ existed in and with creation while existing *in* the lordship of God. He is God among humanity as humanity. He was born a man, but born of God. As such, Barth affirms that “He is the Son of God, it is only as such that He is real man.”³⁶⁹ True humanity cannot exist apart from being the Child of God. Humanity, apart from this nature, fails to be truly human. It is into this divine reality that humanity is posited, contained, and included; yet within it humanity truly thrives.³⁷⁰

Fifth, Jesus Christ is the dawning of the kingdom of God, the means and subject of divine deliverance for all humanity. Such a reality exists because “no distinction can be made between what this creature is and what it does, between what God does through this creature and what He does in it. For this creature is the Word of God.”³⁷¹ Though God uses one man to help each and every human, this does not mean that He merely uses this one man in order to reach a particular end. The means and the ends of God’s work in Jesus of Nazareth is a divine reality, imparted by God Himself.

³⁶⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 69.

³⁶⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 69.

³⁷⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 69.

³⁷¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 69.

Sixth, Jesus Christ exists *for* God. “That it is for God means that it is for the divine deliverance and therefore for God’s own glory, for the freedom of God and therefore for the love of God.”³⁷² True humanity is not a reality that exists for itself or its own glorification, but simply for the work and glory of God. Simply put, “Man is the being which is for God.”³⁷³ The truly human life is based on the privilege of *reciprocity* with God. As such, this reciprocity with God is the essence of true humanity. Furthermore, this reciprocity gives humanity meaning. Humanity is not just cut adrift or left to vain pursuits, but human purpose is found in the presence and revelation of God. Because of this relationship “the basis of human life is identical with its *telos*. Deriving from God, man is in God, and therefore for God.”³⁷⁴ True human life does not face any teleological suspension but a fulfillment of *telos* in the continuation of life in the presence of God.

It may seem that these six Christological foundations of humanity, along with Barth’s entire description of Jesus as man for God, is too Christological in the sense that it speaks only of the one man Jesus Christ and thus fails to be an anthropological possibility. However, Barth is clear that “we cannot speak appropriately about man generally and as such until we learn that the essence of man as seen in Jesus is to be for God.” Therefore, one must understand how Christ exists as *the* human before a true understanding of humanity can be perceived. Barth understands the essence of Jesus Christ as being for God. In this the essence of true humanity is revealed in Christ’s person and work.

³⁷² Barth, *CD* III/2, 70.

³⁷³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 70.

³⁷⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 71.

The Phenomena of the Human

After Barth examines the existence of the one human within the cosmos, he prepares to examine humanity generally in light of this Christological principle. Barth sees Jesus as the foundation for the nature of humanity. It is in this section that Barth discusses humanity as perceived outside of the Word of God and revelation, that which can be discerned regarding humanity outside of the one person Jesus Christ. The very concept of such an anthropology outside of the one person Jesus Christ initially may seem antithetical to Barth's demand that humanity only exist in relation to Christ, as Emil Brunner suggested.³⁷⁵ However, it is important to note that while Barth is discussing the phenomena of humanity generally, this phenomenological description occurs under the illumination of the man Jesus. Barth thus outlines the "minimal requirements which we must always bear in mind in face of conceptions of man's nature derived from other sources."³⁷⁶ In this it is not that Barth places other sources of anthropological knowledge alongside of his Christological one, but that other sources of anthropological knowledge are possible because of this one Christological source.

Barth is clear that because of His two natures, Jesus Christ cannot serve as more than a foundation for anthropological description. Even though Barth describes Jesus' humanity as "a creature of God,"³⁷⁷ ultimately Jesus cannot be equated with humanity generally, for "Anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology."³⁷⁸ While in Christ humanity sees a perfected humanity, this humanity is vastly different than its own humanity. Barth explains, "We remember that between the man Jesus and

³⁷⁵ Brunner, "The New Barth," 124.

³⁷⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

³⁷⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 55.

³⁷⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 71.

ourselves as men there stands not only the mystery of our sin, but primarily and decisively the mystery of His identification with God.”³⁷⁹ This difference continues to reveal the existence of the *realdialektik* between God and humanity within Barth’s thought. Its existence shows the error in Emil Brunner’s comment that “Barth himself will surely not contest the fact that what stands in this sixth volume is in contradiction to much that was said in earlier volumes.”³⁸⁰ Respecting the unique personhood of Jesus Christ, Barth understands that within Christ’s person and work there is a significant gap between this One human and humanity generally. To flatten Christ’s unique features, so as to reflect the whole of humanity broadly, would do violence to humanity generally (by attempting to elevate humanity above its reality) and also to the Christological description of Christ (by denying His unique personal status as the God-man).

Barth recognizes the gap that exists between the reality of humanity and the truly human and the subsequent impossibility of a direct knowledge of the nature of humanity generally from that of the human Jesus. However, there is still a connection between Christ and humanity generally, so as to make possible general knowledge of Himself to humanity. Explaining this further, Barth writes, “It might well be possible to know indirectly who and what we are from the fact that we live in the same world and have the same humanity as this man, so that we are contrasted as men with this very different man.”³⁸¹ It is because humans share a common experience of human life that they exist in the same world as Christ, despite political, social and technological changes.

While Barth does not question the irremovable difference between the human Jesus and humanity generally, he does look to the relationship between God and humanity

³⁷⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 71.

³⁸⁰ Brunner, “The New Barth,” 124.

³⁸¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 72.

generally for defining true humanity as it is for the human Jesus Christ. Barth admits that anthropological knowledge cannot be a direct result of Christological knowledge, yet he sees Christology as the necessary basis for humanity's nature as the creation of a God who creates.

The indirect nature of anthropology raises the issue as to why knowledge of humanity must exist in such a complex manner. After all, could not theology look to other forms of human knowledge that seem more direct such as methods based on the autonomous self-reflection of humanity? Barth willingly admits that these forms of anthropological understanding hold some significance for "in their limits they may well be accurate and important."³⁸² Sociology, psychology, biology, existential philosophy, naturalism, and evolutionary science all describe humanity in its uniqueness, based on the unique methodological features of its field of study. These descriptions can be helpful, useful and accurate, but they cannot fully describe humanity. These various descriptions of humanity are "all bracketed, and no decisive enlightenment about man is to be expected from within these brackets, but only from a source outside. This source is God."³⁸³ True humanity cannot be understood apart from God. True humanity is created humanity as it was intended. To remove the Creator from the definition of humanity means to remove the foundation of what humanity is. Barth suggests that "If we think of man in isolation from and independence of God, we are no longer thinking about real man."³⁸⁴ For him humanity exists because of God and only in relationship with God. Outside of this relationship humanity ceases to be human. The significance of this

³⁸² Barth, *CD* III/2, 122.

³⁸³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 122.

³⁸⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 123.

relationship means that it “is not peripheral but central, not incidental but essential to that which makes him a real man, himself.”³⁸⁵

According to Barth, humanity must be understood in the context of its relationship with God, which is indirectly displayed through Jesus. One cannot “consider man as a self-enclosed reality, or as having a purely general relation *ad extra*, to part of the whole of the cosmos distinct from God. We must understand him as open and related to God Himself.”³⁸⁶ Therefore, any attempt to describe humanity as a self-enclosed reality or a reality distinct from God is bound to err (as seen in apologetics, evolutionary science,³⁸⁷ classical thought, natural sciences,³⁸⁸ ethics,³⁸⁹ existential philosophy,³⁹⁰ and theological

³⁸⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 123.

³⁸⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 72.

³⁸⁷ Barth perceives that the apologetics of modern theology, since the time of Schleiermacher, had adopted evolutionary concepts to define humanity. This resulted from the focus upon humanity in place of God, allowing for the easy adopting of Kant’s dissolution of the classical proofs of God’s existence and the subsequent idea of the special position of humanity in the universe offered by modern science. Barth, *CD* III/2, 79-80. Modern theology and its apologetics came to adopt what Barth refers to as the “Darwinian dogma” and with evolutionary science, and perhaps even more than evolutionary science, understood humanity as set in its environment. Barth, *CD* III/2, 90. Barth willingly admits that “no one can doubt that if man is to know himself he must see himself as set in his environment, and therefore primarily, for good or ill, with his animal environment.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 87. However, this evolutionary understanding of anthropology cannot be the sum of an anthropological understanding. After all, “it is clearly advisable not to remain in this position or to try to see man merely against this background. Otherwise he will not be viewed as a whole. Otherwise we shall not even see correctly what bind him to his environment.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 87. Evolutionary understandings of humanity that pay particularly attention to humanity’s environment are no doubt helpful in understanding humanity. But, as Barth states, “If man does not know himself already, long before his attention is directed to these phenomena, he will be blind even though he sees. In face and in spite of these phenomena he will always look on the wrong side. He will always think with the animal and the rest of creation generally.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 90.

³⁸⁸ Classical thought defines humanity naturalistically as an animal endowed with reason. In this framework, which is predominantly adopted by natural science, humanity is understood as an animal with a particular feature that distinguishes it from the other animals. This concept of humanity “tries to answer the question whether and to what extent man is more than an animal in contradistinction to other animals.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 90. Barth remains open to starting an understanding of humanity with its physical nature as a mammal, particularly in relationship to a scientific discussion to humanity. However, classical descriptions of humanity cannot be allowed to canonize this definition of humanity as the first truth about humanity. Human nature cannot be grounded upon a general animal nature in that it ignores the true primarily human reality, which is humanity’s relation with God. Barth, *CD* III/2, 90-91. While humanity may be seen in a connexion with the cosmos and the processes of it, humanity can never be understood as derived from it. Barth, *CD* III/2, 93.

³⁸⁹ Barth notes that while some may see the move from naturalistic descriptions of humanity to ethical descriptions, such as the eighteenth century German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, such descriptions cannot be that of true humanity. To think that ethical humanity is true humanity is self-deception. Human

naturalism).³⁹¹ Furthering his argument, Barth notes that “if we start with a universal obtained by treating man’s relation to God as one specific feature with others and therefore as a *cura posterior* [later concern], not to be included in the definition, we shall merely be pointed to the void and never to the face of real man.”³⁹²

In order to know and understand humanity, one’s thinking must be grounded in God. While anthropology is not directly Christology, Barth sees no other grounding for anthropology than in Christ. Barth finds his concept of humanity

... on a very definite ground, that of the view of the man Jesus which is normative for Christian theology, we have postulated that real man must in any event be a being which as such belongs to God, to which God turns as Saviour, the determinations of which God’s glory, which exists under the lordship of God and is set in the service of God.³⁹³

beings deceive “ourselves if when we see his shadows we think that we see the man himself. Indeed, when we see his shadows, his ethical singularity, we have not even seen the symptoms of his true self.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 96. This is because even within the ethical framework, while “we have verified the ethical characteristics of man, we still do not have an unambiguous index of real man. For it is not the shadow which distinguishes real man from the man who has perverted his true nature.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 96.

³⁹⁰ Barth takes on the issue of existentialist philosophy through the writing of Karl Jaspers. Based on Jasper’s own definition of existentialist philosophy, it seems to be significantly related to the Christian, or a theological understanding of humanity. Karl Jasper’s doctrine of frontier situations “especially seems to approximate at any rate to a genuinely Christian understanding and estimation of man, as, for example in Luther’s account of the relations between election, vocation, and temptation.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 113. Barth admits that “Looking back from real man, we may even claim that it is the most genuine symptom of the human.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 113. However, this is only a possibility in retrospect. As a result “we cannot say more of the anthropology of this philosophy than that it has seen a phenomenon of the human. We cannot say that it has shown us real man.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 113.

³⁹¹ Theological naturalism is a term that may be used to describe, among others, the theology of sixteenth-century Reformed theologian Amandus Polanus. Polanus conceived of humanity defined by an existence in an organic body, with a living and sentient soul, and capable of independent movement. As Barth states, “by adopting this definition he formally encouraged the idea that his theological interpretation [of humanity] could be regarded as an appendix and even ignored.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 77. Barth points out that that if one states with the “idea of man as an animal endowed with reason, we are not led by any necessary inference to God, and therefore not to man as a being essentially related to God.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 77. In order to be a proper understanding of true humanity, Barth perceives that humanity’s relationship with God must be foundational. “If the interpretation is to be valid, the definition must include the truth that man’s relationship to God is an essential part of his being ... Real man, whether animal or rational, exists in a definite history grounded in God’s attitude to him. What he is apart from this history is not real man at all, but a phantom.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 77.

³⁹² Barth, *CD III/2*, 77.

³⁹³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 121.

It must be noted that individual humans do not cease to exist outside of this Christological grounding, but that they cease to exist as true humanity. Such sinful humanity exists in isolation, from fellow humanity, themselves, and most importantly God. This expression of humanity, or inhumanity, is an expression of humanity that phenomenologically continues to exist as human; their physical life continues, at times seemingly unaffected, yet it ceases to exist noetically and ontologically as truly human, autonomous from the command of God and the Christ's revelation of true humanity.³⁹⁴ Such a human experience fails to understand the proper measure and reality of human life and opens the individual up to inhuman acts; acts which mar the relationship between the individual and God, their fellow man, and the self. This human existence is existence in the dark, as it is unable to attain the concept of true humanity.³⁹⁵ Looking back to an early description of his *CD*, Barth points to the disciples, particularly Peter, to show how easily one can transition from an individual of faith to one of faithlessness, from true humanity, living in light of divine command, to autonomous humanity, living out fleshly intentions.³⁹⁶ This inhuman expression rejects the freedom that Christ has provided humanity to exist with God, and instead chooses idolatry and subjects itself to works of righteousness.³⁹⁷ Humanity can exist in opposition to God, but it ceases to be humanity as it was created to be. Humanity in opposition to God is inhuman, an experience of humanity that is full of malice and brutality.³⁹⁸ Sinful humanity is autocratic humanity in

³⁹⁴ It is exactly this form of inhuman existence that Barth pronounced such a vehement "No" against in his early writings, particularly in *Romans*, in that this inhuman reality stands under the judgement and condemnation of God.

³⁹⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 125.

³⁹⁶ Barth, *On Religion*, 89-90.

³⁹⁷ Barth, *On Religion*, 119.

³⁹⁸ This description of the inhumanity of the autonomous human was on full display for Barth as he bore first hand witness to the depravity of "civilized Christian" nations attempting to destroy each other in the two world wars that surrounded Barth for so much of his writing Career.

that sinful humanity seeks exclusive self rule, leaving no place for God-given authority.³⁹⁹

Consequential of Barth's Christologically oriented anthropology, he names six implications of his thinking thus far, which are directly connected to his six-fold Christological description of the man Jesus. The six implications provide the guidelines for Barth's later exposition of true humanity beginning in §44.3 and continuing through Barth's "Doctrine of Reconciliation," contained in volume IV of his *Church Dogmatics*.

First, humanity is able to perceive a similarity between Christ and itself "in spite of all dissimilarity, every man is to be understood, at least mediately and indirectly, to the extent that he is conditioned by the priority of this man, in his relationship with God."⁴⁰⁰ This means that humanity generally shares a similarity with Christ in that both share a relationship with the God. The dynamics of this relationship results in God using the individual. It is this result of being made useful by God, as with the slave Onesimus, that creates a common reality amongst all humanity.

Second, God establishes human history within His relationship with the man Jesus based on an assumed similarity between Jesus and humanity generally. Every human must exist and have their "being in a history which stands in a clear and recognizable relationship to the divine deliverance enacted in the man Jesus."⁴⁰¹ This Christological concept of history means that true history is not a scientific study of human phenomena (*historie*), but the narrative of God's salvific work amongst his people (*Geschichte*).

³⁹⁹ This autonomous humanity may best be seen in the pages of Judges. In the times of the Judges, as with autonomous humanity generally, "all people did what was right in their own eyes." Judges 17:6 (NRSV). particularly the despicable acts of the Ephraimite Micah of Judges 17. While this idea of autonomy appears to many in contemporary society to be perfectly acceptable, even desirable as a libertarian paradise, such autonomy is in direct violation of God's command in Deuteronomy 12:8-12, which demands theologically centred, not anthropocentric religion, as pleasing to God.

⁴⁰⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 73.

⁴⁰¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 73.

Third, as God is able to will and to work in and through Jesus in His divine freedom, so it is for true humanity as they will and work in light of this divinely given freedom. Based upon this similarity and dissimilarity between Jesus and humanity generally, the being of every human “is not an end in itself, but has its true determination in the glory of God.”⁴⁰² Humanity thus finds its *telos* not in human aspirations but in the glorification of God.

Fourth, because Jesus is Lord over all of humanity “there is similarity between Him and us ... it must be said of every man that it is essential to him that as he exists God is over him as he himself stands under the lordship of God the Lord.”⁴⁰³ Jesus’ lordship directly defines humanity. Because humanity is defined through this lordship, human freedom must also be understood in light of this lordship, as Barth states “whatever may be the meaning of [human] freedom, it cannot consist in freedom to escape the lordship of God.”⁴⁰⁴

Fifth, because the being of Jesus consists wholly in the history of God as humanity’s Saviour “the being of every man must consist in this history. Not only his actions but his being consists in his participation in what God does and means for him.”⁴⁰⁵ True humanity can only exist as it corresponds to divine action in its favour.

Sixth, if Jesus is humanity for God and thus surpasses all other creatures in the fact that He exists simply that the work of God may be done, because Christ has surpassed all creation, no human can be understood apart from the man Jesus.⁴⁰⁶ The similarity that

⁴⁰² Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

⁴⁰³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

⁴⁰⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

⁴⁰⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

⁴⁰⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

exists between God and humanity — in Christ — cannot be understood outside of God’s willful action to bind Himself to humanity.⁴⁰⁷

With these six implications, Barth provides the minimal requirements to keep in mind as one thinks about humanity’s nature, that is derived from other sources. It is these six realities that exist in the man Jesus and thus it allows Barth to peer beyond the brackets of autonomous humanity and self-perception. One can pass beyond this human self understanding into a genuinely different level of thought “only when we realize that the conjunction ‘God and man’ or ‘God with man’ or ‘man with God’ means noetically and ontologically that God *acts* towards man, and when we rigidly confine our view to the history which takes place between God and man.”⁴⁰⁸ When humanity is understood noetically and ontologically, on the basis of God’s acts for and towards humanity, an understanding of “Real Man” becomes possible.

True Humanity

Moving forward, Barth turns to the constructive task of providing a positive description of what it means to be true humanity within the created cosmos.⁴⁰⁹ His description of true humanity, based upon the two previous sections, remains staunchly Christological. After all, “the ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the

⁴⁰⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 74.

⁴⁰⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 124.

⁴⁰⁹ At this point it is wise to consider the question posed by Cynthia Rigby: How is it that we are to understand human particularities, other than those held by Jesus (such as women-hood)? Rigby, pondering Barth’s conception, states that “we [as human generally], become more sentient of our particularities in relation to those of Jesus Christ, more in turn with the reality that human beings ‘[do] not exist abstractly but concretely In response to the ‘divine seeing and thinking and speaking’ in the revelation of Jesus Christ, we respond not in a disembodied way.” Rigby, “The Real Word”, 218-219. In this Rigby points out that in the embodiment of Jesus the whole of humanity, in their unique embodied experience shares a commonality with the embodied God-man.

fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus.”⁴¹⁰ Therefore, Jesus is not an addendum to humanity generally, but rather defines the essence of humanity. In consequence, “The more we concentrate upon Him the better will be our knowledge of ourselves.”⁴¹¹ Barth continually presses for any truly theological description of humanity to be Christological if it hopes to transcend mere human phenomena. He writes, “We are condemned to abstractions so long as our attention is riveted as it were on other men, or rather on man in general, as if we could learn about real man from a study of man in general, and in abstraction from the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus.”⁴¹² Because humanity is “englobed” by Christ,⁴¹³ Jesus is the baseline as well as the *telos* of humanity; human understanding must find its essence in Christ.⁴¹⁴ It is for this reason that Spencer observes that the tendency of modern theology to construct its anthropology on another ground other than Christ “is tantamount to reading a clock backwards.”⁴¹⁵ This ability to draw knowledge of humanity generally for Christ specifically is because “He is the creaturely being who as such not only exists from God and in God but absolutely for God instead of himself.”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁰ Barth, *CD III/2*, 132. It is here that Barth’s anthropology learns from and conflicts with Friedrich Schleiermacher concept of humanity. Schleiermacher conceives of the human person as Christo-morphic, wherein the person is subjectively formed in *the experience of a relationship* with Christ and the community that He established. Jacqueline Marina, “Christology and Anthropology”, 151. By contrast, Barth conceives of the human as objectively established in the *human person* of Jesus Christ.

⁴¹¹ Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality*, 248.

⁴¹² Barth, *CD III/2*, 132. In this, Barth stands in the shadow of Calvin, who conceives of true knowledge of humanity as solely “grounded upon downward motion of grace.” Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 14.

⁴¹³ Fletcher, “Co-humanity,” 43.

⁴¹⁴ In this understanding of humanity, one that fundamentally defines humanity by something other than interiority, Barth, like Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, is radically anti-modern. Webster, *Moral Theology*, 42.

⁴¹⁵ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 179.

⁴¹⁶ Barth, *CD III/2*, 133. Here Barth’s view builds on the view of Friedrich Schleiermacher in that humanity only achieves its perfection in Jesus Christ. However, Barth strongly opposes Schleiermacher’s collapsing of the Divine into the truly human, while Schleiermacher conceives of the essential character of perfected humanity as an expression of the Divine. Marina, “Christology and Anthropology,” 156. Barth on the other hand understands that while Christ exists as fully God and fully man, there remains an infinite qualitative difference between humanity and God.

Barth begins his discussion of the reality of true humanity with the message of the Bible, because it establishes that this one man Jesus has ontological significance for all of humanity. Barth continues, “speaking of this one man it says of all other men – those who were before Him and those who were after Him ... at least that they were and are creaturely beings whom this man is like for all His unlikeness, and in whose sphere and fellowship and history this one man also existed in likeness with them.”⁴¹⁷ Human creature-hood is based upon and linked to the person who confronts humanity in the pages of the Gospels.⁴¹⁸ Humanity cannot separate itself from this reality. Because Jesus stands as human, it belongs to human essence generally that Jesus too is human. In Him human beings have a “human neighbour, companion and brother... [and] we cannot break free from this neighbour.”⁴¹⁹ This neighbour stands as the other who is like us and in relationship with us. Just as every other human exists as a fellow human, Jesus too exists in this common human fellowship.⁴²⁰

Such fellowship with Jesus means that to be human “is to be with this correspondence, reflection and representation of the uniqueness and transcendence of God, to be with the One who is unlike us.”⁴²¹ True humanity, real man, exists as one who is in relationship with God. True humanity exists only when it receives from God and thus responds. True humanity is a reality of relationship.⁴²² Therefore, while humanity

⁴¹⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 133.

⁴¹⁸ It is at this point that Barth chastens theological anthropology to boldly stand in light of the truth of the Gospel descriptions of humanity. “Theological anthropology must not be so timid that it does not firmly insist on this simplest factor in the setting It reckons only with a creatureliness of man constituted by the fact that one man among all others is this man.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 134.

⁴¹⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 133.

⁴²⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 134.

⁴²¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 135.

⁴²² In this Barth stands in the shadow of Calvin who understands that humanity was created and can only truly exist when humanity exists “in complete dependence on God.” Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 14. As

exists in the shadow of another, a wholly other, this other is not unknown or one who stands against humanity, but rather one who confronts humanity “as a true and absolute Counterpart, because He, this individual, is unique in relation to all creatures.”⁴²³ While it is true that Jesus exists as the real man, as true humanity, true humanity not only describes Christ, “but it is also a description of the reconciled human being.”⁴²⁴

Christological Humanity and the Ontological Impossibility of Sin

Because Barth conceives of humanity as ontologically based in its relationship with God in Christ, he conceives of sin as an impossibility. True humanity is founded on unification with Christ; thus, it is impossible for sin to be definitive of human beings.⁴²⁵ The ontological grounding of humankind on the humanity of Jesus means that true humanity cannot be without God. “Man is not without, but with God.”⁴²⁶ True Humanity exists solely in relationship with the man Jesus and God, because of this “we are actually with Jesus, i.e., with God.”⁴²⁷ This Christological reality means that “sin itself is not a possibility but an ontological impossibility for man.”⁴²⁸ This reality is an impossibility because sin contradicts true humanity. “By aspiring either the autarkic or the autonomous

Torrance notes, true human life for Calvin “consists in the light of his understanding in so far as that is reflexive of the glory of God revealed through His Word.” Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 31.

⁴²³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 135.

⁴²⁴ Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 122.

⁴²⁵ Webster, “Creation and Humanity,” 102. In this Barth stands as a descendant of Calvin. Calvin is clear that sin and depravity “do not spring from nature, but rather from the corruption of nature.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I.XIV.3, 163.

⁴²⁶ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136. In this Barth follows Athanasius who states that “The presence and love of the Word had called [humanity] into being; inevitably, therefore when they lost the knowledge of God, they lost *existence* with it; for it is God alone Who exists, evil is non-being, the negative and antithesis of good.” Athanasius, *Incarnation*, 30; emphasis added.

⁴²⁷ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136. In this understanding, Barth’s concept of real man is not dissimilar to Augustine’s conception of ideal humanity. For Augustine, the human person is “not merely a person that does not intend to do wrong, does not plan to do wrong, does not determine to do wrong, but that he cannot *want* to do wrong, since he cannot *love* to do wrong – indeed *cannot love to do wrong*.” John Rist “Faith and Reason,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 26.

⁴²⁸ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

forms of moral mastery, they defy their creatureliness.”⁴²⁹ When humanity acts autonomously of God in sin, it rejects the being it was created to be and becomes untethered from its true self and experiences cognitive, ontological, and noetic dissonance.

This is not to deny the reality of sin in the experience of the individual. Sin exists within human phenomena, in fact the world groans under the weight of sin. While godlessness is not a possibility for true humanity – because humanity stands with God and thus “sin is absurd”⁴³⁰ – “this is not to say, of course, that godless men do not biologically exist. Sin is undoubtedly committed and exists. Yet sin itself is not a possibility but an ontological impossibility for man.”⁴³¹ Sin exists, but it is counter to true humanity. Sin is a denial of God and thus it is a denial of humanity. Should the human choose sin, “He chooses his own impossibility.”⁴³² It is this conclusion that allows Barth to say,

Every offence in which godlessness can express itself, e.g. unbelief and idolatry, doubt and indifference to God, is as such, both in its theoretical and practical forms, an offence with which man burdens, obscures and corrupts himself. It is an attack on the continuance of his own creatureliness: not a superficial, temporary or endurable attack, but a radical, central fatal attack on its very foundation and therefore its continuance.⁴³³

Human sin does irreparable damage to the proper relationship with the Creator and it means that “[our] very *being* as man is endangered by every surrender to sin.”⁴³⁴ The human act of sin brings our being into danger, in death, physically and spiritually. Human sin is at the same time an act of estrangement from one’s true object of worship and the

⁴²⁹ Biggar, *Hastening*, 10.

⁴³⁰ Mangina, *Christian*, 91.

⁴³¹ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

⁴³² Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

⁴³³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

⁴³⁴ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136, emphasis mine.

ontological foundation of humanity, in that these two are one in the same, the one true God. The existence of the human in sin “does not mean the destruction of their ‘humanness’ but rather its contradiction.”⁴³⁵ Unbelief is not simply a passive action but an active decision against Christ and the true self. Or as G. C. Berkouwer suggests, “Unbelief is a denial of the election in Christ, it is a denial of the definitive ‘God-for-us’ and of the fact that God has taken *our* rejection upon Himself and borne it away.”⁴³⁶ However, this fissure does not remain irreparable. Christ’s work of restoration includes the restoration of humanity to its true ontological basis.⁴³⁷ The work of Christ, in faith, is able to overcome the significant self-harm that sin inflicts, bringing justification and reward in place of the retribution that is due to humanity.⁴³⁸

In this understanding of sinful humanity as an ontological impossibility, Barth borrows particular concepts of existentialist philosophy. For Barth — like existentialism — “to exist is to be human.”⁴³⁹ Sinfulness is to make one other than human — to cease to exist. This concept of existence means that humanity is not measured by biological realities, whether an individual contains the scientific “stuff” of humanity — human DNA, cognitive ability, social reality, etc. — instead, existence is seen as a life lived following the image of humanity. As Carl Michaelson states “To exist is to value personal authenticity more highly than scientific exactitude.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Fletcher, “Co-humanity,” 42.

⁴³⁶ Berkouwer, *Grace*, 113.

⁴³⁷ Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

⁴³⁸ It is for this reason that Barth writes, “The biblical message necessarily includes the thought of retribution and reward because the necessity of justification of retribution and reward are deeply rooted in this primary ontological basis of man – that he is with God.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 136.

⁴³⁹ Michaelson, *Existentialism*, 15.

⁴⁴⁰ Michaelson, *Existentialism*, 17. The influence of Kierkegaard’s existentialism is apparent here in that, for Barth, true humanity was not a question of scientific measurement but a question of authenticity. However, this should not be mistaken for the humanism of Sarte or the personalism of Mounier or Bergyaev.

Barth's understanding of sin follows his Christological definition of humanity as true humanity in relation to God, but also allows him to distance himself from standard modern conceptions of sin. Such a perception characterizes sin as the human condition, wherein humanity learns of its need for God. This tends to screen out many of the very sins that the gospel should illuminate.⁴⁴¹

True Humanity in Creation

Theological descriptions of humanity have often struggled to describe humanity's relationship to the rest of creation. Anthropological descriptions err in one of two ways. First by elevating humanity above creation wherein a separation between creation and created humanity is introduced, which leads to domination and exploitation on the part of humanity. Humanity, because of its status as unique within the whole of creation, does not perceive a need to care for creation and steward the world around them. Conversely, anthropological descriptions of humanity can flatten the realities of creation, leaving humanity in need of securing its unique position among creation through science.

Descriptions of humanity in relation to the rest of creation have a tendency to either elevate humanity above creation or to reduce the significance of humanity before God. A third position must also be mentioned, that of a middle ground between these two tendencies, yet a middle ground that takes the worst of both the denigration of creation and the elevation of humanity, which is Gnosticism. While Gnosticism is often perceived

⁴⁴¹ As Joseph Mangina points out there are four significant and easily understood reasons why Barth would desire to distance himself from the standard modern concept of sin. "First, if the quasi-foundational role it assigns to 'the' human condition, a dubious notion in any case ... [secondly] from Barth's perspective, the 'God' arrived at through analysis of the conscious of sin and guilt could never be the God of Jesus Christ ... [thirdly] that privileging a certain kind of existential analysis has the effect of conveniently screening out the sin we are most reluctant to have exposed, e.g. economic and social sins." Finally, "the Christological consideration that is decisive... what finally defeats all 'systematic' attempts to master the concept of sin is the fact that only Jesus Christ himself, present by his Spirit, is in a position to tell us the truth about ourselves." Mangina, *Christian Life*, 93-94.

as a patristic problem, non-Christological anthropologies easily fall into this way of thinking, wherein the created or fleshly aspects of humanity are denigrated and the spiritual or rational aspects of the individual are elevated to a demigod status. It is this third concept that tempts contemporary evangelical Christianity, when it denies the very reality that Barth has been clear to point out, humanity exists as the creation of God. Concepts of humanity that denigrate humanity's embodiment emphasizing Scriptural passages, particularly those in Paul that condemn humanity's fleshly nature,⁴⁴² as well as theologians such as Calvin⁴⁴³ without considering both the traditional separation between embodiment (σῶμα) and flesh (σὰρξ), nor the physical aspects of regeneration.⁴⁴⁴

True humanity is a creature with God. Similarly, the rest of creation is created to be with God, yet humanity stands uniquely among creation.⁴⁴⁵ Such a unique position with

⁴⁴² Such as Galatians 5:17 and Philippians 3:1-3.

⁴⁴³ "The world menaces, the body weighs us down." Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, XII, 757.

⁴⁴⁴ This view, which can be labelled as an axiological dualism, can be seen to develop in Berkhof, when he states "The operations of the soul are connected with the body as its instrument in the present life; but from the continued conscious existence and activity of the soul after death it appears that it can also work without the body. J.P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body and Soul: Human nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 22. Berkhof, *Systematic*, 196. This became every more strongly constructed in anti-evolutionary and thus anti-materialistic conceptions of humanity which over-emphasised the division between soul and body in early Christian theology, while failing to fully admit to the influence of Greek philosophy on this early theology. Such views of humanity are buoyed by the suggestions of theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenberg who significantly plays down the importance of the body in his description of the resurrection as a spiritual reality of the soul, in which the soul has served as the living, humanizing aspect of the body that death sets free to live in a spiritual reality. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew O'Connel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 522-532. In adopting this anti-materialistic construction, it becomes possible to view all physical reality as sinful, while conceiving true life and true humanity as a spiritual reality. Such an anti-embodiment concept of humanity, following particular readings of Romans 7: and Galatians 5:17, inevitably end up in a Gnostic-like dualism, which distorts Paul's concern for actions of sinful humanity lived out in the body and surrenders up the human body—and all of God's created physical world—to be cast aside, as simply the remains of "fallen creation."

⁴⁴⁵ This unique status of humanity originates not in any act of humanity but fully in God's choosing, particularly His choosing of Christ. "Not every creature is with God as man is with God." Barth, *CD III/2*, 137. Other creations, in their own way "are originally and decisively with Jesus, and in this way with God their creator and thus participant in being." Barth, *CD III/2*, 137. However Barth notes that "in the other spheres of creation we see no comparable Representative and Revealer of the majestic transience of God, no creature to reflect and represent the uniqueness and transcendence of God as distance from other creatures." Barth, *CD III/2*, 137. Because of this "He was not made an animal, a plant, a stone, a star or an element of the invisible heavenly world. But He did become man. It was in this way that in His

God exists because God became man and stood as Man before God and God before man. For Barth, humanity's Christological relationship to God results in humanity standing uniquely and in particularity among creation. Barth's understanding of both creation and humanity existing with God, in their unique manner, serves to maintain the bonds that exist between humanity and creation while also highlighting the unique status of humanity in creation, which for Barth, is grounded on and emanates from Christ who encompasses humanity.

Content of Barth's Christological Definition of Humanity

Because humanity is Christologically understood as “a being with God,”⁴⁴⁶ humanity's being is derived from God. Such a notion leads Barth to two material and primary statements that create the possibility of this reality and the correlation of humanity's understanding of it. He writes, “the being of man as a being with Jesus rests upon the election of God; and that it consists in the hearing of the Word of God.”⁴⁴⁷ The relationship that exists between God and man – that man is *from*, *to*, and *with* God – stands as the formal dimension of true humanity, yet this formal dimension is ensconced within the material dimension. The union between formal and material exist because “both are made known to us in Jesus Christ, the God-man.”⁴⁴⁸

Because Barth bases the entirety of his understanding of humanity on the elected Christ, Barth must begin describing true humanity in the election of Christ. Therefore, it is only in the doctrine of election by God that the possibility of humanity finds an ontological footing. This ground exists in the work and power of God. It is from this

incomparable majesty He was made like the creature. It was in this *man* and not in any other creature that He saw the meaning and motive of His whole creative work.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 137-138.

⁴⁴⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 140.

⁴⁴⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 143.

⁴⁴⁸ McLean, *Humanity*, 29.

thinking that moves Barth to ask, “What power has creaturely being to prevent its own dissolution accompanying and threatening it as the sum of its ontological impossibility?”⁴⁴⁹ Human finitude and sin creates the subjectivity and impotence in humanity that is apparent in Barth’s description of humanity, particularly in *The Epistle to the Romans*. Yet, the movement toward non-being ceases by the work of the God who stands outside of finitude and sin and can provide the solid grounding of true humanity. As Barth states, “The Creator who gave it being can go further and give it a being secure against non-being. And it is the will of God to do this. God created it with the aim of being secure.”⁴⁵⁰ The man Jesus is the spearhead of the will of God in humanity, in that He is the one man in whom God’s will has been fulfilled. Because God has chosen Christ as the one who chooses God, humanity can enter into such a relationship because Christ stands as the head of all humanity. “To be a man is to be with Jesus ... to be with the One who is the true and primary Elect of God.”⁴⁵¹

The second point that creates the possibility of humanity existing as it does with Jesus consists in their hearing and listening to the Word of God. “The being of man as being with Jesus consists in listening to the Word of God. The man Jesus and again we start with Him, is the sum of the divine address, the Word of God, to the created cosmos.”⁴⁵² Barth’s understanding of a humanity that is based upon the Word of God is dependent upon his Logos Christology. “The man Jesus not only speaks but is Himself the divine speech.”⁴⁵³ Christ is the Word of John 1:1. He speaks, acts, and exists as the Word of God. “He is not merely the Bearer or Instrument of the divine address and

⁴⁴⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 146.

⁴⁵⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 146.

⁴⁵¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 145.

⁴⁵² Barth, *CD* III/2, 147.

⁴⁵³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 148.

summons but is Himself the divine address and summons.”⁴⁵⁴ It is in Jesus that humanity receives directly the revealed reality of God and the reality of true humanity. Jesus’ revelation of God’s Word in the simplest terms can then only be understood as Himself. In His life, Jesus “speaks of the creaturely presence, actions and revelation of God actualized in Himself; of the saving action of God, and therefore of His kingdom, of the doing of His will, of His own creaturely being as wholly dedicated to this purpose, of God’s lordship over Him.”⁴⁵⁵

It is here that Barth reaches a significant anthropological, as well as soteriological, reality. Barth’s Christological foundation of humanity, as humanity addressed by God, means that “Man *is* the being which is addressed in this way by God. He does not become this being. He does not first have a kind of nature in which he is then addressed by God ... He is from the very outset, as we may now say, ‘in the Word of God’.”⁴⁵⁶ Thus, following Athanasius,⁴⁵⁷ the individual does not become human in any action, nor, contrary to many popular Western soteriological constructs, the individual does not *become* a Christian or *become* like Christ. To be a true human is to be a Christian; to be a true human is to be like Christ.⁴⁵⁸ True human existence does not start with human action, or even human re-

⁴⁵⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 148.

⁴⁵⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 148.

⁴⁵⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 150.

⁴⁵⁷ For Athanasius, as with Barth, God became human, but this does not mean that God changes in becoming human. God ontologically becomes human in the incarnation and yet this does not concurrently involve change. Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 85.

⁴⁵⁸ As seen in Louis Berkhof’s concepts of conversion and sanctification. Berkhof notes that conversion is a human response “born of godly sorrow, and issues in a life of devotion to God.” Berkhof, *Systematic*, 483. In this response the individual is regenerated and enters into a process of sanctification. This process produces a new human “that must grow into full stature.” Berkhof, *Systematic*, 537. Also, J.I. Packer hints to this concept of this continual evolution of the Christian when he states that “Christians become increasingly Christ like as the moral profile of Jesus is progressively formed in them.” Packer, *Concise Theology*, 170. This concept of becoming like Christ is seen in Wolfhart Pannenberg’s concept of “The ‘New Man’” in comparison to Barth’s Real man or true humanity. In this Pannenberg looks back to Irenaeus who states that “we did not reach completion at first because, as finite beings, we were unable to

action toward God, but rather in its foundation, in its creation by the Word of God.⁴⁵⁹

While individuals can exist outside of the Word of God, this experience is not the natural reality of humanity, but rather the result of humanity's decision to reject God. Ultimately, it is an act against one's own true nature.

This grounding of humanity in the address of the Word of God is radically counter to the general anthropological concepts of popular Western Christendom.⁴⁶⁰ Christianity is not a value added to human reality. In the same way, it is not an addition to the individual, whereby humanity is augmented. Instead, it is core to the very essence of humanity. Human nature is not something that exists and is at one point addressed by the Word of God, but that from its very outset it exists in the Word of God. This human existence is that of being addressed, called, and summoned by the Word of God. As a result, Barth suggests that "perhaps the fundamental mistake in all erroneous thinking of man about himself is that he tried to equate himself with God and therefore to proceed on the assumption that he can regard himself as the presupposition of his own being."⁴⁶¹

receive, or achieve by ourselves, perfect fellowship with God." Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:298.

⁴⁵⁹ In his understanding of true humanity in relationship to God, Barth stands near Augustine who sees Jesus also as the clearest example of true humanity because his humanity is pleasing to God. "It is pleasing, claims Augustine, not because Jesus overcame the temptations of the flesh and thereby earned God's favor, but because at heart he was never other than the person God intended him to be." James Wetzel, "Predestination, Pelagianism, and Foreknowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 50.

⁴⁶⁰ An example of this is seen in J.I. Packer's statement that "in regeneration, God implants desires that were not there before." J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishing, 1993), 170. Similarly Millard Erickson states that regeneration "involves something *new*, a whole reversal of the person's *natural* tendencies. Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 312. Further, Barth is clearly in conflict with the American Neo-Evangelical writer Wayne Grudem who sees the act of conversion as a personally initiated response to Christ, whereby the individual makes a "*personal decision* to turn from [sin]", thus repenting turning to a life of faith. The human generated nature of this conversion is apparent in the second person singular verbs Grudem uses surrounding faith and repentance. For Grudem, faith and repentance, and thus becoming a Christian, is the result of personal human action. It is in this that such Neo-evangelical concepts of conversion turn to a sort of works righteousness whereby the individual is the actor who, in a way, procures their own salvation. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 713.

⁴⁶¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 151.

Humanity is a reality, but a reality that exists on a basis outside of itself. Because real humanity is the created being that is addressed, called, and summoned by the Word of God. Barth's first full description of humanity is as "summoned because chosen."⁴⁶² To truly ask the question "Who am I?" – in light of the Word of God – the answer must be "that I am summoned by the Word, and to that extent I am in this Word."⁴⁶³

Humanity exists in a reality of truth and thus has a true understanding of itself. Moreover, Barth explains that "[Humanity] exists in the fact that what he is told by God is the truth. He exists in this truth and not apart from it."⁴⁶⁴ Ontologically speaking, humanity cannot exist in a lie or deception; true humanity only exists within the true understanding provided in divine revelation. The existence of humanity within divine truth means that such an understanding of humanity is based upon the acceptance of the *realdialektik* that has existed within Barth's theology since *The Epistle to the Romans*. True humanity lives within the truth of God and thus the very real gap that exists between God and humanity. God is God; humanity is not. Yet this truth also includes the knowledge that God, in Christ, transcends this difference.

Christ and the Origin of Humanity

It is here, in Christ, where Barth wishes to anchor the origin of humanity. As Barth has previously shown, he is not interested in the organic development of humanity,⁴⁶⁵ but in the origin, the source of humanity. Barth is able to conceive of humanity grounded in an invisible reality because all things that are seen have been created by the Word of God,

⁴⁶² Barth, *CD* III/2, 150.

⁴⁶³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 150. In this Barth follows the lead of Athanasius who understood humanity to be created in the image of the Word, which is Christ. It is also *in* the Word that humanity stands as it was created to be. Athanasius, *Incarnation*, 40-41.

⁴⁶⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 152.

⁴⁶⁵ For example, as it is seen in evolutionary science.

the One who is unseen. In this “those things that are seen are not grounded in anything perceptible but solely on the Word of God What men are as men, they are thought God and not otherwise.”⁴⁶⁶ Barth suggests that there exists in Christ “a real pre-existence of man as the one who is summoned by God” in Christ.⁴⁶⁷ Humanity’s origin is found in Christ because “through Him all things were made.”⁴⁶⁸ Christ stands as the “first born over all creation.”⁴⁶⁹ Moreover, Christ stands as the eternal, “uncreated prototype of the humanity that is linked with God, man in his unity with God.”⁴⁷⁰

Christ stands as the pre-existence of humanity, not as a failed experiment or a primordial man that humanity has fallen from, but as the image of which the very essence of humanity was created. Humanity, individually and collectively, stands as truly human only when it exists in light of the Christological knowledge and election of God. Barth’s Christological concept of humanity means that human history is a reality, but only because of the divine work of God in this man Jesus Christ. This history is made up of the existence of this Man that reveals the Creator’s concern for creation. The Creator’s concern, which culminates in Christ’s existence, Himself becoming a creature, this “is the fullness and sum” of what is meant by the term “history.”⁴⁷¹

The pre-existence of the human Christ, which is the proper basis for human history according to Barth, means that humanity is properly defined by its relationship to God. Humanity is “the being whose Kinsman, Neighbour, and Brother is the man Jesus and in whose sphere therefore this history takes place. He is with God, confronted and prevented

⁴⁶⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 156. In this Barth differs radically from Descartes, Kant, and the majority of modern thinking that has sought to secure humanity upon a tangible reality, either internal or external, to humanity.

⁴⁶⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 155.

⁴⁶⁸ John 1:3, NIV.

⁴⁶⁹ Colossians 1:15, NIV.

⁴⁷⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 155.

⁴⁷¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 157.

and elected and summoned by Him, in the fact that this history takes place in his own sphere.”⁴⁷² Humanity is marked by this remarkable factor because of God’s work. God has worked to establish humanity in relation to Himself, transcending the chasm that exists between God and man.

Christ’s Graceful Establishment of Humanity

This work of God is a work of grace. In this true humanity is a reality established in the work of God’s grace. Grace is the act of establishing humanity in relationship to God as well as the act of re-establishing humanity with God. “In the Word of grace God its Creator comes to it, gives Himself to it and dwells within it. And in the Word of grace which comes to it, it acquires its own being as man.”⁴⁷³

God’s Word of grace creates the opportunity for humanity to reply to God’s actions in their action. This grateful action on the part of the human is to “recognize and honour as a benefactor the one who has conferred this good.”⁴⁷⁴ Humanity is able to act in gratitude as a result of God’s act towards humanity. These grateful actions are human actions that stand as godly actions, because they are made possible in the relationship that exists between God and true humanity and are thus good. Humanity is able to respond to the “Yes” pronounced by God regarding it. However, these actions and the attitude associated with them, cannot exhaustively express the reality that exists between God and man.⁴⁷⁵

True Humanity as Grateful Humanity

⁴⁷² Barth, *CD* III/2, 160.

⁴⁷³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 164-165. It is important to note that grace and gratitude are terms used solely in soteriological contexts in the New Testament, “but in the New Testament the existence of the man Jesus is a soteriological, *the* soteriological reality.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 160.

⁴⁷⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 167.

⁴⁷⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 167.

This reality of human gratitude prompts Barth to pose four significant propositions, two directly concerning God and two directly concerning humanity. The first suggests that “Only God deserved the thanks of man.”⁴⁷⁶ This is not to say that humanity cannot express gratitude to aspects of creation, but that such gratitude – if it is to be true gratitude – must be rooted in an understanding of God’s work on humanity’s behalf. Barth explains, “Thanksgiving is wasted, indeed it rests on error and can only lead to further error, if it is not directed to the one benefit of this one Benefactor, even in the grateful acceptance of benefits from creaturely benefactors.”⁴⁷⁷ This gratitude of humanity for God is unlike any other gratitude in depth and scope because of the radical work of God.

Second, “God can only be thanked by man.”⁴⁷⁸ Gratitude is a reality that is essential and only possible in the relationship between God and humanity. Ontologically speaking, it is only humanity that can be grateful to God.⁴⁷⁹ Only God can receive true and utter gratitude, and humanity is the only aspect of creation that can express such true and utter gratitude.⁴⁸⁰

Third, Barth turns to highlight the first of two propositions that directly relate to humanity, mirroring his first proposition. It is only as humanity lives in gratitude, only as humanity thanks God, does humanity fulfill its true being. One’s “history and therefore his true being has its origin in God with the fact that God tells him that He is gracious to

⁴⁷⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 169.

⁴⁷⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 169.

⁴⁷⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 169.

⁴⁷⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 170.

⁴⁸⁰ It is here that Barth warns his readers in regards to idolatry. “A God who requires and accepts anything else from man, any attitudes and actions otherwise conditions and grounded, would certainly not be God.” Any “God” who requires more than gratitude from humanity is a god fashioned after human likeness. Barth, *CD* III/2, 170.

him.”⁴⁸¹ For Barth, true human history is founded in God and is marked by human gratitude; human history is the recounting of God’s works for humanity.

Here the ontological description of true humanity begins to take form. Barth states that “by doing this and this alone does [the individual] distinguish himself as being from non-being.”⁴⁸² True humanity exists in a relationship of gratitude. Should an individual choose to exist with any other attitude towards God, either individually or collectively, this person(s) fails to stand as truly human. The ungrateful individual stands as an ontological impossibility, as inhuman, in the eyes of God. It is only when humanity stands as properly grateful to God, does it exist as it was created to. It is for this reason that Barth is able to provide a paraphrase of his concept of being, through Shakespearian language, “‘To be or not to be? That is the question,’ and it is decided by the way in which we answer the question: To give thanks or not to give thanks? The real man is the man who is thankful to God, and he alone.”⁴⁸³ This is not to suggest that Barth understands true humanity as solely existing in gratitude, for “man can and does do many things. But only in one way can he confirm the fact that he is man. He has only the one great possibility of being man.”⁴⁸⁴ True humanity exercises itself in various human activities, but these activities never mark the essence of the human nor do they stand as *the* quality of humanity that is human gratitude.

Fourth, mirroring his second proposition is that “to thank God in this way is incumbent on man alone.”⁴⁸⁵ This gratitude arises as a result of the human connection with the divine Word of grace which God speaks to humanity. This human thankfulness

⁴⁸¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 171.

⁴⁸² Barth, *CD* III/2, 171.

⁴⁸³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 171.

⁴⁸⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 171.

⁴⁸⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 171.

consists in the human “finding himself engaged and committed to the God who shows him this benefit in His word.”⁴⁸⁶ In this true human identity is an identity marked by gratitude, marked in a fashion that is unique to true humanity alone.

All created beings exist in the reality of God’s grace, as it is experienced in their respective manner, and all created beings are called to live in thankfulness to God. This compels humanity to understand itself not as separated from the rest of creation, but “together with that of all other creatures as a creaturely being.”⁴⁸⁷ The life of true humanity is marked by thankfulness, yet this life is marked by thankfulness “no less than the sun and Jupiter, but also no more than the sparrow of the lane or indeed the humblest Mayfly.”⁴⁸⁸ Because of the common reality of thankfulness of creation, humanity must interact with the rest of creation in humility.

However, this thankfulness of creation differs from the thankfulness of true humanity as a result of the establishment of the unique relationship between humanity and God in the person of Jesus Christ. In this “the form in which thanks are demanded of man is peculiar to man alone.”⁴⁸⁹ The unique reality of true human gratitude is rooted in the fact that it has the character of being subjective and spontaneous. The Word of God provides the ability for humanity to act in gratitude in the realm of their volition, creating a uniquely human reality, which can be called responsibility. This responsibility is a reciprocal relationship that exists between God and true humanity. After all, “God does not merely make man responsible by His word,”⁴⁹⁰ as if to set humanity up for an inevitable failure, but in His Word, God actively engages humanity. The Word of God

⁴⁸⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 172.

⁴⁸⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 172.

⁴⁸⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 172-173.

⁴⁸⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 173.

⁴⁹⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 174.

provides humanity the means to exist, not simply in the particular potentiality of gratitude, but spurs humanity into “an act and occurrence [of gratitude] and therefore beings itself.”⁴⁹¹

Barth’s understanding of gratitude continues to take on an ontological definition of true humanity, made possible through God’s grace. Gratitude marks the being or essence of true humanity and it is for this reason that he states, “Being, human thanksgiving, has the character of responsibility.”⁴⁹² The reality of gratitude is a continuation of his anthropological concept stretching back to *Romans*. True gratitude is only possible when the *realdialectic* is perceived, when humanity understands the “No” spoken against it by God, as a result of sin, as well as the graceful “Yes” of God’s mercy. This dialectic is revealed in Christ, in whom humanity has been elected to a relationship and freedom to perceive and express this gratitude.

“Real Man,” True Humanity

One cannot read Barth’s concept of “Real Man” without continuing to be aware of the gravity of the human situation as it stands outside of relationality with God. Neither can the reader overlook the significance of the union of God and humanity, enacted by God, in the God-man Jesus Christ.⁴⁹³ This union is possible for Barth because he shares

⁴⁹¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 174.

⁴⁹² Barth, *CD* III/2, 174.

⁴⁹³ This existence of humanity stands in stark contrast to the conceptions of humanity of both Kant and Hegel. Kant’s conception of “true” humanity is circumscribed by moral considerations. Price, *Anthropology*, 60. By contrast, Barth’s true humanity is “not found where the categorical imperative beckons. The ‘real man’ is found rather in the very specific person of Jesus Christ, who is fully human but not merely human.” Price, *Barth’s Anthropology*, 123. While Barth’s concept of the truly divine Christ as true humanity may seem strikingly Hegelian, it is the exact opposite of the anthropologically focused philosopher. While Hegel’s system results in a deification of humanity, in that ultimately Hegel’s man is Hegel’s God, Barth’s concept of true humanity exists only in light of the transcendent call of God, a God who remains distinct from humanity. Price, *Barth’s Anthropology*, 60-123.

in the historical doctrine “of the *en-* and *anhypostatis* of the human nature of Jesus Christ, the view that this man only exists at all because God united himself with humanity.”⁴⁹⁴

Barth continues to expound his description of true humanity by discussing the subjectivity and spontaneity that is developed as a result of the human being in responsibility before God. True humanity exists in this reality as a result of God’s actions towards humanity in Christ. True humanity, that is Christological humanity, exists in a reality of truly human action, which Barth perceives as having four particular aspects. The first being that “as human life is a being in responsibility before God, it has the character of a knowledge of God.”⁴⁹⁵ This means that true humanity is defined by a revealed knowledge of God. True humanity cannot exist in ignorance of the truth of God. It is this act of knowing that the human defines itself as a subject. Humanity stands as a subject of knowledge, solely because of God’s act of revelation, and is thus established in knowledge of God as an object.⁴⁹⁶

Furthermore, true humanity attains a true self-knowledge in this knowledge of God, made possible through divine revelation. Humanity outside of divine revelation is unable to fulfil the Delphic maxim γνῶθι σεαυτὸν.⁴⁹⁷ The problem of objective self-knowledge is solved only in this relationship with God and opening themselves to God. Barth reasons, “In this act he will find himself only as a relatively other.”⁴⁹⁸ Self-knowledge is continually dependent upon humanity’s relation to God. “For this reason we cannot ascribe to human self-knowledge the strict subject-object relationship which is

⁴⁹⁴ Krötke, “Anthropology”, 163.

⁴⁹⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 176.

⁴⁹⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 177. In this Barth establishes humanity in the very act that Kant defined as an impossibility, objective knowledge of the Divine. The difference for Barth is that humanity is established in this knowledge not because of any action of their own, but solely because of the graceful provision of God’s revelation.

⁴⁹⁷ “Know thyself.”

⁴⁹⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 178.

characteristic of the knowledge of God.”⁴⁹⁹ Even when humanity exists as true humanity, as it was created to exist collectively and individually, at no point does it transcend the dialectical difference that stands between God and humanity. At this point Barth is able to affirm “the simple and pregnant statement: ‘I am,’ is now possible and necessary.”⁵⁰⁰ However, while the relationship with God, afforded to humanity by Christ, does not simply establish this possibility, it continues to establish this relationship. Just because “I am” is possible and necessary, “It is not absolutely true. We can dare to affirm it only to the accompaniment and in consequence of the affirmation: ‘God is’.”⁵⁰¹

The second aspect of true humanity is that “It has the character of obedience to God.”⁵⁰² This obedience is an act of responsibility before God. True humanity, as seen above, is grounded in the hearing the Word of God. Thus responsibility is the spontaneous and active form of hearing.”⁵⁰³ It is this act of hearing that stands as the defining action of the knowing subject. True humanity is thus defined by its act of hearing and obeying the Word of God.⁵⁰⁴

True humanity thus cannot exist outside of the reality of the Word of God. “The omnipotent working Word of God does not permit the creature to remain self-contained and apart, to be itself without positing itself. The being of man is as it is claimed and engaged by this Word.”⁵⁰⁵ True humanity exists as it stands under the shadow the Word

⁴⁹⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 178.

⁵⁰⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 178.

⁵⁰¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 178.

⁵⁰² Barth, *CD* III/2, 179.

⁵⁰³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 179.

⁵⁰⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 179.

⁵⁰⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 180.

of God. That true humanity exists and therefore is obedient to God, means that the statement “I am,” must be interpreted by the further statement: ‘I will’.”⁵⁰⁶

True humanity is thus established in an action, true humanity exists not as a noun, but as a verb; true humanity exists only as it acts in this shadow of knowledge. “‘I will’, thus emphasizing the fact that the being and presence of man are not merely passive but active. Man is, of course, purely receptive as regards the movement from God, but he is also purely spontaneous in the movement of God.”⁵⁰⁷ However, this understanding also means “I am” is equated with “I do.” The action “I do” means that humankind acts and continues to act in response to God. Because man is both “I am” and “I will,” humanity is not simply a passive object; it is not a chess piece manipulated by the chess master. Yet if humanity does not obey, they act to surrender themselves to godlessness and inhumanity, surrendering the God-given freedom for the tyranny of sin.⁵⁰⁸

Third, true humanity is marked by an invocation of God, which is the basis for humanity’s responsibility before God.⁵⁰⁹ Because of the problem of creatureliness – the supreme disparity between humanity and the divine – humanity can only be understood as approaching God, as a result of God’s previous action of approaching humanity. “God comes to man – this is the objective basis of man’s being. And man goes to God – this is the subjective basis. But God is the Creator and man is His creature.”⁵¹⁰ Such a reality continues to mark humanity, even as it stands as renewed humanity. Because of this

⁵⁰⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 180.

⁵⁰⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 180.

⁵⁰⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 180-181. Here Barth draws heavily on the understanding of human knowledge as human responsibility from Calvin’s Catechism in which Barth points out the primary aim of human life is to know God. Taking up a theme of Augustine, Calvin points out that humanity’s highest aspect is not to be saved by God but to glorify God. “To honour God is to meet Him as He gives Himself to us, to be responsible before Him as the One He truly is. But to invent a god according to our own fancy is the source of all error and heathendom.” Barth, *CD* III/2, 183-184.

⁵⁰⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 186.

⁵¹⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 187.

Barth is quick to point out that “the subjective foundation of human being [human knowledge] cannot be equal in dignity to the objective foundation [divine self-revelation].”⁵¹¹ Humanity holds the ability to choose to respond to God, to offer itself to God, to express thanks to God, thus humanity is responsible before God in making itself a response to the Word of God and ultimately submitting to the judgment of God. However, true humanity can be no less but also no more than a response to God.⁵¹²

True humanity is secure when confronted by God in this understanding of humanity as an invocation. True humanity cannot be confused with the real possibilities of hubris or idolatry in that “The limits of the creature are guarded when we understand the being of man as an invocation of God.”⁵¹³ As a result, true humanity exists in a responding towards God, but this cannot occur in actuality if it is not first based on God’s invocation to humanity.

Fourth, humanity exists in freedom, “the freedom which God imparts to it.”⁵¹⁴ This freedom is not the individualistic freedom that is expressed in enlightenment concepts. God and God alone bequeaths freedom to the human. It is because “in the first place God alone is free. Then he alone wills and creates a free being as His creature. As man is this being, he too is free.”⁵¹⁵ However this freedom cannot exist without God or outside of human dependence upon God. Human concepts of freedom would be “valueless if it related to a freedom which man had gained for himself or had accepted from some other source. He is only in so far as he is willed and created by God.”⁵¹⁶ The individual thus

⁵¹¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 187.

⁵¹² Barth, *CD* III/2, 189-191.

⁵¹³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 191.

⁵¹⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 192.

⁵¹⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 194.

⁵¹⁶ Barth, *CD* III/2, 194.

gains true freedom to act through its unity with the freedom of God and ceases to be free only when the individual asserts himself or herself outside of the realm of freedom that God has established in relation to humanity.

True humanity exists in a freedom that is Christological in that it is a freedom provided by God to humanity through Christ. Human freedom cannot exist without the reality that Christ exists in the freedom of God, confronting humanity as Saviour and Keeper, creating human responsibility and thus the freedom to live out this responsibility.⁵¹⁷ This freedom is “the freedom of a right choice.”⁵¹⁸ Barth’s concept of freedom of a right choice cannot be confused with liberty. Humanity is set free from sin, from the inability to choose God and instead is provided the ability to choose true existence with God. “In the free choice of man which is really made in exercise of the freedom given by God, it is clear that only thanksgiving to the God of grace and the acceptance of responsibility before Him can be chosen.”⁵¹⁹ Despite human conceptions otherwise true freedom is freedom to choose to live in the truth, truth that can only be understood in the light of revelation of the Word of God.⁵²⁰

It is impossible to understand true humanity as anything other than free. True humanity stands in a freedom that releases the individual from the fetters of sin. True

⁵¹⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 194-195.

⁵¹⁸ Barth, *CD* III/2, 197.

⁵¹⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 197.

⁵²⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 197. While Barth’s concept of freedom can be seen in contrast to multiple philosophical descriptions of freedom, the most significant comparison maybe with the founding concepts of the United States of America, “The Land of Liberty.” Thomas Pane, among other founding Fathers, equated freedom with liberty. Pane understood freedom something that indwells within the individual, something that is anthropological based, and must be respected by the state and others in society. Thomas Pane, “Rights of Man,” in *Common Sense, Rights of Man and Other Essential Writings of Thomas Pane* (New York: Signet Classics, 2003), 250-253. Barth’s conception of freedom cannot be equated with liberty. However, while Barth’s concept of freedom appears radically different than modern conceptions of freedom, as seen in Pane, Barth’s Christological freedom does not suffer the limitations seen in anthropological concepts of freedom. Barth’s concepts of freedom is able to transcend the individual, and does not bring one’s freedom in conflict with another’s, as is often the case with liberty.

humanity is kept from evil. True humanity is free in that it exists in a reality wherein the individual is able not to see and not able to sin.⁵²¹ This is because “evil has no place in the creation of God or the creatureliness of man.”⁵²²

True Humanity in the Real World

Having established these four ontological aspects of true humanity (responsibility to God, obedience to God, the invocation of God, and true freedom) Barth is able to reconsider the phenomena of humanity. Having considered this reality of true humanity it is not possible to know “the content of which they belong the reality of which they are appearances.”⁵²³ As a result “we are now in a position to see them not merely as phenomena but to estimate them as real indications of the human.”⁵²⁴ As a result of having considered these Christological presuppositions that define true humanity – based upon the divine “No” pronounced against sinful humanity as well as the divine “Yes” that humanity encounters in Christ’s divine gracefulness – Barth is now able to “affirm that all scientific knowledge of man is not objectively empty.”⁵²⁵ This scientific knowledge must presuppose the theological definition of humanity, but it is able to arrive at a valid anthropological knowledge. It is because of this that Barth is able to affirm the possibility of the genuine discovery of true humanity, or at least aspects of true humanity in natural

⁵²¹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 197.

⁵²² Barth, *CD* III/2, 197.

⁵²³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 198.

⁵²⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 198-199.

⁵²⁵ Barth, *CD* III/2, 198-199. In this, Bruce McCormack’s assertion is seen correct that in Barth’s theology “The divine NO in which opposition to human sinfulness is expressed is the servant of the divine Yes of grace because human sinfulness is expressed is the servant of the divine Yes of grace because grace is the beginning and the end of all the ways of God in which God has his being.” Bruce McCormack, “The Sum of the Gospel: The Doctrine of Election in the Theologies of Alexander Schweizer and Karl Barth,” in *Towards the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 489.

science,⁵²⁶ idealistic ethics,⁵²⁷ existentialist philosophy,⁵²⁸ and theistic anthropology,⁵²⁹ the very fields that Barth had the most stringent criticism in the earlier discussion of human phenomena.⁵³⁰

In this discussion, Barth has outlined the reality of true humanity in the cosmos. This reality is a result of Barth's understanding of Christ and the revelation of God in Christ. In this Barth has described true humanity as "the creature of God."⁵³¹ However, this simply provides the basis for human description that Barth will continue to develop throughout the remainder of his *Church Dogmatics*.⁵³²

⁵²⁶ Barth notes that natural science can perceive an aspect of true humanity when it seeks to locate humanity in the cosmos in humanity's interconnection with other cosmic phenomena. Barth states that natural science can be valid "if it realises that man cannot be its object except in his capacity to be cosmic both in general and in particular, therefore to be the creature of God, and if it also realises that this involves a presupposition which is not itself scientific in character, namely that of the real man who has this capacity, then it is genuine science." Barth, *CD III/2*, 200. In this Barth stands firmly in the tradition of Calvin who perceives "secular writers" as admirable, when understood first in light of humanity's fallen nature and God's good gifts "we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonour the Spirit of God." Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 2,II, 273-274.

⁵²⁷ Barth describes idealistic ethics as attempting to understand and present humanity in the act of differentiation within the cosmos. Such an understanding and presentation can represent an aspect or symptom of true humanity. But for this to be a possibility, such ethics must realize that its object cannot be more than a partial symptom of true humanity and can never describe the sum of true humanity. Barth, *CD III/2*, 201.

⁵²⁸ Existentialist philosophy may describe a symptom of true humanity and go beyond natural science and idealistic ethics in its description of true humanity because it understands humanity against the backdrop of "the true transcendence which proclaims itself only in the fact of the limitation of human existence." Barth, *CD III/2*, 201. However, existentialist philosophy can only be true if it affirms and denies something and presupposes "something which as existentialist philosophy it can neither affirm nor deny" that is true humanity. Barth, *CD III/2*, 201.

⁵²⁹ For Barth theistic anthropology is a valid description of humanity in that "from the very outset it understands [humanity] as theonomously rather than autonomously determined." Barth, *CD III/2*, 201. While Barth previously perceived that theistic anthropology was impossible based upon the phenomena of the human, now based on the presuppositions of true humanity outlined above Barth is able to state "without hesitation that a theistic anthropology ... can describe in a far-reaching and exhaustive way that which constitutes the potentiality of real man." Barth, *CD III/2*, 201.

⁵³⁰ In this Barth stands directly in the footsteps of Calvin who understands the work of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other like disciplines as having benefit and assistance in the ministry of the believer and suggests that those who neglect God's free gift in these areas "ought to suffer just punishment for our sloths." Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 2,II, 275.

⁵³¹ Barth, *CD III/2*, 202.

⁵³² Barth, *CD III/2*, 202.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored themes contained within §44 of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. It began with an explanation of what it means for humanity that Jesus Christ existed as a creature for God. It is in this unique experience of *the* one true human that Barth finds an ontological grounding for true humanity, in light of its status as created creature. It is in this section that Barth develops what may be best described as a description of Christological humanity within the cosmos, which highlights six unique features of the experience of Christ's humanity. While these six aspects are unique to Christ, they will later form the foundation of an understanding of human phenomena generally.

In the second section of this chapter Barth's discussion of the phenomena of humanity is explored in the context of daily existence, in light of who this one human was. While Barth is emphatic that humanity must understand itself solely in light of this one person, he is quick to point out that "Anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology."⁵³³ As a result, Barth seeks to explore the reality of humanity in light of who Christ is. This exploration leads to a discussion of six points that provide the framework that highlight human reality in this Christological relationship to God.

Finally this chapter reaches a lengthy discussion centred around Barth's concept of true humanity, what he terms "real man." This concept of true humanity is a live possibility for humanity generally based on the person and work of the one man Jesus Christ. True humanity is an existence based in faith, faith that is provided by God through Christ. Humanity, having been encompassed by Christ, can be seen in a true reality that is free from abstractions.

⁵³³ Barth, *CD* III/2, 71.

Humanity is defined first and foremost by the fact that they are continually confronted by the reality that in Jesus Christ they have a “human Neighbour, companion and brother ... [and] we cannot break free from this neighbour.”⁵³⁴ This reality means that while humanity exists within and as part of creation, it has a unique reality, as a result of its relationship with God in Christ. Humanity stands on this special ground not because of any human action but as the result of two interconnected actions of God: election of humanity in Christ and the act of revelation of the Word of God, which is Christ.

The two acts of God, revelation and election, work to establish humanity in the reality of grace, which creates the possibility of human reciprocity in gratitude. Humanity thus is ontologically grounded in the realities of divine grace and the truly human response of gratitude. This act of gratitude is a uniquely human reality that can only be uniquely directed to God.

This encounter of grace opens the door for human freedom and human responsibility. These two realities, lived in obedience to the Word of God – as a result of God’s invocation – forms the very basis of an ontological description of humanity that is true to our reality as created by the Creator God. This ontological description is not the sum of human self-understanding but the beginning of it. Furthermore, it also provides an understanding of who humanity is without separating humanity from creation or the Creator. Barth’s definition of humanity respects the reality of humanity without downplaying the very real reality of sin within the human experience as a result of the fall of humanity.

⁵³⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 133.

This Christological anthropology is a theme in Barth's theology from his earliest writings following his break with liberal theology. Barth's Christological anthropology of true humanity can be seen as a distinct development of the ideas held as early as his essays "The Righteousness of God" and "The Christian's Place in Society," as well as *The Epistle to the Romans*.⁵³⁵ Barth's anthropology has often been cast in the dower light of the divine "No" of *The Epistle to the Romans*, however, this exposition, along with the work of others, shows that Barth's anthropology was truly one of true hope for true humanity, a hope founded solely upon the work of Christ.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ Spencer, *Clearing a Space*, 122.

⁵³⁶ Forde, "Future," 74.

CHAPTER 4: BARTH'S CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

FOLLOWING §44

Following Barth's development of "Real Man" in §44 of his *Church Dogmatics*, he continues to use and explore the same conception of humanity throughout the subsequent pages of the *Church Dogmatics*. Building upon the consistent and continued Christologically described anthropology within the writing of Barth, this chapter explores the major categories of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* in order to confirm the presence and influence of this Christological anthropology throughout these subsequent sections of the *Church Dogmatics*. In order to provide a relevant exploration, this chapter provides a brief overview of a number of the ways that Barth's Christological concept of humanity figures in to various aspects of his thought.⁵³⁷

To accomplish such a task, this chapter moves through various sections of the *Church Dogmatics* in the order that they appear in the text, highlighting some significant aspects of Barth's Christological anthropology. This chapter will begin by further developing a description of true humanity as a result of this Christological description, chiefly: humanity in its determination as the covenant-partner of God, humanity as soul and body, true humanity as reconciled humanity, and the being of humanity *in* Jesus Christ. Next, this chapter will examine how this Christological conception of humanity exists alongside the experience of sinful human, or the inhuman individual. Finally, this chapter will look at the implications of Barth's Christological anthropology in daily life: first in examining Jesus Christ as Royal Man, then exploring Barth's concept of vocations

⁵³⁷ As an overview this chapter cannot not be exhaustive, but it can illustrate how the very same Christological anthropology that was fleshed out in §44 continues to factor into Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. This chapter will engage with the sections of the *Church Dogmatics* that follow §44 which most clearly and significantly point to Barth's Christological anthropology.

for true humanity. This chapter follows Barth's own direction within these particular sections, and so it is important to be reminded that this chapter's argumentation, along with the *Church Dogmatics*, is presented in a less sequential and a more cumulative format.⁵³⁸

Humanity in its Determination as the Covenant-Partner of God

Barth follows his discussion of true humanity, which is the realization of his Christological-ontological basis for humanity, with a focus on the external reality of true humanity. True humanity's external reality is one of relationship – corresponding relationships between God and humanity – as a being in encounter. This encounter occurs within human reality, between fellow humans, as well as with God. True humanity “is human in this encounter, and in this humanity it is a likeness of the being of its Creator and a being in home in Him.”⁵³⁹ This means that true humanity continues to exist not only as determined by God, as seen in §44, but also in a continual relationship with God, made possible through the determination of humanity by God, which occurred in Jesus Christ.

This Christological anthropology – humanity as determined not by autonomous volition, but Christ's person and work – leads Barth to describe humanity in a way that seems counter to his view in *The Epistle to the Romans*, as God's covenant-partner. As Barth states, true Humanity “lives with God as His covenant-partner. For God has created him to participate in the history in which God is at work with him and he with God; to be His partner in the common history of the covenant.”⁵⁴⁰ However, this partnership is not in opposition to the “No” of *Romans*, but is its result. Humanity is a covenant partner with

⁵³⁸ Webster, “Creation and Humanity,” 99.

⁵³⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 203.

⁵⁴⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 203.

God because it enters into the grace of God – into an encounter with Christ – leaving behind its purely human centred understanding.⁵⁴¹

It must be noted that while Barth conceives of true humanity as being in a reciprocal partnership with God,⁵⁴² at no point does Barth collapse the significant ontological gap that stands between God and humanity. “[Humanity] belongs to God, but he is still a creature and not God.”⁵⁴³ This means that

The being of God cannot be compared with that of [humanity]. But it is not a question of this twofold being. It is a question of the relationship within the being of God on the one side and between the being of God and that of man on the other The correspondence and similarity of the two relationships consists in the fact that the eternal love in which God as the Father loves the Son, and as the Son loves the Father in which God as the Father is loved by the Son and as the Son by Father, is also the love which is addressed by God to man.⁵⁴⁴

God thus exists in a relationship to humanity, but is not bound to humanity outside of His own will. God continues to exist in divine freedom in relation to humanity and is only limited by his own action that is made within this freedom. In this Barth’s concept of God, and thus his concept of humanity stand in stark contrast to that of Hegel.⁵⁴⁵ While the Hegel’s panentheism conceives of God being bound to the world and humanity,⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴¹ When Barth’s anthropological description in III/2 is understood as a result of the “No” of *Romans*, instead of counter to it, one must reject von Balthasar’s assertion of Barth’s turn to analogy and reconciliation with Emil Brunner’s concept of natural theology. Barth’s tone towards other fields of study may have changed, but this is only because his perspective has changed on them – from human self-perception to human perception made possible because of the Christological reality of Jesus Christ. In this one must disagree with von Balthasar’s reading, there remains no true “pre-understanding” nor does Barth turn to side with Brunner. von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 105-151.

⁵⁴² Barth, *CD III/2*, 203.

⁵⁴³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 204.

⁵⁴⁴ Barth, *CD III/2*, 220.

⁵⁴⁵ Price, *Anthropology*, 60.

⁵⁴⁶ As John Cooper points out for Hegel “it is the Absolute’s nature to posit itself in order to become completely one with itself. Not having a world is not an option for God. ‘It belongs to his being, his essence to be the creator.’ Thus God is not free not to posit the world and not free to not to realize himself dialectically in and through the world. ‘Without the word God is not God’.” John Cooper, *Panentheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 112.

Barth understands God as willing to bind Himself to humanity, however, it is only by His willing that this occurs. In this God retains complete *aseity*.

For Barth, humanity's true identity is found in relationality first and foremost with God. This basic human form is found in the question of the humanity of Jesus. The application of this criterion means that

a whole sphere of supposed humanity is ruled out as non-human from the very first, and cannot be considered, because that which in its is regarded and alleged to be human stands in a contradiction to the humanity of Jesus which denies the essential similarity between Him and us and therefore excludes the possibility of the human creature as a covenant-partner of God, thus destroying the unity of the creation and covenant.⁵⁴⁷

True humanity is established in a reciprocal relationship that is established by God. This relationship does not deny human action or human ability, but grounds both action and ability antecedently within God's action. It is within this context that Barth establishes a theological basis for the realization of one's vital, natural, and intellectual aptitudes within one's life-act. This realization provides the theological basis for Barth to implore Christian action in human realities. This basis means that humanity is not defined by the Cartesian self-thinking ego, but by Christ. Human relationships are not based primarily in a human propensity for relationships, but because of Christ's relational nature — both with His fellow members of the Trinity and with fellow humanity. Humanity seeks to explore and yearns truth in all number of fields not fundamentally because of a human sense of wonder and thirst for knowledge, but because of God's revelatory acts in Christ, which provide humanity with true knowledge. True humanity

⁵⁴⁷ Barth, *CD* III/2, 226. For this reason it is possible for the individual to choose to exist within this non-human reality, but it cannot destroy the truly human reality that God has established within the world. Humanity can despise this reality, it can scorn or dishonour it, but humankind cannot slough it off or break free from it. "Humanity is not a deal which he can accept or discard, or a virtue which he can practice or not practice." Barth, *CD* III/2, 228. In this the individual may reject life as true humanity in Christ; however, Christ remains a reality above and surrounding the individual, which means that humanity cannot escape the reality of God.

loves, not principally because of a human desire to give and receive love, but because God is love and thus “We love because He first loved us.”⁵⁴⁸ Barth’s Christological humanity becomes the impetus for an individual “participation in scholarship and art, politics and economics, civilization and culture.”⁵⁴⁹ The participation of true humanity within these realms is an act of worship in that in these actions of true humanity should divulge the relationality of true humanity.⁵⁵⁰ Such a perception of humanity means that worship is no longer bound by the walls of a church. Rather, worship subsumes the whole of human action when this reciprocity is realized. For the Christian, there is no longer a division between sacred and secular action, the whole of life is worship and an expression of one’s relationship as true humanity with God.

Worship thus occurs not in the singing of songs but in the living out of the realization that true human action follows the action of God. Worship of God is not merely something that is “tacked on to” one’s day, but is the very premise of one’s life. Worship takes place when the individual realizes that true actions are first of all preceded by God’s establishment of the human in relationship. It is for this reason that Paul could state, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”⁵⁵¹ Worship occurs when business people act with a mindset that understands others — clients and employees — not as objects to be manipulated but instead as individuals, who are also in relationship to God. Creative acts become worship when these acts cease to be autonomous self-expression and instead seek to express the true self, the self that is in a relationship with the God who created the vast universe.

⁵⁴⁸ 1 John 4:19 (NRSV).

⁵⁴⁹ Barth, *CD* III/2, 249.

⁵⁵⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 249.

⁵⁵¹ Philippians 3:13 (NRSV).

Humanity as Soul and Body

It is in §46 that Barth finally turns to what typically stands as an introduction of theological discussion of humanity,⁵⁵² that being the relationship between human's spiritual and physical reality. Here Barth shifts from humanity's being in itself to humanity's being as it exists as an existential reality. Even in understanding the human as body and soul, Barth returns to his Christological source. He writes, "Here too, then, we first go back to the source of understanding which alone can be authentic and normative for the theological doctrine of man's nature. We find our bearings and our instruction as we look to the constitution of the humanity of Jesus."⁵⁵³

Barth understands that the human exists as a unity of body and soul and it cannot be understood outside of the mutual dependence of one upon the other as a result of Christ's existence. "The Jesus of the New Testament is supremely true man in the very fact that He does not conform to the later definition [that being a division of body and soul], and far from existing as the union of two parts or two 'substances,' He is one whole man, embodied soul and besouled body:⁵⁵⁴ the one in the other and never merely beside it."⁵⁵⁵ As a result, Barth rejects any and all elevation of one particular aspect of human reality over another. Humanity is not simply a soul that must experience embodiment before

⁵⁵² Examples of this can be seen in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 219-225; Pannenberg, *Systematic*, 2:175-277; and Berkhof, *Systematic*, 191-201.

⁵⁵³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 327.

⁵⁵⁴ Barth here follows the lead of the earlier John Calvin who argues that humanity stands as the *imago Dei* both in body and soul. Calvin, *Institutes I*, 1, XV, 190. In addition, Calvin argues that body and spirit cannot be separated and that both are interconnected in both sin and redemption. Calvin, *Institutes I*, 2, III, 289.

⁵⁵⁵ Barth, *CD III/2*, 327. Barth's understanding of humanity as a union of body and soul is radically counter the young Augustine, still under the influence of Manichaeism, who emphasized the significance of the soul over the body. However, Barth's concept of humanity as a union of body and soul is congruent with the later developments of Augustine's mature concept of the unity of body and soul. This later development resulted from Augustine's shift away from earlier platonic thought forms to more Hebraic forms. Roland Teske, "Augustine's Theory of Soul" in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 26.

freedom nor simply is it a fleshly robot that is abused, perverted, or exploited. It is a soul and body that have been called and encountered by God.⁵⁵⁶ Following Barth, “To be human is to be created in the *imago dei*; to be created by God in the image of God is to have intrinsic worth.”⁵⁵⁷

As a result of Barth’s Christological anthropology he views human ontological existence before noetic existence, as a result of human dependence “on the fact that humanity is not without God.”⁵⁵⁸ Humanity with God is. Humanity without God “has neither being nor existence.”⁵⁵⁹ It is for this reason that humanity finds itself in a unique ontological reality among creation.⁵⁶⁰ The truly human ontological reality is one wherein the human exists as body and soul, body and soul that is united,⁵⁶¹ both of which serve unique functions.⁵⁶² Both soul and body are perceived in thought and activity, first by the soul “both as desire and volition, and that the body follows.”⁵⁶³ In this concept of true

⁵⁵⁶ This unification of soul and body reminds the Christian that humanity is a physical reality that is Christological conditioned. This means that a human’s physical needs and reality cannot be divorced from their reality as renewed humanity in the work of Christ. Degradation of the human body either by scarcity or gluttony, over exertion or slothfulness, is a degradation of the whole of the individual, an individual that is established in Christ. The denigration of the body to an object, either sexually or economically is a denigration of the soul and thus an affront to the God who exists in relationship in this besouled body. True humanity can never ignore its physical health nor overlook the physical well-being of fellow humanity (James 2:14-17). As a result of this union of body and soul, as seen in Christ, Christians must be concerned for the world, both for the condition of their soul and of their body.

⁵⁵⁷ Rigby, “Real Word,” 62.

⁵⁵⁸ Barth, *CD III/2*, 345.

⁵⁵⁹ Barth, *CD III/2*, 345.

⁵⁶⁰ As Barth succinctly points out, humanity’s particular status in creation exists in its unique relationship with God. “Men and beasts can be born, but men alone can be baptised.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 359.

⁵⁶¹ As Barth states, the existence of the soul “is not without body. It is, only as it is soul of a body. Hence every trivialisation of the body, every removal of the body from the soul, and every abstraction between the two immediately jeopardises the soul. Every denial of the body necessarily implies a denial of the soul.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 370.

⁵⁶² It is for this reason that Barth states that “The inner unity of human creatureliness and therefore the interconnection of soul and body consists in the fact that in man the soul is the quickening factor aroused by the Spirit and the body is that which is quickened by it and lives.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 394.

⁵⁶³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 418.

human reality, Barth denies the possibility of dualism, as seen in Kant,⁵⁶⁴ while affirming the duality of human nature. Humanity must be understood as body and soul together.

Both are equally created and in relationship to God.⁵⁶⁵

In §46 Barth describes true humanity in light of the person of Christ. When humanity is understood in light of Christ, Barth perceives that it is impossible for humanity to be truly understood except in a union between body and soul, a union that is based and illumed solely by Christ. This union of body and soul that Barth sees in the fact that Paul lives by faith “in the flesh,”⁵⁶⁶ as faith is a reality of both the human soul and body.⁵⁶⁷

True Humanity as Reconciled Humanity

For Barth, true humanity exists as a result of the fulfilled covenant of God, which brings about the reconciliation of humanity. This for Barth is “the heart and subject-matter of the Christian faith, of the origin of Christian live, of the content of Christian hope.”⁵⁶⁸ The Christian life can only exist as a result of the message that is Jesus Christ and never the reverse. Reconciliation is the result of God’s divine work to unite Himself to humanity; this means that true humanity exists in a reality of the Christmas theme “God with us.” This statement is the core of the Christian message and the decisive

⁵⁶⁴ As Daniel Price points out, “Barth’s anthropology, when seen in the light of the wider scope of the *Dogmatics*, indicates that Barth had no intention of abiding by Kant’s distinction between nominal and phenomenal. Price, *Anthropology*, 285.

⁵⁶⁵ As a result of this concept of soul and body, Barth suggests that “we necessarily contradict the abstractly dualistic conception” that Barth has commonly referred to as “Greek” but, as he notes, has also found its way into the church and at times has also be described as “the traditional Christian view.” Barth, *CD III/2*, 418. At the same time Barth cannot accept the adoption of monism that solely emphasizes humanity’s embodiment over and against this Greek dualism. Barth, *CD III/2*, 382. Nor is a third option, such a Christological conception of humanity able to adopt a monistic spiritualism, which solely emphasizes human spirituality at the expense of embodiment. Barth, *CD III/2*, 390.

⁵⁶⁶ Galatians 2:12, (NRSV).

⁵⁶⁷ As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whatever you do [emphasizing bodily actions], do everything for the glory of God.” (NRSV).

⁵⁶⁸ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 4.

general statement of the community that is formed in Christ's reconciliation of humanity, the act of reconciling humanity into true humanity.⁵⁶⁹

True humanity exists as the result of salvation, and salvation stands as the process that is the creation of true humanity. As a result, "Salvation is fulfillment, the supreme, sufficient, definitive and indestructible fulfillment of being. Salvation is the perfect being which is not proper to the created being as such but is still future."⁵⁷⁰ True humanity is thus a reality that may be experienced for the Christian in the here and now, yet it cannot be fully and completely experienced before the *parousia*. This does not mean that for Barth true humanity is an impossibility in this life; instead, reconciliation continually occurs and reoccurs. The truth of reconciliation, "God with us," is a reality that must always be learned a fresh. In this life, true humanity can be experienced, but in human freedom, it is an experience that must be re-learned and re-experienced when humanity has forgotten its Christological ontological reality and attempts to act autonomously for itself.⁵⁷¹ Because of this possibility of re-learning, true humanity continues to experience reality with God, being encircled by Christ, as a result of God's own election and action.⁵⁷²

The Being of Humanity in Jesus Christ

For Barth humanity cannot exist outside of the reality of Jesus Christ. Properly speaking of humanity requires speaking of Jesus Christ. "We cannot speak of the being of man except from the standpoint of the Christian and in light of the particular being of

⁵⁶⁹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 4-5.

⁵⁷⁰ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 8.

⁵⁷¹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 4-8.

⁵⁷² Barth, *CD IV/1*, 12.

man in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷³ Because true humanity is encompassed by Christ, humanity cannot be separated from Christ. To attempt to do so results in the creation of an inhuman reality, the non-human. In this sin, selfish action, and harm are not actions of human beings, but inhuman beings. Actions outside of the reality and nature of Christ cease to be human and exist outside of the ontological reality of true humanity.

For Barth, true humanity is a reality that comes to be experienced and known by the Christian in his or her encounter with Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to know and experience Jesus Christ and thus to know and experience true humanity. This means that true humanity is both an existential and noetic reality. True humanity is not simply a state of being in relationship with Jesus, nor the experience of peace and joy. While true humanity includes these, true humanity is a human life lived in light of the knowledge of Christ, of His relationality, in which the redeemed reach out to the other around them, bringing one’s neighbour in contact with the radical existential and noetic realities of true humanity.

Barth is clear on the scope of true humanity. God has given the experience of true humanity to “all men in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷⁴ Humanity is universally bound to the true humanity of Jesus Christ and thus has universal access to the reconciliation that is salvation worked out in the person of Jesus Christ. However, Barth notes that “We cannot expect that all men will be in a position to know and to give an account of Him and therefore of their true and actual being as it is hidden and enclosed and laid up from them in Him.”⁵⁷⁵ This means that while salvation is universally accessible to humanity in the election of God, this election does not mean that humanity will be willing or in a position

⁵⁷³ Barth, *CD* IV/1, 92.

⁵⁷⁴ Barth, *CD* IV/1, 91.

⁵⁷⁵ Barth, *CD* IV/1, 91.

to respond to the salvific work of Jesus Christ. For Barth, salvation is universal, human response to salvation is not.

It is in his discussion of the location of true humanity in Jesus Christ that Barth describes the essence of the truly human life. True humanity, having been reconciled to God in Jesus Christ has three unique aspects, each of which are uniquely Christologically grounded. True humanity is a reality that is made up of the experience of faith,⁵⁷⁶ love,⁵⁷⁷ and hope.⁵⁷⁸

It is in Christ that the divine “No,” pronounced in *The Epistle to the Romans*, lives as well as the divine “Yes,” seen in the description of true humanity, and forms the justification of humanity. “Justification definitely means the sentence executed and revealed in Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, the No and the Yes with which God vindicates Himself in relation to covenant-breaking man, with which He converts

⁵⁷⁶ For Barth, faith is more than intellectual assent to doctrine, nor is it simply confidence in the person and work of the man Jesus Christ among humanity, it is only in the faith of the Other, of Jesus Christ Himself, who is High-priest as he officiates, speaks, and acts for us, that we can know and cling to. True faith, which is Christological, is intellectual assent and confidence that is not only grounded in Christ but established by Christ in his faithful act and is first known and held by Christ and later shared with humanity. Barth, *CD IV/1*, 91. Christological faith is the very basis of true humanity. Faith “is the only form of this new being.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 96-97. Therefore, faith is the means of humanity’s relationship to God, the reality that brings about an experience of righteousness and acceptance by God. In this, faith is the basis for love and hope in that faith is the “act of obedience, that subjection to the will of God acting and speaking in His own cause and therefore in sovereign power that acknowledgement of the honour and glory of God in relation to man.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 96-97. This is an act that is first and foremost grounded in Christ’s action.

⁵⁷⁷ For Barth, Christian love is a reaction to God’s love, as faith is a reciprocation of Christ’s faithfulness in his justifying sentence, “God Himself is love and revealed Himself as such by sending His only Son into the world in order that we might live through Him ... In Jesus Christ God has created a final and indestructible fellowship between Himself and all men, between all men and Himself, a fellowship which is final and indestructible because it is based upon His own interposition and guaranteed by it.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 102. It is this interposition and guarantee that is the actualization and revelation of His love. This love is thus “the direction to which man is subjected and the Christian love which receives it resounds.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 102. Christian love is love for both God and fellow humanity, these two forms of love are parallel, but cannot be equated, nor can one overtake the other. “Love to others cannot exhaust itself in love to God, nor can love to God exhaust itself in love to others. The one cannot be replaced and made unnecessary by the other.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 106.

⁵⁷⁸ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 93. For Barth, hope is the mark of true Christianity. The truly Christian life cannot be found outside of hope, both hope for themselves and for the world as a whole. Barth, *CD IV/1*, 118. Christian hope, which is Christologically grounded, “is a present being in and with and by the promise of the future, a being which is seized by the promise of God and called.” Barth, *CD IV/1*, 121.

him to Himself and therefore reconciles him with Himself.”⁵⁷⁹ In this execution, sanctification is the continual existence of true humanity in that it is the “claiming of all human life and being and activity by the will of God for the active fulfillment of that will.”⁵⁸⁰ Jesus Christ is the divine pledge that this is a possibility and a reality, both current and future. Jesus Christ makes God’s proclamation both a present and future reality. This is because “He is the man who lives not only under the verdict and direction of God but also in the truth of His promise.”⁵⁸¹ In Jesus Christ humanity experiences the promise of the future reality. “Because God has made Himself one with it in Jesus Christ, because He Himself was and is present in it, it has the divine pledge of its future life.”⁵⁸² Jesus Christ is thus both the “now” and the “not yet” of the Christian life. Jesus Christ is the promise and experience of true humanity that is fully experienced in the realization of the Christian’s hope.

The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country and the Human Experience

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the true human being. This means that true human history is founded and established in Jesus Christ: history is the drama of God’s interaction with His people. In this the atonement that occurs in Jesus Christ takes precedence over all other history.⁵⁸³ The historical nature of the atonement proves itself in the fully responsible attitudes of true humanity. This means that “when it is revealed and grasped and known, it is so in its priority, its presence, its superiority to all other histories, to the existence of all the men who take part in it. In this sense everyone who

⁵⁷⁹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 96.

⁵⁸⁰ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 101.

⁵⁸¹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 115.

⁵⁸² Barth, *CD IV/1*, 116.

⁵⁸³ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 157.

knows it as truth knows in it the truth of his own existence.”⁵⁸⁴ Christ’s atonement and the resulting transformation of humanity is thus both a noetic and existential reality, knowing cannot be separated from experiencing.

It is possible for the individual to seek to establish an autonomous history outside of this Christological history, the human can choose to stand outside of our relationship with God; however, this is to our detriment, just as it was for the prodigal son.⁵⁸⁵ When the individual “tries to be his own master, and to control his relations with God and the world and his fellow-man. And as he does so, the onslaught of nothingness prevails against him, controlling him in death in an irresistible and senseless way and to his own loss.”⁵⁸⁶ In this humanity enters into non-being, into an ontological impossibility, despite the grace of God.⁵⁸⁷ As Barth states, “[t]his is the *circulus vitiosus* of the human plight presupposed and revealed in and with the grace of God. And there is no man who, whether he experiences it or not, is not in this plight.”⁵⁸⁸ This vicious circle is a reality continually experienced within the Christian life as Paul in Romans.⁵⁸⁹

The Christian, the one who is elected by God “not only suffers and experiences [this vicious circle]. He knows it. He knows that he must perish. He considers that he must die. The connection between his guilt and the righteous judgment of God is constantly before him.”⁵⁹⁰ True humanity cannot escape this reality, humanity exists under the “Yes” of God, only because they have first experienced the “No” of God, in Christ. “Occasionally and for the moment he may forget it, he may deceive himself about

⁵⁸⁴ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 157.

⁵⁸⁵ Luke 15:11-32.

⁵⁸⁶ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 173.

⁵⁸⁷ Berkouwer, *Grace*, 88.

⁵⁸⁸ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 173.

⁵⁸⁹ Romans 5:14-20.

⁵⁹⁰ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 173.

it, he may fall asleep to it. But he would not be the elect of God if the dreadful fact did not awaken him again, and pursue him even in his dreams ... there is no escape from it.”⁵⁹¹ Humanity can forget or overlook the reality that it exists before God, but it cannot escape this reality. To exist as true humanity it must allow itself to be struck by the results of its sinful reality. When humanity acts as the prodigal who has journeyed into the far country and squandered all that was gifted by the father, the individual must return to the Son who also journeyed into the far country and remained faithful.

The Pride of Humankind and the Fall of Humankind

While Barth conceives of true humanity as Christologically conditioned, he does not overlook the possibility and even the reality of a sinful existence. Sin in humanity is not simply an action but stands as a state. Sin is a verb, but it also creates a noun. “Sin of man, or rather man of sin, man as he wills and does sin, man as he is controlled and burdened by sin.”⁵⁹² When humanity looks beyond its Christological reality, attempting to reach an autonomous reality, the individuals cease to exist as they were created, and humanity removes itself from the ontological, noetic, and existential reality that is true humanity, throwing itself into the reality of non-being.

The knowledge of sin, like anthropology generally, can only be recognized as a result of God’s revelation in Christ. “Even in the knowledge of sin which [one] has in the sphere of self-understanding without listening to the Word of God, he is the man of sin and therefore one who has no knowledge, who is completely closed to this negative determination.”⁵⁹³ For Barth, knowledge of sin can only come about as a result of human

⁵⁹¹ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 173.

⁵⁹² Barth, *CD IV/1*, 358.

⁵⁹³ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 361. As Joseph Mangina shows, while many readers of Barth consider Barth’s concept of sin, as a reality made known through a knowledge of God, as remaining at a purely formal level, Barth

understanding of the anthropological situation that exists in Christ.⁵⁹⁴ Sin cannot be a starting point for a theological description of humanity, as theologians and preachers want to do.⁵⁹⁵ Instead, sin may only be spoken of after an understanding of Christ's perfection is initiated.

Any attempt to produce a doctrine of sin previous to both a doctrine of Christ and a subsequent understanding of humanity, will “consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, move in the direction of this idol and his claim.”⁵⁹⁶ As John Webster points out “to be human is to be united to Christ, then sin cannot be definitive of human beings.”⁵⁹⁷ Barth's concept of sin, as something that is only apparent through divine revelation, and not something that is self-evident is a significant departure from traditional Reformed modes of thought, as well as other theological traditions dating back to the early creeds, which assumed that sin was self-evident. Barth's anthropology and hamartiology not only recognizes what Barth perceives to be a weakness in traditional theological understandings of humanity and sin, but also comes to grips with the

— no less than Kierkegaard — provides descriptions of sin that provide insights into familiar forms of human behavior marked by sin. Mangina, *Christian Life*, 6-7. Here Barth stands clearly in line with his predecessor John Calvin who states, “It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face ... For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy —this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 1, I, 37.

⁵⁹⁴ Here Barth echoes the earlier Calvin who states that humanity must be “brought into a true knowledge” which is brought about in the regenerate work of faith. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 3, III, 595.

⁵⁹⁵ This can be seen in many Christians' emphasis on the “Roman Road” to salvation. Beginning to discuss Christianity not with God's creative work or Christ's Incarnation, but with human sinfulness as seen in Romans 3:23. Such an emphasis was the central point of the early Fundamentalist preacher, Dwight L. Moody who's preaching simply involved the “Thee R's”: Ruin by Sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost.” George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 21. When faith and thus true humanity is grounded not upon God's work but upon humanity, this inevitably leads to an anthropo-theology instead of a theo-anthropology. God comes to be defined by human action and human need instead of humanity being defined by God's revelatory action.

⁵⁹⁶ Barth, *CD IV/1*, 365.

⁵⁹⁷ Webster, “Creation and Humanity,” 102.

optimistic concepts of humanity that surrounded Barth throughout his career and continue with us into present culture.⁵⁹⁸

Jesus Christ as Royal Man

As a result of Barth's Christological concept of humanity, he understands Jesus Christ as the "Royal Man." This title points to the kingly office of Jesus Christ, which exists because He is the Son of God and also the Son of Man. At this point Barth focuses upon Jesus Christ "as the true and new man in virtue of this exaltation, the second Adam, in whom there has taken place, and is actualized, the sanctification of all men."⁵⁹⁹

Jesus of Nazareth exists as the kingly man in all of His mundane earthly reality. Jesus existed as the greatest of all humanity and yet the least of all humanity. "He has nothing of what the world counts as recognition and authority and honour and success ... His kingdom has neither the pomp nor the power, the extent nor the continuance, of even the smallest of the human kingdoms which all the same it overshadows and questions."⁶⁰⁰ Jesus existed as the royal man in a way that is counter to worldly conceptions and thus revealed the life of true humanity in this humility.

Jesus' kingly power appears radically counter to the world's concepts of power. "His power is present to men in the form of weakness, His glory in that of lowliness, His victory in that of defeat ... He who alone is rich is present as the poorest of the poor."⁶⁰¹ It is in this radically counter-cultural display of power that humanity glimpses the existence of true humanity. This display of humility however, should not be seen as a

⁵⁹⁸ Barth's concept of sin, as requiring divine revelation, draws a strong parallel to Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of meaning and understanding. Just as Wittgenstein's shopkeeper acts in and creates knowledge of four red apples in community with the shopper, so humanity comes to conceive of sin in community with God in Christ. Kerr, *After Wittgenstein*, 57-58, 65.

⁵⁹⁹ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 155.

⁶⁰⁰ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 168.

⁶⁰¹ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 168.

condemnation of humanity but an exaltation of humanity, which occurs through the encounter of humanity generally with this experience of true humanity in Jesus of Nazareth. It is in this portrait of true humanity that humanity generally perceives the royal man Jesus, who is “the image and reflection of the divine Yes to man and his cosmos.”⁶⁰² In this, Jesus’ existence as royal man, the head of all humanity, intersects with his existence as true humanity, humanity in relationship with God.

His student, Eberhard Jüngel best sums up Barth’s exposition of the royal man:

Humankind can never receive its due as long as it seeks it within itself. The same holds true for our reflections on the topic. We can conceive what God intends for humankind only by reflecting on the one human being that God himself has uniquely intended and directed, and in whom his own divine being is taken up: Jesus Christ. He is the royal man. And his royalty does not exclude but includes, us. All humankind is reflected in him.⁶⁰³

It is in this existence as both royal and true humanity that Jesus encounters sinful humanity. As seen in the miracle stories of the Gospels, Jesus does not encounter others as sinners at fault in relation to God, but encounters these individuals as sufferers. Jesus does not denounce individuals for their sin, but seeks to heal them from the result of sin – human brokenness – by restoring their relationship to a right relationship to God.⁶⁰⁴

In this Barth takes the human experience of sin seriously, but does not see it as the heart of the gospel, as it may have appeared in *The Epistle to the Romans*. Instead, the definition of humanity and its sinful reality, even in *Romans* can only be understood first in light of God’s work of both condemnation of humanity in Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that is offered in Christ to all humanity, which is the possibility of a true relationship with God.

⁶⁰² Barth, *CD IV/2*, 168.

⁶⁰³ Jüngel, “The Royal Man,” 128.

⁶⁰⁴ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 222-223.

The Vocation of True Humanity

In Barth's thinking, true humanity derives its vocation from the creative call that is Jesus Christ. This redeemed humanity experiences a call to the "well-equipped witness into the service of His prophetic work."⁶⁰⁵ Humanity's vocation is Christologically grounded in that it is first of all Christ's vocation; this human vocation is "instituted in the actual fellowship with Jesus Christ."⁶⁰⁶ As such, truly human work is the work modeled by Christ on earth. Fellowship with Christ results in humanity's call to the "service of his prophecy, in the *ministerium verbi divini* [the ministry of the divine Word], of the Word of reconciliation, and therefore in the service of God and his fellowmen."⁶⁰⁷ As a result, true humanity is called to continue the work of Christ in every aspect of human reality. True humanity lives its life proclaiming the Word and in care of fellow creation.

Barth is clear that it is impossible to bifurcate between apparent natural and supernatural volition, true humanity exists as a living out of the realities of proclamation and care in all aspects of human life. There is no aspect of human life that can either be seen as truly secular, when a life is lived in fellowship with Christ.⁶⁰⁸ Christ's vocation, which He shares with the sum of humanity, is a spiritual calling. "However for Barth this does not mean something that is supra-temporal and supra-historical, and therefore transcendentalizing. Barth uses it "in the New Testament sense of pneumatic, with its implication of the supreme concretion of temporal and historical process."⁶⁰⁹ This calling has a spiritual reality because it exists in and is given by the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy

⁶⁰⁵ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 481.

⁶⁰⁶ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 482.

⁶⁰⁷ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 482.

⁶⁰⁸ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 482-483.

⁶⁰⁹ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 502.

Spirit that this call or vocation is given and it is by the Holy Spirit that humanity is able to live out this reality.⁶¹⁰

In Barth's understanding, Christian vocation does not exist in the individual but in humanity generally. Humanity as a whole is called to exist and live in actions that are grounded in Jesus Christ and thus the Word of God. This call exists on account of Christ's relationship to humanity generally, as existing as very man, the royal man, and true humanity. Because of this, humanity cannot be understood in the corruption of our mode of existence by sin, by anti-Christian activity, but only by openness to the other human, as modeled by Christ.⁶¹¹ This does not mean that the imitation of Christ is a formulaic repetition of the life of Christ, one could act exactly as Jesus commanded His disciples and yet fail to act as they did, responding to Christ's particular call. The Christian life is not a replaying of Christ's life on earth, but a response to His particular call in particular situations, specific to the individual.⁶¹² Therefore, the call of the human life is to fellowship with God in Christ. This fellowship has the affect that humanity is called to respond, responding by sharing in the ministry that was established and is maintained by Christ.

This Christological call to human vocations means that all people are called to serve God in their daily lives. While Barth's Christological conception of humanity — with its relational nature of humanity — calls into question the humanity of isolationist

⁶¹⁰ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 512.

⁶¹¹ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 493.

⁶¹² Nimmo, "Ethical Agent," 233. In this description of vocation, it can be argued that Barth is far less clear of the ramifications of such a divinely sourced vocation for the laity than his predecessor John Calvin, who saw the very work of the individual, the labour in the field or factory as dignified in its existence as a human response to the "active providence of the heavenly Father." Calvin, *Institutes* I, 1, X, 64.

vocations⁶¹³ as they separate the individual from the relationality that is basic to such an understanding of humanity, Barth's Christological concept of vocation provides a means of living a human life amongst inhumanity. The relationship that is the basis of true humanity means that this life is able to transcend inhumanity and brokenness to establish an openness and relationship with those around them. True humanity is a life lived out of Christ-like service, service to the created world, fellow humanity, and ultimately to God.

In the most inhuman environment, true humanity is able to bring glory to God, in their motivation to act as stewards of the gifts given to them and to show the love of Christ to those around them, even in the most seemingly insignificant of interactions. Understanding Christological humanity means that following Christ the truly human individual serves their neighbour, not out of coercion, but out of the love for fellow humanity grounded in God's love for humanity expressed in Christ. It is in these acts that the Christian is able to follow the commands of Paul that "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."⁶¹⁴

Conclusion

The current chapter of this project has sought to highlight some of the Christological aspects of Barth's description of true humanity following §44 in volume III/2 of his *Church Dogmatics*. This chapter has covered the existence of true humanity as a covenant partner with God, true humanity as it is interconnected body and soul, true humanity as humanity that has been reconciled to God in Christ and thus lives *in* Christ

⁶¹³ Such as the long distance truck driver, telecommuter, and travelling business person, away from family and kin for weeks and months at a time, as exemplified by the lead character in the 2009 film *Up In The Air*. Ryan Bingham is a travelling employee who spends exponentially more time away from home—moving from place to place—than he does at home and thus lacks any sense of community, relationships, and any human reality. *Up In The Air*, DVD, directed by Jason Reitman. (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 2009).

⁶¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:31, (NRSV).

as an alternative to the sinful reality of inhuman existence outside Christ, Christ's nature as Royal Man, and finally the volition of humanity that is provided.

Barth describes the external reality of true humanity as one of relationship, a corresponding relationship between humanity and God, a relationship that is a response to God's relationship to humanity. Barth shows that this relationship is first established by the man Jesus with God who shares this relationship with humanity generally through His nature as fully man. Also, Barth is clear to present that it is because of Christ's reality as fully and utterly human, human in body and soul, that humanity must be considered both body and soul. To consider humanity as merely embodiment or a spiritual reality is to overlook the reality of Christ, to mar the image of humanity, and to create an idol of one aspect of Christ's human experience. Furthermore, true humanity can exist in the human experience because of the work of reconciliation that occurs in Christ, re-uniting humanity with God. Christ's work allows for the reestablishment of the relationship that humanity was created to exist in and marks true humanity, even when humanity continually acts to break off this relationship. Such reconciliation means that the whole humanity is encircled in Christ, that true humanity exists in a reality *in* Christ. True humanity exists in the experience of living out faith, love, and hope. All three of these attributes of the Christian life are first established in Christ's life and shared with humanity generally through Christ. These truly human realities of faith, love, and hope are possible only because of God's work to journey into the far country, to enter into sinful humanity with grace, who suffers and experiences the results of inhuman actions of humanity generally. It is by this suffering that Jesus Christ is able to overcome the guilt of humanity and call humanity to encounter the joy of the divine "yes," which is first

experienced by Christ. Moreover, Barth suggests that sin can only be understood Christologically; only once true humanity is understood is an individual able to understand the depravity that results from sin. In addition, Jesus Christ exists as royal man, this title means that Jesus Christ exists as fully human, but also that Christ exists as the one person who is exalted as the second Adam and the sanctification of all humanity. Jesus Christ is the first among all humanity in that He is the establishment of true humanity, through His relationship with God, restoring humanity from its sinful experience, through Christ's condemnation and death. Finally, for Barth, Christ's existence as royal man opens the door for humanity to experience a true vocation. True humanity exists in a fellowship – through Christ – with God. This fellowship creates the call for humanity to share in the divine ministry of Christ on earth. This Christological vocation is three fold as humanity is called to prophecy, the ministry of the divine Word, and the work of reconciliation between fellow humanity and between humanity and God. In this the life of true humanity is a life of proclamation and caring. True humanity exists in a reality that seeks fellowship with God and others, and the restoration of creation to the divine will of creation and humanity generally to the divine-human relationship that humanity was created for.

This brief survey of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* shows that his concept of Christological anthropology continued to radically shape his theological writing following §44, particularly in areas pertaining to human existence and human reality. While Barth expresses a variety of different aspects of his Christological anthropology in the later half of volume III and volume IV of *Church Dogmatics* than in his earlier writing since *The Epistle to the Romans*, the core remains the same. Humanity can solely

be understood in light of its relationship to Jesus Christ. As Hans Vium Mikkelsen states “the difference between the early and late Barth expresses a change in the theological accent.”⁶¹⁵ Barth may emphasize different aspects of this relationship in these later writings,⁶¹⁶ but the core aspects of condemnation, salvation, and reconciling of humanity in Christ remain the same.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 25.

⁶¹⁶ Mikkelsen suggests that these differences occur in that “with the help of a highly expressionistic language the early Barth stresses the gap between God and the human being. The later Barth emphasises in his Christology, especially in the teaching of the atonement in Barth, *CD IV*, how God, despite this gap, has revealed himself for human beings in the man Jesus from Nazareth.” Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 25.

⁶¹⁷ This is a view that is supported by John Webster who sees astonishing continuity in Barth from the time of *The Epistle to the Romans* to the closing of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*. Webster, *Moral Theology*, 13-14.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS: BARTH'S ANTHROPOLOGY FROM *THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS* TO *CHURCH DOGMATICS* VOLUME IV

This study has sought to examine the Christological anthropology throughout Karl Barth's corpus of work, starting first with *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, and *The Word of God and the Word of Man* through to his *CD*, chiefly §44 and beyond following the genetic-historical method.⁶¹⁸ This study has demonstrated a significant congruency that exists throughout his corpus of work. It is the goal of this chapter to examine the various anthropological concepts throughout this corpus to highlight the significant congruency that exists throughout these concepts as well as any incongruence that may have become apparent through this study.

Within the first chapter of this project Barth's early anthropological concepts are examined following his break with liberalism. Barth's work within *The Epistle to the Romans* exists to attempt to tear down the anthro-centric conceptions of theology that existed within the world surrounding Barth in the first two decades of the twentieth century. As early as *The Epistle to the Romans*, as well as throughout the collection of essays within *The Word of God and The Word of Man*, and *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, Barth seeks to develop theological concepts, including his anthropology, by beginning not with human knowledge, but with divine revelation. This allows Barth to describe the frightening situation of sinful humanity in light of this divine revelation and also to avoid surrendering humanity over to the fall or to blind optimism. By contrast, Barth is able to emphasize the possibility of transformation from death to life in Christ.

⁶¹⁸ McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, ix.

In *The Epistle to the Romans* Barth clearly rejects any form of human knowing and rejects anthropological pride; however, Barth's Christocentric emphasis means that while humanity experiences the rejection of God, most clearly seen in Christ, humanity can also experience divine renewal through the person of Christ. Thus, Christ stands as both the rejected human and the elected human who makes the way for humanity to experience the life of faith.

Moving into the first volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, one notices an apparent change in Barth's style and tone, most notably against the backdrop of the *Göttingen Dogmatics*. Yet these changes are largely stylistic in nature and do not reveal any significant change in Barth's theological motivation, direction, or foundation. This continuity is particularly apparent within the context of Barth's concept of anthropology in that it continues to be inextricably linked to the person of Jesus Christ.⁶¹⁹

In Barth's doctrine of revelation he develops a concept of humanity that utterly rejects any form of Cartesian certainty derived from the self. Instead he develops a concept of humanity and human epistemology based solely upon God's revelatory work in Jesus Christ. This divinely revealed knowledge portrays true humanity as existing within Christ and thus in a realm of true freedom, freedom that is radically different than liberal concepts of freedom as liberty.

Barth continues in his doctrine of revelation to develop a concept of humanity, based upon Christology that understands humanity as a unified whole, soul and body. Barth rejects any degradation of either body or soul. True humanity, in light of the person of Christ is equally both an existential and noetic reality. Humanity is both

⁶¹⁹ While McCormack may downplay the significance of any changes throughout Barth's work, flattening Barth's work and denying any personal development, his assertion of its continuity throughout is borne out at this stage of the current project. McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical*, 15.

embodied and rational, a reality that is most apparent through Christ, who both cares for the spiritual and physical realities of humanity around him.

Finally, as a part of Barth's doctrine of revelation, his anthropology takes on a high degree of relationality that is based upon Christ's unique relationships, both with the other members of the Trinity as well as with all of humanity. This means that as a result of Barth's Christological conception of revelation, his anthropology, which is also grounded in the reality of Christology, is highly social. This social reality of humanity means that estrangement experienced by humanity, either in relation to the Triune God or fellow humanity, eviscerates the image in which humanity was created.

Barth's concept of Christological anthropology is significantly shaped by and seen within his concept of divine election. In the next section of this project I examined the anthropological realities that are revealed within Barth's unique concept of divine election. For Barth, election is the reality in which humanity is brought into relationship with God, through God's choosing to share His grace with humanity in and through His contact with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ who stands as the rejected human, shouldering the strong rejection of humanity's sin, which was earlier described in *The Epistle to the Romans*. However, Jesus also stands as the elect and redeemed human, the one human who defeated death and thus is able to share this redemption with the whole of humanity. Humanity is Christologically in relationship with God, because God chose humanity *in Christ*. God, in Christ overcomes the dialectic reality that exists between God and humanity.

Finally, in this second chapter of this project I examined Barth's concept of humanity within the realm of creation, leading up to §44 of his *Church Dogmatics*.

Barth's whole doctrine of creation, including anthropology, is seen in this section to be highly Christological, in that all of creation is seen to be related to Christ because of his humanity. In Christ the whole creation gains status and significance because He stood amongst creation. Thus humanity stands as part of creation, sharing a single creator with the whole of creation, and yet chief among creation, not because of any particular human attribute, but because of existence of the God-man Jesus Christ. The relationship that is thus established by Christ between God and creation generally and humanity in particular enlivens and redeems the whole of creation that is groaning under the weight of sin. As a result, Christ makes real the anthropological existence that humanity was created to live within.

It is this Christological existence that stands as the capstone of Barth's anthropology. Within §44 of his *Church Dogmatics* Barth begins by exploring what it means for humanity generally that the one human, Jesus Christ, existed as a creature for God. In this unique human experience, Barth finds the ontological grounding for true humanity, an ontology that is thoroughly and exclusively Christological. While Barth has continually been clear on the dialectic that continues to exist between God and humanity – a dialectic that was bridged by God in Christ – it can never be collapsed for Barth.

“Anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology.”⁶²⁰

Because of Barth's Christocentric form of theology and his emphasis on a Christological conception of humanity, particularly within his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth is able to describe a concept of humanity that is utterly true to its created nature before God. True humanity for Barth, what he terms, “real man,” is an existence based upon the reality of Christ and the faithfulness of Christ. Humanity, because of the work of Christ,

⁶²⁰ Barth, *CD* III/2, 71.

is thus able to exist in a reality of reciprocity with God, a reciprocity that is marked by gratitude for the truth revealed in Christ and the opportunity for redemption for humanity offered in Christ.

This Christological concept of humanity allows for Barth to conceive of humanity in a way that does not surrender humanity over to sin and separation from God. God has entered human reality and made a way forward for humanity. Also, this Christological concept allows Barth to take seriously the human reality of sin, first in the rejection that Christ takes upon Himself on the cross and second in the reality of humans to choose against themselves, to choose inhumanity and sin, moving against God and its very human nature. It is not that sin does not exist for Barth, but that following his Christological framework, sin is foreign to humanity's true being.

Even following §44 of his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth continues to develop his concept of anthropology as a direct offshoot of his Christology. Humanity continues to be solely grounded upon the reality of Christ in the later sections of volume III and the whole of volume IV, as seen in the overview of these sections in the fourth chapter of this study. This Christological framework forms Barth's concept of the human reality as body and soul, the reconciliation of sinful humanity, the reality of those who freely chose to exist outside of this reconciliatory relationship that is founded within Christ, the nature of Christ as "Royal man," and also humanity's true calling or vocation.

True humanity experiences an external reality of relationality, in response to God's establishment of a relationship with humanity in the human person Jesus Christ. Humanity, because of this reconciliation with God, experiences a renewal of inter human relationships, relationships marked by an understanding of humanity's true reality, which

is free from the pride of fallen humanity. Humanity, through the life of Christ, experiences a fully orbéd life, one that accounts for both humanity's embodiment and existence as a soul. Humanity, as true humanity is able to live in a reality of faith, hope, and love. Humanity is able to encounter these divinely given, truly human aspects because of Christ's work experiencing and overcoming the fallen nature of humanity, re-establishing humanity as it was created to be. This work of re-establishment is the work of Christ as the "Royal man." Christ stands as *the* human amongst all humanity because of his existence, which is uniquely true to His nature as human.

These later paragraphs, volume III/2 §45 through IV.3.2 §73 express unique realities and outcomes based upon Barth's Christological understanding of humanity. Humanity comes to be defined positively in light of the relationship that is made possible and established for humanity in Christ. Humanity is understood to be reconciled to God and to one another. It experiences unity of body and soul, and thus the true joy in the calling of humanity to fulfill a divinely sourced vocation, within the later pages of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. The later Barth certainly emphasizes the "Yes" of God expressed to humanity over His "No," counter to his earlier writing, particularly *The Epistle to the Romans* wherein God's grace is much more apparent in these writings than the divine condemnation.

These later anthropological statements of Barth's, describing the positive reality of true humanity, are bound to his earlier negative anthropological statements describing humanity's fallibility, ineptitude, and brokenness as a result of human sin. The whole of Barth's anthropological description both positive and negative, early and late, are bound to his consistent Christology. Christ is the Revealer of human fallibility and human

ability made possible through Christ. Scripture tells of humanity both elected and rejected, rejected and elected, at the same time. It is this dual reality that Barth describes throughout his writing. In addition, humanity has continually been tied to Christ throughout Barth's theological description. He clearly has discussed different aspects of the human reality in light of Christ throughout his various writings. It would even appear that these differing aspects may be contradictory; however, these aspects find unity in Barth's emphasis on Christ.

For Barth humanity is defined by an existence of having been redeemed from sin, and existing as body and soul in a true relationship of reciprocity with God, and by consequence, fellow humanity. Humanity exists in this reality of freedom, first because of God's election of the human to be free for such reciprocity. Thus, true humanity has many aspects of its life; however, all of these aspects are first and foremost founded upon the reality of Christ. As a result of this, any attempt to reduce humanity to a single reality, other than Christ, creates an idol and a false sense of humanity, a humanity that is ripe for exploitation. Contemporary consumerism, classical capitalism, all forms of Marxist socialism, and liberalism of every stripe reduce humanity to an economic reality. Class, race, socio-economic status, education, athletics, and creativity have the ability to reduce humanity as a whole to a valuation based upon a particular human aspect. Pornography, torture, war, health and wellness, as well as hedonism of all sorts, reduces humanity to an embodiment — an embodiment that is either mortified or easily dispensed with. All of these, and other human realities, despite their own inherent validity or invalidity as a human reality, bring irreparable harm to humanity as a whole, as well as the individual in

particular, when these realities substitute the one true reality, Christ, as the grounding and definition of anthropology.

For Barth, humanity exists in vastly different realms – and this thus portrayed in these vastly different realities – because of the fully orbed reality of Christ. Christ exists as both condemned and redeemed, elected and rejected. Humanity, through its enveloped, or englobed, nature in Christ, experiences these divergent realities.⁶²¹ It is for this reason that in 1956, as Barth was working on volume IV/3.1 of his *Church Dogmatics* he declared that “God does not turn toward [the human] without uttering in inexorable sharpness a ‘No’ to his transgression. Thus theology has no choice but to put this ‘no into words within the framework of its theme.”⁶²² Yet Barth continues, that “however, it must be the ‘No’ which Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself for us men, in order that it may no longer affect us and that we may no longer place ourselves under it.”⁶²³ As Ingolf Dalferth states, “from the publication of his *Epistle to the Romans* in 1919 ... Barth did not waver on this fundamental point: the reality to which theology refers is the eschatological reality of the risen Christ and the new life into which we are drawn by the Spirit.”⁶²⁴ Understanding the Christological theme that runs throughout Barth’s anthropological description, from his break with liberalism to the end of Barth’s literary cannon, means “the difference between the early and late Barth expresses a change in the theological accent.”⁶²⁵ Barth may emphasize different aspects of this relationship in these

⁶²¹ Any theological attempt to describe humanity without holding this tension together, of human rejection and election, would simply be a truncation of both human experience and, more importantly, the narrative of Scripture.

⁶²² Karl Barth, “The Humanity of God” in *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 60.

⁶²³ Barth, “The Humanity of God,” 60.

⁶²⁴ Dalferth, “Eschatological Realism,” 21.

⁶²⁵ Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 25.

later writings than in earlier writings;⁶²⁶ however, the core (condemnation, salvation, and reconciling of humanity in Christ) has remained constant in Barth's writing.⁶²⁷

As this study has shown, while there was significant development within Barth's theological writing, as John Webster points out "the direction of Barth's later work is present *in nuce*"⁶²⁸ as early as the lectures entitled *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, and *The Epistle to the Romans*, in Barth's Christological concept.

In this Barth continued to develop and explore differing aspects of humanity in light of the reality of Christ, yet the core of this exploration never altered, that being the singular person of Jesus Christ, who was and is fully God and fully man, reveals the truth regarding humanity, both in its fallen state and as it was created to exist with God, as the image of Christ.

⁶²⁶ Mikkelsen suggests that these differences occur in that "with the help of a highly expressionistic language the early Barth stresses the gap between God and the human being. The later Barth emphasizes in his Christology, especially in the teaching of the atonement in *CD IV*, how God, despite this gap, has revealed himself for human beings in the man Jesus from Nazareth." Mikkelsen, *Reconciled Humanity*, 25.

⁶²⁷ This is a view that is supported by John Webster who sees astonishing continuity in Barth from the time of *The Epistle to the Romans* to the closing of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Webster, *Moral Theology*, 13-14.

⁶²⁸ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 30-31.

Conclusion

This project has set out to examine Karl Barth's anthropology, beginning with *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, and *The Word of God and the Word of Man* through to his *Church Dogmatics*, chiefly §44. The purpose for which this examination has been carried out is to determine if Barth demonstrates a coherent theological treatment of humanity throughout his works. In this study Barth's anthropology has been shown to be constantly Christological throughout his corpus. Despite the change in tone and emphasis, Barth's anthropological concept remains coherently Christological.⁶²⁹

Barth's tone changed throughout his writing career, most notably between *The Epistle to the Romans* and his *Church Dogmatics*,⁶³⁰ yet the theologian's concept of humanity never shifted from finding its centre and fullest expression in Jesus Christ. It is first and foremost Christ who stands as the condemned human upon the cross under the divine "No." However, it is also Christ who is the first expression of a renewed humanity, even in *The Epistle to the Romans*.

It is Christ who reveals to humanity its true reality, both as sinner and redeemed. Christ stands as the One elect human, by which all of humanity stands as elected to choose relationality with God. It is Christ who exists as the One human that is truly faithful to its created reality. It is this existence that allows Barth to consider Christ as

⁶²⁹ Barth's acceptance of such an influential and high Christology must be seen as a radical reversal of his mentor Adolf von Harnack, who saw the adoption of Christ as the Greek *Logos* as an aberration of early Christian thought through the Hellenizing of Christianity, thus rejecting nicenal concepts of Christ. Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 200-204.

⁶³⁰ This change must be, at least partially, understood as a result of the purpose of these respective works, *Epistle to the Romans* stands as a critical text, standing against much of Christendom that surrounded Barth—particularly within the German Reformed world—as well as the wider culture of the day, while Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, in which stands as a creative theological text — in which Barth describes the theological reality for the Church, in light of the person and work of the God-man Jesus Christ.

true humanity or “real man.” This Christological perspective of humanity means that while Barth’s tone or accent may have changed,⁶³¹ there is certainly no “New Barth” as a result of his anthropology, as Emil Brunner and Hans Urs von Balthasar propose.⁶³² Barth’s anthropology, including the seminal work regarding the true nature of humanity in volume III/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*, never experiences a transition away from the Christological core that Barth establishes early in his writing career. Looking past all other commentators, it is important to note what Barth states regarding his theology up to 1938. He writes, “My thinking in any event remains at one point the same as ever. It is unchanged in this, that *no* so-called ‘religion is its object, its source, and its criterion, but rather, as far as it can be my intention, *the Word of God.*’”⁶³³ Even in the late lecture “The Humanity of God,” while Barth suggests a change in emphasis from his early work, Barth never turns from the Christological basis of his theology.⁶³⁴ In aspects or expressions Barth’s writing may have changed or developed from the time of the *Epistle to the Romans*, but the centrality of his High Christology never changed.

Implications

While never equated with one another, humanity is continually bound to Christ in Barth’s thinking. All words that are truly said about humanity are first said in Christ and it is for this reason that Barth’s anthropology is solely rooted in the eternal divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. As such, humanity is expressed most clearly and truly in Christ. Any form of humanity grounded outside of Christ is but a mere figment or fabrication. In light of the person of Christ, humanity must be understood in light of the *krisis* that exists

⁶³¹ Webster, *Moral Theology*, 30-31.

⁶³² Brunner, “The New Barth,” 124; von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 105-151.

⁶³³ Karl Barth, *How I Changed my Mind* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), 38.

⁶³⁴ Barth, “Humanity of God,” 38.

because of who God is, that man is sinful. Yet this same definition shows the humanity should be understood in light of the person of Jesus Christ. While humanity is sinful, God has also elected it into relationality with the Divine.

Barth's Christological concept of anthropology allows him to remain true to biblical descriptions of humanity as both condemned sinner and renewed humanity. This true humanity is not a denial of self as seen in ascetic traditions and Reformed theology following Calvin,⁶³⁵ but an affirmation of true humanity. This true humanity is holistic, in that it rejects platonic divisions between mind and body, while avoiding the monist conception frequently seen in much contemporary theology under the influence of science⁶³⁶ which understands humanity as a besouled body and an embodied soul — as with one's heart and lungs where the two cannot be separated from each other without irreparable damage to the self but they also cannot be considered one object. While so many descriptions of humanity within the church have sought to eschew our embodiment, whether in order to avoid sinfulness or to avoid appeals to the natural sciences, Barth shows that true humanity cannot exist without a bond between body and soul, as seen in Christ.

In the shadow of Barth's Christological anthropology, any attempt to subjugate or oppress an aspect of humanity is not merely an affront to humanity generally but also to Jesus Christ who exists as truly human while being truly God. In this, subjugation and oppression of humanity is not only a sin against humanity but also a sin against God who exists in relationship with true humanity. As a result of this Christians must stand against this sinful action. Because a Christological anthropology reveals the hideous nature of

⁶³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, I,3, VII, 691.

⁶³⁶ Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 7.

human subjugation and oppression of one other, Christians must work to oppose the subjugation of our fellow human. Christians cannot stand idly by in the face of mass human trafficking for sexual or economic slavery.⁶³⁷ Nor can Christians allow themselves to be complicit in the horrific subjugation of humanity in industries such as the textile and garment industry.⁶³⁸

For Barth, true humanity is an existence of life lived, as embodied soul, as the image of Christ. The human body is not an item to be elevated to an object of worship, nor denigrated to an object of scorn or abasement. In this Barth's Christological anthropology continues to stand radically against the major popular anthropological conceptions in contemporary society. Barth's understanding of humanity as existing as body and soul in relation to the divine Christ stands in sharp critique of the abasement of the body exemplified by North America's pornography and fashion cultures and as an object for consumption.⁶³⁹ In a world in which perceptions of sexuality are largely

⁶³⁷ While the slave trade has been illegal in Canada and the rest of the British Empire since 1807 and in the United States since 1865, and counter to popular concepts of human freedom and modernization, scholars such as Kevin Bales estimate that there are "more people in bondage today than during any other period in history." Benjamin Perrin *Invisible Chains* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2010), 7. These new forms of black or grey market slavery, which includes countless cases of forced prostitution, can occur anywhere as seen in the 2003 case dubbed "Operation Relaxation" in Calgary Alberta. Perrin, *Chains*, 5. This hidden slavery is not only tragic, but also catastrophic for the humanity of individuals involved. While this may appear at first to be a minor problem in Canada bn, it should be noted that between 2005 and 2008 Royal Canadian Mounted Police received twenty-eight complaints *that were reported* in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba *alone!* Perrin, *Chains*, 171. While often hidden away, this issue of human slavery — the dehumanization of every aspect of an individual for pure economic rational — should send shockwaves through Christians throughout this county — particularly when humanity is understood Christologically. Slavery is not simply the abasement of an object — but the refusal that an individual exists as a human — as one who exists in the shadow of Jesus Christ.

⁶³⁸ As revealed in the terrible loss of life in the Rana Plaza collapse on April 24th, 2013 in Dhaka Bangladesh.

⁶³⁹ As Sascha Cohen states, "If porn reduces women to flesh, fashion whittles them to bone. If porn sees women as toilets, fashion casts them as corpses. Both industries, together, contribute to misogyny." Sascha Cohen, "Flesh and Bones: Pornography and High Fashion as Complementary Mediums for the Dehumanization of Women," *Off Our Backs* 77, No. 1 (2007): 36.

defined by pornography⁶⁴⁰ and human physical expectations are set by manipulated and artificial concepts of “beauty,” Barth’s Christological concept of humanity reminds the Christian that the value of the human body is not set by these or other manipulative industries, but because of its connection with the soul as a be-souled body. Equally, Barth’s concept of Christological anthropology challenges the equal danger of celebrity culture that idolizes the human body, or particular forms of the human body raising them as the ultimate reality, denigrating the human soul as a secondary or non-reality. This Christological definition of humanity means that Christian views of the body and beauty cannot be tied to artificial constructs but understand that beauty is truly found in the individual’s status as the creature of God. Humanity, elected by God, must understand itself as “good” not because of its adherence to any human constructed concept, but because it has been elected and redeemed as body and soul in Christ. Christians must ground their understanding of the body not in popular culture’s understanding of the body — negative or positive — but instead must ground their understanding of its spiritual reality, as a God given aspect of humanity that is both marred by sin but elected and thus redeemed in Jesus Christ.

While contemporary culture simultaneously worships the human physical form — through celebrity culture and the fashion industries, with their descriptions of human beauty. It simultaneously denigrates humanity’s physical form as a sexual object, through pornography and sexual consumerism: sexual advertising, sex trafficking, enslavement for the purposes of sex and all other commercial activities that reduce an individual, man

⁶⁴⁰ This is obvious in the large number of youths who are exposed to pornography at a young age. In a recent study it was found that 72.8% of college students had been exposed to pornography before the age of 18, a number that climbs to 93% of boys under age of 18. Chiara Sabina, Janis Wolak, and Diavdi Finkelhor, “The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth” *Psychology and Behavior* 11, no. 6 (November 2008): 691.

or women, to a sexual object. However, Barth's Christological anthropology shows that humanity is valued, both body and soul, because of its relationship with Christ and thus it cannot be thrown on the trash heap nor can it be elevated to idolatry.

Also Barth's Christological anthropology critiques any and all epicurean strands that exist within culture, both inside and outside of the church. When the body is treated as an object for pleasure, gastronomically, sexually, sensually or otherwise, it ceases to be humanity as it was created to be. Such an understanding of humanity mars the image of humanity seen in Jesus Christ and it thus can be understood in no other way than sinful debasement of God's good creation. In addition, Barth's concept of the embodied soul means that the Christian can do no other than deny any stoic conceptions of humanity. The physical life of Christ and the physical ministry — healing the sick and feeding the hungry — shows that humanity cannot be reduced to mental processes.

This Christological anthropology stands against Karl Marx's description of humanity. Marx defines the nature of human beings by their ability to produce with and for others⁶⁴¹ — an anthropological description adopted by both socialist and capitalist systems — resulting in human meaning and worth being derived from particular human action and human ability. Human worth is bound to human productivity. While Marxist thought may no longer be *en vogue*, Marx's conception of humanity continues to ring true in contemporary Western Culture. Individuals of all ideological polarities find human worth in human accomplishment — for the right, human worth is found in the accomplishment of human liberty and economic prosperity, while for the political left, human worth is found in the accomplishment of human and social equality.

⁶⁴¹ Allen Wood, "Marx, Karl," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 525.

For the political right, self-worth is found in the amassing of wealth and the ability to experience life, while for the political left, self-worth is accomplishing social activity and producing equality — both sides, reflecting Marx’s concept see self-worth as result of human production. Even within the church it is not uncommon for humanity to derive self-worth based on human productivity under the guise of the Christian religion, whether it is through souls saved, missionaries sent, buildings built, or people in the pews. It is against this understanding of humanity that Barth’s Christological anthropology stands as such a stinging critique. For Barth, humanity holds value not because of production or ability, but as a result of the relationship humanity encounters in Jesus Christ with the truly human. As a result humanity does not point to its accomplishments — great and small — in order to find value, but instead, along with John the Baptist, points to the man on the cross to find meaning.⁶⁴² True humanity finds meaning in the immutable God. Any attempt by humanity to define itself and derive meaning and value from human production will thus be seen as works of righteousness.⁶⁴³

The reality is that this project has shown that Karl Barth was consistent in his conceptions of anthropology, from the “No” of *The Epistle to the Romans* to the creative and significant “Yes” of §44 of his *Church Dogmatics*. This has consistency for three significant groups: the church as a whole, the individual disciple of Christ, and particularly the scholar who wishes to portray the truth of the Gospel throughout their scholarly work.

⁶⁴² This can be exemplified by Matthias Grünewald’s painting, *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1515, Unterlinden Museum, Alsace, France.

⁶⁴³ While this excludes a works-based theology, it provides the basis for a theology of work and vocation.

Barth's consistent presentation of humanity as grounded in the person of Jesus Christ both encourages and challenges the church. Barth's consistent presentation of humanity's identification with Christ encourages the church to be consistent with a true presentation of the Gospel throughout various cultural and social pressures and reality. Also, Barth's consistency challenges the church to respond to cultural and social changes — changing the form of the message it portrays yet never changing the message itself, which is the Gospel of Christ. As Barth's description of humanity had different emphasis' in *The Epistle to the Romans* in relation to the optimism of pre-war imperial Germany than in *Church Dogmatics*, written in the broken world of post world war two Europe that existed within the shadow of the nuclear age, and the existential crisis that resulted, which received Barth's affirmative statement on the ability of humanity in Christ. So the church must respond from the perspective of the Gospel to whatever cultural setting within which it exists.

For the individual disciple of Christ, as part of the church, the consistency of Barth's description of humanity, being grounded in God Himself by way of Christ's humanity encourages the individual to understand themselves and their fellow humans in light of this consistently theological description of humanity, responding to the various shifts and changes in the surrounding *zeitgeist* but never moving from the consistent epistemological bedrock of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

For the scholarly audience, the consistency of Barth in his proclamation of a Christological anthropology offers a quintessential example of a thinker who fervently engaged the changing world around him and aptly applied the Word of God to the context in which he lived and wrote. Though Barth's context changed throughout his

lifetime, he continued to express a clear and consistent conviction that underpinned his concept of humanity, that humanity is grounded in the one person of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Further Study

This project produces a number of significant questions that can only be pursued through further study either because they fall outside of the scope of this particular study or require further expertise in fields adjacent to theology.

First, and potentially most significant for the contemporary Canadian context is the question of how does a Christological conception of humanity — as displayed by Barth — respond to end of life issues that are continuing to surface due to advances in medical technology and the continuing public discussion regarding the right of terminally ill individuals to die.

Second, Barth's concept of Christological anthropology, which binds body and soul together as besouled body and embodied soul, brings the questions of how such a theological concept of anthropology responds to Queer theology which purposes, and is based upon, a rift between sex and gender. While the church has historically caused much hurt in its strong, bombastic responses to such alternative lifestyles, Christian theology must lovingly engage such anthropological descriptions that are gaining ascendancy, particularly in social sciences, which suggest a division between sex and gender.

Third, Barth's concept of Christological anthropology and the associated concept of true human freedom, which is based not on a removal of exterior limitations, but instead the ability to act as humanity has been created to, as truly human, provides the possibility of conflict with ecclesiastical models within the Free Church tradition and particularly with Baptist concepts of freedom, particularly the central Baptist concept of "soul

liberty.” Barth’s concept of human freedom demands reflection and a response by groups, including Baptists, whose ecclesiastical concepts have largely been influenced by the enlightenment concept of liberty.

Barth’s Christological anthropology may seem foreign, particularly to Western society, but the power of such a Christological description of humanity is evident in that it allows humanity to freely exist in the reality that humanity was created to indwell. Such a Christological existence is not a foreign experience to humanity, but like the prodigal who sojourned in the far country⁶⁴⁴ existing within and living out of this Christological construct is a return to freedom and rich living provided by our Heavenly Father.

⁶⁴⁴ Luke 15:11-32.

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