

"Karl Barth's Conception of God"

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In this essay for a directed study in systematic theology with DeWolf, King examines alternative conceptions of God, a theme that would become the topic of his dissertation. He disagrees with the dialectical nature of Barth's logic and his view of the transcendence and unknowableness of God. King's analysis, while sharply critical, is largely appropriated from an article by George W. Davis and a book by Alvin Sylvester Zerbe.¹ Referring to his own studies with Davis and other Crozer professors, King acknowledges that "most of my criticisms stem from the fact that I have been greatly influenced by liberal theology, maintaining a healthy respect for reason and a strong belief in the immanence as well as the transcendence of God." Echoing the words of Davis, King concludes that Barth's neo-orthodoxy was important as "a necessary corrective for a liberalism that at times becomes all to[o] shallow." DeWolf gave the paper an A, terming it an "excellent study."

The purpose of this paper is to present and criticize Karl Barth's doctrine of God. We may conveniently discuss his doctrine of God under three main headings: 1. The transcendent God 2. The unknown God, and 3. the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Our chief sources for the present study are: The Epistle to the Romans, The Word of God and the Word of Man, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God

his methods of attaining and applying knowledge are improved. Although such ethical religion is humane and its vision a lofty one, it has obvious shortcomings. This particular sort of optimism has been discredited by the brutal logic of events. Instead of assured progress in wisdom and decency man faces the ever present possibility of swift relapse not merely to animalism but into such calculated cruelty as no other animal can practice.

"Maybe man is more of a sinner than liberals are willing to admit. I realize that the sinfulness of man is often over-emphasized by some Neo orthodox theologians, but at least we must admit that many of the ills in the world are due to plain sin. The tendency on the part of some liberal theologians to see sin as a mere 'lag of nature' which will be progressively eliminated as man climbs the evolutionary ladder seems to me perilous. I will readily agree that that many of man's shortcomings are due to natural necessities, but ignorance and finiteness and hampering circumstances, and the pressure of animal [impulse], are all insufficient to account for many of man's shortcomings. We have to recognize that man has misused his kingly prerogative as a social animal by making others bear the burden of his selfishness. This seems to be an important aspect of any depth theology" (Draft, "Crozer Quarterly," 12 December 1951, MLKP-MBU: Box 114). The last four sentences of the second paragraph also appear in King, "The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr," April 1953-June 1954, p. 278 in this volume.

1. See George W. Davis, "Some Theological Continuities in the Crisis Theology," *Crozer Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (July 1950): 208-219; and Alvin Sylvester Zerbe, *The Karl Barth Theology, or The New Transcendentalism* (Cleveland: Central Publishing House, 1930). Several of King's quotations from Barth do not correspond to the translation he cited or to Davis's or Zerbe's translations, which suggests that King used another unidentified source.

2 Jan 1952 according to the Teaching of the Reformation, and Dogmatics in Outline. Before undertaking the above stated task we may mention something of the life and career of Karl Barth.

Karl Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1886. He was educated at Bern (where his father held a theological chair), Berlin, Tuebingen, and Marburg. During the first world war he was engaged in Pastoral work in Geneva and Safenwil, Switzerland. In 1921 he was appointed professor of Reformed theology at the University of Goettingen. Afterwards he taught at Muentner, and Bonn. In 1934 he was expelled from Germany. Since 1935 he held a professorship in the University of Basel. While a student at Berlin and Marburg he came under the influence of the two great Ritschlian scholars, Harnack and W. Hermann.² For a short while he was associate editor of the Ritschlian journal Die Christliche Welt. But this liberal influence was not long to remain a positive factor in Barth's life. As Sasse put it, "in Karl Barth liberal theology brought forth its own conquerer. He could overcome the liberal theology because he was bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh."³

* Stasse, HWS, 155³

The Transcendent God

One of the cardinal points of Barth's doctrine of God is that He is the transcendent God. On every hand Barth is out to set God immensely above the dieties of the world, and the substitutes for God which modern philosophy and scientific research into Nature's forces have put into "modern" man's mind. "The power of God," says Barth, "can be detected neither in the world of nature nor in the souls of men. It must not be confounded with any high, exalted, force, known or knowable."⁴ All modern ideas of immanence are thus set aside by this emphasis on God's transcendence.

† Barth, ETR, 30⁴

From the foregoing we can see that Barth procal-

2. King refers to Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889), Carl Gustav Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), and Wilhelm Herrmann (1846–1922).

3. Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand*, trans. T. G. Tappert (New York: Harper, 1938).

4. The quotation is actually from p. 36 (Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns [London: Oxford University Press, 1933]).

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ims the utter separation of the high God and the world. The two are totally unlike and exclusive. At no point does God touch the external world with its corrupted nature and evil matter. No part of the world is, therefore, a manifestation or revelation of the infinite, majestic Deity. Barth's God is "above us, above space and time, and above all concepts and opinions and all potentialities."* In other words God is the "Wholly Other." Here "otherness" implies "exclusive separation." Such thinking ends in the entire divorce-ment of God and our human experience. Take, for an instance, the following passage from The Epistle to the Romans,

* Barth, KOG, 28

God, the pure limit and pure beginning of all that we are, have, and do, standing over in infinite qualitative difference to man and all that is human, nowhere and never identical with that which we call God, experience, surmise, and pray to as God, the unconditioned Halt as opposed to all human rest, the yes in our no and the no in our yes, the first and last and as such unknown, but nowhere and never a magnitude amongst others in the medium known to us, God the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer . . . that is the living God.†⁵

† ETR, 315f

Such a passage reveals that we are complete aliens until God wills to give himself to us. If we are not to end up defining ourselves when we think that we are defining God, we can only take the second way and therefore "hold fast to the incomprehensible majesty in which God meets us in His revelation, the majesty of His person as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."‡⁶

‡ KOG, 33

In harmony with his general position Barth asserts that man cannot find God by the study of the soul of man. The qualitative distinction between God and man makes this totally impossible. "It is evident that the relation to God with which the Bible is concerned does not have its source in the purple depths of the subconscious, and cannot be identical with what the deep-sea psychological research of our day describes in

5. This passage is translated differently on pp. 330–331 of Hoskyns's translation of *Epistle to the Romans*.

6. Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teachings of the Reformation*, trans. J. L. M. Haire and Ian Henderson (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), p. 33: "If we do not wish to end by really defining ourselves, when we think that we are defining God, we can only take the second way and therefore hold fast to the *incomprehensible* majesty in which God meets us in His revelation, the majesty of His person as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

2 Jan 1952 the narrower or broader sense as libido fulfilment.”* * WGWM, 70
 God is the one who stands above our highest and deepest feelings, strivings and intuitions.†⁷ † DO, 37

It is to be noted that Barth is explicit in rejecting each and every acknowledgment of a theologia naturalis. This rejection came about primarily because of Barth’s emphasis on God’s transcendence and man’s impotence. The rejection of Natural Theology put Barth in a peculiar position when he was invited by the Senatus of the University of Aberdeen 1935, to deliver the Gifford ~~foundation~~ {Lectures on Natural Theology.} Barth would have had “to promote, advance, teach, and diffuse,” the study of natural Theology “among all classes of society,” and among the whole population of Scotland as was the intention of the late Lord Gifford.‡ This Barth could not do and remain loyal to his calling as a Reformed theologian. He could make this task his own only indirectly, namely, “to confer on Natural Theology the loyal and real service of reminding it of its partner in the conversation.”§ Barth delivered the lectures in 1937 and 1938. Their title is The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation (published 1939). He is very frank as regards his rejection of any sort of a Natural Theology. However there is an emphasis in this work which is somewhat a modification of his former emphasis on the “infinite difference between time and eternity.” Barth now says, “While it is beyond our comprehension that eternity should meet us in time, yet it is true because in Jesus Christ eternity has become time.”|| Ibid, 72

And again: Eternity is here (in the stable at Bethlehem and on the cross of Calvary) in time.”*# This view expresses the reality of God in time. A detailed discussion of this view may be reserved for our section on “the revelation of God in Christ.” # Ibid, 78

The Unknown God

Barth makes it explicit from the beginning that God is the unknowable and indescribable God. The hidden God remains hidden. Even when we say we

7. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 37: “He is the One who stands *above* us and also above our highest and deepest feelings, strivings, intuitions.”

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know him our knowledge is of an imcomprehensible Reality. Consider, for instance, the personality of God. Barth writes: "God is personal, but personal in an incomprehensible way, in so far as the conception of his personality surpasses all our views of personality."*⁸

* Ibid, 31

Barth also contends that even through the knowledge which comes by faith, than which "no more objective and strict form of knowledge can lay claim more definitely to universal validity," †⁹ no full knowledge comes to us. Even when God reveals himself to the man of faith, or, more accurately, to the man to whom he gives faith, still that man with faith "will confess God as the God of majesty and therefore as the God unknown to us." ‡¹⁰ Man as man can never know God: His wishing, seeking, and striving are all in vain. §¹¹

† Ibid, 25

‡ Ibid, 28

§ ETR, 91

In order to understand Barth at this point it is necessary to understand his objectivism. The absolutely objective, the transcendental (Kant) cannot be reached by man. It can only be reached in *actus* and such *actus* Barth finds in Scripture and pre-eminently in Christ and the Holy Spirit. And yet, as stated above, even in his revelation of himself God is ontlogically unknown and unknowable.¹² On Romans 1:19, 20, Barth says:

We know that God is He whom we do not know, and that our ignorance is precisely the problem and the source of our knowledge. The Epistle to the Romans

8. Davis, "Some Theological Continuities," pp. 208–209: "Barth is always true to his conviction that the infinite God is always unknowable and indescribable. The hidden God remains hidden. . . . Even when we say we know him our knowledge is of an incomprehensible Reality. Consider, for instance, the personality of God. Barth writes: 'God is personal, but personal in an *incomprehensible* way, in so far as the conception of His personality surpasses all our views of personality.'"

9. The quotation should read, ". . . strict form of knowledge can exist, and no type of knowledge can lay claim . . ." (Barth, *Knowledge of God*, p. 25).

10. Davis, "Some Theological Continuities," p. 209: "Barth also contends that even through the knowledge which comes by faith, than which 'no more objective and strict form of knowledge can exist, and [than which] no type of knowledge can lay claim more definitely to universal validity,' no full knowledge of God comes to us. Even when God reveals himself to the man of faith, or, more accurately, to the man to whom he gives faith, still that man with faith 'will confess God as the God of majesty and therefore as the God unknown to us.'"

11. This quotation does not appear on p. 91 of Hoskyns's translation of *Epistle to the Romans*.

12. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 77: "Much depends upon one's understanding of Barth's objectivism. The absolutely objective, the transcendental (Kant) cannot be reached by man. It can be reached, or cognized, if cognized at all, only in *actus* and such *actus* Barth finds in Scripture and pre-eminently in Christ and the Holy Spirit. . . . Even in his revelation of Himself God is ontologically unknown and unknowable."

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is a revelation of the unknown God; God chooses to come to man, not man to God. Even after the revelation man cannot know God, for he is ever the unknown God. In manifesting himself to man he is farther away than before.*¹³

* ETR, 48

The more we know of God the more he is yet to be known.

The revelation in Jesus, just because it is the revelation of the righteousness of God is at the same time the strongest conceivable veiling and unknowableness of God. In Jesus, God really becomes a mystery, makes himself known as the unknown, speaks as the eternally Silent One.†¹⁴

† ETR, 73

We give another passage from Dogmatics in Outline, on God's unknowability, in which Barth's characteristic ideas and modes of expression are closely joined together.

When attempts were later made to speak systematically about God and to describe His nature, men became more talkative. They spoke of God's aseity, His being grounded in Himself; they spoke of God's infinity in space and time, and therefore of God's eternity. And men spoke on the other hand of God's holiness and righteousness, mercifulness and patience. We must be clear that whatever we say of God in such human concepts can never be more than an indication of Him; no such concept can really conceive the nature of God. God is inconceivable.‡

‡ DO, 46

Barth's contention is summed up in the dictum: Finitum non Capax infiniti, the finite has no capacity

13. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 78: "On Romans 1:19, 20, Barth says: 'We know that God is he whom we do not know and that this not-knowing is the origin of our knowing . . . What do we know of the acts and works of God? Here is the greatest misconception . . . The Epistle to the Romans is a revelation of the unknown God; God chooses to come to man, not man to God. Even after the revelation man cannot know God, for he is ever the unknown God. In manifesting himself to man he is farther away than before' (*Rbr.* p. 353)." Ellipses in original. The quotation is not found on p. 48 of Hoskyns's translation of *Epistle to the Romans*.

14. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 78: "The more we know of God, the more is yet to be known. 'The revelation in Jesus, just because it is the revelation of the righteousness of God is at the same time the strongest conceivable veiling and unknowableness of God. In Jesus, God really becomes a mystery, makes Himself known as the unknown, speaks as the eternally Silent One.'" Hoskyns's translation of this passage is substantially different: "The revelation which is in Jesus, because it is the revelation of the righteousness of God, must be the most complete veiling of His incomprehensibility. In Jesus, God becomes veritably a secret: He is made known as the Unknown, speaking in eternal silence" (*Epistle to the Romans*, p. 98).

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* WG, 177

for the Infinite.¹⁵ “There is no way from us to God—not even via negativa not even a *via dialectica* nor *paradoxa*. The god who stood at the end of some human way—even of this way—would not be God.”*

In order to understand Barth at this point it is necessary to know something of his method. Barth constantly reiterates that his method is dialectical, proceeding by affirmation and denial, the yes and no, with no safe, ascertainable midway resting place. Astounding as it may seem, Barth boldly affirms that his affirmations and denials are meant to be, not God’s absolute truth, but as most human and fallible concepts thereof.

The language of dialectic is that of paradox. Paradox is the juxtaposition of an opinion alongside of it, implicated with it. Examples given by Barth are: The glory of God in creation and yet his concealment; death and its transitory quality alongside of the majesty of another life; man’s creation in the image of God conjoined with his fallen being; sin so awful, yet only known when it is forgiven. In God we see the same contrasts. Creation, and Providence; grace and judgment; promise and fulfilment; forgiveness and penalty—“Thou forgavest them though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.” In man’s religious experience the same speech of paradox has to be used. Flesh with spirit; faith and obedience; freedom, yet under law still; “autonomy and heteronomy; “justified, yet still a sinner”—these are examples frequently appearing in Barth’s works.

The method of dialectic is to counter the no by its opposite yes: the thesis by the antithesis. Barth uses the procedure of the examination room where questions are put requiring answers. The answer contains the question and the question implies the answer. We pass from one side to the other, and often the no is but a concealed yes. Often in the commentary on the Romans, Barth has recourse to algebraical formulae. The minus sign placed before the series of plus terms enclosed in brackets, changes the values, and conversely, the plus sign transforms the minus sign. Every positive implies a negative and every negative hints at a positive.

15. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 79: “Barth’s contention is summed up in the dictum: *Finitum non capax infiniti*, the finite has no capacity for the Infinite.”

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It is quite difficult at times to recognize which method of dialectics Barth prefers—the Platonic-Socratic, the Aristotelian or the Hegelian. Sometimes Barth writes as if truth lies, as with Aristotle, in the mean between two extremes. At other times he seems to incline to Hegel's neat scheme: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, which combines the preceding two in a higher unity. Usually, however Barth takes another line; he passes back behind the contraries to the previous state from which they emerged into contradiction. "The truth," says Barth, "lies not in the yes and not in the no, but in the knowledge and the beginning from which the yes and the no arise."* And again: "Our yes towards life from the very beginning carries within it the Divine No which breaks forth from the antithesis and points away from what now was the thesis to the original and final synthesis. The No is not the last and highest truth, but the call from home which comes in answer to our asking for God in the world."†

* WGWM, 72 f

† Ibid, 312

What is the ultimate way out of this arena of paradox? It is found in God. The contradictions will be solved not in time, nor on this plane of earth, but "from God who is our Home" prior to, subsequent to, Creation—"not now, but in the Better Land".

The Revelation Of God In Jesus Christ

On every hand Barth speaks of time and eternity as two distinct realms, an unbridged chasm between God and man, and the unknown God. All of this ends up in the view that there is no way from man to God. There is a way, however, from God to man through Jesus Christ. "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father."¹⁶ This Christ who is the Word of God is no "Jesus of history."‡ That "historical Jesus is but a construct of historians' minds, designed to reconcile contradiction which will not down. The Christ of the flesh is not proclaimed by Barth any more than by

‡ WGWM, 277

16. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 133: "Time and eternity two distinct realms, an unbridged chasm between God and man, God unknown to man. . . . There is no way from man to God. There is a way from God to man through Jesus Christ. 'He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.'" 102

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* ETR, 144; WGWM, 201

† ETR, 276 f.

Paul, but the Christ, crucified and risen.¹⁷ It is in him that the impossibilities are combined, the irreconcilables are here reconciled: God and man, eternity and time, death and resurrection.* Here in him, the conflict is somehow resolved,† and thus we are saved. At this point we might give a rather long quotation from the Romans which well summarizes Barth's view at this point:

In this name (the name of Jesus) two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, the one known and the other unknown. The known plane is God's creation, fallen out of its union with Him, and therefore the world of the flesh needing redemption, the world of men, and of time, and of things—our world. This known plane is intersected by another plane that is unknown—the world of the Father, of the Primal Creation, and of the final Redemption. The relation between us and God, between this world and His world presses for recognition, but the line of intersection is not self-evident. The point on the line of intersection at which the relation becomes observable and observed is Jesus, Jesus of Nazereth, the historical Jesus,—born of the seed of David according to the flesh. The name Jesus defines an historical occurrence and marks the point where the unknown world cuts the known world . . . as Christ Jesus is the plane which lies beyond our comprehension. The plane which is known to us, He intersects vertically, from above. Within history Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as Problem or Myth. As the Christ He brings the world of the Father. But we who stand in this concrete world know nothing, and are incapable of knowing anything, of that other world. The Resurrection from the dead is, however, the transformation: the establishing or declaration of that point from above, and the corresponding discerning of it below. The Resurrection is the revelation: the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the appearing of God, and the apprehending of God in Jesus. The Resurrection is the emergence of the necessity of giving glory to God: the reckoning with what is unknown and unobservable in Jesus, the recognition of Him as Paradox, Victor and Primal History. In the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without

17. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 134: "The Christ of the flesh is not proclaimed by Barth any more than by Paul; but the Christ crucified and risen."

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touching it. And, precisely because it does not touch it, it touches it as its frontier—as the new world.*

* ETR, 29 f

The above passage exhibits the characteristic features of what may be called a theology. In Jesus Christ we have the solution of the problems raised to the mind by the transcendence of God, the brokenness of humanity, and the unknown God. It is the mark of this kind of theology, in contrast to the usual method of procedure followed for almost a century now, to start from above, from the God-side, and work down to man.

Criticism of Barth's Views

The leading ideas of Barth's doctrine of God have been presented in the preceding paragraphs: it remains for us, in this closing section, to indicate the main lines of criticism which they have called forth in my mind. Most of my criticisms stem from the fact that I have been greatly influenced by liberal theology, maintaining a healthy respect for reason and a strong belief in the immanence as well as the transcendence of God.

First let us take the point of God's transcendence, for it is here that Barthianism irks the liberal Christian mind probably more than elsewhere. Not that God is not transcendent. The liberal so believes, but he also contends that God is also immanent, expressing his creative genius throughout the universe which he is ever creating and always sustaining as well as through the essential goodness of the world and human life. It is not that God is above us to which the liberal objects, but he does demur when he is asked to affirm that God is with us only in a tiny segment of "experience." (Barth would not use the term, but rather "revelation" or "divine confrontation"); namely, in that which comes only when God gives his word to us. The liberal also finds God in the beauty of the world, in the unpremeditated goodness of men, and in the moral order of reality.¹⁸

18. Davis, "Some Theological Continuities," p. 218: "The point at which Barthianism irks the liberal Christian mind and leaves it cold is in its twin and exclusive emphases of the divine transcendence and our human impotence. Not that God is not transcendent. The liberal so believes, but he also contends that God is also immanent, expressing his creative genius throughout the

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Another point at which Barth irks the liberal is his emphasis on the unknowableness of God. "A God about whom we dare not think is a God a thinking mind cannot worship."* Note that Barth says that the Word of God is the norm and standard of truth. Let us turn to it.

* Brightman, FG, 26¹⁹

Job ask: "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"† This verse is typical of the Bible representation generally. We can know God as we know anything else, only imperfectly. In the book of Exodus, in the scene in which God appears to Moses we read; "Thou canst not see my face" but "thou shalt see my back".‡ A signal proof that God reveals himself in nature is seen in Psalms 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God, etc." The New Testament writers are even more explicit at this point. According to Paul, man through reason, may have sufficient knowledge of God to render him inexcusable."§²⁰ This passage, found in the Epistle to the Romans, is practically ignored by Barth. He says: "We know that God is the one whom we do not know and this not-knowing is the problem and origin of our knowing. . . . What are God's works in their absolute riddeness (absolution Raelhselhaftigkeit) other than questions without an answer."||²¹

† Job 11:16

‡ Exodus 33:20

§ Romans 1:18-23

|| ETR, 45

universe which he is ever creating and always sustaining, as well as through the essential goodness of the world and human life. It is not that God is above us to which the liberal objects, but he does demur when he is asked to affirm that God is with us only in a tiny segment of 'experience' (Barth would not use this term, but rather 'revelation' or 'divine confrontation'); namely, in that which comes only when God gives his Word to us. The liberal also finds God in the beauty of the world, in the unpremeditated goodness of men, and in the moral order of reality within and without himself."

19. This reference, which is not listed in the bibliography, is to Edgar S. Brightman, *The Finding of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931).

20. DeWolf wrote "Quot.?" after this sentence.

21. Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, pp. 81-82: "Job asks: 'Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' (11:6.) This verse is typical of the Bible representation generally. We can know God as we know anything else, only imperfectly. In Ex. 33, in the scene in which God appears to Moses we read; 'Thou canst not see my face' (v. 20) but 'thou shalt see my back.' . . . A signal proof that God reveals himself in nature is seen in Ps. 19: 'The heavens declare the glory of God, etc.' . . . The New Testament writers are more explicit. According to Paul, man through reason, may have sufficient knowledge of God to render him 'inexcusable.' The classic passage is Rom. 1:18-23, every word of which is significant. Barth, however, practically ignores it, saying: 'We know that God is the one whom we do not know and this not-knowing is the problem and the origin of our knowing . . . What are God's works in their absolute riddleness (*absolution Räthselhaftigkeit*) other than questions without an answer' (*Rbr.* p. 22)." Ellipses in quotation from Barth in original. Hoskyns's translation of this passage is different: "We know that God is He whom we do not know, and that our ignorance is precisely the problem and the source of our knowledge. . . . What are all those enigmatic creatures of God—a zoological garden, for example—but so many problems to which we have no answer?" (*Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 45-46).

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It must also be noted at this point that Barth speaks of the generally accepted metaphysical and ethical attributes of God, sovereignty, majesty, holiness, ect., with a degree of certainty. It was once said of Herbert Spencer that he knew a great deal about the "Unknowable" so of Barth, one wonders how he came to know so much of the "Unknown God."²²

In criticism of Barth's method we may say that there is the danger that one may take a side, the No, or yes, without carrying the dialogue through. This is precisely what Lenin did, with such disastrous consequences to religion in Russia.²³ Again, if a position implies a negation, and a negation a position, then faith carries disbelief with it, theism, atheism, and if one member of the pair comes to be doubted the result may be disastrous to religion itself.

These seem to me, to be some of the great difficulties implicit in the Barthian position. In spite of our somewhat severe criticisms of Barth, however, we do not in the least want to minimize the importance of his message. His cry does call attention to the desperateness of the human situation. He does insist that religion begins with God and that man cannot have faith apart from him. He does proclaim that apart from God our human efforts turn to ashes and our sunrises into darkest night. He does suggest that man is not sufficient unto himself for life, but is dependent upon the proclamation of God's living Word, through which by means of Bible, preacher, and revealed Word, God himself comes to the consciences of men. Much of this is good, and may it not be that it will serve as a necessary corrective for a liberalism that at times becomes all to shallow?²⁴

22. DeWolf commented in the margin, "Good." Zerbe, *Barth Theology*, p. 84: "Barth speaks of the generally accepted metaphysical and ethical attributes of God, sovereignty, majesty, holiness, etc. It was said of Herbert Spencer that he knew a great deal about the 'Unknowable'; so of Barth, one wonders how he came to know so much of the 'Unknown God.'"

23. DeWolf placed an asterisk beside this sentence and remarked at the bottom of the page: "I am interested in this comparison. As a graduate student I once defended the thesis that Lenin was Hegel's 'antithesis on horseback,' indicating the many stages of Hegel's dialectic of which Lenin took the antithesis as the truth. Have you made such a study too? Have you found such a study by someone else?"

24. Davis, "Some Theological Continuities," pp. 217-218: "[Barth's and Emil Brunner's] cries do call attention to the desperateness of the human situation. They do insist that religion begins with God and that men cannot have faith apart from him. . . . They do proclaim that apart from God our human efforts turn to ashes and our sunrises into darkest night. They do suggest that man is not sufficient unto himself for life, but is dependent upon the proclamation of God's living Word, through which, by means of Bible, preacher, and revealed Word, God himself comes to the consciences of men. Much of this is good."

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