

## BARTH AND ESCHATOLOGY

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Karl Barth, in *Dogmatics in Outline*,<sup>1</sup> discusses the affirmation of the Apostles' Creed, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." He begins by objecting to the conception of Michael Angelo's great painting in the end of the Sistine Chapel because it, and all such conceptions, divide the just from the wicked, with rewards or punishment meted out. He alleges that the painters have some delight in the idea "how these damned folk sink in the pool of hell." He does not elucidate how he knows that painters have these feelings of delight. Angelo has apparently not left a record of his feelings in the matter, but Barth's remark is calculated to impress the reader with the awfulness of Angelo's representation without admitting that the picture, in general, faithfully represents both the Biblical teaching and the confessional statement upon which Barth is commenting.

Barth proceeds to contradict this teaching of the Bible with what I can only call a semantic deception. He declares that in "the Biblical world of thought, the judge is not primarily the one who rewards some and punishes others; he is the man who creates order and restores what has been destroyed." In short, he appeals to the Old Testament office of "judge" current before the monarchy and derives the definition of "judge" in the creed from the action of men like Gideon and Barak in the Book of Judges! It is true, of course, that Gideon was a leader. It is also doubtless true that as a leader in Israel he executed judicial functions. But the Apostles' Creed and the passage in Matthew 25 which Michael Angelo depicts does not use the Hebrew word *shophét*. These sources clearly and unambiguously represent Jesus as a rewarder and punisher, and it is no explanation of them nor answer to them to introduce the matter of the office of Old Testament judge and argue from its character that Christ will not conduct a Last Judgment. I repeat, in my opinion this is a clever way of advocating a position by semantics, but cannot be called interpretation of the documents being considered. I emphasize this example, for I fear it is all too typical of Barth and his eschatology. We shall return to the reference in *Dogmatics in Outline* later. *Christology and Anthropological Eschatology*.

As is well known, Barth bases or claims to base his anthropology upon Christology. This is affirmed in Weber's *Synopsis*<sup>2</sup> and the *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>3</sup> In the section on "Man in his Time," which discusses both similarities with and differences between the man Jesus and us, Barth says: "Our anthropology can and must be based on Christology."<sup>4</sup> Berkhouwer refers to important concepts of the limited life of man and notes that "conceptions are involved which are not derived from Christology, but which are anthropological in nature."<sup>5</sup> It remains a question whether Barth is consistent or successful in finding a base for his anthropology in his Christology. But before we attempt to judge the former we must investigate the latter. It is not impossible that the Christology is also not well based.

### *The Resurrection of Christ*

One of Barth's older books is, in the English title, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (Eng. Tr. copyright in 1933). It amounts to an outline commentary on 1 Corinthians, arguing that the whole epistle is unified around the thought that Christianity in Corinth was too institutionalized, too coldly orthodox and not the all-out meeting of insecurity with God in Christ. He argues that the cases of sin and disorder of the early chapters are taken up by Paul simply as examples of a Christianity which at its center does not face the risen Lord. And therefore, he claims, the whole epistle comes to its climax in the wonderful 15th chapter. To this chapter and the subject of the Resurrection, Barth devotes much attention and outlines

his thoughts which are particularly important for us. He rightly says, "I Corinthians contains the doctrine of the *last things*."<sup>6</sup> But he hastens to add that *last things* do not belong to a future of the world, human or individual, perhaps immediately imminent or distant in time. Rather, he means the "'end of history' in the sense of the termination of history, history at the termination of the story, of the life story of the individual as well as the story of the world and of the Church."<sup>7</sup> "Last things as such are not *last things*," he avers.<sup>8</sup> He goes on to liken the end of history with pre-history, i.e. with the boundaries of history. We are warned, therefore, that the end and resurrection are not always to be understood by Barth in the normal sense. "The dead: that is what we are. The risen: that is what we are not. But precisely for this reason the resurrection of the dead involves that that which *we are not* is equivalent with that which *we are*: the dead living, time eternity, the being truth, things real." In short, in Barth's approach, death and resurrection are not here taken literally. It is perhaps not even permissible to say he refers to death-in-sin and resurrection-in-salvation according to the well-known Biblical symbolism of spiritual death and life. Until further defined, we may say he means that death is our meaningless life and resurrection is our life in meaningful confrontation with God.

His discussion of I Corinthians 15 begins with consideration of vs. 1-11. "It must be emphasized," he says, "that *neither* for Paul *nor* for the tradition . . . was it a question of giving a so-called 'resurrection narrative' . . . or even . . . a 'historical proof of the resurrection.'"<sup>9</sup> This is further argued by the rather surprising claim that the four words he *died*, *was buried*, *rose again*, and *was seen*, do not aim to give "a narrative of events." This he says is because some of the verbs are qualified by an appeal to the Old Testament prediction which would be out to place in a chain of historical testimonies. To us this seems to be a strange argument. The fact that He rose again according to the Scripture by no means minimizes the assertion that He rose again in historical reality. The "*He was seen*," he says, "extends fan-shaped into a whole series of 'was seen.'" So be it. This only reinforces the historical proof which Paul was concerned to summarize.

His further objection to the normal exegesis is that in vs. 13, the statement is made "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." Barth says rightly enough that this says "this historical fact, the resurrection of Jesus, stands and falls with the resurrection of the dead generally."<sup>10</sup> He asks, what kind of a historical fact is that which is bound up with a general truth, which "by its nature cannot emerge in history, or, to speak more exactly, can only emerge on the confines of all history, on the confines of death?" The statements amount to a denial that the resurrection of Jesus was a historical fact. But the answer to Barth's question is plain enough. It is a plain historical fact that guarantees another historical fact. Paul argues on the basis of the historical resurrection of Jesus admitted by the Corinthians and supported by Paul in brief summary, and from there he concludes to the other truth of the resurrection of the dead generally. This general resurrection Barth is concerned to call a general truth, not historical but on the "confines of all history." Here Barth merely takes his stand with the Corinthian doubters whom he elsewhere castigates. Because he questions the actual resurrection of believers he doubts the historical resurrection of Jesus. Paul on the contrary clearly believes in both. Barth, we repeat, is at least correct in that both go together.

As might be supposed, he finds difficulty with the verb "he was buried," and with the witness of the empty tomb. These are too historical! He concludes that "was buried" means that "*history* . . . is here illuminated in most dazzling manner

from the *frontier* of history which is described by the words 'who died' on the one hand, by the words 'he rose again' on the other hand."<sup>11</sup> Notice how he insists on putting Christ's death and resurrection in a different historical category from the literal burial. This is underlined by his statement, "This tomb may prove to be a definitely closed or an open tomb, it really is a matter of indifference."<sup>12</sup> It is *curious what people* speak of as indifferent. Pearl Buck, we remember, regarded it as a matter of indifference whether there ever was a Jesus. The Jesus of history was thought to be of less importance than his ethics. Barth feels the empty tomb to be a matter of indifference. Because Barth is not concerned with history as such. Due to his radical dualism, history is not a way to God and cannot be. But this view involves a complete departure from the apostolic witness. One may agree with Paul or not, but it is as clear as day that Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-11 was concerned to affirm the historical death, burial, and resurrection of the man Christ Jesus and to draw from that admitted fact of Christology, certain conclusions for his anthropology concerning our resurrection. Barth draws different conclusions.

Barth further questions that the resurrection appearances are historical. After all, in them, he says, "Time and place are a matter of perfect indifference. Of what these eyes see it can really be equally well said that it was, is, and will be never and nowhere, as that it was, is, and will be always everywhere possible." This is peculiar logic. Is Paul's own witness of no historical value unless he says his sight of the risen Christ took place near Damascus? If so, one out of three of his accounts in Acts is faulty! If Barth rejects the idea that these appearances are history because time and place are not mentioned, what will he do with the Gospel accounts, most of which do mention the time and place! But there he alleges "the extreme obscurity and discordance in all indications of time and place and as to the how."<sup>13</sup> He continues in this vein for some pages, but what he is concerned to aver is that "Christ lives! - which unless they overlook the witness of Christ generally - that is, desire to leave the Church - is in no way to be understood as a continuation of human experiences, and insights of a higher and the highest kind, but only as the witness of God's revelation, as the really genuine Easter gospel."<sup>14</sup>

In summary, we may say that Barth is here interested in the meaning of the resurrection of Christ rather than its reality. He even allows that the Corinthians may have believed in the historical reality of Christ's resurrection while Paul insists that the important thing is "the revelation." This leads him to say of "the hope of the resurrection" that "it is that which cannot be denied, if Christ's resurrection is to be understood, not as a miracle, or myth or psychic experience (which all come to the same thing), but as God's revelation."<sup>15</sup> The important thing is not the fact which indeed can be questioned, but the experience denominated "revelation" which Barth feels cannot be denied. Strange that he equates as similar the views that Christ's resurrection was a myth or a miracle or an hallucination! Jesus' resurrection to him is in the world of revelation not in the world of historical fact. To him, of course, revelation is not factual.

This revelation leads the Christian to something different from a "beyond" to something which is rather a new life here and now. On vs. 19 ("of all men most miserable"), Barth comments: "What meaning can their privation and their hope have, unless it refers to the crisis from life to death to life, to the life of the resurrection, beyond this life."<sup>16</sup> Everything here depends on the meaning of "beyond this life" which in Barth clearly does not mean "later," but "more deeply." As he says in a final word in this book, "the tension in which the thought of Paul

moves is unprecedented . . . It is not a tension of a successive order, but tension of an intertwining character.”

It is true that this book was written many years ago - indeed a long time ago for a theology that is said to be a theology on the wing. In his later book, *Dogmatics in Outline* (1947), he devotes just 3 pages to Jesus' resurrection. He speaks in very general terms, but does say “we must not transmute the Resurrection into a spiritual event. We must listen to it and let it tell us the story how there *was an empty grave*, that new life beyond death did become visible.”<sup>17</sup> This sounds fine enough. But the emphasis of the preceding paragraphs does not ring true. They speak of Jesus beginning a new life and Easter as this breaking in of a new time and world in the existence of the man Jesus. In Jesus' altered existence the early Church saw “not only supernatural continuation of his previous life, but an entirely new life . . . and simultaneously the beginning of a new *world*.”<sup>18</sup> But was this really what the resurrection appearances betokened to the disciples?

In the larger Church Dogmatics III 2, Barth again refers to Christology, this time as the basis of anthropology. Here he frequently and emphatically declares that the bodily resurrection of Christ is at the heart of everything.<sup>19</sup> It sounds fine. But there is no apology for an earlier position or a hint of a change of position. He objects to Bultmann's demythologizing of Easter. But in a telling section he himself evaporates the resurrection too. He speaks of a history out of reach of historical research. He classifies the resurrection with what modern historians call “saga” or “legend” and says that the Bible is full of such material. Specifically, he likens the Easter story to “the creation narratives [note the plural!] in Gen. 1-2.” “except for a tiny ‘historical margin.’” He alleges that Christians may use an eclectic world view and “we have every reason to make use of ‘mythical’ language in certain connections.” So he concludes “we must still accept the resurrection of Jesus, and his subsequent appearances to his disciples, as genuine history *in its own particular time*.”<sup>20</sup> He elaborates this further: “The Easter story is differentiated from myth . . . by the fact that it is all about a man of real flesh and blood. But the stories are couched in the imaginative, poetic style of historical saga, and therefore marked by the corresponding obscurity. For they are describing an event beyond the reach of historical research or depiction.”<sup>21</sup> This is far from satisfying, especially in view of Barth's earlier treatments. The question remains, what does Barth mean when he declares for the bodily resurrection of Jesus? For myself, I believe he means a revelation event to the early Christians which he would call a real historical event in their life and world view, through not, or at least not necessarily, an historical resurrection. Surely he said this much in his exegesis of I Corinthians 15.

We might pause a moment for a critique of this position. Barth is concerned that God reveal Himself in history, but equally concerned that history can not reveal God. The history of the Bible therefore may or may not be true. It is true in the sense that it may beget a revelatory experience, but not necessarily true in the sense of agreement with actual occurrences. Thus Genesis 1-11 are history in this other sense. They cannot be depended upon as as literal history. But what about Christ's resurrection? Did it really happen? Barth knows that he cannot say that it makes no difference. Yet if it does make a crucial difference, how is his theology proof against Bultmann's scepticism? His dilemma is unresolved.

### THE FUTURE OF MAN

Personal eschatology is extensively treated in Church Dogmatics III 2 pp. 437-640 (English edition). Here he discusses at length his concept of time which

is doubtless central to his view, but adds difficulty to the interpreter.

Professing to found his anthropology upon Christology, Barth first discusses Jesus, Lord of Time. In brief, he declares that in Jesus, the limited time of man is associated with God's time, which Barth does not exactly define. This union of eternal and human time is proved by the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in which apparently, limited human time is superseded by God's time. In the incarnation God has time for us. God Himself is not timeless, Barth thinks, though he does not say exactly how he knows this. God's time is a time that holds a past present and future in a contemporaneity. "In His eternity, in the uncreated self-subsistent time which is one of the perfections of his divine nature, present, past and future, yesterday, today and tomorrow, are not successive, but simultaneous."<sup>22</sup> This concept of time bears on the familiar dichotomy of the historical and suprahistorical. But they meet in the man Jesus Christ. The delineation of the time of the man Jesus has some difficulties, however. The life of Jesus has a beginning. "But the man Jesus was even before He was."<sup>23</sup> This is a strange concept. Orthodoxy has insisted that the Second Person of the Trinity is eternal, but the man Jesus was not in eternal existence backward in time. Also "there was a moment when His time became past," but apparently it continues. Again orthodoxy insists that Christ's human nature is eternal.

Our time is, however, different from Jesus' time. Man's time Barth makes out as a somber business. Our past we cannot recall, i.e. live over again. Our future is pressing toward us inexorably (if we live), but our present in which we live is the knife edge of existence between a has been and a not yet which is a cheerless thing. He quotes a poet Hölderlin to say that we are "like water dashed from cliff to cliff in lifelong insecurity." "This," he says, "is what *we* are."<sup>24</sup>

We may wonder if Barth can be so sure that this is what we are. He means that this is what certain species of philosophy make us out to be. Is Barth discussing time here? Or is he actually discussing consciousness? Time as a mathematical concept does not have the characteristics he alleges of it. And it may be doubted if all consciousnesses show the views of his poet Hölderlin. Most of us are not conscious of such a knife edge present. Certainly our body and sensations are a complex of many past impressions and experiences. My present painful neuritis may be the results of last week's vitamin deficiency. I may not be living on a knife edge of a present. I may be in a family reunion with memories of the past all about me and high hopes for the future. Barth is giving way to the current analyses of our "human predicament." But it is only fair to note that this concept is not Scripturally oriented nor universally recognized. Our human situation becomes a human predicament because some philosophers thus analyze it.

However, we may agree in a measure with Barth's next thesis that human life is limited. It is obviously so in this world. Our great question is an old one: Is it limited also in the next? Or as classically put, "If a man die shall he live again?"

Barth seems to exhaust the possibilities of language to answer with a flat no. Man's span "begins at a certain point, lasts for a certain period and finally comes to an end. Man is, therefore in this span and not before or after it."<sup>25</sup> "At a certain point life began. Now we are somewhere in the middle or before or after the middle. One day it will be over. This is how we are in time. It is our allotted time, and no other."<sup>26</sup> Of human life he says, "Where is it going? Towards its end, i.e., the end of its time, after which it will be no longer."<sup>27</sup> Even Jesus as man had to die: "He is as helpless in face of death as any other man."<sup>28</sup> "Death is man's step from existence into non-existence as birth is his step from non-existence into

existence . . . Man as such, therefore, has no beyond . . . He is thus finite and mortal.”<sup>29</sup> Barth speaks of “This sided existence, above and beyond which there is no other . . . God . . . is his true beyond.”<sup>30</sup> Many other quotations of this nature could be given. Barth is opposed to immortality.

Barth is equally positive on this in his *Dogmatics in Outline*. “What is the meaning of the Christian hope in this life? A life after death? An event apart from death? A tiny soul which, like a butterfly, flutters away above the grave and is still preserved somewhere, in order to live on immortally? That was how the heathen looked on the life after death. But that is not the Christian hope. ‘I believe in the resurrection of the body.’ Body in the Bible is quite simply man, man, moreover, under the sign of sin, man laid low. And to this man it is said, Thou shalt rise again. Resurrection means not the continuation of this life, but life’s completion . . . The Christian hope does not lead us away from this life; it is rather the uncovering of the truth in which God sees our life. It is the conquest of death, but not a flight into the Beyond. The reality of this life is involved. Eschatology rightly understood is the most practical thing that can be thought.”<sup>31</sup> He continues, quoting Romans 6:8 (“If we died with Christ, we shall also live with Him.”) and adds, “The man who believes that, is already beginning here and now to live the complete life.”<sup>32</sup>

I confess that I can derive no meaning from these expressions except that man’s life is finished finally and irrevocably at his death. Man is finite. His finitude is God ordained. To fight this finitude is the supreme *hybris*. A right attitude toward God made possible by His revelation in Jesus Christ allows us to be satisfied with our finitude and thus live a complete life. Thus our eschatology is practical, he feels, i.e., it is a here and now. The Christian message has nothing to do with an endless future which he denounces in every term imaginable (he actually says it would be a “hell”).<sup>33</sup> The Christian message is a teaching which brings meaning into this life and therein is its value.

In further support, we may cite his treatment of the end of Moses, Enoch, and Elijah. He declares, in contradiction to everybody else, that Enoch and Elijah died as did Moses. Enoch “being in time was at an end.”<sup>34</sup> Of Elijah he says that he died although “the record completely obscures the fact.” We wonder what other record Barth has access to in order to be able to contradict the one in II Kings! He makes the illuminating remark that “the life which Elijah the prophet lived before and with God was not extinguished when his end came, but . . . he now lives it before and with God as never before. For his office, commission, authority and power, now revealed to Elisha are transferred to this one who is left.”<sup>35</sup> The meaning of this statement, especially in view of the previous ones, seems clearly to be that Elijah lived on in spirit, power, and memory in the person of his successor.

A word should be said about Barth’s teaching of immortality. He opposes this as a Greek and pagan concept. He declares that man is “the soul of his body.”<sup>36</sup> He further insists that “Man is only as he is in time. Even in eternal life he will still be in his time. For he will then be the one who, when there is not time, but only God’s eternity, and he is finally hidden in God, he will have been in his time.”<sup>37</sup> This may be an important quotation. If it is of the essence of man that he be the soul of his body and be a creature of time, how will he be in future days? Barth seems to say that he will exist only in the mind of God, i.e., he will be the one who was in his day temporal. Now if at death we are somehow “eternalized” in God (the word is Barth’s own), what will be our situation? Berkhouwer confesses that “Barth’s conception of the ‘eternalizing’ of our ending life has, so far as I know, no antecedent in the history of Christian doctrine.” But it is “this,” says

Berkhouwer, that "is the resurrection of the dead."<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, Berkhouwer does not elucidate the doctrine any more than does Barth. If, however, it has absolutely no antecedent in the history of doctrine, I would gather that it is difficult to classify it with orthodoxy!

With Barth's constant emphasis on man's finitude, his being in time, his being limited because he is not God, it would seem that there are only two possible explications of this eternalizing. Either man after death is taken up into God in some Nirvana-like situation, or else he ceases to be except in the conception of the mind of God. Barth expressly and emphatically rules out the continuing existence of the individual, as I have said, calling such an existence a veritable "hell." For, he argues, infinite duration would only open possibilities for infinite craving for self fulfillment. "He would have infinite space before and behind, but only for his creaturely human life, which always seeks satisfaction because full satisfaction, duration, fulfilment and perfection are promised and assigned to him by creation, but which can never attain it because it is not divine. If it were without beginning or end it would always lack and seek this satisfaction . . . It would be condemned to perpetual wanting and asking and therefore dissatisfaction. Could there be any better picture of life in hell than enduring life in enduring time?"<sup>39</sup> Note, Barth does not say that unending evil life is hell, but that unending finite life is hell. In view of this argument as well of his statements, the alleged "eternalizing" of life cannot include personal life existing in an eternal sphere without deifying man. This would be a type of Nirvana.

It is not our main purpose to point out Barth's logical fallacies, but it seems that we might transgress here. Apparently, he feels that God can somehow satisfy finite man in finite time by making him satisfied with his finitude. Why could not God equally easily satisfy finite man in unending time by making him satisfied with just that condition? Especially so when orthodox theology teaches that the condition of the blessed in unending life includes personal fellowship with God the Lord? Further, on immortality. We fully agree with Barth that this doctrine may be held in a non-Christian form. We do not hold that a soul has an inherent quality of eternal existence apart from the everlasting support of God. And our bliss does not consist in being relieved of the body. Mere death does not guarantee bliss. But if we hold the Biblical ideas of sin and judgment, we believe in an intermediate state, future judgment, and reunion of our bodies and souls in bliss or torment. Barth, as we saw, recoils from such torment. He also scorns such naive bliss. He therefore opposes *all* immortality. "Whatever existence in death may mean, it cannot consist in a continuation of life in time." The Old Testament teaches "there is no fellowship either of the dead among themselves or between the living and the dead."<sup>40</sup> We do not have time to take up *seriatim* the verses against immortality in the Old Testament which Barth discusses. They include the familiar ones from Ecclesiastes, Job, Psalms, etc. plus some more of Barth's own. I feel he takes them out of context and treats them as any Old Testament critic might. They do not deny immortality. The Old Testament affirms bodily resurrection. I do not feel that Barth adds materially to the discussion here.

His thought advances somewhat as he discusses the New Testament. He first notes that our being limited in time involves that we had a beginning. This, oddly enough, does not trouble us too much. It gives rise to an emphasis on memory and history, an emphasis on the old days. But it is a natural consequence of our finitude and we accept it gladly.

We are almost prepared to hear that death also is natural and we should submit to it with equal aplomb. But Barth's thought is at least not shallow. None of us could accept this. So Barth analyzes death *in extensu*. He finds the Bible denouncing it as evil. Men abhor it instinctively.<sup>41</sup> Above all, its fearfulness is shown in that Jesus experienced it. Jesus' death of course is different. This topic could well stand exhaustive analysis. In the cross God declares death "to be his enemy as well" and places Himself beside man in the verdict there pronounced. Strange terms are used saying that God in Christ entered the lists against death, vanquished death, as in a struggle, "He defied death . . . by submitting to it as a willing victim."<sup>42</sup> These terms are not exactly self-explanatory. How does willing submission vanquish death? Yet the man Jesus as man had to die by his very nature. "He is as helpless in the face of death as any other man." And from this angle we see death in another light.

For Christ has become the death of death. In Barth's descriptions of Jesus' work upon the cross I personally fail to see the orthodox doctrine of a substitutionary atonement whereby Christ bears the penalty of an outraged deity because of a broken law. But the conclusion of Barth at least is that Christ has somehow conquered death considered in this fearsome aspect.

There remains, however, another aspect of death — a natural one. This situation is more analogous to birth. As we had a beginning and are not pained about it, so some Biblical expressions show we have an end and are not pained about it. He gives numerous Biblical instances. Jacob died easily. Stephen "fell on sleep" even in his violent demise. Paul speaks of "them that sleep in Jesus." Barth claims that these are not mere euphemisms and he may be right in that. He says they show that to have an absolute end is natural and we can therefore die happy. Actually here his logic is poor. They only show that Christians can die happy! The context does not show that Stephen died happy because he had compared his exit from time with his entrance into time and had concluded that infinite time was a cheerless business. The statement in Acts indicates that Stephen's dying thoughts were running along another track.

Barth therefore is neither Biblical nor successful in arguing that future temporal existence is a hellish thought and that all our eschatology is now. The man of the world often claims this — our heaven and hell are in this life. But Christ taught that we have a heaven to gain and a hell to shun after life is past.

It is a pleasure to close this discussion of Barth with words of confirmation of our position gathered from G. C. Berkhouwer. Berkhouwer's critique at times merely raises questions where I myself would be more dogmatic. He courteously hopes that Barth will define his terms more adequately and reconcile his inconsistencies and approach Biblical positions better in his final volumes. I can entertain no such hope. If in thousands of pages he has not already clarified his views of the future life I fear it is because they are in themselves obscure. He promises only a dark future! And in Barth's smaller books dealing with these subjects he has already expressed himself. In principle Berkhouwer admits Barth's unsatisfactory teaching.

Berkhouwer quotes Vogel to the effect that "Barth rejects 'any form of existence for men beyond this life.' In so doing Barth comes into conflict with the New Testament conception of hope 'which gives man as the new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) the promise of a new existence and being in God's time, in eternity, and extends to him participation in the glory of the incarnate Son of God.'"<sup>43</sup> Berkhouwer goes on, "The Bible can be understood only on the presupposition of con-



tinuity. This continuity lies in the hand of God, it is true, but *in* that hand it will become reality."<sup>44</sup> Barth in his heavy emphasis on no continuity after death is in diametric opposition.

Further, Berkhouwer analyzes Barth's concept that there is a natural, a good death. He shows that this arises from Barth's concept of human limited time and his conclusion that "the fact of human death *as such* is not, as it was not in the case of Christ, a judgment . . . Barth's basis for his conception of the end of man is indeed a vulnerable one. It is a peculiar abstraction that Barth introduces when he writes 'His human life could also have ended in a wholly different manner' . . . This would seem to be a piece of abstract reasoning."<sup>45</sup> He concludes, "Barth's thesis as drawn from the mortality of Jesus is untenable. His argument impresses us that *the real origin of the idea of man's 'limited' life does not lie here, but rather in his conception of man, that is, in his anthropology.*"<sup>46</sup> In short, Barth molds Christ and Scriptures to his presuppositions.

Further, Berkhouwer says, "this parallel" (our not being — no longer being)," in the definitive sense in which Barth posits it, is precisely the thing that Scripture *denies* us. It is not the idea of continuity that Scripture opposes, but the denial of it," and he instances the Sadducees.<sup>47</sup> The conclusion is: "From this it appears . . . that a way of thinking which is alien to the whole of Scripture suppresses the eschatological perspectives of the New Testament."<sup>48</sup> I could say no more.

We have not dealt at all with such questions as millennialism, the details of heaven, hell, and judgment. There is no need. Barth gives them little attention, and what could be said of them anyhow if, for the individual, death ends all? We are left with Matthew Arnold in his poem *Dover Beach* seeing the tide of faith retreating down "the naked shingles of the world!" What advantageth it? What advantageth thousands of pages of theology to arrive at this conclusion? The apostle's *reductio ad absurdum* for this view is "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (I Cor. 15:32). But the Biblical teaching is of a different sort. "The dead shall be raised incorruptible . . . Death is swallowed up in victory" (I or. 15:52, 54)."

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## FOOTNOTES

1. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, Trans. by G. T. Thompson, New York: Philosophical Library, 1949, p. 134f.
2. O. Weber, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, an Introductory Report*, Tr. by A.C. Cochrane, Phila.: Westminster, 1953, p. 151.
3. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter CD) Vol. III, Pt. 2. Edingurgh: T. & T. Clark 1960, p. 512.
4. CD III, 2, p. 47.
5. G. C. Berkhouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, p. 337.
6. Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Tr. by H. J. Stenning, London: Revell, 1933, p. 101.
7. *ib.* p. 102.
8. *ib.* p. 104.
9. *ib.* p. 131.
10. *ib.* p. 133.
11. *ib.* p. 134.
12. *ib.* p. 135.
13. *ib.* p. 136.
14. *ib.* p. 139f.
15. *ib.* p. 143.
16. *ib.* p. 161f.
17. *op. cit.* p. 123.
18. *ib.* p. 122.
19. *op. cit.* p. 422.
20. *ib.* p. 447 (ital. ours).
21. *ib.* p. 452.
22. *ib.* p. 437.
23. *ib.* p. 464.
24. *ib.* p. 515.
25. *ib.* p. 354.
26. *ib.* p. 554.
27. *ib.* p. 559.
28. *ib.* p. 602.
29. *ib.* p. 632.
30. *ib.* p. 633.
31. *op. cit.* p. 154.
32. *ib.* p. 155.
33. CD III 2, p. 562.
34. *ib.* p. 635.
35. *ib.* p. 636.
36. *ib.* p. p. 521.
37. *ib.* p. 521.
38. *op. cit.* p. 158.
39. CD III, 2, p. 562.
40. *ib.* p. 589.
41. *ib.* p. 600.
42. *ib.* p. 602.
43. *op. cit.* p. 330 n.
44. *ib.* p. 330f.
45. *ib.* p. 336f.
46. *ib.* p. 336f. (Ital. his).
47. *ib.* p. 338.
48. *ib.* p. 340.