

Exploring Karl Barth's View on the Image of God

Reymand M. Hutabarat¹

Introduction

The theology of Karl Barth is generally known as neo-orthodox.² It is characterized by an encounter between God and man. This section presents an introduction to Barth's theology; then briefly discusses his view of God, revelation, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and last things. Karl Barth³ was born in 1886 in Basel, Switzerland.⁴ His father was a professor of theology at Reformed Seminary, who moved to the University of Bern when Karl was a small child.⁵ The young Karl grew up in that capital city of Switzerland and resolved to become a theologian at the time of his confirmation—he was only sixteen years old. He studied theology under some of the leading liberal Protestant thinkers of Europe, including Adolf Harnack,⁶ and became a minister of the Reformed Church, first in Geneva, and then in the small town of Safenwil on Switzerland's border with Germany.⁷ According to his later memories, Barth found that the Liberal Theology of his education did not translate into meaningful preaching that connected with the lives of the average people of the parish. He became disillusioned with liberal Protestantism when his own theological mentors such as Harnack and other German professors publicly supported the Kaiser's war policy in 1914.⁸

¹ Reymand M. Hutabarat, MA, MDiv, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Theology Department of Universitas Advent Indonesia, his expertise are in history, philosophy and ethics. He finished his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Systematic Theology from AIAS School of Theology, Philippines in 2007.

² Neo-orthodox theology is a Protestant theological movement in the twentieth century. It emphasizes the divine transcendence as well as human sinfulness and need. It represented a return to modified forms of orthodox doctrines as contrasted with the liberal abandonment of such doctrines. "Neo-Orthodoxy came to prominence in the wake of World War II. During the 1940s, neo-orthodox realism welcomed by many in mainline and fundamentalism, it offered a fresh means of hearing the Gospel." Daniel G. Reid, ed., : *Dictionary of Christianity in America (DCA)* (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), s.v. "Neo-Orthodoxy" See also Erickson, "Neo-Orthodoxy," CDCT, 112.

³ Swiss theologian who rejected his liberal theological moorings through a gradual rediscovery of Scripture. He is largely responsible for the revolution in 20th-century Protestant Theology known as neo-orthodoxy. "With his Commentary on the Romans (A.D. 1918-A.D. 1932) he led the reaction against the liberal theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and heralded the resurgence of the classic themes of Christocentric orthodoxy. Barth maintained the knowledge of God can be based only on the Bible and the revelation of Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer. He thus clearly rejected natural theology and all non-Christian religions of the world. His *Church Dogmatics* published in 1932 without the final volume is his crowning work. It is the most comprehensive exposition of Protestant Christian doctrine published in the twentieth century, tying together such doctrines as the Trinity, Incarnation, and Christ humanity." Kurnian. NNCD, s.v. "Karl Barth."

⁴ David L. Mueller, *Makers of the Theological Mind/Karl Barth* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972), 14.

⁵ Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrews Press, 1966), 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20

⁸ *Ibid.*, 21. "Wilhelm II (1859-1918) was the last German emperor (Kaiser) and king of Prussia, whose policies helped to bring about World War One . . . He was a strong believer in increasing the strength of the German armed forces, particularly the navy. His policies towards Britain were contradictory. He alienated Britain with his naval expansion and a policy of aggressive German colonial expansion, and also supported the Boers in their fight against the British. However, he was also closely related to the British royal family and was particularly fond of his grandmother, Queen Victoria." "Wilhelm II (1858-1918)." Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilhelm_kaiser_ii.shtml.

Godsey writes, On what he (Barth) has called a "black day" in August 1914, ninety-three German intellectuals impressed public opinion by their proclamation in support of the war policy Kaiser Wilhelm II, and to his horror he (Barth) discovered that many of his former professors were among them. This convinced him that he could no longer follow them in their and therefore not in their theology.⁹ Barth delved into that perennial source of theological renewal—the apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans—and published *Der Romerbrief* in 1919.¹⁰ In that theological commentary Barth set forth the basic precepts for dialectical theology, or the "theology of the Word of God." In 1921 he was appointed professor of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen. Afterwards he taught at Münster and Bonn. While teaching at Bonn, Barth began writing a complete system of systematic theology based on God's Word with title *Church Dogmatics*. He continued to work on his *Church Dogmatics* from 1932 until shortly before he died in 1968. Barth intended to write a systematic theology completely free of any overpowering philosophical influences and based purely on exegesis of God's word in Jesus Christ as witnessed to the Scriptures. Unlike most of other systems of theology, Barth launched an exposition of the Word of God directly in threefold ground; Jesus Christ, the church, and Scripture. His basic axiom is that the knowledge of God lies in God's Word Alone.¹¹

God

This section discusses Barth's doctrine of God dividing it into two parts: the transcendent God and the unknown God.

The Transcendent God

One of the cardinal points of Barth's doctrine of God is that He is the transcendent God. God is "above us, above space and time, and above all concepts and opinions and all potentialities."¹² Such thinking ends in the entire divorcement of God from man's experience. In his *Epistle to the Romans* Barth describes this concept as follows: God, the pure limit and 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 end never a magnitude amongst others in the medium known to us, God the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer . . . that is living God.¹³ Man is a complete alien until God wills to show Himself to him. God is in the highest where man cannot reach unless He reveals Himself to man. Here "in the highest" means that "God is he the one who stands above our highest and deepest feelings, strivings and intuitions, above the products, even the most sublime, of the human spirit."¹⁴

The Unknown God

Barth makes it explicit from the beginning that God is the unknowable God.¹⁵ Even when man says that he knows Him, this knowledge is of an incomprehensible Reality. "God is personal, but personal in an incomprehensible way, in so far as the conception of his personality surpasses all our views of personality."¹⁶ In relation to man's inability to know God, Barth contends that even when God reveals Himself to the man of faith, of, more accurately, to the man to whom He gives faith, still the man "will confess God as the God of majesty and therefore as the God unknown to man."¹⁷ Man as man can never know God: man's wishing, seeking, and striving are all in vain.³

⁹Jhon D. Godsey, "Barth's life until 1928," chap. In *Barth, How I Changed My Mind* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrews Press, 1966), 21-22.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹Karl Barth, CD, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of Word of God*. Translated by G.T. Thomson (1936), 222.

¹²Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation*, trans. J. L. M. Haire and Ian Henderson (New York: Scribner, 1939), 28.

¹³Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translate from the 6th German edition (*Romerbrief*) by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 315.

¹⁴Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: SCM, 1966), 37.

¹⁵Barth, CD, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G.T. Thomson (1936), 390.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 28

¹⁷Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 91.

In his comment 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 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.¹⁸ So, according to Barth, the more man know of God, the more He is yet to be known, and the more things of God which man will yet not be able to know. In the same book, he further states, the revelation in Jesus, just because it is the time the strongest conceivable veiling and of God. In Jesus, God really becomes a mystery, makes himself known as the unknown, speaks as the eternally silent One.¹⁹

Revelation

Revelation, according to Barth, is the sole prerogative of God, that is, God revealing Himself to man.²⁰ It comes solely at God's discretion. It means that there is nothing man can do to force it, of merit it, but it is given to man all freely, in any case, from God's infinite love. Barth sees that God's revelation to man though His Word is communicated through three primary mediums: Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the proclamation of the church.²¹

Jesus Christ

Christ is the revelation of God.²² Human beings are not able to know God apart from the revelation in Jesus Christ. Apart from incarnation there is no revelation.²³ Barth, on every hand, speaks of time and eternity as two distinct realms, an unabridged chasm between God and man. He also speaks of 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.²⁴ In Him the impossibilities are combined, the irreconcilables are reconciled: God and man, eternity and the time, death and resurrection.²⁵ It is in Him, that the conflict is resolved,²⁶ and thus man is saved.

¹⁸Ibid., 48.

¹⁹Ibid., 73.

²⁰Ibid., 52.

²¹Trevor Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 59.

²²Barth asserted that Jesus Christ is "the authentic revealer of God Himself. Again, he is the effective proof of the power of God as Himself God. Yet again, He is the fulfiller of the covenant as Himself God. He is nothing less or other than God Himself, but God as man." Karl Barth, CD, vol. IV-1, *Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (1956). 128, 129.

²³Olson says that "when Barth identified divine revelation with Jesus Christ, he was not referring to Jesus' teaching or example," but "he was referring to the person of Jesus in time and eternity." According to him "Barth did not say that it is impossible to know God without knowing about the Jewish Messiah, who was born in Palestine and died there about 30 AD. He was and is the Lord, but his human life here on earth does not exhaust his divine-human reality." Therefore, he further says that "Barth's view of divine revelation is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God's perfect and complete self expression, and whatever other authentic revelations of God there may be center around him as promise and memory." Olson, 580, 581.

²⁴In his Epistle to the Romans, Barth describes Jesus Christ as God's revelation as follows: "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 the 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 this world and His world presses for recognition, but the line of intersection at which the relation becomes observable and observed is Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, 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 or declaration of that other point from above, and the corresponding discerning of it below. The Resurrection is appearing of God, and the apprehending of God in Jesus. The 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 a circle, that is, without touching it. And, precisely because it does touch it, it touches it as its frontier—as the new world." Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 29-30.

²⁵Ibid., 29.

²⁶Ibid.

According to Barth, Christ as manifested in Scripture is not necessarily the historical Jesus but the Christ of Faith. This Christ who is the Word of God is not the "Jesus of history."²⁷ For Barth, the historical Jesus is but a product of the historian's mind, designed to reconcile contradiction which will not down. The Christ of the flesh is not proclaimed by Barth any more than by Paul. The Christ proclaimed by Himself was the Christ who was crucified and risen.²⁸

The Bible

For Barth, the Bible is merely a record of revelation, an authoritative pointer to revelation. Jesus Christ is the revelation and the Word of God.²⁹ He rejects both natural theology³⁰ and general revelation.³¹ According to him, the Bible contains the Word of God. The Word is revealed by the Spirit as the Bible and Christ proclaim it. The Bible is human and fallible. And the historicity of the Scripture is unimportant.³² The Bible, according to Barth, is not God's Word in the sense that Jesus Christ is. Jesus Christ is the very Word of God, for He is God Himself in action and communication. The Bible is one form of God's Word, not the primary but a secondary form.³³ However, it is the God-ordained witness to God's Word in the person of Jesus Christ, and it becomes God's Word whenever God chooses to use it to encounter and confront people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Barth says, "The Bible is God's Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it."³⁴ Barth rejects the idea of the inerrancy of the Bible. According to him, the Bible is a human product through and through. It is a book of human testimony to Jesus Christ, and in spite of all its humanness it is unique because God uses it. The statements of the Bible can be wrong at this point. That does not matter, however. God has always used fallible and even sinful witnesses, and the Bible is just one of such witnesses.³⁵ Barth never devaluates the Bible. He always highly esteems it. What he wants to do is only to exalt Jesus Christ above the Bible. For him, Jesus is the Lord. Scripture is not. It is a witness to the Lord.³⁶

The Church

Barth recognizes the proclamation of the church as the third from divine revelation. For him the Christian Community is the true church.³⁷ As a community, according to Barth, the concrete of a living congregation. It should not connotatively refer to an organization or institution. The Church is the "event of gathering together," and in this sense a "living congregation."³⁸ This is the very essence of the church.

²⁷Ibid., 184. In his Church Dogmatics Barth asserted that "Jesus Christ is the Word by God created the world out of nothing. As the world of the Father He is equal to the Father, the very God from all eternity." Barth, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 442.

²⁸Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 144; idem, Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 201.

²⁹Barth, vol. IV-1, *Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord*, 128; idem, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 138; *Epistle to the Romans*, 276.

³⁰Natural Theology is a "theology which is developed apart from the special revelation in Scripture; it is constructed through observation and experimentation." Erickson, "Natural theology," CDC, 112. It declares that "man outside of faith in Christ can have a true knowledge of God." See Cairns, 198. This rejection came about primarily because of Barth's emphasis on God's transcendence and man's impotence.

³¹General revelation is a "revelation which is available to all persons at all times, particularly though the physical universe, history, and the make up of human nature." Ibid., 143. The doctrine of general revelation is that "God does reveal Himself in some sense to all men." See *ibid.*, 198.

³²Olson, 582.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Barth, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of Word of God*, 241.

³⁵Olson, 581.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Barth, CD, vol. IV-2, *Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord*, translated by G.W. Bromiley (1958), 517.

³⁸Karl Barth, "The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," in *God Here and Now, Religious Perspectives* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 67.

The Christian community as the true church, according to Barth, arises and exists only when the Holy Spirit works.³⁹ The task of the true church is to awaken man for conversion. Its existence is necessary for the salvation of sinners.⁴⁰ Barth says, The Christian church also counts on the awakening of man to conversion because I cannot conceal the fact that the Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament count on it and call on the church to do so.⁴¹ Thus, for Barth, the proclamation of the church is a form of divine revelation. It is a means of instruction that has been used by the Christian Church from its very beginning.⁴² However, it is tertiary-third in priority after Jesus Christ and Scripture. In and through the preaching and teaching of the church, God sometime speaks and draws people into encounter with Himself. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Scripture and the church. Scripture is the authority in the church is the context for divine-human encounter in which Scripture is expounded and Jesus is proclaimed. All of these there are divine revelations. But each one then centers upon Jesus Christ.⁴³

The Holy Spirit

Barth strongly believes in the deity of the holy Spirit.⁴⁴ In his Church dogmatics He equalizes the Holy Spirit with God Himself. He says, "God's spirit, the Holy spirit . . . is God Himself, so far as He cannot only come. To human beings, but in them, and so open up human beings for Himself, make them ready and capable."⁴⁵ Barth sees the Holy spirit, in the life of the trinity, as the uniting power of love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit also makes the union between God and humanity in Christ possible and binds believers together in Christ.⁴⁶ The work of the Spirit is in full accordance with that of the Resurrected Lord. Indeed, the only content of the work of the Holy Spirit is Jesus.⁴⁷ Man can enjoy the relationship with the Father only through the Spirit. Thus, the revelation as creator, redeemer and reconciler.⁴⁸ Another work of the Holy spirit, according to Barth, is to bring the Word of God all the way to man. He observes, the act of the Holy Ghost in revelation is the Yes to God's Word which is spoken by God Himself for man, yet not just to man, but also in man. This Yes spoken by God is basis of the confidence with which a man may regard the revelation as applying to him⁴⁹

Salvation

According to Barth, God's entire purpose in creation is salvation, and the election is an intrinsic part of salvation by grace alone. He affirms the sovereignty of God in election and rejects synergism.⁵⁰ For Barth, the doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel. His approach to predestination is based on two main assertions: (1) Jesus Christ is electing God, and (2) Jesus Christ is elected man. For him, predestination is eternal that precedes time. Predestination is also Christologically based. Jesus is the subject in election who elects other. Jesus at the same time is also the object of God's election. The election of Jesus Christ by God, in Barth's understanding, is that "God elected of predestinated Himself."⁵¹in this election, there are two contradicting aspects. This is called a "double predestination."⁵² In positive sense God has ascribed salvation and life to man, while in negative sense, He has ascribed reprobation, perdition, and death to Himself.⁵³

³⁹Barth, vol. IV-2, Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord, 517.

⁴⁰Ibid., 621.

⁴¹Ibid., 558.

⁴²Karl Barth, *The Word of God the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York : Harper and Row, 1856), 97-135, quoted in Millard J. Erickson, *Reading in Christian theology*, 2 vols (Grand Rapids ; Barker, 1976) , 1065.

⁴³Olson, 582.

⁴⁴Barth, vol. III-1, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 56. Barth believes that the Holy spirit is the Creator, reconciler and redeemer.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Barth, CD, vol. III-2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, translated by Harold Knight, G. W. Bromiley, J. K. S. Reid and R. H. Fuller (1960), 654.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Barth, CD, col. I-2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, translated by G. T. Thompson (1956) , 257.

⁴⁹Barth, CD, vol. I-2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 453.

⁵⁰Barth, vol. I-1, *The Doctrine of God*, translated by G. W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Ian Wilson, J. Strathearn, Harlod Night, R.A. Steward (1957), 162. Cf. Olson, 580. Synergism is "the idea that man work together with God in a certain aspects of salvation, for example, faith or regeneration." Erickson, " Synergism," CDCT. 163.

⁵¹Barth, vol. II-2, *The Doctrine of God*, 162.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 163.

At Calvary, God said "Yes" to His Son and humanity who were in Him; at the same time He elected Himself to be man's partner and took upon Himself the rejection, death, and hell which man deserved. Thus, in Barth's view of predestination, there are only "divine glory," "blessedness," and "eternal life" for man.⁵⁴ There is no foreordination of evil or damnation upon man. Although God has allowed evil from the very beginning, He has negated it through Jesus Christ. God does not will and foreordain any portion of His creation to be eternally lost. Rather, He wills, foreordains and decrees to allow sin and evil to be totally negated in Jesus Christ, that is, in His cross and resurrection.⁵⁵ God's "no" has never been spoken against humanity, not even a portion of humanity, but only against Himself in Jesus Christ. God does speak "no" and "yes" in double predestination. But, for Barth, unlike the traditional Reformed Theology,⁵⁶ "double predestination" does not ferret to a dual determination of humans beings. Rather, it refers to the two different aspects of what happened in God's election of Jesus Christ. In the election of Jesus Christ which is the eternal will of God, God has ascribed to man . . . election, salvation and life; and to Himself He has ascribed . . . reprobation, perdition and death.⁵⁷ Thus, for Barth, "predestination means that from all eternity God has determined upon man's acquittal at His own cost."⁵⁸ The cost for this acquittal is "the way of the Son of God into a far country" and His death on the cross at sinners hand.⁵⁹ For Barth, in God's election "the only truly rejected man is His own Son."⁶⁰ Jesus is picture as both the elected and the elector, the subject and object of divine election. For this reason, according to Barth, the justification of all humanity is not to be found in the history of individual persons but in the history of the God-man, Jesus Christ.⁶¹ In Christ all humanity is simultaneously the elect of God. Man is elected if man connects himself to Jesus, for "every man as such is a fellowman of Jesus."⁶² Jesus, in His life, death, and resurrection, has fulfilled the full cost of the divine-human bifurcation, and thus all humanity is forensically justified before God.⁶³ Thus, in Barth's doctrine of election, God has elected himself in Christ for suffering and death, and has elected humanity for eternal life.⁶⁴ Considering all that has been discussed above, it seems that Barth holds the concept of universalism⁶⁵ in his doctrine of salvation. But he does not affirm it. He can neither affirm nor deny the possibility that all will be saved. So what can we do? Barth's answer is clear: we can "hope."⁶⁶ The inner logic of his doctrine of election, however, testifies that his doctrine of salvation is rooted in universalism.⁶⁷

The Last Things

Barth's view of the last things is well expressed in his interpretation on Romans 13:11, "besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." In this text, instead of seeing a chronological nearness, Barth speaks of different kinds of nearness. He writes, Standing on the boundary of time, men are confronted by the overhanging, precipitous wall are dissolved. There it is that await the Last Hour, the Parousia of Jesus Christ. . . . Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not enter in never be delayed? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event. . . . What delays its coming (the expectation of the End) is not the Parousia, but our awakening. Did we but awake; did we but remember; did we but step forth from unqualified time into the time that has been qualified; were we only terrified by the fact that, whether we wish it of not , we do stand at every moment on the frontier of time

⁵⁴Ibid., 171.

⁵⁵Ibid. Cf. Olson, 585.

⁵⁶Election is "God's decision in choosing a special group or certain person for salvation or service. The term is used especially of the predestination of individual recipients of salvation." Erickson," CDCT, 48.

⁵⁷Karl Barth, vol. IV-1, *Doctrine of Reconciliations: Jesus Christ the servant As Lord*, 516.

⁵⁸Karl Barth, vol. IV-1, *Doctrine of Reconciliations: Jesus Christ the servant As Lord*, 516.

⁵⁹Olson, 586.

⁶⁰Barth, vol. III-2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 319.

⁶¹Hart, 59.

⁶²Barth, vol. III-2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 134.

⁶³Karl Barth, vol. IV-1, *Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord*, 516.

⁶⁴Barth, vol. III-2, *Doctrine of Creation*, 346.

⁶⁵Universalism is " the believe that in the end all humans will be restored to God." Erickson, " Universalism," CDCT, 176.

⁶⁶Barth, CD, vol. IV-3, *Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ the Servant As Lord*, 477-478.

⁶⁷Olson, 586.

Then we should await the Parousia. . . and then we should not hesitate to repent, to be converted to thing the thought of eternity, and therefore to-love.⁶⁸ In the above quotation, Barth reveals a conception of eschatology where it no longer means looking forward to certain event in the future, but rather apprehending Jesus Christ in repentance and faith at every moment when man confront him. Adam's natural children, according to Barth, hand a beginning. And , if they do not find immortality in Christ, they will come to an end-time when they will be no more. Thus, Barth sees that, for those who are not in Christ, there will be no physical resurrection from the dead and no immortality through Christ.

Rejection of Liberalism and Social Gospel

In forming his theology, Barth rejected Liberalism⁶⁹ and Social Gospel.⁷⁰ Both Liberal theology and Social Gospel have the "common ground optimism regarding human capabilities and the progress of society."⁷¹ Barth rejected both, for, in reducing religion to feeling, they also tended to reduce Christianity back into the meanings and values of the secular culture. He tried to bring theology back to the principles of the Reformation and the prophetic message of the Bible.⁷² Barth interpreted the Christian message to mean the that God is so supremely transcendent and superior to all human expiration and that any religion ground in mere human experience in impossible. His Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans rejects all the mere historical interpretation of Scripture as incapable of doing justice to the text as the inspired Word of God. For Barth, God id not to be proved through philosophical speculation and logic.⁷³ Even though he feel that "human reason is worthless,"⁷⁴he accepted the result of historical-critical investigation of the Bible and therefore he cannot be considered merely conservative. Finally, in addition to the claim that God is inconceivable and unprovable, Barth asserts that God is unsearchable. Man cannot reach up to God, but God must reach down to man. No man women has even found God, for knowledge of God is acquired only by God when He willingly discloses Himself to human beings. Barth believed that Protestant Liberalism had ignored human contingency and obliterated the gulf between God and humanity.⁷⁵

Summary

For Barth, God is transcendent, and unknown. The only revelation is the incarnation of Jesus. God's revelation to man through His Word is communicated in there primary mediums; first, through Jesus Christ, second through the Bible, and third, through the church is the context for divine-human encounter in which Scripture is expounded and Jesus proclaimed. The Holy Spirit is the uniting power of love between the Father and the Son in the life of the Trinity effects the union between God and humanity in Christ and binds believers together in Christ. The key to understand the image of God is found in the "us" and the "out" of the creation statement of Gen 1:26. An analogy of relation exists between the I and thou in the divine being, and the being of humanity, male and female. Because the human as creature cannot be "like" God, analogies can only be comparisons of "unlikeness." The image of God is to be found in relationship and not found in something that man possess.

⁶⁸Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 500-501.

⁶⁹Liberalism of Liberal Theology is "a trend in Protestant theology during the 19th and 20th centuries. Its attitude is rationalistic and it abandons belief in Revelation for a religion of natural reason Another form of liberal theology, like Catholic Modernism, regards dogma as a mere objectification of subjective faith (influenced by F. Schleiermacher and A. Ritschl). The most far-reaching result of liberal theology has been a biblical criticism that does violence to the scriptural data and is govern by arbitrary philosophical assumptions." Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, " Liberalism" Theological Dictionary, ed. Cornelius Ernes, trans. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 261.

⁷⁰Social Gospel is "a tendency within liberalism of the late nineteenth end early twentieth centuries to replace the transformation of society through alteration of its structure." It" seek to bring men under repentance for more modern conscience" and" calls for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations." Erickson, "Social Gospel," CDCT, 155. See also Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, 1917) 5; M James Sawyer, "Liberalism," (article on-line) ; available from http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=177.

⁷¹Gonzales., 258.

⁷²Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 23. Cf. William D. Dean, *History Making History: The New Historicism in American Religious Thought*, 52. (book on-line) available from <http://books.google.com/books?id>; internet.

⁷³Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 24, 25 . Cf. Olson, 587, 588. Also Just Gonzalez, *That Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (New York; harper Collins, 1985) , 365.

⁷⁴FredrerickckLawrence , " Barth," (article on-line) available form <http://mindyourmarker.wordoress.com/tag/karl-barth/>.

⁷⁵Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, 27.