



PROJECT MUSE®

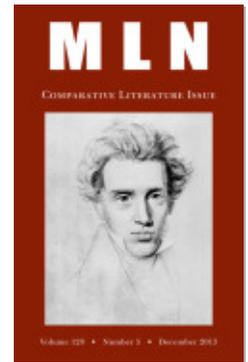
The Kierkegaardian Moment: Dialectical Theology and Its
Aftermath

Hent de Vries

MLN, Volume 128, Number 5, December 2013 (Comparative Literature Issue),
pp. 1083-1114 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2013.0086>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/535738>

The Kierkegaardian Moment: Dialectical Theology and Its Aftermath



Hent de Vries

It is common knowledge that Kierkegaard was widely and eagerly read by European theologians of different stripes when in the early 20th century his works became gradually available in translation (into German, French, and then also English). An extensive body of scholarship has been devoted to that reception and to the difficulties that (often inadequate) translations posed for a general readership that was not very familiar with his intellectual background or literary style, much less with the philosophical and theological message he seemed to communicate, if indirectly, by way of numerous pseudonyms and no small amount of posturing, with the help of striking paradox and a near endless variety of Biblical and dramatic parables. Add to this the protracted dialogues and sharp diatribes, portraits and vignettes, intimate journals, actual and fictional letters and what emerges is a singular oeuvre that required extensive interpretative, indeed, dialectical skills and, hence, baffled most audiences.

Not so theologians who, rightly or wrongly, almost immediately recognized in Kierkegaard—the very master of the *incognito*—a fellow Christian apologist, a witness, martyr, and, perhaps, knight of faith; a modern genius of what we would now (no doubt, well beyond Kierkegaard's own, far from ecumenical, much less inclusivist outlook) call “Abrahamic religion” (cf. Stroumsa).

A significant position in the German reception history and early twentieth-century renaissance or *réveille* of Kierkegaard's writings is

taken up by Karl Barth, but also, more generally, by the relatively short-lived movement of so-called dialectical theology—sometimes dubbed the theology of “the Wholly Other,” of “the Word of God,” but also self-designated as a “theology of crisis”—a school of thought between roughly 1918 and 1932 that is forever associated with Barth’s name and the considerable influence he exerted on its original beginnings and, by any standard, most rigorous theoretical formulation.

Barth, arguably the most important Protestant theologian of the twentieth century (and, indeed, unsurpassed in that stature up until the present day), is our best anchor point for any effort to determine what I would like to term here “the Kierkegaardian moment” in Christian theology. No better foil against which to profile Kierkegaard’s reception in Protestantism than the remarkable attempts of dialectical theology in its radical attempt to invent as much as resuscitate a stringent—and decidedly Reformed—concept of Biblical, practical, and eventually dogmatic “theology” and to do so from the perspective of “theological existence now.” Not accidentally, *Theologische Existenz Heute* was the programmatic title of a journal, founded in the summer of 1933, by Barth and his friend Eduard Thurneysen (the fellow pastor in whom Barth confided most when he first started the exegetical as well as political revolution in the theological and cultural symbiosis of his days).

The facts are known and I will not dwell on the actual reception history of Kierkegaard’s work in Christian theology in this context too long (cf. von Kloeden; Jüngel; Barrett; and Turchin). What interests me here is a systematic, if you like, conceptual point, first of all. All I wish to clarify is what the Kierkegaardian moment in dialectical theology and its aftermath *only* could be. More precisely, I want to help us understand not only why Barth and so many others were quick to adopt Kierkegaardian language, but then—equally swiftly, with ever greater consistency and consequence—moved also somehow beyond it. This paradoxical given (if that is what we should call it) holds lessons for theology more generally, in its Christian, Protestant varieties and, I suspect, not limited to these. It even tells us something about the reception in theology—and, no doubt, in other theoretical registers as well—of singular motifs and moments that only resemble the impulses that went out from Kierkegaard’s writings as they were first perceived, but are not necessarily identical with and, hence, limited to them. After all, if this were not the case there would be little more than historical or documentary interest to the matters at hand. As such, these texts and the controversies they elicited would be of little further theoretical (i.e., theological, philosophical, critical) significance, for us, now.

Further, I would like to suggest that Barth, in inheriting and then discarding the Kierkegaardian impulse, repeated precisely the gesture that, since Kierkegaard, we have come to designate as that of *repetition* (and that we find expressly thematized and dramatized in the book or essay, attributed to Constantin Constantius, entitled *Repetition, Die Wiederholung*). Albeit in a radically different literary genre and style, and when leaving the bold expressionistic language of his early phase—notably, in the second, 1922 edition of his *Der Römerbrief (Epistle to the Romans)*—behind, Barth's method and aim was anything but “a venture [in German: *Versuch*] in experimenting psychology” (as the subtitle of *Repetition* had suggestively called it). And the far more sober and robust prose of dogmatic theology in Barth's *magnum opus*, the *Kirchliche Dogmatik (Church Dogmatics)*, only reinforces that tendency even as it moves resolutely beyond the paradox and aporetics of faith that the earlier work so deftly celebrates. Indeed, far from being “psychological” or “experimental” in any register, Barth's intention and approach might more plausibly be described in terms of the philosophical schools of his and our day, that is, as rigorously *phenomenological*, *critically realistic*, and, I would venture to add, *deeply pragmatic*.

But what was Kierkegaard's own sense of moment and momentum, of the instant and its repetition, their necessary passing, and of the form of communality, if not communication, that would secretly link the pointed and punctuated gestures of faith (of prophets and apostles, martyrs and knights, in short, of witnesses of the truth) together across generations? In other words, what—and well beyond his ultimate “attack” upon Christendom ever more so than upon Christianity—was his concept of “Church”?

Kulturprotestantismus

For Barth and his followers, the Kierkegaardian “moment” was, in the first place, of relevance as a concept of quasi-punctual, fulfilled, kairological time, as the *Augenblick* or instant, but also as a passage and passing, ultimately a fleeting stage of theological thought. As scandal, crisis, indeed, paradox of faith and its expression, it effectively put an end, full-stop, to the complacent and fundamentally moralist—human, all too human—syndrome of German cultural Christianity, of *Kulturprotestantismus*, its natural theology, to begin with, and the now imperial-nationalist then again bourgeois-capitalist collaboration in political matters it not so secretly fosters (or, which comes down to the same, fails to resist).

Indeed, it has often been noted that dialectical theology found its first impetus and rationale in the events of 1914, especially when in August of that year some ninety-three German intellectuals, including some of Barth's most revered teachers (Adolf von Harnack, the author of the famous *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, among them), signed a public petition endorsing the emperor's war efforts.¹ In Barth's recollection:

It was like the twilight of the gods when I saw the reaction of Harnack, Herrmann, Rade, Eucken and company to the new situation, and discovered how religion and scholarship could be changed completely into intellectual 42cm cannons... To me they seemed to have been hopelessly compromised by what I regarded their failure in the face of the ideology of war. Thus, a whole world of exegesis, ethics, dogmatics, and preaching, which I had hitherto held to be essentially trustworthy, was shaken to the foundation, and with it, all the other writings of the German theologians. (qtd. in Busch 81)

Much later, Barth would look back at the role that Kierkegaard had played in the dislodging of a cultural syndrome of a moralized, psychologized, and historicized, indeed, naturalized Christendom that had led up to the imperial war or, at least, failed to put up any meaningful resistance to it (thereby testifying to a fallen state of the Church, its dignitaries and theoreticians, that would prove even more fateful soon after, during the Weimar Republic and the gradual take-over of Nationalist Socialist ideology and political rule). As to Kierkegaard Barth mused:

[What] attracted us particularly to him, what we rejoiced in, and what we learned, was the criticism, so unrelenting in its incisiveness, with which he attacked so much: all the speculation which blurred the infinite qualitative difference between God and man...all the attempts to make the scriptural message innocuous, all the too pretentious and at the same time too cheap christianism and churchliness of prevalent theology, from which we ourselves were not as yet quite free. ("A Thank-You" 5)

If this critique, in Kierkegaard's case, was not theologically or dogmatic framed per se, it nonetheless required his current readers, notably dogmatic theologians, Barth reasoned, to revisit, revise, and reframe the very philosophical and hermeneutic, culturalist and exegetical premises upon which the old dispensation of Christendom (the later Kierkegaard's target) and *Kulturprotestantismus* (the early Barth's worry) had solidly rested.

¹For a discussion of Barth and von Harnack, see my "Inverse."

Interestingly, it is with regard to *dogmatic* theology that Erik Peterson—the Catholicizing thinker and Marburg colleague who, as we shall soon see, would soon come to challenge Barth’s overall program—will dispute this premise. Kierkegaard was a genius, not a prophet or an apostle, much less an authorial guide in matters of Christian, ecclesial dogma (as Kierkegaard himself would have been the first to fully agree). This is not to deny that Peterson had known his own “dialectical phase” (Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson* 504), which, like Barth’s early phase of theologizing, was to no small extent influenced by—more precisely, expressed through—his eclectic reading of Kierkegaard. Nor is it to forget that both Peterson and Barth enthusiastically—if strategically and provisionally—used Kierkegaard to simultaneously articulate their theological and social critiques. Starting out from religious socialism and social-democratic policy in the wider labor movement, in Barth’s case, and from conservative communitarianism and Christian anti-fascism in Peterson’s, theirs was a political theology *sui generis*, even though Barth (unlike some of his later followers) had little use for this particular term, whereas Peterson (somewhat idiosyncratically) came to completely reject its general project.

While much less known or read than Barth, Peterson has rightfully received more attention in recent years. But it is fair to say that, beyond the small circle of specialists, he has been best known as the author of *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (*Monotheism as a Political Problem: A Contribution to the History of Political Theology in the Roman Empire*), first published in 1938 in critical response to Carl Schmitt, whom he had befriended as he had Barth. In it, Peterson, somewhat paradoxically, put the question of the publicness (*Öffentlichkeit*) of theology center stage, even though much of his wider work had largely concentrated on archeological and philological findings with a strikingly a-political affect. And it was this same overall orientation of his work that would allow him to take issue with the longer tradition of political theology, effectively claiming that one should repudiate “any such thing as a Christian political theology.” Long after Peterson’s death, Schmitt concluded the second volume of his *Politische Theologie* (*Political Theology*) with a long riposte of Peterson’s theses, in a belated settling of old accounts that need not concern us here (cf. Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson* 727ff.).

Of more importance is the fact that precisely these early inquiries would eventually alter Peterson view of the early history of the Church and his own personal belonging in it—leading to his conversion of

Roman Catholicism in 1930, that is to say, well after the debates and his reception of Kierkegaard that interest us here. But in this reappraisal Kierkegaard had played a significant role as he was the major instigation behind Peterson's "primary intellectual horizon," namely that of *eschatology* (Hollerich, "Michael"). What is meant by this expression is the Christian "acute awareness" of and theological insistence on "the already-but-not-yet-character" of the New Testament expectation, the so-called "eschatological proviso [*Vorbehalt*]" that Peterson coined but that became a common theologoumenon by way the exegetical commentaries of one of his students (and a pupil of Rudolf Bultmann's), the New Testament scholar Ernst Käsemann (*ibid.*). It was this intuition that enabled Peterson's sharp condemnation during the interbellum of the Catholic *Reichstheologie* of a Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch, and Gerhard Kittel who "deluded" themselves into the role of theologians of the *Reich*, in its Third, National-Socialist dispensation (*ibid.*). Conversely, in the post-Second World War period, Catholic theologians such as Yves Congar and Jean Daniélou would come to appreciate Peterson's "return to the sources," together with its peculiar eschatology, as a preparation for very renewal, the *nouvelle théologie*, that eventually animated the Second Vatican Council (Hollerich, "Introduction" xiii). And, during a 2010 address to the conference participants gathering to celebrate life and work of Peterson in Rome, former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and then Pope Benedict XVI praised Peterson's thinking and revealed that he had been reading him as early as 1951 (xxvii). Interestingly, Peterson had referred to Alfred Firmin Loisy's well-known word, in his 1902 *L'évangile et l'église*, that "Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom; what came was the Church," a statement that led to his excommunication. It was no one less than Cardinal Ratzinger who in 1991 would claim that Peterson was "the first ... to adopt [Loisy's thesis] and take it in a Catholic direction" (qtd. in Hollerich, "Introduction" xxi; that is, an even more Catholic direction than Loisy himself felt he had taken). In Michael Hollerich's rendering this meant that: "Peterson frankly admitted there was no direct and immediate connection between Jesus and the Church, its offices, and its sacraments, though the purpose of the argument was to explain that this did not mean that there had to be a separation or a gap between them" (*ibid.*).

What Peterson in his resort to traditional theologoumena strongly implied was that a simple and absolute disjunction lay at the earliest origin and foundation of the institutional body, that of the Church to begin with. Yet whether this disjunction was conceptualized in terms

of the two natures of the one *corpus Christi* or as the heavenly and the earthly city, the king's two bodies, or even Luther's two realms, its constituent parts formed an integral element of one and the same history of creation, revelation, and salvation. And one sees how this view could not but distance Peterson from the Kierkegaardian claim that the concept and practice of the Church must eventually founder on the very formulation and foundation of the reality for which these must ultimately stand.

Walter Lowrie, in his *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* is certainly right when he concludes that "the attack upon the Established Church was the logical and necessary outcome of all his thinking" (242). He quotes a fragment, a "separate tract," entitled "The Cry" and dated December 24, 1854, in which we read:

Whoever thou art, whatever thy life may be, my friend—by ceasing to take part (if in fact thou dost) in the public performance of divine performance as it now is, thou hast one guilt the less, and a great one, that thou dost not take part in holding God to be a fool, and in calling that the Christianity of the New Testament which is not the Christianity of the New Testament. (242–243)

And yet, for all of the latter's relentless critique of real existing Christendom, this final stage went hand in hand with a certain approximation to Roman Catholicism as well (219).

The Context

Interestingly, it was especially Barth's profound engagement with some of his Catholic contemporaries that would prove, in fact, far more revealing than his growing disaffection with his closest friends, colleagues, and early followers (a sense of increasing frustration we find expressed in the extensive correspondences, snappy open letters and pamphlets, dismissive scholarly comments as well as impromptu asides). Indeed, it has been claimed that Barth measured his own progress by the way in which he chose to respond to objections by theologians such as Eric Przywara, Hans Urs von Balthassar, and, again, notably Peterson, all of whom commented extensively on the earliest phase of his work.

For instance, in the Winter Semester of 1923–24, Peterson lectured on Thomas of Aquinas in Göttingen. Barth sat in on his classes and, from here on, began to systematically work his way through the five-volume set of the *Summa Theologica* he had received from his brother,

the philosophy professor Heinrich Barth, just as he came to frequently use the Roman Catholic source book of historical creeds, conciliary decisions, and encyclicals, Heinrich Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, next to the Protestant canons he found in source books such as Heinrich Heppe's and Ernst Bizer's *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche* and in E. F. Karl Müller's *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Reformierten Kirche* (Marga 28, 30, 34). At the time, Barth would go so far as to note: "On the point of reason and revelation, I have learned much that is enlightening from Peterson, who I am listening to on Thomas Aquinas; it makes Book I of Calvin's *Institutes* understandable" (qtd. in Marga 30).

For his part, Peterson, who during the lectures thought of Barth as his "favorite listener"—and, likewise, approached Aquinas coming from an external, Protestant point of view—took his lead from so-called "dialectical" theological motifs and concerns he had been familiar with since around 1922. As one insightful commentator helpfully notes:

Even though he had often expressed distaste for the heavy dialectics of the *Romans* commentary [Barth's revised *Der Römerbrief*, published in 1922], there is evidence that on several points, Peterson utilized these same dialectical moves to break open Thomas; he may have even done a full-blown dialectical reading of the Scholastic. One instance is his remark about Thomas' theology of God's presence in the creaturely sphere. He declares: "Oh the wonder of the divine dialectic!—the extraordinary precisely *in* the other and *through* the order is revealed as the extraordinary." He also points to the dialectics that Thomas himself utilized, commenting that "Thomas knows exactly that all theological concepts stand in dialectical connection to one another. Faith does not live out of logical impossibilities [*Ausgeschlossen*], but in the dialectical tension of the concepts." These overt nods to Barth's dialectical method most certainly led the Swiss [i.e., Barth] to look closely at the form and function of dialectics in Thomas' theology as well. (Marga 31)

And while Barth would eventually wonder whether Aquinas's *Summa* should not convince us that the most significant writing of a Luther or Calvin was "in the best sense Catholic"—even if unbridgeable differences between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation remained squarely in place and in even greater need of clarification—it was no less clear that for the then Protestant Peterson, deeply steeped as he was in the history of the Church from its earliest beginnings onwards, teaching Aquinas was a step on the path that would inescapably lead him to his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Strange as it may seem, in this conversion, an early enthusiastic reception of the Lutheran Kierkegaard played a determining, if not necessarily decisive, role.

Yet, come to think of it, Catholicism may well have formed a *terminus a quem* of the stages of life's way Kierkegaard took as his own or, in any case, of those he inspired in others (cf. Lowrie 219–220).

Barth's debates with Catholic or Catholicizing thinkers (Peterson being the first among them)—together with the almost simultaneous and surprisingly sudden demise of the dialectical theological movement in its early and resolutely Protestant variety—are best understood as expressing a Kierkegaardian moment in the repetitive mode. By this, I mean the passionate urge and conceptual need for constant restatement, of beginning all over. And this, Kierkegaard had himself time and again insisted, in a forward looking *recall*, that is, suspension *and* recapitulation, of *all* earlier theses and formulations much rather than in a backward looking and, ultimately, merely melancholic recollection of what had been lost. In fact, this urge and need extended well beyond the necessary misstatements caused by the ill-fated, if inevitable, directness or generality of every reference, of any communication that was un- or non-dialectical, predicated upon any predication of the discursive, whether rational or deliberative, kind. Lest we forget, Kierkegaard himself would eventually leave behind him the regimented and somewhat artificial postures of indirect communication, of pseudonyms and other rhetorical devices, replacing them by a singular individual voice that had, at long last, come into its own, and, henceforth, spoke on its own account, publicly, unabashed, and out in the open.

The Point

We know that Barth, since approximately 1920, notably between the work on the first and second editions of his *Der Römerbrief*, read Kierkegaard selectively. This is demonstrated by his somewhat haphazard choice of texts (texts he owned, refers to and comments on or annotated) as well as by his clear preference for certain usable themes and formulations, while he would either blissfully neglected or downright dismiss several others.

The texts he owned and repeatedly cites in their German translations from the Jena edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* are *Der Augenblick* (*The Moment*) and *Einübung im Christentum* (*Practice in Christianity*), and a somewhat haphazard selection of Kierkegaard's journals (McCormack, *Karl Barth's* 235, 235 n.92; Barrett 7). References to "infinite qualitative difference" (between man and God, "between the world's sensibilities and the categories of faith"; Barrett 8), to "the paradox"

(of any meaning- and truthful expression of divine incarnation, its “incognito” and our “contemporaneity” with it), introduced in the second, fully reworked, edition of Barth’s commentary on *Romans*, can be all be traced back to these three texts. This holds particularly true for *Training (or Practice) in Christianity (Einübung im Christentum)*, most notably for its section on “The Categories of Offense,” the text Barth cites most frequently and often directly (10). And other longer citations from this work abound, such as this one:

But take away the possibility of offense [*Ärgernisses*], as has been done in Christendom. And all Christianity becomes direct communication, and then Christianity is abolished, has become something easy, a superficial something that neither wounds nor heals deeply enough; it has become the false invention of purely human compassion that forgets the infinite qualitative difference between God and man. (Kierkegaard, *Practice* 140)²

But Barth’s repeated use of terms such as “scandal,” “offense,” “indirect communication,” and his insistent mentioning of “the absolute and not merely relative ‘otherness’ of God” (Barrett 9) can, likewise, be found in the other aforementioned texts. In sum, one commentator notes, all of these terms sought to convey Barth’s conviction that “the encounter with Christ happens in the ‘moment’ that cannot be explained in terms of historical antecedents and natural processes” and that, hence, must be as the very instant and instance at which “God breaks into history” (ibid. 8).

To illustrate this point in geometric, quasi-spatial terms, Barth’s *Romans* invokes the mathematical, geometric figure of the tangent, in other words, revelation’s infinitesimal “point” of contact and touch-down, as it were. Quite literally, the moment of God’s revelation is a *Punktum*, indeed, less than a point in either space or time and one, we are told in the Holy Scriptures, that comes and goes, out of His free will, hence, for no apparent reason (intelligible or given to us), with natural cause (as, for God, everything is quite possible without any such previous condition firmly in place), and also without determinable—yet, therefore, all the more special—*effect*. After all, since a tangential point is a *virtual* point, that is, no actual or actualizable point in space or time—*hic et nunc*—at all, its purely and spectacularly *phenomenal* actuality is not of the order of presence. And, again, it is

²Cf. Barrett 10, and Karl Barth, *The Epistle* 98–99 / *Der Römerbrief* 138. In following references to *The Epistle to the Romans*, page numbers in the English translation will precede references to the German original. I will do the same with all other translated foreign titles, each time following their first full citation. Where no official translation is available, all translations are my own.

precisely for this specific reason that it is, paradoxically, all the more incisive, inclusive. It would almost seem that for its genuine—and this means here, “critically,” “realistically,” and “dialectically” conceived “existence”—it does not even need to *be*. In either historical and empirical, natural or ontological terms, it cannot be *said* or *thought* to be. This, nothing else, is its scandal and foolishness, offense and paradox, invisibility or divine incognito.

In the preface to the second edition of his *Der Römerbrief*, Barth would acknowledge this indebtedness to Kierkegaard in telling terms, emphasizing a method (or “system”) for detecting and maintaining “difference” even more than the actual themes (“time and eternity,” for example) that might keep it in place or require for their proper—theological—understanding. All of this introduced by a massive hypothetical (“If”):

If I have a “system,” it exists in what Kierkegaard called the “infinite qualitative distinction” between time and eternity, and in keeping that distinction as constantly as possible [*möglichst beharrlich*] in view of its negative as well as positive significance. “God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.” The relation between *this* God and *this* man, and the relation between *this* man and *this* God, is for me the theme of Bible and the sum [*Summe*] of philosophy all in one [*in einem*]. Philosophers name this *krisis* of human knowledge the origin [*Ursprung*]; the Bible beholds in this cross-roads [*Kreuzweg*] Jesus Christ. (Cf. Barrett 14, and Barth, *The Epistle* 10, trans. modified / *Der Römerbrief* 16–17)

What is meant and praised as the negative and positive side that Kierkegaard’s “dialectical audacity” allows us to alternately see and highlight is, in Barrett’s words, the “acceptance of the reality that human life is most completely cut off from the union with God,” on the one hand, and the fact that resolute critique of so-called Christendom guards us against “adulterating true fidelity to God with cultural loyalties” (14), on the other. In a similar vein, Barth mentions “Kierkegaard’s protest against *Weltkirchlichkeit* [the worldliness of the church]” and his own “small private morning devotions from Kierkegaard,” just as he lists this author’s influence next to that of Franz Overbeck and Dostojevsky. An important lecture from October 1922, entitled “Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie” (somewhat unhelpfully translated as “The Word of God and the Word of Man”), further identifies Kierkegaard as a “spiritual ancestor,” next to Jeremiah, Paul, Luther, and Calvin (McCormack, *Karl Barth’s* 236; Barrett 8; the reference can be found in Barth, “Das Wort” 164).

This said, several commentators have argued that Barth's major theological decisions had been taken on other grounds and well before, such that the undeniable reception of Kierkegaard's work (albeit of a selective and limited portion of it) "fell on already prepared soil" (McCormack, *Karl Barth's* 237). As Bruce McCormack, by any standard the most authoritative scholar of the early Barth, further summarizes:

From Kierkegaard, Barth learned above all a style of communication ("indirect communication") and an attitude (the attitude of the critic of Christianity as a religion). And the Kierkegaardian understanding of the paradoxicality of the incarnation certainly provided Barth with ample ammunition for stressing the incomprehensibility of a revelation which can take place only as a divine possibility and never as a human possibility. But we overestimate Kierkegaard's importance if we wish to see in him the decisive influence on Barth's thought in this phase. (Ibid. 240)³

This is, no doubt, accurate, especially if we take into consideration (as McCormack explicitly does) that "the problem for the sake of which Kierkegaard devised many of the concepts appropriated by Barth was not shared by the latter" (237). In one word, Kierkegaard's "problem" was that of the establishment of an "authentic existence," the delineation of how one "becomes" a real Christian; Barth's concern was that of "the divine subjectivity of revelation" (237, 238). Every other emphasis, in his view, turned "theology into anthropology" (238), reduced theological dogmatics to human psychology, and betrayed faith (*Glaube*) for religion (which equaled *Unglaube*, as Barth emphatically claimed). As a consequence, the first volume of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* takes stock of an implication that Barth had come to spell out in more and more detail over the years, namely the fact that Kierkegaard was "partly responsible for the evolution of Christian subjectivism from Pietism to existentialism, a movement that was too fascinated with the inner life of the self" (Barrett 15). By contrast, as McCormack rightly summarizes: the simple *fact* that, for Barth, God, not human existence, is the center and "Subject of revelation" was designed to guarantee the "objective," if "critical" and "dialectical," reality (and, hence, realism) of the latter. This, nothing else, was the locus—the very question and problem—of theology as a dogmatic

³See also McCormack, "Foreword" (291–304, 301), which reiterates the same claim with regard to Erik Peterson, suggesting that the reading of and response to the latter's "What is Theology?" by no means "forced" Barth to "concretize his method" as this shift had largely taken place well before in the so-called Göttingen *Prolegomena* on which he first lectured in 1924, a year before the publication of Peterson's essay (cf. Barth, *Unterricht* and *Die christliche*).

discipline of thought in and for the Church. It was also the lever that would eventually force the Kierkegaardian moment into its “repetition,” its annulment and recapitulation, as it were, and to rephrase (i.e., restate and simultaneously re-enact) its theological—and, we said, virtual—point.

The Predicament of Predication

Barth puts theology’s difficulty to *make its point* in the most succinct fashion (even though concision would not turn out to be his greatest strength by the time he had almost completed his multi-volume *magnum opus*, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, in the German original some 9000 pages long). In so doing, he restates a simple, undeniable and irrevocably theological (and, I would add, conceptual and practical) truth and, perhaps, truism. In somewhat provocative terms, I will paraphrase it as the *predicament of predication*, a designation that should be taken in every logical and theological, but also homiletic sense of the word. The logical and theological dimensions of this predicament will be my focus in the rest of this essay. Yet the homiletic aspect is not without relevance either. It would suffice to refer to the historical and political conditions under which Barth would consistently formulate and level his severest criticisms of the social question in his comments, in sermons on the religious socialism during his early days as a pastor and in his explicit condemnations, as the leading spokesman of the so-called *Bekennende Kirche*, of the collaborationist policies of the *Deutsche Christen* during the rise, electoral victories and, ultimately, takeover of Germany’s National Socialist Party. A well-known document of this *Zivilcourage* and Barth’s role as a public theologian is the *Barmer Theologische Erklärung* (in full, the *Theologische Erklärung zur gegenwärtigen Lage der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche*), issued in the year 1934. But other, lesser known documents testify to the same theologico-political impetus that Barth would never disavow during his lifetime.

Theologically speaking, for Barth, the matter poses itself in simple, rigorous, and compelling terms: knowledge of God is an “event,” a “miracle”: “Whoever says God says *miracle* [*immer sagt Wunder, wer Gott sagt*]” (*The Epistle* 120, trans. modified / *Der Römerbrief* 167).⁴ Hence, the insistence on what has (rightly or wrongly) been called his theological “actualism” (McCormack, *Karl Barth’s* 432, 465), not to be confused with, say, Rudolf Bultmann’s existentialism, which draws

⁴I am following McCormack’s translation of this passage in *Karl Barth’s* (248).

on a philosophical paradigm, namely Martin Heidegger's, in ways Barth's clearly does not. As he puts it in *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, the book often credited (not least by Barth himself) as his most resolute attempt to once and for all rid himself and Protestant dogmatics of the "last remnants of a philosophical, i.e., anthropological ... foundation and exposition of the Christian faith," that is to say, to conceive of a theology no longer hampered by "the eggshells of philosophical systematics" (Barth, *How I changed* 42–44): "All theological statements are inadequate for their object.... In the strictest sense, only God has a concept of God. All we have are concepts of objects which are not identical with God" (Barth, *Anselm* 29 / *Fides* 28).

Objects, argues Barth almost phenomenologically, in quasi-Husserlian terms, concern not the subject matter—*die Sache selbst*—the being or existence, the originally given or gift, of the Divine. Anselm's *unum argumentum*, in Barth's view, not so much offers demonstrable proof of God's existence and essence, as it ponders His divine predicates, whose given of gift is never in question. Nor does it ever pretend to ground faith, from the bottom up, as it were, couched as it remains from beginning to end in a substantive spiritual exercise rather than formal-theoretical, speculative or hypothetical, thought experiment, strictly speaking. Its proof, therefore, is that of an *explicatio*, of existing faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectus*) though that takes on the meditative form, first of all, of a prayer. Even so, Anselm's "argument" offers little assurance of the demonstrative kind, since, as McCormack aptly summarizes,

conformity to the *ratio fidei* offers no guarantee whatsoever that conformity will also be established with the *ratio veritatis* [i.e., the very being and essence of God as He is in and for Himself]. It could be that the Creed [i.e., the *ratio fidei*] will need to be corrected. But we will only know that as a result of a fresh event of revelation—an event over which we have no control and for which we can only pray. (*Karl Barth's* 434)

Or again: "Humanly speaking, theology is impossible. It is possible only on the basis of the divine Self-speaking, an event over which humans have no control" (369). This, nothing else, is what Anselm's one argument would have solidly proved.

Yet, in fact, Barth draws an even more radical conclusion from these considerations, by stating that salvaging the possibility of so-called *predication* (here of the creed and of dogma) requires an ongoing—or repeated—crisis of the very *predicament* of theologic expression (including the boldest expressionism of its rhetorical-literary form) as such. Only thus can it offer any hope of speaking—that is, predicating and

preaching—in divine matters at all: “*Doctrina* is the Christian human word which has passed through the crisis, the merciless cleansing and purifying of the Word of God attested in the Scriptures. It remains a human word; it does not itself become *verbum divinum*. But nevertheless, when this way is travelled, it is a legitimate pure *praedicatio verbi divini*” (Barth, *Reformierte* 194). Yet how the latter is even possible cannot be demonstrated, deduced or explained, without relying on the sole theological hypothesis Barth allows himself here, as a *petitio principii*, if one could say so: I mean, the non-empirical fact (in phenomenological jargon: a given or gift) that it is God Himself Who is the subject, that is to say, original and moving force—the push and pull—behind creation, revelation, and redemption; in one word, the very “Word” become flesh and God-man with whose critical and dialectical, if real, presence the Biblical events would, Barth thinks, not be and accomplish what surely they claim.

On this overall view, then, theological predicates cannot but eschew the terms and logic upon which natural theology, indeed, all inferential reasoning readily rests. On the contrary, theology, including (especially) dogmatic theology, cannot but be dialectical, that is, crisis-driven, premised as it must be on the initiative of the Divine Word—or, if one can still say so, of the Divine Predicates, that is to say, of *their* predication and, correspondingly, *our* fundamental predicament—and nothing else. Theology must find and locate itself in the perennial (or is it, decidedly modern?) position of having to say the Word and spread (diffuse and disseminate) the Gospel, without having the least power and competence to do so on its own account, by its own authority. On the contrary, theology is *heterological*, if not heterodox. It conveys a non-formal *tautology*: repeating and constantly bringing back the one Word, and reminding us with a seemingly limitless plurality of terms and their various uses of the one incarnation of God-in-man (Christ, the Cross, and Resurrection being the non-synonymous substitution of the single phenomenon that is said here in multiple ways—dialectically, at first, analogically, in the end).

Further, in an apparent reversal of the early Wittgenstein’s famous-infamous dictum—that is, the concluding proposition of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—Barth seems to suggest (as Theodor Adorno, yet another early reader of Kierkegaard’s oeuvre, would reiterate more than forty years later) that of which we cannot speak, we must not, therefore, be silent. Rather, of that of which we cannot speak we must—and, this time, also ought—paradoxically, *speak all the more*, to the greater glory of God (*ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, as Ignatius of Loyola is

supposed to have put it). Only this and nothing else serves as testimony to our creaturely, fallen, finite, yet undeservedly graced existence, the nature and order of things, and the redeemed, if transient, moment it nonetheless hands us, as Kierkegaard knew.

From early on Barth suggests as much and nowhere more clearly than in his 1922 lecture “Das Wort Gottes als Aufgabe der Theologie” (“The Word of God and the Task of Theology”): “As theologians, we ought to speak of God. We are, however, human and as such cannot speak of God. We should recognize both our *ought* and our *cannot* and by that recognition give God the glory” (158; emphasis added).

Instead of pontificating about a “true religion,” supposedly covered over, forgotten or repressed, by a long history in which secularism, naturalism, and (some now claim) even biopolitics join dirty hands, Barth tirelessly restates and reiterates the simple, yet deeply consequential, predicament that *all* predication, as far as we will ever be able to tell, must *always, everywhere, and under any condition* run up against, no matter whether it takes a propositional form, praises and prays, sings or, indeed, whistles its tune. Not even keeping the silence escapes this ultimate fate. On Barth’s view, we would be dealing with a logical and theological, rhetorical as well as homiletic necessity—a predicament and crisis, paradox and scandal—no less than with a moral command or requirement.

That Barth’s position is not without troubles and doomed to shock modern sensibilities, goes without saying. Its reputation of authoritarianism—*Offenbarungspositivismus*, so the accusation went—is quite understandable, even if such designations seem undeserved in the end. With its somewhat maddening view on existence, both human and divine, Barth’s dogmatics invites us to see what we cannot—indeed, must not—logically and theologically grasp at one go, with any single one proposition or predication. It is only the extensive, I am not saying consistent use of the dialectic, that is to say, of even contrasting, contradicting sentences and concepts, parables and images, voices and silences, that keeps this vision in place (or, perhaps, we should say, constantly on the move, as any pilgrimage must be). And this—paradoxically, dialectically—requires the very same dialectic to cede even *its* place, forcing the Kierkegaardian moment that gave it its model also to pass, to repeat and thereby change itself, hence, to yield its subjective pathos, individualism, psychologism, and anthropocentrism in matters of salvation (which it inherited from Pietism) and to substitute it with a more objective, realistic, and intersubjective ecclesial stance, shifting its emphasis on the *pro me* on the *pro nobis* that Barth would

come to accentuate more and more as he embarked upon the long path towards the completion of his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Barrett 16).

What, then, is Theology?

Erik Peterson's scathing critique of Barth's use of paradox and implied dialectic of theology and non-theology (of the "ought" and the "cannot") deserves further attention. In his 1937 essay "Zeuge der Wahrheit" ("Witness to the Truth"), the concluding essay of his volume *Theologische Traktate* (*Theological Tractates*), about which I will say more below, Peterson cites not only an eminently Kierkegaardian title, he also positions the martyr "less as a lonely knight of faith and more as a Savonarola to a complacent Christianity" (as Michael Hollerich aptly puts it in the introduction to his translation; xxix). In the words of the essay: "If there is anything that is the opposite of the spirit of bourgeois comfort, it is primitive Christianity, which in the mouth of the martyr in Revelation blasts us like some fiery breath." Indeed, Peterson will go so far as to claim that: "[t]he secularization of Protestantism, which Kierkegaard fought against so passionately and to which he opposed the concept of the 'witness of the truth'—meaning the concept of the martyr—is just the inevitable result of the Protestant rejection of the cult of the martyrs and the saints." In other words, the nearly unreserved admiration he expresses with regard to Kierkegaard's "genius" will lead Peterson eventually back to the earliest Christian beginnings, to the history and authority of ecclesial dogma, *not* to the modern sensibilities concerning human existence, whose aesthetic presentation and representation (whether in Kierkegaard or Baudelaire, Dostojevski and Strindberg, the literary authors he will explicitly mention) have no place in theology proper. And while a Heidegger may have been justified in claiming that there is *philosophically* (phenomenologically and ontologically) more to be gained from Kierkegaard's "edifying [*erbaulichen*]" writings than from his theoretical-dialectical views (as a memorable footnote in *Sein und Zeit* [*Being and Time*] strikingly puts it), Peterson rejects any similar suggestion for the task of dogmatics.

In this context, it is worthwhile to briefly recall Peterson's 1925 essay "Was ist Theologie?" ("What is Theology?")—first published and circulated as a freestanding pamphlet and later as the opening chapter of his collection *Theological Tractates*. In this highly polemical *Streitschrift* (as he would designate it), Peterson takes Barth to task for a certain vacuousness of a merely writerly, prophetic, apostolic, and

professorial as well as confessional and modernist, literary style that falls well short of the task of stringent and serious dogmatic theology. He also condemns its somewhat unrealistic and ethereal concept of ecclesial community, seen in an exclusively and especially all too abstractly defined eschatological light rather than as the visible body of Christ, in what Peterson will come to identify with the historical continuity of apostolic succession, the community of saints, and with the institution of the Roman Catholic Church (no matter how much he would always lack *romanità*, *romanitas* or romanness, disenchanting as he soon was with the reigning pope and the ecclesial authorities at the time, long unable to obtain an academic position at any of the Church's theological faculties that would be commensurate with his scholarly reputation).

Unlike the later Barth, Peterson's insistence on the importance of dogmatic theology does not mean that he espoused "theological system-building" per se. As several authors have noted, "[d]iscontinuity" is a theme in his diaries from early manhood to old age: "We know in part' [1. Cor: 13] means that there is no 'systematic' ... knowledge of God and his mysteries" (Hollerich, "Introduction" xvii).

This said, with equal right others have heralded Peterson as "dogma's defender" (Hütter). In this regard, "What is Theology?" counts as "arguably still the most incisive critique of dialectical theology," still considered the most significant movement that "reflected a rebellion against the liberal Protestant tradition that made God's revelation an extension of human subjectivity or an outgrowth of the historical process" (ibid.). Yet what Peterson opposes to the strict Protestant, in his (as in Kierkegaard's) case, Lutheran "monoculture of faith" is the "mystical life" and "imitation" in love. Kierkegaard is taken by Peterson to have destroyed "existing" Christianity, that is, the Protestantism of his (and Peterson's own) day. And Barth's position is its logical consequence. To counter this tendency, Peterson suggests, the religious literariness (*Schriftstellerei*) that Kierkegaard and dialectical theology espouse needs to yield its place to dogmatic theology, in the strictest sense of the term, just as the pathos of the singular individual and the correlative emphasis on Divine Subjectivity must be replaced with conversion into the very "fullness of time" that only the Church, with its authority and community, has any chance of giving both substance and continuity.

Both questionable positions, discussed in "What Is Theology?"—the one concerning the nature of theological discourse and the one regarding community—are, in Peterson's view, based upon a misun-

derstanding of the revelation and incarnation of the divine Logos in Christ. They follow a Protestant penchant for formulaic formulations and schematic formalizations that animated much of the movement of early dialectical theology, its so-called actualism (*Aktualismus*) and spontaneous activism. In sum, it is their lack of “concrete theology” that provoked Peterson’s ire and scathing critique.

It was in particular Bultmann’s 1922 essay, entitled “Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?” (“What Does It Mean to Talk of God?”), published in the *Theologische Blätter* in 1925, that prompted Peterson’s vehement response (see Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson* 514, 539), even though his subsequent essay (“What is Theology?”) made merely a fleeting reference to it, reserving its opening salvo for Barth and, via him, questioning the dogmatic legitimacy of precisely those authors, such as Kierkegaard, Calvin, Luther, medieval nominalists, Paul, and Jeremiah that Barth had recently turned or returned to.

Peterson’s polemic attack was severe notwithstanding the fact that his relationship with Barth remained always deeply amiable, as we know from their extensive and recently published correspondence, and in spite of the circumstance that Peterson, during the same year, would publish part of his *Das Buch von den Engeln* (*The Book on Angels*) in the movement’s signature journal, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, founded in 1922, in whose pages Bultmann would also respond separately, as, again, would Barth himself.⁵ Moreover, in a reconciliatory letter to Barth, dated July 23, 1925, Peterson sought to mitigate the fallout of the controversy, claiming—somewhat surprisingly given his own investment in this particular author—that his attack (his *Hauptangriff*, as he phrased it) had been directed at Kierkegaard and, supposedly, not Barth or the dialectical theologians primarily (Peterson, *Theologie* 221–222). But, then, why would he choose to do so, given the fact that he had earlier described Kierkegaard as his “spiritual [*geistiger*] mentor”? (Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson* 99; cf. Scholz 120).

The short answer is that one should read Kierkegaard (as a spiritual mentor, that is), but keep him out of theology, that is to say, out of dogmatics (the very domain and discipline to which Barth and the dialectical theologians sought to insert him but that, in so doing, they

⁵Rudolf Bultmann, “Die Frage,” reprinted in Moltmann, ed. (72–92). Peterson’s essay on angels had appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten* 3 (1925). Barth’s response was entitled “Kirche und Theologie” and appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten* 4 (1926). For the characterization of Peterson’s “What is Theology?” as a *Streitschrift*, see Barbara Nichtweiss, “Einleitung” (xxi).

also, inevitably, emptied out, effectively stripping it of its authority, community, and continuity, and this no matter how much Barth's deemed himself to safeguard the very "objectivity" of revelation and the "realism" of the theology built upon it).

In "What is Theology?," Peterson objects that the Word of God theology in its most dialectical formulation risks losing both its decisive content and ongoing relevance that only the doctrine of incarnation and of ecclesial, apostolic succession (together with a well-understood principle of the *analogia entis*, of "similar-dissimilar," in accordance with the "God in and above us") can guarantee it. Barth, Peterson claims, de facto implies that "there is theology only in that there is no theology" (*Theological* 11 / *Theologische* 3) and, thereby, engages in a self-defeating project that, literally cannot come off the ground and say anything in particular or (what comes down to the same) that allows one to say—that is, prophesy, declare, confess, and narrate as Gospel—just about anything that is unfounded and illogical (and, thus, passes merely as a "surrogate" for the absolute truth):

The Christian dogma that God has become man is not the same as the paradox that the impossible has become possible. *The paradoxical is the surrogate of revelation.* Part of contemporary theology lives on this surrogate. When I present the "paradoxical" as the authentic meaning of revelation, I might just as well say that two times two make five and that "I believe" this religiously—and it is not going too far to say that such a belief is already widespread. As a result, just as the Professor can no longer be distinguished from the Prophet, so the Reformer, under this construal, can no longer be distinguished from the Apostle.

The "paradoxical" makes its appearance in history in the moral paradox of the Stoics and then as the mystical paradox of Sebastian Franck. But to the Christian theologian that is a dubious ambience. The Stoic paradox, for example, that the wise man alone is king, is a paradoxical *statement*. But that the cross of Christ is a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks is not at all in the same sense a statement, because the cross of Christ is itself not a "statement." (18 n.9 / 187–188 n.9)

Kierkegaard, Peterson wants to remind Barth, was a "writer" and "explicitly" stated as much in his diaries ("I am without authority; I am a genius—not an apostle"), Indeed, Peterson adds: "Had he been a theologian, then he would not have been without authority" (19 n.10 / 188 n.10).⁶

⁶The reference is to Kierkegaard, *Tagebücher* (2: 48).

All the Way Down, All the Way Up

Peterson's overall criticism is, perhaps, not wholly justified. For at least in his mature work, in the period of writing his *Church Dogmatics* and already in his immediate critical riposte to Peterson, entitled "Kirche und Theologie" ("Church and Theology"), Barth leaves no doubt that paradox does not reach *all the way down* (or, if you like, *all the way up*), after all. In fact, this insistence may well mark the decisive difference between the *dogmatic* theology that Barth returns to—and about whose enterprise the second edition of his commentary on Paul's *Letter to the Romans* had remained somewhat ambivalent—and all those *other theologies of the Wholly Other*—call them *inverse*, *minimal* or *global* theologies, if you like (theologies, in any case, that are neither historical and positive, revealed or natural, fundamental or philosophical)—that take paradox and dialectics *all the way down, all the way up*. As Barth admits:

The revelation of which theology speaks is not dialectical; it is no paradox. That does not even need to be said. But when *theology* begins, when we humans *think, speak, and write ...* on the basis of revelation, the dialectic—i.e., a forming of principally incomplete thoughts and statements, in which every answer is once again a question, and which all together point beyond themselves toward fulfillment in the inexpressible reality of the *divine* speaking—is the actual form of our doing and acting ... ("Church" 299 / "Kirche" 319)

This important precision and distinction (i.e., between the divine Subject of revelation and its human expression and articulation) should not mask the fact that Barth had earlier, in the second edition of his commentary on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, also affirmed that Christ *is* the paradox, that there *is* an "inner dialectic of the *Sache*" itself, a dialectic (as Eberhard Jüngel would put it in his *Barth-Studien*) "in the being to be known" (Jüngel 143). Indeed, nothing else, it would seem, could be the inner consequence and logic of the theological model in both its—hermeneutic-exegetical and systematic-dogmatic variation—Barth had begun to devise (and from which he would eventually also shy somewhat away as years progressed).

Its simple truth and truism was this: dialectics, if, indeed, it is worth its salt and governs our thinking, speaking, and writing, from beginning to end, then it must go *all the way*. It lives from this predicament of predication, which is seen as capturing, conveying and dramatizing, the very crisis of experience, of history, and does so most tellingly in the scandal and paradox of faith. It is a matter of debate whether

Barth in fact took the dialectics all the way down and up, into the very heart of the theological matter, its *Sache selbst*. What is certain is that if he did not, it is hard to see how his *dogmatic* could yet be salvaged and does not expose itself to an inversion, to another theology of the Wholly Other that, from here on, must take its lead from elsewhere (if not from Kierkegaard, then from a Kafka and Beckett, as read by Benjamin and Adorno, for example).⁷

Peterson thus rightly suspects that the very meaning and internal hierarchy of the traditional *analogia fidei*, like the *analogia entis*, must come under tremendous pressure, as a logical and theological consequence of Barth's own original project. And, presumably, its later expansion into *Church Dogmatics* does not fundamentally alter the premises upon which the debate is based. Thought all the way through, Barth's dialectics and dogmatics put both the substance (the concreteness, as Peterson says) and the subsistence of historical faith and the Church on an entirely different ontological—or, rather, theological—plane: one that cannot anchor itself but remains adrift.

As Peterson puts it somewhat provocatively, contrasting the free-wheeling, narrative nature of the—in his eyes, fundamentally Kierkegaardian—dialectic of dialectical theology with the “full stop [*das Punktum*, once again]” (Peterson, *Theological 5 / Theologische 3*) of

⁷McCormack's subtle attempt to salvage Barth's intention and project, I fear, cannot convince in the end, but must speak for itself here: “*in itself*, revelation is undialectical. The Person of the Logos is not dialectically structured. But the being of the Mediator (the Person of the Logos in His two natures) is dialectically structured. In that the Logos reveals Himself in and through the veil of human flesh without becoming directly identical with it, there is dialectic in the being to be known” (*Karl Barth's 370–371*). Barth's presumed “turn” in the years following the second edition of his *Epistle to the Romans* and the preparation of his later dogmatic studies, McCormack continues, “did not consist in a simple and straightforward abandonment of a dialectic in the being to be known, it consisted in his thoroughly Reformed reception of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic model of Christology, in accordance with which it had become possible to recognize an ‘undialectical point of unity’ in the Person of the Logos who triumphs over the antithesis of God and humankind without eliminating it. This understanding ... remained foundational for all of Barth's later reflections on Christology. He never went back on his basic insight that the presence of God in the veil of creaturely flesh is a presence in a reality that is different from God. To that extent, the ‘inner dialectic of the *Sache*’ would always be preserved” (371). McCormack treats the debate with Erik Peterson as a “Footnote to Barth's Christology” (367). But to do so is, perhaps, to underestimate the wider significance and implications of the confrontation. To say that Barth was neither “alarmed” nor “considerably influenced” by Peterson's “attack” (as Eberhard Jüngel, with whom McCormack disagrees here, had earlier claimed) is one thing, but to acknowledge that the Peterson-Barth debate epitomized major issues for both thinkers to which they would keep returning for reasons internal to their respective and very different theological projects, is another. McCormack's conclusion—“The truth is that Barth found it [i.e., Peterson's “What is Theology?”] a ‘bad’ piece and he thought it was probably written on a whim” (368)—does not really express this.

faith qua obedience that the Biblical revelation of the God-man and apostolic tradition seemingly clearly imputes:

theology only exists intelligibly if the real possibility of knowledge is presupposed. That does not mean that theology has to take a position in the philosophical controversy between realistic and idealistic theorists of knowledge, in the sense of a human dogmatizing in favor of the realists, but rather that the realistic character of theological knowledge is consistent with the real character of revelation. Only on the assumption that God has become man, and thereby enabled us to participate in the *scientia divina*, only under this presupposition does it make sense for theology to speak of a real, even if only analogical, knowledge of God. (6 / 4)

Would Barth have denied this? Certainly not. But, on Peterson's view, the Kierkegaardian and Barthian dialectic entertains "narratives" and "possibilities" and, hence, lacks seriousness, commitment, re-enactment. It forces the legitimate question "What is Theology?" into the infinite regress of an endless and merely abstract "repetition" of this very same question whose answer thus stays open-ended, that is, says either nothing or (what comes down to same)—potentially—all. The only way, then, out of this predicament—the predicament of all predication, as I have called it—is the further assumption and affirmation that, theologically speaking, "revelation, faith, and obedience in some way involve a participation [*Partizipation*] in the divine Logos" (7 / 5). Or, as a footnote has it: "Dogma belongs to the speech of the incarnate Logos, as the body of Christ belongs essentially to his head. The body of Christ is not a subordinate *accidens* (secondary quality) that he could just as well do without, and in the same way dogma is not something one can put brackets around according to one's preference and leave unnoticed" (22 n.23 / 191 n.14)

But would Barth have been quick to deny this? This is hardly the case. Barth takes from Calvin the remarkable—phenomenological, critical, realistic, and, I would add, deeply pragmatic—insight that there is a theological place for the natural and the historical givens that natural theology (before and after the Reformation) interprets incorrectly. Following Barth, McCormack calls it, somewhat paradoxically, a "natural revelation" that is

"actualized" by the "Word of God in nature and history" through the *lens* provided by the Bible. But the *right use of the lens* presupposes its *right interpretation*, which Barth regarded as impossible apart from the witness of the Holy Spirit. ... What decided whether a theology was "natural" or not was not the *locus* of the revelation but the source (the power) by means of which revelation (in the Bible or in nature and history) was actualized. Since revelation [scil. as opposed to natural causes or reasons] in either

locus [scil. the Bible or natural history] is always the effect of God's gracious action alone, there was nothing "natural" about a theology which derived its material from either *locus*. (*Karl Barth's* 306–307, 306 n.51)⁸

Without resorting to the classical insight that theology draws on at least three central sources, namely Scripture, tradition, and experience, it merely requires what Calvin and, in his footsteps here, Barth call a *testimonium spiritus sancti internum* by which the Holy Spirit in Biblical Scripture meets the Holy Spirit in the heart of the human believer, which while, at first glance two, is, in reality, one (307). Which is another way of saying that every call (like every vocation, again in Luther's no less than Weber's idiom *Ruf, Berufung*) is "my call," before anything else. Or, more precisely, that the hearing and the answering of such calling—including the "occasion" of its event, the "response" or "decision" following up on it directly (but actually coming before its actual or actualized happening at least just as much)—are essentially one and the same. This is not to reduce such call and calling to idealism, to merely subjectivist figments of our imagination and all too human aspirations. Rather it is to insist that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, that we must put our money where our mouth is and, only in so doing, we transform contingencies into the necessities we can live by.

To make this claim is not to suggest that Barth abandoned his earlier view that "God as a subject was dialectically structured" under the influence of Peterson's essay (as had been Jüngel's hypothesis), since several lectures that Barth had given in Göttingen had already widely addressed this matter (and had seemingly reversed the very position for which Peterson took Barth to task): "Barth's insistence throughout the Göttingen dogmatic lectures that God's revelation is a recognizably *positive* revelation, even though God's presence is hidden within creaturely veils, suggests that already at the start of his reflection on dogmatics he intended to portray God as an undialectical Subject in God's own being" (Marga 88–89). But these lectures, which have often been characterized as the most important document of Barth's development between the 1922 edition of *Der Römerbrief* and the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*—thus marking the transition from "Christian radicalism" (itself a liberation from the liberalism of *Kulturprotestantismus*) to the "liberation from the shackles of philosophy in order to arrive at a genuine, independent theology"—were published much later, well after the initial reception of the Peterson-Barth debate (cf. *ibid.* 36, and von Balthasar 101).

⁸McCormack draws on Barth's 1922 *Die Theologie Calvins* (217).

The Church

Peterson's thoughts on the historical meaning and present role of the Church amplify the crucial points made in "What is Theology?" Indeed, a second, if far more implicit, confrontation between Barth and Peterson is relevant in this context. The latter's essays "The Church" and "The Church from Jews and Gentiles," published in 1928/1929 and 1933, respectively (the second written after he had just converted to Catholicism) develop an ecclesiology that differs in many respects from Barth's. "The Church" can be characterized as a direct "sequel" to "What Is Theology?" (Hollerich, "Introduction" xx). Certainly, most striking, especially for us readers today, is the adamant anti-Judaic and no less vehement anti-Pauline streak of these writings that find their echo also in Peterson's own alternative interpretation of the letter to the Romans, in seminars held between 1925 and 1928 at the University of Bonn, whose lecture notes have now been reconstructed and were recently published (Peterson, *Der Brief*). Investigations regarding the nature of the Church informed the explicit and extensive debates that Barth had in the 1920s, notably with the theological counterparts whom he respected most, that is to say, with Catholic thinkers of various persuasions (Peterson, being the most prominent among them). And yet, it is also clear that, for both Barth and Peterson, theology is before any thing else *a function of the Church*, although everything here hinges on how one interprets the Biblical, New Testament term, *ekklesia* (no small matter). This said, the four defining characteristics of the concept of the Church that Catholics, such as Peterson, and Reformed theologians, like Barth, agree on are that of "unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity," no matter how much they differ in their respective responses to the question as to whether the Church in its very actuality possesses "the slightest mastery of grace" or whether it is rather as an "instrument" of the divine grace that the Church is brought into existence "moment by moment." After all, as Barth insisted, if the four defining features were not at the Church's "disposal," then they have to remain "properties of God's act," that is to say, they are "not the properties of a statically existing historical entity" (McCormack, *Karl Barth's* 379, 380). And this, one is tempted to conclude, would seem to settle the matter once and for all. Barth's concept of divine *Gegenständlichkeit* is not that of a "historical medium that can become transparent and let God's objectivity shine through in the same manner as ... the Incarnation, Scripture, and Christian proclamation" (Marga 90). History and the institutional media can be adopted as a "predicate" of God's revelation

but not the other way around; the relationship between the former and the latter is—infinity—“asymmetrical” (88). This is what Barth holds out against Peterson and the Roman Catholic tradition whose identification of the Church’s authority with that of Christ is misguided at best, sinful and blasphemous at worst.

One could object that this position does not take sufficient account of Peterson’s uncharacteristic comments on the dictum *Jesus Christus instituit ecclesiam*, a formulation which had caused so much controversy in modern times and which Peterson had held up against the eschatological light, with and against Loisy’s aforementioned view. But this will lead us too far.

Theology Now

A question remains: what good can a renewed meditation on these fractured, punctured legacies—the Barth-Peterson debate on the question “What is Theology?” (or on the meaning of “The Church,” which I have not further addressed here)—still do to us? And this beyond the historical evaluation of their, at times, edifying and, at times, trying examples (Barth’s authorial tone, Peterson’s discussing of torture and heresy are cases in point)?

A possible answer to this question begins, perhaps, to emerge. It is one that insists on the *critical* need for—and renewed pragmatic use for—a return to (and of) theological archives and their methodological apparatuses, also (I would say, especially) *today*. Barth himself makes a similar observation when, with reference to his study of old Reformed orthodoxies, notably in Heppe’s *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche*, he writes that, “it can be worthwhile to reflect upon the smallest point with the greatest power of Christian presuppositions, and precisely for the sake of the much-appealed-to ‘life,’ to take the truth-question with complete seriousness all along the line” (“Foreword” iii–iv / “Zum Geleit” viii). The dialectical reversal of the “smallest” and “greatest” reveals a great deal, not least the fact that theology’s minimal (tangential, virtual) “point” of detail and its maximal impact for “life” correspond in the most paradoxical and secret of ways.

All this, then, is not to suggest that one could or should endlessly rehash debates that have their temporal index clearly written all over them: in Barth’s case, the articulation of a genuinely “modern” theology that rejects “natural theology,” “apologetics,” “anthropology,” and “historicism” (McCormack, *Karl Barth’s* 466), but does so—with atypical, un-modern gusto—*von Gott aus*; in Peterson’s case, the “search in ancient texts for a world that was not so much lost as still beyond

us" (as, again, his translator's, Michael Hollerich's, introduction summarizes very aptly; "Introduction" xiii).

Yet, however much Barth and Peterson and their contemporaries have been marked by theological no less than cultural and societal crises that shook and displaced every building block of their world and view—a crisis that, up to a point, we are able to render, perhaps, explain in more sober and distant historical terms only now—it is also apparent that their echoes and tremors are still or yet again very much with us today. In matters of fact and for conceptual reasons, one might venture to say that their stakes have only been raised.

As with Barth, whose political—theologico-political—influence beyond the identifiable theologies of liberation is somewhat less clear (see Gorringer), one might well ask what a contemporary parallel or reception of Peterson might plausibly look like. One might be tempted to look at former Cardinal Ratzinger's and former Pope Benedict XVI's writings, from his early article on the meaning of "Church" in the Catholic *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* to his more recent discussion of the so-called dialectic of secularization (in direct and indirect conversation with Jürgen Habermas, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, and others).

Conclusion

Barth's work still marks one of the most radical modern and contemporary attempts to expunge all philosophical—but also: natural, historical, cultural—presuppositions from theology as a project and discipline (and, under a certain definition, "science" or, rather, a *Wissenschaft*, a profession or *Beruf*, as Max Weber well knew, which is at the same time a calling or *Ruf*). In this, Barth would be far more rigorous and relentless, expansive and daring, than many of his fellow travelers, Eduard Thurneysen, Friedrich Gogarten, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to mention just the most well-known among his contemporaries. And the same, I would claim, holds true for a whole generation of post-Barthian theologians, comprising such diverse thinkers such as Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Eberhard Jüngel, Ernst Käsemann, and Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, whose writings formed the daily bread of my teachers.⁹

⁹If I have chosen Karl Barth as a pivotal focus, here and elsewhere, then this is, first of all, to pay homage to my theological formation in the Theological Faculty at the University of Leiden, in The Netherlands, where under the guidance of my *Doktorvater*, the late Hendrik Johan (Han) Adriaanse (who analyzed Barth's recurrent emphasis on the importance of the *Sache selbst* with the help of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology),

Further, Barth allows one to return to a Kierkegaard who was, perhaps, violently mischaracterized by a Theodor W. Adorno, in his *Habilitationsschrift*, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*. Adorno's somewhat dismissive depiction of the "bourgeois interior" does not quite capture the "inwardness" from whose perspective alone historical objectivism and societal conformism—the "deification of the established order" which is "the secularization of everything"—can be kept "in suspense" (Kierkegaard, *Practice* 91). But it forces one to revisit and rethink, likewise, a Kierkegaard who, in the readings of an Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida is, perhaps, all too quickly accepted as the *alpha* and *omega* of all religious reflection, notably in his interpretation of the binding of Isaac, of Abraham and that of sacrifice, in *Fear and Trembling* (published in the same year, on the very same day, as was *Repetition*—each title being a repetition, in fear and trembling, of the other, as it were).

From Barth and his interlocutors (Peterson to begin with) one could first of all learn that there might well be—to put it, again, somewhat paradoxically—a logically necessary and practically useful Kierkegaardian moment that, inevitably, *must* also be made to pass. And, in all fidelity to Kierkegaard as an eminently consequential author and thinker, this might well be what *repetition* clearly requires. Kierkegaard may have been the first to acknowledge this much.

Constancy (in Latin: *constantia*), as Constantin Constantius, the presumed author of *Repetition*, rightly reminds us, requires one to recall the moment and to "resume" what came before, and to do so with a persistence and courage for which Job, after Abraham and before Christ, offers one the rare models to live up to (as do the lives of martyrs and witnesses, including the most modern, unapparent and unlikely ones, the so-called "knights of faith," and, perhaps, not least, for us, Kierkegaard, the individual, himself).

Constantine, by the way, was the name of the first Roman emperor—Constantine the Great or Saint Constantine (306–337 CE)—to officially declare Christianity the religion of the state, legalizing its worship. And one wonders whether to take this faint echo of his name of

Hendrikus Berkhof (the eminent Professor of Dogmatic Theology who had met Barth in his long career), Gijsbertus Hendricus (Bert) ter Schegget (a left-Barthian, and Christian-Marxist, if ever there was one), and, finally, Eginhard Meijering (who, far more reservedly, evaluated Barth's abundant citations of the early Fathers of the Church), I was permanently exposed to Barth's dialectical theology, including his interpretation of Scripture and his monumental *Church Dogmatics*, not so much as a theological point of departure, but as a constant, if critical, historical-systematical reference from which much could still be gleaned (perhaps, ever more so).

which Kierkegaard must surely have been aware for what it is. Is it not to remind the reader that the great Constantine's repetition was, well, not "constant"? Or, conversely, that no repetition can stick it out fully, *à la longue duréé*? And, hence, that a certain stasis, if not state, enters always the picture, as the very worldliness and commonality, even commonness and communication, that *phenomenalizes* the Word, as a no longer singular, paradoxical incarnation, a no longer unseen invisibility, as it were? Is this Kierkegaard's way of granting a Hegel that the "essence" must also "appear," that pseudonyms and theatrical masks must eventually also be dropped, if even for a moment and one that is no less decisive than the maddening moment of decision of which we, rightly, make so much in the reception—and repetition—of Kierkegaard's work?

If this is the case, one must take Peterson's objections to the (incomplete, still all too positive) dialectic of Barth's theology as both justified and necessary, just as one can take the latter's insistence on its consequential character in theological and ecclesial terms (almost in spite of himself and his own later self-correction or *Retractationes*) to be quite compelling and certainly genuine. On this reading, then, both Barth and Peterson represent serious and, if you like, logically and theologically fully pertinent positions: positions, come to think of it, for which there is, today, not much of an alternative, really (provided we substitute the proper terms and, perhaps, do without the dialectics and *theo*-logics, that is to say, Christian theism, in both its Protestant and Catholic persuasion, after all is said and done).

After all, which religious tradition was ever successful in warding off the predicament of predication, preventing its slippery slope from becoming a *free fall*—indeed, a *free for all*—such that "there is theology only in that there is no theology," and such that our "ought" and our "cannot" go hand in hand and only *thus* testify to the greater glory of God (gods or whatever comes to their place)? It only seems fair, then, to assume that no theological model, even and especially *today*—and no matter how "critically" and "realistically," "dialectically" or, indeed, "dogmatically" dogmatic it presents itself in its propositions, thinking and writing—ever escapes this strangest and most fateful of all fates. This, then, is theological dogma, its profession of faith, its call and calling, in fact, the very academic regime, intellectual discipline, perhaps, spiritual exercise (experience and experiment) under which it must necessarily suffer, under which alone it can flourish. There is not much to add. And, *mutatis mutandis*, as I have tried to indirectly communicate, the very same holds true for philosophy and political

thinking, for criticism and theory, indeed, for the general humanities and the wider cultural discourse or public debate, in the broadest possible sense.

In a much further sense, then, Barth was more right even than he explicitly claimed: for just as theology does not reach, much less own, the grand object (*die Sache selbst*) upon which it touches only *tangentially*, touched as it itself is as by “a mathematical point with no extension” (McCormack, *Karl Barth's* 304), so also the concept—*any* concept—intends (or tends towards) the non-conceptual that it, by definition, does not fully grasp, let alone masters. And if this latter extrapolation is not the point (*Punktum*) around which Barth wider project revolves, *theologically* and *dogmatically* invested as it remains, we may well make this additional step and see it as the very “point” from which he must not only depart but to which *we, today*, cannot but return, as to a Kierkegaardian moment, nothing less, nothing more.

Non-extensiveness, pure intensity is the very matter of its principle. Call it *Aktualismus*, if you like. And yet, if Peterson is right as he surely must be, intensity and density go hand in hand. The two perspectives, opposed only in appearance—at the surface level of our historicist reading and naturalist attitude—are, in spiritual fact, co-extensive, virtually indistinguishable. Only faith recognizes faith where it manifests itself, incognito, if need be, triumphantly visible, where possible.

The Johns Hopkins University

WORKS CITED

- von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976. Print.
- Barrett, Lee C. “Karl Barth: The Dialectic of Attraction and Repulsion.” *Kierkegaard's Influence in Theology*, Tome I: *German Protestant Theology, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*. Vol. 10. Ed. Jon Stewart. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012. 1–41. Print.
- Barth, Karl. “Foreword.” In *Reformed Dogmatics* by Heinrich Heppe. Rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G.T. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978. Print.
- . *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*. Trans. Ian W. Robertson. London: SCM Press, 1960. Print.
- . *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf. Erster Band: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes. Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*. Ed. Gerhard Sauter. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982. Print.
- . “Church and Theology.” *Theology and Church*. Trans. Louise Pettitbone Smith. London: SCM, 1962. 286–306. Print.
- . *The Epistle to the Romans*. Trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1968. Print.

- . *Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes in Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms*. Ed. Eberhard Jüngel and Ingolf U. Dalferth. *Gesamtausgabe* II.13. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981. Print.
- . *How I Changed My Mind*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1969. Print.
- . "Kirche und Theologie." *Die Theologie und die Kirche*. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1928. 302–328. Print.
- . "Kirche und Theologie." *Zwischen den Zeiten* 4 (1926): 18–40
- . "Reformierte Lehre, ihr Wesen und Aufgabe." *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. 179–212. Print.
- . *Der Römerbrief (Zweite Fassung, 1922)*. Ed. Cornelis van der Kooi and Katja Tolstaja. *Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. II. 47. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010. Print.
- . "A Thank-You and a Bow: Kierkegaard's Reveille." *Canadian Journal of Theology*. XI: I (1963): 3–7. Print.
- . *Die Theologie Calvins*. Ed. Hans Scholl. Zürich: TVZ, 1993. Print.
- . *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*. Vol. 1. *Prolegomena* 1924. Ed. Hannelotte Reiffen. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985. Print.
- . "Das Wort Gottes als Aufgabe der Theologie." *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. 156–178. Print.
- . *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1925. Print.
- . "Zum Geleit." In *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche: Dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* by Heinrich Heppe. Ed. Ernst Bizer. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958. Print.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. "Die Frage der ‚dialektischen‘ Theologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Erik Peterson." *Zwischen den Zeiten* 4 (1926): 40–59. Print.
- . "Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?" *Theologische Blätter* 4 (1925): 129–135. Print.
- Busch, Eberhard. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Trans. John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976. Print.
- Gorringe, Timothy J. *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.
- von Harnack, Adolf. *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. 3 vols. Freiburg im Breisgau: J.C.B. Mohr & Paul Siebeck, 1888. Print.
- Hollerich, Michael. "Introduction." *Theological Tractates* by Erik Peterson. xi–xxx. Print.
- . "Michael Hollerich on Erik Peterson (and Carl Schmitt)." November 1, 2011. Web. September 12, 2013. <<http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/michael-hollerich-on-erik-peterson-and-carl-schmitt/>>.
- Hütter, Reinhard. "Dogma's Defender: A Review of *Theological Tractates*." *First Things*. May 2012. Web. September 13, 2013. <<http://www.firstthings.com/article/2012/04/dogmarsquos-defender>>.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. "Von der Dialektik zur Analogie: Die Schule Kierkegaards und der Einspruch Petersons." *Barth-Studien*. Zürich and Köln: Benziger Verlag; and Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1982. 127–179. Print.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Practice in Christianity*. Ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991. Print.
- . *Tagebücher*. Vol. 2. Ed. and trans. Theodor Haecker. Innsbruck: Brenner Verlag, 1923. Print.

- von Kloeden, Wolfdietrich. "Das Kierkegaard-Bild Karl Barths in seinen Briefen der 'Zwanziger Jahre': Streiflichter aus der Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe." *Kierkegaardiana*, 12 (1982): 93–105. Print.
- Lowrie, Walter. *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2013. Print.
- Marga, Amy. *Karl Barth's Dialogue with Catholicism in Göttingen and Münster: Its Significance for His Doctrine of God*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010. Print.
- McCormack, Bruce L. "Foreword to the German Edition of *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*." *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2008. 291–304. Print.
- . *Karl Barth's Critical Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Print.
- Moltmann, Jürgen, ed. *Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie*. Vol. 2. *Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten, Eduard Thurneysen*. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967. Print.
- Nichtweiss, Barbara. *Erik Peterson: Neue Sicht auf Leben und Werk*. Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 1992. Print.
- Nichtweiss, Barbara. "Einleitung." In *Theologie und Theologen: Briefwechsel mit Karl Barth u.a., Reflexionen und Erinnerungen* by Erik Peterson. xix–lxxvi. Print.
- Peterson, Erik. *Der Brief an die Römer. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Vol. 6. Eds. Barbara Nichtweiss and Ferdinand Hahn. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2012. Print.
- . "Das Buch von den Engeln." *Zwischen den Zeiten* 3 (1925): 141–153. Print.
- . *Theological Tractates*. Ed. and trans. Michael J. Hollerich. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.
- . *Theologische Traktate. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Vol. 1. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1994. Print.
- . *Theologie und Theologen: Briefwechsel mit Karl Barth u.a., Reflexionen und Erinnerungen*. Ed. Barbara Nichtweiss. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2009. Print.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. "Ansprache an die Teilnehmer des internationalen Symposiums über Erik Peterson." *Erik Peterson: Die theologische Präsenz eines Outsiders*. Ed. Giancarlo Caronello. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2012. xxv–xxviii. Print.
- . "Kirche." *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*. Vol. 6. Ed. Michael Buchberger. 2nd ed. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1961. 172–183. Print.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Politische Theologie II: Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder politischen Theologie*. Berlin: Duncke & Humblot, 1970. Print.
- . *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of Any Political Theology*. Trans. Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward. Malden: Polity Press, 2012. Print.
- Scholz, Frithard. "Zeuge der Wahrheit—ein anderer Kierkegaard." *Monotheismus als politisches Problem? Erik Peterson und die Kritik der politischen Theologie*. Ed. A. Schindler. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1978. 120–148. Print.
- Stroumsa, Guy. "From Abraham's Religion to the Abrahamic Religions." *Historia Religionum: An International Journal*, 3 (2011): 11–22. Print.
- Turchin, Sean A. "Kierkegaard's Echo in the Early Theology of Karl Barth." *Kierkegaard Studies: Yearbook 2012*. Eds. Heiko Schulz, Jon Stewart, and Karl Verstrynge. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012. 323–336. Print.
- De Vries, Hent. "Inverse versus Dialectical Theology: The Two Faces of Negativity and the Miracle of Faith." *Paul and the Philosophers*. Eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. 466–511. Print.