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THE CATHOLIC CRITICS OF KARL BARTH

IN OUTLINE AND ANALYSIS

by GROVER FOLEY

IN 1932 R. Grosche, editor of the newly founded magazine *Catholica*, attributed to Karl Barth the chief honour of 'having made the Catholic-Protestant controversy again possible in the form of theological discussion'.¹ For the Catholic critics of Barth the full possibilities of this discussion were first realised in 1951 in a brilliant work by Urs von Balthasar,² whose central thesis was rated by Barth himself as 'incomparably more powerful than that of most of the books which have clustered around me' (*C.D.* IV.1, 768).³ Now, in his latest part-volume, Barth expresses his gratitude to three other Catholic authors of excellent books on his theology, one each in German, French, and Italian, all showing a 'thorough familiarity with the text', and even more important, 'an earnest wish to comprehend and a real comprehension' (*K.D.* IV.3.1, viii). Hans Küng's *Rechtfertigung*⁴ reconciling the Catholic doctrine of justification with Barth's own, and raising a storm of interconfessional debate, has since become virtually a part of the continental theological vocabulary. Henri Bouillard's three-volume 900-page analysis,⁵ surpassing even von Balthasar's research in objectivity and breadth, and stimulating sheer envy for its French-reading public, appears to be *the* introduction to Barth's theology for the foreseeable future. And Emmanuele Rivero worthily represents even Italy's traditionally conservative Catholicism with a lengthy critique ranking with most Protestant attempts to date.⁶ Among the multitude of questions which this whole remarkable phenomenon raises for the Protestant spectator, several are

¹ *Catholica*, I, 1932, p. 96.

² H. U. von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, Köln, 1951.

³ *C.D.* stands in the following for the *Church Dogmatics*, Edinburgh, 1936ff; *K.D.* for *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, being those volumes not yet published in English.

⁴ *Rechtfertigung*, Einsiedeln, 1957, 304 pp.

⁵ *Karl Barth*, Paris, 1957, in two parts: I, 'Genèse et évolution de la théologie dialectique'; II, 'Parole de Dieu et existence humaine' (in two sections, here referred to as II.1 and II.2), 284, 288, and 308 pp.

⁶ *La Teologia esistenzialistica di Karl Barth*, Napoli, 1955, 425 pp.

basic: how does Catholicism see Barth's dogmatics, what does it say to what it sees, and why should it to a greater extent than Protestantism be so obviously interested in seeing anything at all there?

In the early days of Barth's theology such critics as K. Adam and E. Pryzwara had indeed applied themselves to the task of criticism, and some of the decisions then made were so fundamental and far-reaching as, for instance, Barth's speaking of the Catholic *analogia entis* as an 'invention of the Antichrist'. But until the storm of the 'dialectical theology' subsided into its disparate elements and the promontory of the *Church Dogmatics* emerged, the real defenders of traditional Catholic dogma could not sight the danger. Even long after the determinative Anselm study *Fides quaerens intellectum* of 1931 and in face of the steadily growing *Dogmatics*, most Catholic (as well as Protestant) opinion held that the early commentary on *Romans* included, concluded, and (for the critics) excluded the essence of the Barthian aberration. Typical are the only two full-length books prior to von Balthasar's, in one of which J. C. Groot, though enthusiastically joining the attack on nineteenth-century Liberalism, finds in Barth only a 'dialectic' based on the 'actualistic principle of distance', to which the Catholic 'analogy' must oppose its true 'static source of revelation'.¹ Jérôme Hamer as late as 1949 is even less favourable to Barth's 'occasionalism' 'founded on an agnosticism which he tries in vain to evade through fideism'.² Some excellent works in *Catholica*, such as G. Söhngen's defence of the *analogia entis* which almost reconciled Barth at least to this interpretation of the concept,³ were not applied directly to Barth's theology. If a system is attributed to Barth at all during these 'dark ages' of the Catholic criticism, it is exclusively Kierkegaard's 'infinite qualitative distinction' between God and man in the *Romans*.

However, a splendid enlightenment was being prepared by von Balthasar, resulting finally in the freedom of most critics from those Platonic and Kantian 'eggshells' which Barth had long before discarded. No longer is Barth presented as the

¹ J. C. Groot, *Karl Barth en het theologische kenprobleem*, Heiloo, 1946, p. 329.

² Jérôme Hamer, *Karl Barth, l'Occasionalisme théologique de K. Barth*, Paris, 1949, p. 171.

³ Gottlieb Söhngen, 'Analogia fidei', *Catholica*, III, 1934, pp. 113-36, 176-208; cf. *C.D.* II.1, pp. 8iff.

disciple of Kierkegaard, but rather as his chief modern foe. No longer is he an 'occasionalist', but the first systematician since Aquinas. Even the dialectic of Yes and No rules no more, but the christocentric analogy allows man a reality precisely in his dependence on God's grace. *Credo ut intelligam* does not mean that I know nothing, any more than *analogia fidei* means that there is no likeness between creature and Creator. What they do exclude is the reverse movement from a human knowledge or potentiality to the knowledge of God, as in the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* which bases faith's certainty of God ultimately on human self-certainty, and the *analogia entis* which substitutes for God's revelation a 'being in general' 'existing and capable of proof even without revelation and otherwise than in faith' (*C.D.* II.1, 231). Yet there is a real analogy, for faith is not nothing, but everything, not only noetic but also ontic (though von Balthasar unfortunately tends to oppose faith to 'being', reducing it almost to *notitia*, an interpretation of Barth which the Lutheran G. Wingren carries to an extreme¹). Man may think he at least 'is'. 'But the point is that in faith he must regard . . . his very self in its activity, in its living of its own life, as determined by the Word of God . . .' (*C.D.* I.1, 280). For the believer as for Paul, the same 'life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God' (Gal. 2.20), in the proper order of both senses of the *fides Jesu Christi*. To imagine a 'creation' or 'history' to which faith would be superfluous would threaten the only real existence which Christians have in and with Christ. 'This "with Christ" determines their past and present and future; their whole history' (*C.D.* IV.2, 277).

Yet von Balthasar goes further. In the third volume on the doctrine of creation, Barth supposedly not only admits the reality of human nature in its dependence on God's grace, but allows it enough relative independence to satisfy even the requirements of the *Vaticanum*. Without denying that the *analogia entis* signifies a similarity or likeness between creature and Creator, von Balthasar applies Söhngen's argument for this analogy as subordinate but indispensable to the *analogia fidei* directly to Barth's own development, though with a more

¹ Gustaf Wingren, *Die Methodenfrage der Theologie*, Göttingen, 1957; Engl. trans. *Theology in Conflict*, Edinburgh, 1958.

Catholic emphasis than Söhngen displayed. The noetic analogy of faith, that 'God is known only through God', requires and receives an ontic basis in the analogy of being, which also involves a creaturely self-knowledge grounded in a 'primary act of the reason'. Since Barth admits that nature forms a relative but indispensable 'presupposition' for grace, von Balthasar concludes that 'at this point the polemic against natural theology and the *analogia entis* is also outdated'.¹ Consequently Barth's continuing rejection of other doctrines such as the *preambula fidei*, the proofs of God, *philosophia perennis*, freedom of the will, the *potentia oboedientialis*, and so forth, reveals itself simply as a misunderstanding.²

Von Balthasar has had such a determinative influence on later critics, as Küng and Bouillard acknowledge, that a criticism of his thesis best follows analysis of the subsequent authors. So representative are these three other authors with respect to the present-day possibilities that a constant comparison in a dogmatic area characteristic for each recommends itself, following each general introduction. (In the following comparisons, however, it must be remembered that the authors themselves almost never mention one another.)

Emmanuele Riverso entitled his book in 1955 *The Existential Theology of Karl Barth*, making clear at the outset his return to the pre-Balthasar interpretation (in contrast to Bouillard, who consistently employs existentialism precisely against Barth). The method is quite simple: 'The *analogia fidei* is only an illusion which hides the polarity . . .' (36) which Hamer has rightly classified as a man-God dualism (being therefore rejected by Bouillard, I, 235). Barth's whole theology, epitomised in the *Romans*, is irrevocably opposed to the Vatican Council's defence of man's autonomous reason. 'A faith which has no other relation to reason than its exclusion lacks contact with the higher part of man' (146f). Somewhat disconcerting is Riverso's combination of polemics and irenics which allows him not only to find occasionally in the *Dogmatics* an 'exalted and profound religious passion' (97) but also to designate for example the grace Barth proclaims as 'a nonentity in fact in man and a lie in God' (149).

¹ op. cit., p. 313.

² For a fuller report cf. in *S.J.T.*, 7, 1954, the essay by G. Miegge, pp. 59-72, and the review by E. Wildbolz, pp. 108-11.

For Riverso the stumbling-block is 'the fundamental dialectic of Barthianism: God unveils Himself in veiling Himself' (99), the inseparability of mystery from revelation, the constant so-called transcendence which only conceals a fideistic agnosticism (122) indifferent, among other things, to the significance of modern philosophy and science for apologetics (41). Christocentrism offers no help. All Barth's 'positive' language for the goodness of creation and even the admittedly orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (found orthodox also by Bouillard, I, 123), since these lack any demonstrable 'effects' in man, are vitiated.

With respect to the problem of *dialectic and analogy*, Riverso constantly opposes to von Balthasar his conviction that 'properly speaking there is no evolution in the thought of Barth' (236) (in contrast to Küng and Bouillard, who accept von Balthasar's thesis, though Bouillard finds a final rehabilitation of Barth too optimistic). To explain the positive language on creation and reconciliation, Riverso maintains a widespread use by Barth of the analogy of being, for instance in the *analogia relationis* (220) (similarly equated with the *analogia entis* by von Balthasar and Bouillard, II.1, 203). Supposedly Barth relies on pure phenomenology (221) (which Bouillard also finds in the *imago Dei* in the *Dogmatics*, II.1, 258, combined with a silent use of natural law, II.2, 258). The political ethic is not analogical or theological but 'bourgeois' (367) (in contrast to Bouillard's quite positive estimate of this 'confessing' prophetic ethic). And though it is hard to believe that Riverso totally rejects the analogy of faith, he nevertheless is so uncritical toward the analogy of being that even Boisset's formula of an 'ontological parentage of God and man' represents for him 'the purest Catholic orthodoxy' (397).

After all due recognition of Riverso's careful and often inspired summaries of the *Dogmatics* and the salutary counterbalance he offers to the widespread criticism of Barth's 'objectivism', he seems to have failed to grasp Barth's radical Christocentrism. Virtually ignoring the *Fides quaerens intellectum*, he naturally also misses the significance of the christological 'indicative' for the ethical 'imperative' and the constitutive importance of christology for anthropology (199, 387). No wonder then that Barth's *credere* seems void of any *intelligere*, and the *sola iustitia Christi* meaningless for our justification. An

excellent illustration is offered by an earlier essay in which he defends Bartmann's doctrine of grace with its endless distinctions between *gratia increata et creata*, *gratia externa et interna*, and so forth,¹ which had been passionately attacked by Barth (*C.D.* IV.1, 84ff). Precisely the final distinction between *gratia Christi et gratia Dei*, which Barth finds 'the most remarkable of all', receives the least attempt at explanation by Riverso (making the unreserved recommendations of Küng and Bouillard for this essay rather mysterious).

If Italian Catholicism as represented by Riverso were to be classified, it would perhaps resemble most the post-Ritschlian conservative 'Positivism' for which Barth has always harboured less sympathy than for a straightforward Schleiermacherian Liberalism. For instance, there is an uncanny centrality of 'positive religion' in this apologetic: 'Religion has therefore always been positive, and only in positive religion has natural religion had effective historical continuity and a valuable effect on humanity' (394). To Riverso's apologetic use of the most up-to-date physics, sociology and depth psychology (368f) must be added his Catholic Biblicism (Moses the author of the Pentateuch, 174; the original monotheism of all peoples, 394; the biological community of all men descended from one primordial ancestor, 299). Nevertheless, Riverso reveals and communicates more enthusiasm for much of the *Dogmatics* than any Positivist would have shared, and many of his passages are so perceptive and exciting that one wonders whether he or his readers can really believe the otherwise radically negative assessment of Barth.

Scarcely anyone could have dreamed a greater contrast to Riverso's work than Hans Küng's *Rechtfertigung*, published in 1957. If von Balthasar's thesis was enlightening, Küng's is incendiary, having ignited to date at least thirty articles and reviews in reply,² and prompting even Barth to profess in an

¹ 'Caroli Barth in doctrinam catholicam de gratia recentissimae difficultates refutantur', *Angelicum*, XXXI, 1954, pp. 31-45.

² Because of the importance of Catholic and Protestant reactions, sources for the various essays and reviews should be mentioned. Mutually supplementary lists of twenty-seven works are given in the articles of J. L. Witte, 'Ist Barths Rechtfertigungslehre grundsätzlich katholisch?', *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*, 10.1, 1959, pp. 38-48, and of J. Alfaro, 'Justificación Barthiana y justificación Católica', *Gregorianum*, XXXIX, 1958, pp. 757-69. Interest has been stirred also in Spain, with Alfaro's sympathetic review being balanced by J. M. Alonso's 'Karl Barth, un "criptocatólico"?' answered in the negative, *Revista Española de*

introductory letter, 'If what you develop in your second part as the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church actually is her doctrine, then I must certainly admit that my doctrine of justification agrees with hers' (11f).

Following a first section summarising Barth's doctrine of justification and a second devoted to the Catholic position, both displaying impressive scholarship and splendid clarity, Küng's conclusion finds quite simply a 'basic agreement of the Barthian with the Catholic doctrine' (192, 224). Most Catholic reviewers, despite Barth's strict assurance to the contrary, have suspected that Küng overestimates Barth's Catholicism. Yet there should be little doubt, as the Protestant and some later Catholic reviewers have acknowledged, that a more enthusiastic and faithful follower of Barth would be hard to find even in the Protestant camp.

With regard to *justification and grace*, the key to Küng's faithful analysis is moulded from Barth's Christocentrism, which he makes his own: decisive is the *sola iustitia Christi*, in and by which alone is the *sola fide* sustained. Christology is the indicative which makes possible the imperative of faith (in contrast to Bouillard, who makes every objective revealed truth mutually dependent upon the subjective act of faith). Catholic christology even takes on the contours of Barth's supralapsarianism (163), for it also maintains that election in Christ precedes creation. Similarly, the Gospel is held rightly to precede and establish the Law, though justification remains inseparable from sanctification as in *C.D.* IV.1 and IV.2 (against Bouillard's 'Law and Gospel', II.1, 96, and his criticism of the two parts of *C.D.* IV as artificially separating justification and sanctification, II.1, 91). (But to avoid the impression that Küng is on the way to conversion, mention must be made of the christological speculation attached as an independent essay at the end of the book, so defending Mariology that the result is virtually an eternal quaternity, 287.)

Of special interest is the question of terminology. Typically Reformation themata form the chapter titles: 'Grace as Graciousness' (*increated* rather than *creata*), 'Declaration of the

Teologia, XVII, 1957, pp. 357-82. Additions to the above lists are: H. van Oyen, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 14.5, pp. 380-3; E. L. Allen, 'Rome Meets Geneva', *Anglican Theological Review*, XL, 1958, pp. 314-17; and a review in *Irenikon*, XXX, 1957, pp. 337-40.

Righteousness of the Sinner', 'Soli Deo Gloria', among others. Küng's uncompromising insistence on the biblical vocabulary as the final authority and guide for all theological language seems even more Reformed than Barth's systematic openness to philosophical terminology. Not only are the Scriptures given full priority over tradition (116ff), but this in turn outranks the teaching office of the Church. When not categorically rejected, such terms as 'natural-supernatural' (147f), grace as a *habitus* (197), and *gratia creata* (200f) are at least reinterpreted to the greatest possible degree in a Barthian sense (of course the very opposite of Riverso). Concerning a *liberum arbitrium*, Küng uses great caution (184) (while Riverso and Bouillard defend it). As to the decisive terminology, the Protestant 'justification' is held more biblical than the Catholic 'redemption' (227ff) for the objective event of salvation, and 'sanctification' better than the Catholic use of 'justification' for the subjective aspect (261ff) though the realities signified by both pairs of terms are found identical.

Specially important is the chapter defending a Catholic use of the *simul iustus et peccator* (rejected by Riverso and Bouillard). Even the Church can and must be defined as *simul iusta et peccatrix* (241) (an ecclesiology which von Balthasar found 'catastrophic' in Barth's *Romans*, 113). And in the translation of Romans 3.28 Küng finds that Thomas Aquinas as well as Luther has added the little word *sola* to the *fide* of the text (244) (in which von Balthasar might agree, pointing to the *sola fides sufficit* in a hymn¹ by Thomas, 29; both Riverso and Bouillard reject the *sola fide*).

Some of the possible deviations from Barth are to be found in the theses of: the formal possibility of a creation independent of Christ (146f),² a reinterpreted but still rather neutral 'capability of choice' between good and evil (182), the defence (following Riverso) of Bartmann's divisions and varieties of grace (204f), and the relativisation of Paul's doctrine of justification as 'an essentially anti-Judaic polemic' occasioned by the short-lived peculiarities of the Jewish Christians (214). An apparently clear example occurs in Küng's defence of the

¹ Cited also by Barth in an important essay, 'Der römische Katholizismus als Frage an die protestantische Kirche', *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, Zürich, 1928, p. 342.

² For a criticism of this point, cf. van Oyen, op. cit., p. 381.

Catholic *simul iustus et peccator*, by which it is never certain whether he intends more than the traditional *fomes peccati* and the 'tendency' or 'impulse' to sin residing in the saints, or whether he means 'sin' in earnest. Although expressly acknowledging the importance of the *totus iustus, totus peccator*, enduring *semper*, in the section devoted to Barth (72ff), when handling the Catholic section he is strangely silent about such an interpretation (Riverso rejects the *totus-totus*¹ and strangely attributes to Luther a *partim-partim* interpretation, 268, while Bouillard refuses both the *totus* and the *partim* interpretations, II.1, 107, preferring the sequence of *olim peccator, nunc iustus*, II.1, 105). Of Küng's two supporting authorities here, the primary one is selectively used (235), for Schmaus indeed allows a 'concretely historical' use of the *simul peccator* (by which he intends the *fomes* and 'permissible' sins) but energetically condemns all Lutheran 'actualism' which would encroach upon the 'metaphysical-ontological' sinlessness of the saints.²

Yet the final problem is not Küng's Barthianism, but his Catholicism, for the previous theses form theoretically as well as practically only the periphery of his interest. Though Barth and Trent speak different languages, they intend the same realities (contrary to Riverso and Bouillard), and Trent's anthropocentrism was only a necessary correction of the one-sided theocentrism of the Reformation (112, 215, 231). The primarily objective, active and theocentric biblical doctrine of justification speaks indeed 'not first of "Peace to men on earth" but of "Glory to God in the highest" . . .' (227). Nevertheless, Trent's formulas are *inclusive*, not *exclusive* of God's self-justification. However, can Trent be so interpreted, as though it were consciously only a corrective and by no means a full theological statement? Unusually few corroborative opinions of other Catholics are adduced at this point. As O. Weber has already questioned,³ can Catholicism accept Barth's christology in which fundamental priority in the Incarnation belongs to the divine and not the human nature? The *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* doctrine with its radical irreversibility of 'the Word assumed flesh' (C.D. I.2, 136; IV.1, 179; IV.2, 47) demands the pre-

¹ 'Caroli Barth . . . difficultates refutantur', p. 42.

² M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, III.2, München, p. 101f.

³ O. Weber, 'Gnade und Rechtfertigung bei Karl Barth', *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 83.6, 1958, p. 404.

cedence of theocentrism over anthropocentrism, of the Reformation over the Catholic interest. As a partial alleviation of the difficulty, Küng interprets the term 'redemption' in Trent's article six, chapter two, as the counterpart of Barth's objective theocentric justification, but exceptionally fails to quote any Catholic who has interpreted the chapter similarly (229). That the great majority of Catholic reviewers have subsequently supported Küng's orthodoxy is, however, as heartening as it is surprising, and if there seems to be still much misunderstanding of Barth's doctrine, there may be just as much Protestant failure to understand the possibilities residing in Catholic doctrine.

Henri Bouillard's defence of his thesis, the first at the Sorbonne ever allowed to be written about a living author, has been called 'the cultural and religious event of the year' 1956 in Paris.¹ Already in 1944, as a young adherent of the 'théologie nouvelle' promoted by Henry de Lubac and Jean Daniélou and admonished in Pius XII's *Humani generis*, Bouillard had criticised and rejected Thomas Aquinas's doctrine of grace as an out-of-date theology. The present work, dedicated to de Lubac, was defended in the presence of Barth himself, who nevertheless according to the strict regulations was not allowed a word of comment!

The importance of Bouillard's analysis may be illustrated in a small way by a selection from some of its significantly new insights into Barth's theological development. In principle the 'dialectic' theology of *Romans* is not exclusive of all 'analogy' (I, 29), nor is it too seriously threatened by a secret 'theology of identity' (both points being made implicitly against von Balthasar, although explicitly basic agreement is claimed, II.2, 216). Fascinating is the proof that, while the villain of *Romans* was chiefly Troeltsch and scarcely at all Herrmann (I, 20ff), through the influence of Thurneysen its patron saint was much more Dostoievsky than Kierkegaard, whom Barth himself admitted never to have deeply studied (I, 107). Just as original is the proof that in the 'dialectic' years Barth by no means rejected the possibility of natural theology, but rather that the lines first hardened in the gathering storm after 1930 which dramatically burst in his 'Nein!' to Brunner (I, 183, 204, 216f).

¹ P. Fransen, *Bijdragen*, 19.3, 1958, p. 331.

To concentrate on the problem of *theology and philosophy*, for the first time in the history of Catholic criticism of Barth existentialism has come of age in Bouillard and with full knowledge of its capabilities is turned against the very foundations of the *Dogmatics* (II.2, 298). If Barth's Christocentrism has been presented with exemplary perception and faithfulness, accounts are settled by Bouillard's rejection of this system with an appeal on every decisive point to no other than Barth's major opponent today, Rudolf Bultmann! Naturally other authors such as Brunner are occasionally used against Barth, but in Bultmann's system lies the hope of philosophically defending such Catholic truths as co-operation of the free will (II.1, 110), faith as man's contribution to justification (II.1, 76), and the possibility of natural revelation and theology (I, 201) based on Bultmann's 'pre-understanding' (II.1, 247ff). In short, just as Möhler in the last century poured Catholicism into the mould of Schleiermacher's theology (cf. Barth's criticism, *C.D.* I.2, 561ff), so Bouillard fully exploits Bultmann, objecting only to his dogmatic reductionism and mistrust of the wider-reaching Catholic tendencies, and being fully aware that at the same time he is confirming Barth's well-known thesis of the fundamental identity of Neo-Protestantism and Catholicism.

In the question of Barth's secret philosophy, Bouillard rejects the usual identification with Kant and finds the best parallel in Hegel (II.2, 299) (similar to von Balthasar; in contrast to Rivero, 239). As to his own philosophy, after searching analyses he consistently defends the 'existential' arguments of Augustine, Descartes, Kierkegaard and Heidegger against Barth's criticisms (while Küng relates himself to no philosophy, and Rivero champions Bergson, 231). Often he employs scriptural exegesis, but most arguments come from his vast philosophical and dogmatic arsenal (in contrast to Küng's extended and passionate use of Scripture and Rivero's virtually total neglect of it). Judicious demythologising is the only answer to the 'myths' of the Bible, such as the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament (II.1, 196f) (in contrast to Rivero's defence of Barth's category of 'saga', 110).¹ In

¹ For a worthy Catholic alternative to Bouillard not only on this point but also concerning the total interpretation, cf. H. Fries's *Bultmann, Barth und die katholische Theologie*, Stuttgart, 1955, which wholeheartedly adopts Barth as the true Catholic answer to Bultmann.

general Barth is too 'positive', as in the doctrines of predestination and creation (while Riverso saw only negativity). If Riverso were comparable to the Protestant 'Positivists', and Küng to the most loyal of Barthians, then Bouillard could most properly be likened to the heirs of Schleiermacher.

For the critic, there are two principle difficulties to the 'pre-understanding' which is the key to Bouillard's Catholicism. First, concerning an often-repeated argument: 'One may say: "It is God who believes in me." But on the condition of also maintaining: "It is I who believe"' (II.2, 17). To these inseparable concepts in this sequence Barth would by no means object. But it is quite another thing to hold with Bouillard that the subjective 'I' must be *presupposed*. Here the 'pre-understanding' becomes clearly only another form of the *analogia entis*, from which alone can those doctrines characteristic of Catholicism be developed. Already in *C.D. I.1*, p. 145, Barth agreed with Gogarten that to understand God there must be also a simultaneous self-understanding of man. Yet this fact does not include but radically *excludes* a *pre-understanding*, an 'already' instead of an 'also'. Secondly, the author follows Bultmann in assigning to this pre-understanding only a 'formal' and not a material role. No historically determined philosophy is to be made the criterion for theology, but only a purely formal structure of *Dasein*, of being-as-such. Consequently there is to be no concrete material 'demythologisation' but only a 're-interpretation'. Yet just at this point even the former pupils of Bultmann have today found reason for scepticism. Just as Bultmann, in spite of the theory, in practice discards biblical 'myths' with a free hand, so Bouillard is able to defend Catholic rights to a highly concrete use of Greek philosophy and ethics, and the supposedly merely formal pre-understanding is often clothed in such suspiciously concrete concepts as an 'autonomous moral conscience which . . . must be considered as the voice of God' (II.2, 247) or the ever-recurrent power of a 'critical reflection which fixes upon itself as the autonomous principle of its determination' (II.2, 240). On similar grounds, the idea of an 'immortality of the soul' can be recommended (II.1, 265) (likewise Riverso, 232).

At this point the way seems to have led directly back to von Balthasar's 'apriorism of the spontaneous reason' (173) and the

question of if and how this can be reconciled with the Barthian axiom 'God can be known only through God.' Whether von Balthasar's own system can maintain the desired balance between this *a priori* 'pre-understanding' and the all-pervasiveness of grace remains unclear, but his theory of this same interaction and co-operation in Barth's doctrine between nature and grace, between creature and Creator, has been widely influential. For proof of the general interrelationship he can point for instance to the dialectic between Barth's programme for the 'founding of anthropology on christology' (*K.D.* III.2, 50) and on the other hand his admission, more congenial to Catholic interests, that 'christology is not anthropology' (*K.D.* III.2, 264). Which presupposes which? Here von Balthasar sees 'the central problem of Karl Barth's theology in its ultimate form concentrated in the *concept of presupposition*' (129). As particular proofs he points to the legitimacy finally granted by Barth to philosophy in theology, to general ethics, to non-theological anthropology, and even to natural theology.

Were it not for the acceptance of this theory, Küng's own Catholic fringe—his subdued but significant defence of a possibility of creation apart from Christ (146f), of a *liberum arbitrium* which is not precisely the 'glorious liberty of the children of God' (182), of a *gratia infusa permanens* (204)—would probably not pass his own test of Barthianism. Bouillard also uses the theory of von Balthasar extensively, though in the end he confesses that Barth remains 'unclear' (II.1, 247, 282ff) and therefore uncatholic. Not only have Protestant critics followed suit, but even Barth's closest followers have seen the same difficulties, as the criticism of the doctrine of the *analogia relationis* by N. H. Sørensen¹ and O. Weber² demonstrates.³

¹ *Christliche Ethik*, München, 1957², p. 491.

² *Grundlagen der Dogmatik I*, Moers, 1955, p. 633f.

³ Von Balthasar's major thesis has apparently received no extensive reply, though some excellent criticisms on other points have appeared. In an article on 'Analogia fidei oder analogia entis?' W. Kreck replies to von Balthasar's treatment of ontic and noetic *ratio* and defends Barth's continuing faithfulness to the *analogia fidei*, but he also attests the multitude of von Balthasar's questions remaining to be answered (in *Antwort*, Zürich, 1956). W. Pannenberg proposes that Barth drop the concept of analogy altogether and settle for a dialectic of 'encounter' to avoid von Balthasar's consequences (*Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 78.1, 1953, pp. 17-24). Berkouwer devotes his major interest to a defence of Barth's treatment of Quenstedt (*The Triumph of Grace*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1956, pp. 187ff). For another judgment on Barth and Quenstedt, cf. J. McIntyre's article 'Analogy', *S.J.T.*, 12.1, 1959.

Yet Barth himself, in indirect reply to Brunner as well as to von Balthasar, firmly contends that in the *Dogmatics* as a whole there have been 'no important breaks or contradictions' and cautions against all speculations on a 'new Barth' (*C.D.* IV.2, xi). The controversy between Barth and Catholicism seems therefore not merely, as von Balthasar would have it, a matter of inflection and emphasis, but still an opposition of two qualitatively and definitively different principles calling for a clear decision.

There is indeed a 'presupposition' in creation as the external ground of the covenant or in 'humanity' as the necessary basis for the Incarnation, but never does that allow von Balthasar's separation of an 'order of creation' from the 'order of grace'. Even in *K.D.* III.4 every attempted synthesis of the divine command and the 'orders' of creation is rejected; the celebrated reconciliation with Brunner fails to take place. The reality of the dispensations of Old and New Testaments, of Israel and Incarnation, or the stages of creation, reconciliation and redemption are one thing, a speculation on two different covenants quite another, as Barth's passionate criticism of Coccejus's covenants of grace and of works reveals (*C.D.* IV.1, 54ff). All knowledge as well as being in a creation independent of the eternal covenant of grace in Jesus Christ is impossible, because 'there is no man but the man of the covenant' (*C.D.* IV.1, 43). 'The fact that God has regard to His Son . . . is the true and genuine basis of creation' (*C.D.* III.1, 50).

Following the general problem of nature and grace, von Balthasar's penetrating specific questions in at least the four areas of philosophy, natural theology, general ethics and non-theological anthropology must be answered. In each of these, there is indeed a 'presupposition' often called 'humanity' or simply the goodness of creation itself, but it stands radically opposed to 'man as such' and his 'natural' theology. Yet it is not itself an explicitly theological entity. Possessing its own relative freedom, justification and necessity, it manifests itself through 'signs', 'witnesses' or 'phenomena' as the obedient substructure which indeed 'makes possible' (itself being created and sustained through grace alone) the Incarnation of the Word and God's Covenant with man realised in Jesus Christ. The constancy and clarity with which Barth has systematically

expressed himself on these points from the first page of the *Church Dogmatics* to the last can best be shown under three aspects.

(1) To 'man as such' the search for a supreme philosophy, a natural theology, a general ethic and a non-theological anthropology is a basic necessity of life. Theology will not oppose but admit this necessity. 'Everyone has some sort of philosophy', and 'it is not only unavoidable as such, but legitimate', indeed, 'necessary' (*C.D.* I.2, 728f). Theology itself is, humanly speaking, only 'a kind of philosophy' (*C.D.* I.2, 734).¹ Even natural theology must be quietly acknowledged as 'a necessary undertaking in the sphere of man as such' (*C.D.* II.1, 168). 'How can a man jump over his own shadow?' (*C.D.* II.1, 136). Man as such cannot attack his own self-certainty and ought not to try to do so, because 'the illusion that we can disillusion ourselves is the greatest of all illusions' (*C.D.* II.1, 169). Likewise a general non-theological ethics has 'a legitimate place in the discussion' (*C.D.* II.2, 523). Even a non-theological anthropology receives the acknowledgment 'that the study of these phenomena is natural, interesting, important and justified' (*K.D.* III.2, 91).

(2) But between the self-certainty of 'man as such' and the actual 'readiness of man for God' (in Jesus Christ) there can be no compromise: *tertium non datur*. 'Every philosophy which is posited absolutely leads necessarily to a falsification of Scripture' (*C.D.* I.2, 732). Contrary to von Balthasar's interpretation, no definite philosophy will ever have a *potentia oboedientialis* (*C.D.* I.2, 734), and Barth's unique permission of this term for the as yet unfallen creation envisages no obedience as a result of 'its own creative power', since 'it was made worthy' to obey (*C.D.* III.1, 153). Similarly for natural theology: 'Only one thing cannot be granted to natural theology, namely, that it has a legitimate function in the sphere of the Church' (*C.D.* II.1, 170). Unlike von Balthasar, Barth radically rejects all *preambula fidei* (*C.D.* II.1, 137). Likewise for general ethics: 'Strange as it may seem, that general conception of ethics coincides exactly with the conception of sin' (*C.D.* II.2, 518).

¹ Berkouwer's objection to Barth's openness to philosophy in theology impinges upon the role of 'nature' in general in the *Dogmatics* and possibly hinders the adequacy of his reply to von Balthasar (op. cit., pp. 19ff).

In thesi, 'in a scientific form there is only one ethics, theological ethics' (C.D. II.2, 542). In non-theological anthropology, 'it is clear that here we have to do with the enemy, who cannot be met except with opposition by the Christian confession' (K.D. III.2, 24). The only possible procedure is 'the founding of anthropology on Christology' (K.D. III.2, 50): *ecce homo!*

(3) Nevertheless, in retrospect theology can and must acknowledge the goodness of creation and its openness to apparently non-theological inquiry (and precisely here is the focal point of von Balthasar's argument for the *analogia entis* in Barth, to which answer must be made). Between 'man as such' and 'man in Christ' there stands 'humanity': *tertium datur*. But this *humanum* is a presupposition for grace only in so far as it exists in and through grace; Barth's sole permission of Thomas Aquinas' *gratia non tollit (non destruit) sed (praesupponit et) perficit naturam* is as a proof of God's 'patience'! (C.D. II.1, 411). If *in thesi* directly theological knowledge alone is possible, nevertheless *in hypothesi* there is possible in individual unsystematised instances a true knowledge of man and world of which the theological basis has not yet become apparent. Faith is not without a share of 'sight' which, if admittedly faulty and never capable of systematic use, is nevertheless truthful (K.D. III.3, 29). 'What F. C. Oetinger called the *sensus communis*, the rule of truth imposed on all men as such' (C.D. II.2, 523), is expressed through 'signs', 'symbols' and 'witnesses'. 'Thanks to the wisdom and patience of God, and the inconsequence of men', as Barth puts it (C.D. II.2, 542), there are also certain 'phenomena' which occur in general ethics as well as in apparently non-theological anthropology. Barth's special ethics describes not only a vertical but also a horizontal constancy of revelation (K.D. III.4, 17f) whose continuity is expressed not in 'laws, precepts or imperatives' but in 'spheres and relationships' (K.D. III.4, 31). There is also a genuine science of mankind which, theologically seen, is 'possible, fundamentally justified and fundamentally necessary' (K.D. III.2, 241). Barth is not indulging in a bit of natural theology in commenting on three non-theological anthropologies which have truthfully seen 'phenomena' of the actual man (K.D. III.2, 236ff), or in pointing out four 'definite constant elements' as 'signs and witnesses' of God's providence, the three histories of (1) the

Holy Scriptures, (2) the Church, (3) the Jews, and (4) the limitation of human life (*K.D.* III.3, 225ff). Indeed, Barth is so aware of the indirectness of all man's knowledge of himself, and of the necessary distinction between the Saviour and the saved, that he can also declare 'Christology is not anthropology' (*K.D.* III.2, 264), for only indirectly can (and must) our knowledge of those destined to be sons of God be derived from *the* Son (the safeguarding of which distinction von Balthasar entrusts to philosophy, as though the knowledge of grace—which always 'mediates'—were insufficient, 255).

What speaks decisively against von Balthasar's interpretation is the complete inability of this indirect knowledge ever to become a 'system' which could have even relative independence within the *analogia fidei*. Unlike the false attempts of 'man as such' outlined previously in paragraph (1), it never precedes but always imperfectly follows the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ. When in *C.D.* II.2 Barth compared the use by theology of general ethics with the entry of Israel into the land of Canaan, von Balthasar proclaimed the long-awaited conversion of Barth to Catholicism, for here the *analogia entis* supposedly receives its full rights within the *analogia fidei*. Yet Barth emphatically maintains that the Israelites remained the chosen of God and did not become Canaanites, or even recognise themselves as partly Canaanite: 'Annexation remains annexation, however legal it may be, and there must be no armistice with the peoples of Canaan and their culture and their cultus' (*C.D.* II.2, 524). Even theological acknowledgment and use of a philosophy is only possible as an 'essay' or 'hypothesis' (*C.D.* I.2, 730). A non-theological but, loosely speaking, 'Christian' ethics 'does not attempt to draw up expressly and specifically basic principles' (*C.D.* II.2, 542); in an academic form based on principle, it would reveal its theological basis. The 'phenomena' of general anthropology analysed by naturalism, idealism and existentialism likewise do not present for Barth 'stages' culminating in a perfected theological anthropology (so von Balthasar, followed by Bouillard), but considered in themselves, all stand neutral and meaningless within a bracket, while the decisive teaching about humanity comes 'only from outside this bracket' (*K.D.* III.2, 145). Even the 'sight' gained by a Christian interpretation of history through 'signs' and

'structures' is 'not theoretical, but practical, not programmatic, but free, not infallible, but in need of correction' (*K.D.* III.3, 29). These 'phenomena' are not 'stages' in a natural theology, not even parts of a 'Christian' natural theology such as Emil Brunner proposed. There is still no 'system' other than the revealed Word of God. Barth's lengthy polemic against the Catholic systematisation of a moral philosophy or a natural theology, even when supposedly within and as the 'obedient servant' of moral theology (*C.D.* II.2, 528ff) or the revealed Word (*C.D.* II.1, 137ff), could be applied with striking exactness to von Balthasar's systematisation of an *analogia entis* within the *analogia fidei*.

Barth's self-consistent handling of this whole problem perhaps sheds light on other points which often puzzle friends as well as opponents. Naturally the problem of hermeneutics falls into the same pattern, necessary as a fundamental human enterprise, impossible as a closed system not constantly broken through by the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* in the Word itself, and yet possible and necessary to the extent that theological exegesis must at every moment be open to discussion with non-theologians who may have heard the Word more plainly. No doubt Barth's recent permission and even justification of a 'quest of the historical Jesus' (*C.D.* IV.2, 149f) rests upon the 'openness' of humanity. Although this historical knowledge forms a 'presupposition' for the Kerygma, carefully seen it is not a confirmation of von Balthasar's earlier argument for a sequence *intellectus quaerens fidem* (391) in which 'the first act of the reason is not faith' (372). For other possible examples, let the mention of Mozart or Shin-Buddhism suffice. More complex is the *analogia relationis*, and yet it would be unwarranted to find in it a reliance upon the *analogia entis* of pure sexuality. If sexuality in itself were a 'proof' of divinity, so then were Zimmerman's reply—a favourite anecdote of Barth's—when asked by Frederick the Great for a proof of God: 'Your Majesty, the Jews!'¹ The I-Thou relationship expressed in male and female allows no natural theology, because 'man in his humanity is in very fact to himself a sign and witness . . . , to himself he is a mystery' (*K.D.* III.2, 387) and therefore can be understood only in retrospect from the quintessential *imago Dei* in Jesus

¹ Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, New York, 1959, p. 75.

Christ and His bride, the Church. And the same 'humanity' standing between *eros* and *agape* no doubt allows Barth to speak not only of human desire as the uncompromising enemy of *agape* but also of a 'sanctified' *eros*.¹

In view of the categorical difference of this system from von Balthasar's final consequences, it is small wonder that von Balthasar at the last must find (to use his not all too attractive phrase) a 'christological constriction' in Barth's otherwise Catholic system. In the well-known image of the hour-glass, whose sand runs from the upper half to the lower like God's revelation to man through the 'constriction', von Balthasar reveals even a subtle polemic. Why, one asks, would not the more biblical and Barthian image of the mirror, of the *speculum electionis* which is Jesus Christ, suffice?² Surely the man who thinks himself as self-evident in relation to God as that lower half of the hour-glass is like the man who, to use a favourite passage of Barth's, having observed his natural face in a mirror, goes away and at once forgets 'what manner of man he was' (Jas. 1.24; C.D. II.2, 588f). Von Balthasar seems not to have grasped fully how impossible for Barth's Christocentrism is all separation of divine and human 'nature'. Just as Küng rightly sees that there is only one justification, *sola iustitia Christi*, so likewise is there only one faith, *fides Jesu Christi*, and only one history, the history of salvation, *die Geschichte Jesu Christi*. And as Bouillard correctly sees, the periods of dialectic and analogy are not mutually exclusive, for what Barth once said about Schleiermacher still holds true, that 'one can *not* speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice'.³ If there is a change in the *Dogmatics*, it is only the increasingly positive emphasis that one *can* talk about man by talking about God in the softest of voices.⁴

Why, finally, should it be the Catholics who seem to have won predominance in the critical analysis of Barth's theology? On the one hand, the answer of course is that many well-read followers of Barth need neither to read nor to write intro-

¹ Perhaps this helps explain the apparent contradiction between C.D. III.4 and IV.2 which puzzles O. Weber (in *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Moers, 1957², p. 279f.

² cf. Küng's use of this image (16) and Barth's comment (14).

³ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, New York, 1957, p. 196.

⁴ cf. the recent essay on 'The Humanity of God' (*Die Menschlichkeit Gottes*, Zürich, 1956), significantly not entitled 'The Divinity of Man'.

ductory and interpretative texts. On the other hand, however, it is clear that the recent resurgence of Neo-Protestantism simply lacks the dogmatic interest necessary to such an undertaking. In a very real way Bouillard's massive volumes drawing upon the whole history of dogmatics, though with the same pre-suppositions and resulting existential truths as could already be found in Bultmann, show the difference. Earlier such a situation might have been interpreted simply as an illustration of the Barthian axiom that Catholicism does in earnest what Neo-Protestantism does only in a dilettante fashion. Yet today such a description would obviously not do justice to the facts. There is too clear a wish to be taken seriously, which involves taking other opinions and beliefs seriously. It may even be that the criticism here offered of von Balthasar's interpretation, instead of weakening his and his followers' material agreement with the theological *and* anthropological (because christological) fulness of the *Church Dogmatics*, may only strengthen their careful avoidance of any theoretical consequences which could only undermine Barth's Christocentrism. At any rate, the ecumenical spirit and openness of Barth's Catholic critics leaves no ground for pessimism. And at times such uncompromising controversy can even lead to the joyful recognition that we are, as Barth writes to Küng, 'separated *in faith*, namely, *in the same faith*' (13).