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Karl Barth, Israel, and Religious Pluralism

PAUL S. CHUNG

Abstract

Karl Barth's legacy for a theology after Shoah and his openness for the reality of religious pluralism have been unfortunately distorted due to the general impression of him as the representative of neo-orthodox theology. However, Barth's theology of Israel and reconciliation offers significant, yet provocative insight into the improvement of Christian theology after Shoah and for the reality of religious pluralism. In this paper, the issue is to retrieve hermeneutically Barth as a theologian of world openness with regard to Judaism and non-Christian religions, especially from the perspective of *massa perditionis* (the lost public mass; in Korean *minjung*).

Key words: Israel, Judaism, irregular theology; extra *muros ecclesiae*; hermeneutics of secular parables; Pure Land Buddhism; Shinran; *massa perditionis*, *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*; extra *Calvinisticum*, ecumenical theology of the Holy Spirit

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INTRODUCTION

Since Vatican II, the traditional attitudes of the Roman Catholic Church toward other religions ("no salvation outside the church") have been radically challenged. Rahner's idea of "anonymous Christians" was the watershed in approaches to other faiths and religions. Among Protestants, Tillich takes religion to be the state of being grasped by the ultimate concern. In light of the ultimate concern, Tillich paved a way for Buddhist-Christian dialogue. In an inter-religious context, however, Karl Barth has long been regarded as a staunch evangelical-conservative theologian in his attitude toward non-Christian religions. The neo-orthodox charge against Barth associated with Bonhoeffer's unfortunate critique of Barth as positing a "positivism of revelation"[1] has pushed Barth's theology into a cul-de-sac with regard to inter-religious dialogue. In fact, Barth's theology is often regarded as outmoded and inappropriate with respect to the reality of religious pluralism.[2]

Be that as it may, in my view, Barth's theology presents a structure of radical openness toward the world. This aspect has been overlooked and thus his Christocentrism has been unilaterally misunderstood as an anti-religious and anti-cultural stronghold. First of all, Barth's theology is deeply connected with his complex deliberation of God's faithfulness to Israel, which offers a basis for further discussion of non-Christian religions. Secondly, in the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth elaborated his theology of *extra muros ecclesiae* (words and lights of God outside the ecclesial walls), which is remarkably open to the reality of religious pluralism. In this paper I am interested in retrieving the legacy of Karl Barth regarding a theology after Shoah and furthering inter-religious dialogue from Barth's provocative perspec-

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[1] In his prison letter, Bonhoeffer critiqued Karl Barth as a theologian of positivism of revelation because in Barth's theology there is not much openness to the world coming of age. Due to Barth's one-sided commitment to revelation from above, the worldly issues receive little attention. Cf. Andreas Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000).

[2] Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 80–96.

tive which stands in solidarity with *massa perditionis*, *minjung* in our global world.

KARL BARTH AND ISRAELITE ELECTION

1. For Barth, God in choosing Jesus Christ destines humans for election, blessing, and life whereas God also elects Jesus Christ for rejection, condemnation, and death. This decision took place ultimately in Christ's death on the cross. For this reason, "there is no condemnation . . . for those that are in Christ Jesus."[3] Therefore, the doctrine of election for Barth is "the sum of the Gospel."[4] When Barth discusses the community of those who are elected in Christ, he understands this elected community as the reality for both Israel and the church. Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Lord of the church shapes Barth's grounding principle in his approach to the relation of Israel to the church. In their unity both stand under the covenantal grace of Christ. What is decisive in Barth's doctrine of election is to affirm, clarify, and develop "the bow of the one covenant [that] arches over the whole."[5]

Despite Barth's concept of solidarity in the covenant between Israel and the church, he, in his typical dialectical fashion, treats Israel as a witness to God's judgment, while the church witnesses to God's mercy.[6] This dialectical model is criticized by a circle of theologians who are committed to Jewish-Christian renewal.[7] Unlike the assumption of these critiques, Barth, however, states that in the event of Jesus Christ Israel has already become new by being converted from death to life. Israelite participation in Jesus Christ—even including the unbe-

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[3] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter *CD*], ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London / New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), II/2, 167.

[4] *CD,* II/2, 3.

[5] *CD,* II/2, 200. Cf. Eberhard Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes: Karl Barth und die Juden, 1933–1945* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1996).

[6] *CD,* II/2, 205.

[7] For instance, Katherine Sonderegger argues that Barth conceives of Israel-election only for rejection. She charges Barth with allowing full expression for "a form of dogmatic anti-Judaism." Katherine Sonderegger, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's "Doctrine of Israel"* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 123, 129, 146.

lieving Jews—does not necessarily mean that Israel is superseded by the sphere of the church. In particular, Barth perceives Israel to be a witness to humanity in the form of passing away. When Barth refers to the Jewish cemetery in Prague, he states that it contains an objectively truer gospel than all of the unbelieving Goyim[8] (and much of the Christian) wisdom.[9]

In fact, Barth articulates an Christological embracing of disobedient Israel by interpreting it as Christ's Jewish natural background. Israel is not unilaterally elected only for rejection. As the church lives on in Israel, so Israel lives on in the church for co-existence and pro-existence. In his doctrine of election, Barth does not ghettoize theology for the sake of positivism of revelation from above, but embraces the historical implications of Israel for the church. Just as the New Testament stands in an indissoluble connection to the Old Testament, the church is in indissoluble solidarity with Israel. In fact, the church stands or falls in fellowship and solidarity with Israel. According to Barth, Christian anti-Judaism is essentially rooted in the doctrine of the replacement of Israel by the church. However, a person who believes in Jesus must accept the Jews, that is, accept them as the ancestors and relatives of Jesus. Otherwise, one rejects Jesus along with the Jews. To the contrary of the main argument of Christian anti-Semitism, Barth warns the church *not* to say that it were the Jews who crucified Jesus. If the church does so, Israel would be regarded as an entity in the past history forsaken by God.[10] Against such Christian anti-Semitism, Barth interprets the resurrection of Jesus as nullifying the Jewish disobedience.[11]

Barth's reflection on Israel as the natural background and on the church as the historical background of Christ makes it impossible to make the division that Israel is only for rejection and the church is only for election without qualification. Rather the arch of God's eternal will of election includes dialectically Israel and the church together within the background of Jesus Christ. God's mercy is the final ground and justification for establishing the relation between Israel and the church. Even in the face of an anti-Christ Judaism, God's mercy would remain the first and final word for the election of Israel. Nevertheless, Barth is

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[8] [Goyim: Gentile or non-Jew.]

[9] *CD,* II/2, 236.

[10] *CD,* II/2, 290.

[11] "The *finis* arbitrarily written by the unbelieving will of Israel in the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus has been finally cancelled by a higher hand in His resurrection from the dead." *CD,* II/2, 291.

not capable of integrating the Jewish existence as the natural background of Jesus Christ in light of a formal Christology as compared to the factual Christology in Christian theology.[12]

2. Despite the limitations in his theology of Israelite election,[13] Barth looks to the future of Israel—including the present state of the unbelieving Jews—and the future of the church from the perspective of God's gracious love.[14] What makes Christian anti-Semitism impossible is Israelite hope, which is in fact the hope of both Israel and the church. Therefore, the future in relation to Israel calls for the church's actions in taking responsibility to be a wholly present reality.[15] As far as the Jewish people are "the librarians of the church," believing in Jesus Christ means believing in the fulfillment of God's promise given first to Israel, which is "the substance of all the hope of the fathers," "of all the exhortations and threats of Moses and the prophets," and "of every letter in the sacred books of Israel."[16] In this interpretative sense Barth's idea of dissolving Israel and the synagogue into the church does not necessarily require that it is to be understood unilaterally as an ecclesiological replacement of Israel without reservation.

At this juncture, Barth does not fail to stress the inviolability of God's faithfulness and election in the face of Israelite resistance. Basing on God's faithfulness, Barth is eager to affirm a blessed and hopeful future for Israel. Regardless of the reality of Israelite present resistance to the gospel, "the fundamental blessing, the election, is still confirmed . . . [The] final word is one of testimony to the divine Yes to Israel."[17] The protological aspect of God's covenant with Abraham carries the weight of eschatological correspondence. The whole of Israel is not sanctified through the remnant, but the remnant represents

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[12] F.-W. Marquardt, *Das christliche Bekenntnis zu Jesus, dem Juden. Eine Christologie*, Bd. 2 (Munich/Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, Gütherslohe Verlagshaus, 1991), 7.

[13] For Barth's negative description of synagogue, see *CD*, II/2, 263. Unfortunately, in Barth's unthoughtful and controversial description of synagogue, we see that an idea of integrating (or even replacing) Israel to (or by) the church would secretly govern in Barth's theology of Israel. Against Barth's negative description of synagogue, Marquardt asks whether Israel is not, even in its bruised form, a witness to God's condescending goodness, or whether Israel as a witness to the death of Jesus Christ is not also a witness to his resurrection. See F.-W. Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie: Israel im Denken Karl Barths* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967), 352.

[14] *CD*, II/2, 303.

[15] *CD*, II/2, 305.

[16] *CD*, II/2, 204.

[17] *CD*, II/2, 15.

the whole. What is represented authentically in the rest is the root, that is, Jesus Christ, the last-born, the last number of the remnant who is, in fact, the first-born brother.[18]

Moreover, in his doctrine of providence Barth began to speak positively of post-biblical, anti-Christ Judaism, depicting it as the single natural proof of God. The existence of Judaism is the sign of divine reign and it functions as the natural background of Jesus Christ. In his approach to the Jewish history, Barth does not take as a point of departure historical relativism or the Jewish self-understanding, nor the interpretation of philo-Semitism or anti-Semitism. Instead he associates himself with the standpoint of the Christian message which professes God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ for Israel.[19]

Therefore, it is natural to say that Barth's perspective on the history of the Jews and their covenantal significance is based on God's faithfulness to them and should also be considered in light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The Word became Jewish flesh.[20] God became a man of Israel. The "I" of Jesus came from Israel. He, according to his Jewish flesh, retains in his constitution the old Israel, the natural offspring of Abraham. The covenant of God is fulfilled by his faithfulness in the coming of the Son from the tribe of Abraham. The natural and biological dimension of Jewish hope should not be mystified in an anti-Semitic manner, nor should the tribe of Abraham be spiritualized in a Christian manner. Those who condemn and persecute the Jews do the same thing to Jesus Christ. Anyone who is a principal enemy of the Jews is a principal enemy of Jesus Christ. Thus, "anti-Semitism is a sin against the Holy Spirit."[21]

The entire history of Israel reveals itself as God's gift of covenant and grace. Barth took into consideration the prophecies in the messianic history of Israel as an adequate pre-figuration of the messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ.

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[18] *CD*, II/2, 300.

[19] *CD*, III/3, 216–17.

[20] *CD*, IV/1, 171.

[21] Karl Barth, "Unsere Kirche und die Politsche Frage von Heute" (1938), in Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938–1945* (Zurich: TVZ, 1985), 90.

> . . . in and with the prophecy of the history of Israel there takes place in all its historical autonomy and singularity the prophecy of Jesus Christ Himself in the form of an exact pre-figuration.[22]

Herein we can discern Barth's model of correlation between the entire messianic history of Israel and the messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ. Barth presented his unique and remarkable dogmatic systematization of Israelite relevance to his Christology by comparing Jesus with the entire history of Israel without reservation. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Israelite election and covenant. God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ for God's people—whether they are faithful or unfaithful—becomes the principal hermeneutic in Barth's approach to the Jewish people. Barth subsequently calls for the abandonment of Christian mission to the Jews. The concept of Christian mission to the Jews is theologically impossible. "In relation to the Synagogue, there can be no real question of 'mission'. . . . Mission is not the witness which it owes to Israel."[23]

A conversation for the purpose of converting the Jews to Christianity is meaningless. The church must live together with synagogue, not as a separate religion or confession, but as the root from which the church has emerged. If the Old Testament is the root of the Christian church, should not Jewish self-understanding of the Old Testament through Talmud (even including Kabbalah) be appreciated as the configuration of God's Word in relation to the Christian church?

At any rate, Barth in his *Ad Limina Apostolorum* (1967) devoted himself to a serious study of the sixteen Latin texts in Vatican II, especially regarding matters of Israel and non-Christian religions. Barth asked on what grounds the declaration could speak of the past and present history of Israel in the same breath as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, all non-Christian religions. Recognizing that the Old Testament presents "the original form of the one revelation of God," Barth wondered if we should not make a formal confession of guilt in view of the anti-Semitism in the ancient, medieval, and modern church.[24] Therefore, the ecumenical movement today suffers much more from the absence of Israel than from the absence of Rome and Moscow.[25]

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[22] *CD*, IV/3.1, 65.

[23] *CD*, IV/3.2, 877.

[24] Karl Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum: An Appraisal of Vatican II*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), 36–37.

[25] *CD*, IV/3.2, 878.

Be that as it may, Barth was not prepared to affirm the Jewish self-understanding of their saying "No" to the Christian church as "an act of Israel's faithfulness to the Torah."[26] Critically distancing from Barth's limitation (a so-called face looking backwards), it is furthermore of special significance to integrate and deepen Jewish self-understanding as an important categorical dimension in the theological discussion about Israel. In other words, if God has not thrown away his people, Israelite self-consciousness and existence should not remain a *quantité négligeable*.[27]

At any rate, Barth was not blind to the political reality in Palestine. We notice Barth's concern about Islam in his dialogue with J. Bouman from Lebanon. In his letter to H. Berkhof in Leiden (1968), Barth reported on his conversation with J. Bouman: "In theological appreciation of the situation there [in Lebanon] . . . we were but completely in agreement" that "a new communication about the relation between [the] Bible and Koran is an urgent task for us."[28] This statement refers to Barth's argument for a confession of guilt regarding "the deplorable role of the church in the so-called crusades."[29] I will deal with this inter-religious necessity later in the conclusion of this paper.

KARL BARTH AND THEOLOGY OF GOD'S WORD IN ACTION

Let me examine the internal structure of Barth's theology regarding openness for the world. In his deliberation on the Word of God in a threefold sense (written, proclaimed, and revealed), Barth put the priority of the revealed Word over the other two forms of the Word of God. Barth's reflection on revelation, seen in the context of his theology of the Word of God, cannot be adequately understood apart from his reflection on God's irregular and unexpected voice. According to Barth,

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[26] F.-W. Marquardt, "Feinde um unsretwillen," in F.-W. Marquardt, *Verwegenheiten: Theologische Stücke aus Berlin* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1981), 315.

[27] Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie*, 296. [*Quantité négligeable*: German, negligible quantity.]

[28] K. Barth, *Briefe, 1961–1968*, ed. J. Fangmeier and H. Stoevesandt (Zurich: TVZ, 1975), 504f.

[29] Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, 37.

God can speak to us in a totally different way than we would expect God's voice in the church (proclaimed) or from the scriptures (written). God can speak to us through a pagan or an atheist. Or God may be pleased to bless Abraham through Melchizedek, or Israel by Balaam, or help it by Cyrus, argues Barth. When God does speak in actuality, we have to listen attentively to God.[30] As God can speak to us in strange and profane forms, we are urged to a humble attitude and openness to other voices. As Barth argues,

> God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog. . . . God may speak to us through a pagan or an atheist, and thus [help] us to understand that the boundary between the Church and the secular world can still take at any time a different course from that which we think we discern.[31]

These alien voices of God occur on the basis of the universal reign of Jesus Christ, that is, the Word of God inside and outside the church. In the doctrine of the Word of God, Barth brings the Word of God in the church to the task of regular dogmatics while the Word of God outside the church belongs to irregular dogmatics. Furthermore, Barth continues to deepen his insight into the strange voices of God's Word up to his later doctrine of lights within reconciliation, namely true words *extra muros ecclesiae*. Thus, Barth can be understood as a theologian of God's Word in action.[32]

Barth first developed the theme of religious pluralism in his doctrine of secular parables in *Church Dogmatics* IV/3.1. For Barth, God's reconciliation (distinct from universal salvation) is of a universal-pluralist horizon. Barth's teaching of secular parables, or his so-called doctrine of lights and words in the world, can be understood as his continuous deepening and actualization of his previous concept of God's irregular and alien voices in terms of God's "universal" reconciliation. In his inquiry of secular parables of truth, Barth combines dialectically the Word of Jesus Christ with various truth claims in a pluralistic context. For Barth, God cannot abandon any secular sphere in the world reconciled with him in Jesus Christ. Even from the mouth of Balaam we recognize the well-known voice of the Good Shepherd, which should

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[30] *CD*, I/1, 55–60.

[31] *CD*, I/1, 55.

[32] Cf. Paul S. Chung, *Karl Barth: God's Word in Action* (Eugene: Cascade, 2008).

not be ignored despite its sinister origin.[33] Given this fact, Barth's position implies an inclusive-universalistic tone with a radical openness to the forms of secularism or pluralistic truth claims, even in spite of their sinful origin.

However, Barth is hesitant to canonize or give a dogmatic status to such extraordinary ways and free communications of Jesus Christ.[34] If Barth canonizes or gives dogmatic examples of secular parables, he would inevitably run into a relativistic-metaphysical syncretism, which would result in an expropriation of God's covenant with Israel in a concrete, historical reality. Without leaving the sure ground of Christology, Barth maintains that the church has the task of examining closely whether these profane words and lights are in agreement with the Scripture, church tradition, or dogma, and whether the fruits of these words outside Christianity are good and whether their effect in the community is positive. This is what Barth calls a supplementary and auxiliary criterion, namely "the fruits which such true words . . . seem to bear in the outside world."[35]

Karl Barth and Buddhism

Barth's reading of Buddhism by way of a symptom-seeking (symptom of God's universal grace) hermeneutics needs to be discussed and developed in his examination of the profane words and lights in terms of the Scripture, church tradition, or dogma. In his theology of religions,[36] Barth has already articulated the significance of the name of Jesus Christ in inter-religious dialogue. Barth also scrutinizes Pure Land Buddhism, which stands close to the grace religion of the Reformation. In his reading of this Buddhism, Barth notices that there is "a wholly providential disposition"[37] in the faith of Amida Buddha. Still, he does not discern the name of Jesus Christ in this Buddhism. If the name of Jesus Christ does not contradict God's universal activity in the world of religions, could not Barth evaluate this Buddhism more positively by way of a parable of God's kingdom?

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[33] *CD*, IV/3.1, 119.
[34] *CD*, IV/3.1, 133f.
[35] *CD*, IV/3.1, 127f.
[36] *CD*, I/2 & 17.
[37] *CD*, I/2, 340.

Although Barth does not give a clear account of this hermeneutical principle of encounter, we note later in his doctrine of lights his positive evaluation of religions for the sake of secular parables of God's kingdom: "We may think of the radicalness of the need of redemption or the fullness of what is meant by redemption if it is to meet this need."[38] When we discern the radicalness of human desire of redemption in other religions, when we meet a desire of grace or completeness of redemption in other religions, we can hear from world religions the true words of Jesus Christ. Revelation as *Aufhebung* (sublation in German) of the religion[39] gives a messianic parabolic character and dynamism to religions in light of the messianic *prophetia universalis*[40] of Jesus Christ.[41] Furthermore, Barth's critique of religion is primarily directed to Christianity as a religion, as his polemic is not against non-Christian religions. Barth's theological approach to religions appeals to a tolerance which is informed by the forbearance of Christ deriving from the grace of God's reconciliation.[42]

Therefore, Barth's intent is to affirm, first of all, the priority of revelation over religion, without exhausting, ecclesiasticizing, and Christianizing other religions, because they will be given a parabolic character in pointing and witnessing to God's kingdom. Barth's affirmation of the Christian religion as the locus of true religion does not mean its fulfillment of human religion or affirmation of Christianity as a superior religion over non-Christian religions.[43]

Christianity, in fact, stands in co-existence with many religions. From the standpoint of God (*von Gott her*), "in His revelation God is present in the world of human religion."[44] We discern God's work in "a sphere in which His own reality and possibility are encompassed by

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[38] *CD*, IV/3.1, 125.

[39] *CD*, I/2 & 17.

[40] [*Prophetia universalis*: Latin, universal prophecy.]

[41] In the positive sense of *Aufhebung*, according to Barth, religions are kept and reserved and transformed in light of God's coming kingdom, rather than totally denied, superseded, and destroyed. Barth's use of *Aufhebung* in a dialectical sense demonstrates his evaluation of religion in both negative and positive sense. For Barth, the abolishing of religion by revelation does not mean only its negation, but rather that "religion can just as well be exalted in revelation." *CD*, I/2, 326.

[42] *CD*, I/2, 299.

[43] *CD*, I/2, 298. In his Tambach lecture as seen in connection with the thesis IV of his Amsterdam lecture ("Church and Culture"), Barth's theology of analogy has already been socially engaged, culturally open, and Christologically universal in light of God's reconciliation.

[44] *CD*, I/2, 297.

a sea of more or less adequate . . . parallels and analogies in human realities and possibilities."[45] Christians should not become "iconoclasts in face of human greatness as it meets [them] so strikingly in the sphere of religion."[46] Christian attitude toward non-Christian religion is characterized by self-criticism, spiritual poverty, and openness. As Barth provocatively argues,

> The Veda to the Indians, the Avesta to the Persians, the Tripitaka to the Buddhists, the Koran to its believers: are they not all 'bibles' in exactly the same way as the Old and New Testaments?[47]

As we have already mentioned, a Barthian reading of Buddhism continues to be deepened and re-actualized in the framework of *extra muros ecclesiae*.[48] In the encounter with other religions Barth in later stages asks whether the radicalness of the human need of redemption (grace) in other religions or the fullness of what is meant by redemption should not correspond to the true words of the prophecy of Jesus Christ. When we discern the radicalness of human desire of redemption in other religions, when we meet a desire of grace or completeness of redemption in them, we can hear true words of Jesus Christ from them which may function as free communications of God. In Barth's preferred quotation from Shinran's[49] statement from Honen: "Even sinners will enter into life; how much more the righteous." But this was significantly reversed by Shinran: "If the righteous enter into life, how much more in the case of sinners."[50] Barth would prefer to see the radicalness of justification by the power of Amida in Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism in comparison with the Reformation theology of grace and justification. According to Barth, we should be grateful for the lesson and teaching that such Buddhism provides.[51]

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[45] *CD*, I/2, 282.
[46] *CD*, I/2, 300.
[47] *CD*, I/2, 282.
[48] *CD*, IV/3.1.
[49] [Shinran: 1173–1263, Japanese philosopher and religious reformer, founder of the Jōdo Shinshū school of Japanese Buddhism.]
[50] *CD*, I/2, 341.
[51] *CD*, I/2, 342.

Karl Barth and Paul Tillich

God's irregular voices in Barth's early stages[52] are now actualized and deepened in light of God's reconciliation in Christ with the world. From this perspective Barth would seem to propose an "unrelativistic-unmetaphysical" pluralistic approach to truth claims of other religions to sharpen inter-religious dialogue, especially in terms of the messianic, universal prophecy of Jesus Christ. As Barth states,

> . . . while man may deny God, according to the Word of reconciliation God does not deny man. . . . No Prometheanism can be effectively maintained against Jesus Christ. . . . [For God], neither the militant godlessness of the outer periphery of the community, nor the intricate heathenism of the inner, is an insurmountable barrier. . . . All human words can be true only as their genuine witnesses and attestations. . . . They are true words, genuine witnesses and attestations of the one true Word, real parables of the kingdom of Heaven.[53]

In comparison to Barth, Tillich's approach to the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism is based on his famous method of correlation: For Tillich, Buddhism appears more and more as a living religion in polar tension to Christianity. Tillich thinks all religions find a sacramental basis for themselves. If this basis is properly balanced and united with mystical and prophetic elements, a religion of a concrete Spirit will come to birth, and theonomy will appear with an eschatological reservation. This theonomous element is part of the structure of the religion of the concrete Spirit. At its foundation, Tillich's method implies a hermeneutical relevance that was concretized in view of religious pluralism.

Furthermore, George Hunsinger explains Barth's position with Tillich's categories of autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy. Other lights are neither self-contained nor self-sufficient nor simply autonomous in relation to the great light. Other lights are not conceived to be outside the great light, which is external, alien, and heteronymous. True human words or secular parables are conceived as coexistent with Jesus Christ as the Word of God that may be regarded as the theonomous principle.

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[52] *CD*, I/1.

[53] *CD*, IV/3.1, 119–21.

As Hunsinger argues, "In a theonomous situation, the periphery is fully determined and governed by the truth of the center, but not violated or overwhelmed by it."[54] Because of the mystery of creation, the periphery which is not subsumed into the center holds "its own real freedom (relative autonomy) and real existence (relative heteronomy)" in light of the truth of the center. Secular parables are supposed to be accepted as "free communications of the will of [the] Lord."[55] For Barth, there could be a salvation without Christianity, that is, outside the walls of Christianity, because salvation belongs to the mystery of God. This is characteristic of Barth's unique confession of Jesus Christ, but with radical openness toward God's strange voices in the world. Let's further delve into Barth's theology of reconciliation and its world openness.

Karl Barth and a Pluralist Theology of Divine Discourse

In light of God's reconciliation, Barth is, moreover, boldly affirming "dangerous modern expressions like the revelation of creation or primal revelations."[56] Barth assumes that the divine work of reconciliation does not negate the divine work of creation, nor does it deprive creation of its meaning. There is no point of tearing asunder "the original connection between creaturely *esse* and creaturely *nosse.*"[57] Secular parables are supposed to be accepted as "free communications of the will of [the] Lord"[58] which become a central motif in Barth's so-called doctrine of true words *extra muros ecclesiae*. How does Barth

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[54] George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 263.

[55] *CD*, IV/3.1, 130. However, Hunsinger's summary of Barth's position—"exclusivism without triumphalism or inclusivism without compromise"—seems to lose sight of Barth's deliberation concerning the irregular grace of God which shows that Barth is open to recognizing religious pluralism. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 278.

[56] *CD*, IV/3.1, 140. Regarding this statement Hans Küng affirms Barth's correction of his previous position about natural theology, accusing Barth of not admitting it publicly. Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 527. However, in his early stage, Barth has already accepted Söhngen's thesis in an Christological sense: There has to be an *assumptio* of the *analogia entis* [Latin, analogy of being] by the *analogia fidei* [Latin, analogy of faith]—"the *analogia fidei* is *sanans et elevens analogiam entis*"—namely but through Jesus Christ. *CD*, II/1, 82.

[57] *CD*, IV/3.1, 139. [*Esse*: Latin, being, existence. *Nosse*: Latin, knowing.]

[58] *CD*, IV/3.1, 130.

articulate "words outside Christianity"? Barth states that "to all the witnesses of the Christian community, it is promised and given to be parables of the kingdom of heaven."[59] If there are such words and lights, namely parables of the Kingdom at a very different level in the secular world, "should it [the Christian community] not be grateful to receive it also from without, in very different human words, in a secular parable?"[60]

However, Barth does not want to talk about words in the world by recourse to the sorry hypothesis of natural theology, but rather by recourse to the universal dimension of Christology which is associated with the mystery of God. According to Barth,

> in the world reconciled by God in Jesus Christ there is no secular sphere abandoned by Him . . . even where . . . it seems to approximate most dangerously to the pure and absolute form of utter godlessness.

Further, in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must "be prepared at any time for true words even from what seems to be the darkest places."[61] After all, there is no refusal

> on the part of non-Christians [which] will be strong enough to resist the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit which is pronounced over them too . . . or to hinder the overthrow of their ignorance of Christ.[62]

In relativizing, integrating, and transforming "natural theology" socially, materially, and culturally by means of "universal" reconciliation in Jesus Christ,[63] Barth gives some indication that the true words may be heard even from "openly pagan" worldliness:

> We may think of the mystery of God, which we Christians so easily talk away in a proper concern for God's own cause. . . . We may think of the lack of fear in the face of death which Christians to their shame often display far less readily than non-Christians far and

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[59] *CD*, IV/3.1, 114.
[60] *CD*, IV/3.1, 115.
[61] *CD*, IV/3.1, 119.
[62] *CD*, IV/3.1, 355.
[63] F.-W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barths* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972), 264.

> near. . . . Especially we may think of a humanity which does not ask or weigh too long with whom we are dealing in others, but in which we find a simple solidarity with them and unreservedly take up their cause.[64]

In commenting on this statement Marquardt argues that we see in this passage Judaism, socialism, and practical forms of humanness without faith and world religions next to the great light of Jesus Christ.[65] At this point, the maturity of non-Christian religions finds their justification in the Jewish "No" to the Christian monopoly of God's salvation. Thus, inter-religious dialogue gains inspiration when the Christian church takes seriously a positive reception of the Jewish "No" to the Christian church.

Marquardt's comment finds its validity in Barth's rejection of Christian mission to the Jews and his commitment to more social justice and more democracy. For Barth, the concept of Christian mission to the Jews is theologically impossible. Barth states that

> the Jews, even the unbelieving Jew, so miraculously preserved . . . through the many calamities of his history . . . is the natural historical monument of the love and faithfulness of God, who in concrete form is the epitome of the man freely chosen and blessed by God, who as a living commentary on the Old Testament is the only convincing proof of God outside the Bible.[66]

Furthermore, Barth himself in explication of his so-called doctrine of lights affirmed that the children of this world are often wiser than the children of light. There are co-brothers and sisters in socialist atheism who stand in the inheritance of the promise and hope of the kingdom of God.[67]

According to Barth, there resides in the secular world a more distant (the express and unequivocal secularism of militant godlessness) and a closer periphery (the mixed and relative secularism) of the biblical-ecclesial sphere.[68] Barth's preference for secularism of militant

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[64] *CD*, IV/3.1, 125.

[65] Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, 254.

[66] *CD*, IV/3.2, 877.

[67] Karl Barth, *Gespräche IV*, *1964–1968*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Zurich: TVZ, 1997), 401.

[68] *CD*, IV/3.1, 118.

godlessness over mixed and relative secularism is obvious in the following statement:

> We must continually ask ourselves whether this mixed and relative secularism might not be characterized by perhaps an even greater resistance to the Gospel for the very reason that it is used to being confronted by and having to come to terms with it, and is thus able the more strongly to consolidate itself against it, making certain concessions and accommodations no doubt, parading in large measure as a world of Christian culture, but closing its ears the more firmly against it, and under the sign of a horrified rejection of theoretical atheism cherishing the more radically and shamelessly a true atheism of practice.[69]

Barth's particular commitment to Jesus Christ as a Jew does not block his radical openness for the ways of religious others in light of God's reconciliation. A Christian uniqueness is sought in the context of religious pluralism without doing harm to the different ways of religious others. Secular truth claims can be revealed to have "their final origin and meaning in the awakening power of the universal prophecy of Jesus Christ Himself."[70]

Along this line, it is essential to deal with Barth's Christological universalism in reference to *theologia naturalis*. According to Barth,

> natural theology (*theologia naturalis*) is included and brought into clear light within the theology of revelation (*theologia revelata*), for in the reality of divine grace there is included the truth of the divine creation.

In this sense, "grace does not destroy but completes it."[71]

Moreover, Barth's renewal of *extra Calvinisticum*[72] provides a universal-inclusive basis for his Christology of *anhypostasis*[73] and *enhy-*

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[69] *CD*, IV/3.1, 120.

[70] *CD*, IV/3.1, 128–29.

[71] T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 147.

[72] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: Westminster 1960), II, 13.4. [*Extra Calvinisticum*: The belief among Calvinists that Christ's humanity is not infinite or omnipresent and therefore can only be at one place at one time, even after the ascension.]

postasis.[74] This doctrine becomes, for Barth, not only an indication of the remaining majesty of the divine Word even in the state of incarnation, but also—in Barth's typical supplementary way—a witness for the divine actuality as well as divine universality of the Word.[75] In this light, Marquardt assumes that Barth might revoke his previous radical rejection of *theologia naturalis* through his published article of "Light of Life" in 1959.[76] As evidence for this, Marquardt introduces Barth's own testimony in his interview with *Brüdergemeine* in 1961:

> Later I retrieved the *theologia naturalis* via Christology again. Today my critique would be: One must say *theologia natiralis* only differently, that is, just Christologically.[77]

Barth made a concerted effort to clarify the relation between *enhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* in the service of Christological universalism. Barth's famous sentence reads:

> In his being humanity as human God has implicitly assumed the humanity of all men. . . . With humanity is the church, which exists anhypostatically and enhypostatically in Jesus Christ. At the end of time Jesus Christ will be the *totus Christus*.[78]

The *enhypostasis* of the *humanitas*[79] of the collective human species exists in the incarnated Word. Therefore, there is not merely one human in Jesus Christ, but the humanity of all humans, so that all humanity is exalted as such to unity with God. Given this fact, the Chris-

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[73] [*Anhypostasis*: The belief that Christ, when incarnated, did not take on the characteristics of a specific human being, but of humanity in a "generic" sense. It is traditionally rejected by the church as an inadequate explanation of Christ's humanity.]

[74] [*Enhypostasis*: The belief that the divine and human natures merge in the person of Jesus Christ.]

[75] Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, 260. Furthermore, Otto Weber states that the *logos asarkos* [the logos must exist outside the flesh or incarnation] can, in truth, be only a pure boundary concept for Barth. See Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik II* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987), 143.

[76] *CD*, IV/3.1.

[77] Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, 263.

[78] *CD*, IV/2, 60. [*Totus Christus*: Latin, the entire Christ.]

[79] [*Humanitas*: Latin, human nature.]

tological establishment of natural theology is identical with the transformation of the structure of its inherited form.[80]

Thus, Christ's divinity belongs to the theology of revelation whereas his humanity belongs to the content of *theologia naturalis* because in Jesus Christ the *humanum* of all humans exists and is exalted as such to the unity with God.[81] In explicating the comprehensive character of the humanity of Jesus Christ as the *totus Christus*, Barth again affirms that

> the human nature elected by Him and assumed into unity with His existence is implicitly that of all men. In His being as man God has implicitly assumed the human being of all men. In Him not only we all as *hominess*, but our *humanitas*[82] as such—for it is both His and ours—exists in and with God Himself.[83]

There is no natural realm existing independent of Christological effectiveness. In the typology of Adam and Christ in Romans chapter 5 Barth emphatically says, "Jesus Christ is the secret and the truth of sinful and mortal humankind and also the secret and the truth of *human nature* as such."[84]

Therefore, the doctrine of "the recapitulation of all things" (*apokatastasis panton*) becomes open for Barth:

> To speak of an open number of men here instead of all men is not to impute any impotence or limitation to God's salvific design. It is God's will to save all men, as 1 Timothy 2:4 and other scriptural passages clearly point out. . . . The open number of the elect should not be made a closed number, as the classical doctrine of predestination tends to.[85]

In connection with his doctrine of election, we again read in Barth's statement:

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[80] Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, 264. "The Judaism is for Barth witness to the kernel of truth of the natural theology within the revelation of grace." See Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie*, 316.

[81] *CD*, IV/2, 49.

[82] [*Hominess*: Latin, human being.]

[83] *CD*, IV/2, 59.

[84] Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, trans. T. A. Smail (Edinburgh, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), 50.

[85] *CD*, II/2, 466.

> The Church will then not preach an *apokatastasis*,[86] nor will it preach a powerless grace of Jesus Christ or a human wickedness which is too powerful for it. But without any weakening of the contrast, and also without any arbitrary dualism, it will preach the overwhelming power of grace and the weakness of human wickedness in the face of it.[87]

KARL BARTH AND UNFINISHED PROJECT FOR RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Barth's pluralist model of divine discourse with Judaism and other religions would not give full credit to the theological circle which highlighted the relativistic-metaphysical pluralism (at the cost of the particularity of Jesus Christ), nor to the theological circle which featured the superiority or absoluteness of Christianity (for the sake of ecclesiological triumphalism). The messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ is in correlation with the entire messianic history of Israel in which Barth rejects a Christian mission to the Jews as theologically impossible. This perspective may become a point of departure for developing a theology after Shoah.

In his doctrine of true words and lights in world history and in the creation, Barth is not convinced of exalting the absoluteness of Christianity over other religions, but is rather integrated in leading the Christian church to self-criticism with a humble attitude and radical openness toward the religious others as free communications of the Lord. Barth is skeptical of any attempt at evangelizing ideologies, cultures, and other religions in the name of Christianity because God is reconciled in Jesus Christ with the ungodly world. In it there occurs an essential "theanthropological" correlation between God, human being, and the cosmos.

A Christian theology of religions in favor of Christian uniqueness does not in fact stand in opposition to the reality of pluralism because God is the one who accepts the world's pluralism and integrates all its variety and pluriformity into the coming kingdom of God through his universal grace in Jesus Christ. Barth's deliberation of true lights and

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[86] [*Apokatastasis*: Greek, the state of being restored.]
[87] *CD*, II/2, 477.

words—although he does not give any single example of them—as free communications of God would not contradict necessarily the hermeneutical project of fusing the horizons between Christianity and other religions.

Nevertheless, this historical-ontological grounding of interpretation in the midst of interfaith dialogue is vulnerable to the underside of religious history, which is in the service of the powerful. The ontology of hermeneutics no longer poses the question of what social and cultural factors have shaped and characterized the ideological-linguistic structure correlated with the history of effect. Language is not only "a house of being,"[88] but also an instrument of distorted communication. Analyzing false consciousness rooted in human interpretation and ontological consciousness should become an indispensable moment in the hermeneutical project of suspicion, audacity, and resistance. It becomes a basis for irregular reading and encounters with the religious others as the strange voices of God.[89] Barth refers to the uniqueness of Christianity in encounter with other religions: "The religion of revelation is indeed bound up with the revelation of God: but the revelation of God is not bound up with the religion of revelation."[90]

In addition, according to Markus Barth's report (provided by Bertold Klappert at the Leuenberg conference of 1992) on his father, if allowed Karl Barth wanted to preoccupy himself with the history of religion. In consideration of Barth's plan on the history of world religions Klappert introduces Barth's research plan in the following way: 1. The relation between Christianity and Judaism; 2. The relation between Judaism and Islam; 3. The relation between Buddhism and Hinduism. In examination of Markus Barth's authorized text on Barth's plan on the history of world religions, Eberhard Busch, an important biographer of Karl Barth, wrote to Klappert (on December 12, 1992) that Markus' text reveals Barth's impression concerning the question about non-Christian religions in the Second Vatican council.

Instead of the title "the general history of religion" as proposed by Markus Barth, Busch is certain of "the ecumenical theology of the Holy Spirit" in Barth's own plan.[91] In view of Barth's plan, Klappert

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[88] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 1947.

[89] Paul S. Chung, *Martin Luther and Buddhism*: *Aesthetics of Suffering*, 2nd ed. (Oregon: Pickwick, 2007).

[90] *CD*, I/2, 329.

[91] Bertold Klappert, *Versöhnung und Befreiung: Versuche, Karl Barth kontextuell zu verstehen* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994), 50.

speaks of a dialogue model of neighboring relations with other religions in the framework of ecumenical theology of the Holy Spirit, which is based on the axiomatic correlation between the messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ and the entire messianic history of Israel.

Barth's ecumenical and global theology of the Holy Spirit, which is embedded in God's reconciliation, demonstrates the universal work of the Holy Spirit in view of a doctrine of *apokatastasis*. "To be more explicit, there is no good reason why we should not be open to this possibility . . . of an *apokatastasis* or universal reconciliation."[92] This refers to Barth's confession of hope regarding an open possibility of universal salvation due to Christ's reconciliation with the world and the universal promise of the Holy Spirit. In this sense Jesus Christ is the hope even for those of other faiths.[93]

The messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ has already happened upon all flesh: the Spirit is promised. Barth distinguishes among the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the final return of Jesus Christ.[94] Christ's coming in the promise of the Spirit is the hope of all to the extent that

> no aversion, rebellion, or resistance on the part of non-Christians will be strong enough to resist the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit which is pronounced over them too . . . or to hinder the overthrow of their ignorance in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. . . . [95]

For Barth, an ecumenical and global theology of the Holy Spirit is of particular-universalistic character and horizon. Barth, in his response to an interview question concerning the hidden Christ in the Indian context, said,

> The wind blows where it wills (Jn 3:8): Break-through (revelation) of the hidden Christ is always and everywhere possible: Inside and outside the church; even in the life and work and message of strangers (Melchizedek! [Gn 14:18f; Heb 7:1–4]), heathens, atheists![96]

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[92] *CD*, IV/3.1, 478.
[93] *CD*, IV/3.1, 355–56.
[94] *CD*, IV/3.1, 294.
[95] *CD*, IV/3.1, 355.
[96] Barth, *Gespräche IV, 1964–1968*, 565.

In the year of 1967–1968 Barth questioned—beyond the guilt confession of the church to Israel in the Vatican document to non-Christian religions—whether or not with regard to the Muslim such a guilt confession would remind people of the church's fatal role in the so-called crusades.[97] As we have already mentioned, Barth's conversation with Islamic scholar J. Bouman regarding the political situation in Lebanon, a new communication between the Bible and the Qur'an, is an urgent task for today. For this urgent task of understanding the relation between the Bible and the Qur'an, Barth is concerned with developing a world-open theology of the Holy Spirit in an ecumenical and global horizon, despite its unfinished project.

CONCLUSION: FOR RADICAL BARTH

In deliberation on an irregular theology, Barth articulates the unmethodical, chaotic, and provocative dimensions in his theology of the Word of God. As in guerrilla warfare, this irregular dogmatics runs counter to the danger inherent in the regular scholastic practice of dogmatizing, ossifying, and stubbornness.[98] Therefore, Jesus Christ as the revealed Word of God gains priority over the written Word and the proclaimed Word of God. In the irregular approach, the result to be gained would be more productive than what regular and systematic methodology achieves. This irregular and post-ecclesial theology is no less scientific than the regular systematic theology. In reference to God's universal reign, Barth states that

> the fundamental lack of principle in the dogmatic method is clear from the fact that it does not proceed from the center but from the periphery of the circle or, metaphor apart, from the self-positing and self-authenticating Word of God.[99]

As the event of God's work and activity, the Word of God actually speaks in all directions like the circumference speaking toward the

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[97] Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, 37.

[98] Karl Barth, *Die Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Sauter (Zurich: TVZ, 1982), 15.

[99] *CD*, I/2, 869.

center or the center speaking simultaneously to the whole circumference. In his presentation of the speech of God as the mystery of God,[100] Barth relates this aspect of mystery to "a penultimate 'de-assuring' of theology."[101]

In light of God's Word in action, Barth stresses the significance of culture for Christian theology stating that

> The dogmatician, too, must think and speak in a particular age . . . theology is a specific activity of humanity. The problem of theology and dogmatics can also be seen as wholly set within the framework of the problem of culture.[102]

This perspective articulates Barth's commitment to the contemporary issues because the fact that God's Word is God's act means first its contingent contemporaneity.[103] Given this fact, Barth's provocative thesis "*alles in allem real verändernde Tatsache dass Gott ist*"[104] is of special significance for the Christian church to be open to the world of non-Christian religions, being faithful to God's transforming act on the sides of *massa perditionis* (the lost public mass[105]) in inter-religious context.

This is what theologians of religions and the neo-orthodox Barthians do not understand in dealing with Barth's attitude toward other religions. In fact, Barth's Christological openness to religious pluralism not only inspires inter-religious dialogue, but also retains a concrete socio-political dimension in the preferential option for the poor and attention to social justice. Jesus Christ for Barth is "the partisan of the poor." "People of God's grace are the ones who are swimming against the stream, constantly provoking irritation and hostility."[106] Jesus Christ was in solidarity with *masss perditionis* who belonged to the party of the godless assailed by the Pharisees.[107] For Barth, Christian mis-

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[100] *CD*, I/1, 162.

[101] *CD*, I/1, 164–65.

[102] *CD*, I/1, 283–84.

[103] *CD*, I/1, 145.

[104] "The fact that not only sheds new light on, but materially changes, all things and everything in all things—the fact that God is." *CD*, II/1, 258.

[105] *CD*, IV/3.2, 587.

[106] *CD*, IV/3.2, 581.

[107] *CD*, IV/3.2, 587. The *ochlos* [Greek, mob] as *massa perditionis* in Barthian fashion offers an important insight for me to engage in improving *minjung* theology in the fourth-eye formation with respect to *minjung* hermeneutics of *ochlos* Jesus from

sion or witness should neither aim to strengthen confessional positions, nor to extend European or American culture and civilization. Furthermore, Christian mission should certainly have no desire to support colonial or general political interests and aspirations.[108]

In light of reconciliation there is nothing alien to God. It seems to me that with respect to reconciliation there is an essential "theanthropological unity" between God, human beings, and the cosmos. The fact that God is always with us means that God is present explicitly in people of other religions. The church should learn to listen to those religions, in which there are unknown yet revealed lights from God's kingdom. In light of God's universal reconciliation with the world, Barth rejects the conversion of people of other cultures into the Christian religion. For Barth, conversion is not the work of the Christian church at home or abroad. "This is the Work of God alone."[109]

For the necessity of inter-religious dialogue and the importance of world Christianity, Barth expressed his expectation of discovering a true Christianity in a lecture held for three hundred students who were staying as guests of the Mustermesse in Basle (most of whom came from developing countries):

> There may be a religious West, but there is not a Christian West. . . . It could well be that one day true Christianity will be understood and lived better in Asia and in Africa than in our aged Europe.[110]

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socio-biographical perspective as well as to socially engaged Buddhism. See Paul S. Chung, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer Seen from Asian *Minjung* Theology and the Fourth Eye of Socially Engaged Buddhism," in Paul S. Chung et al., *Asian Contextual Theology for the Third Millennium: Theology of Minjung in Fourth-Eye Formation* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2007), 127–46.

[108] *CD*, IV/3.2, 875.

[109] *CD*, IV/3.2, 876.

[110] E. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 468.