

THEOLOGICAL NEGOTIATIONS

PROPOSALS *in* SOTERIOLOGY *and* ANTHROPOLOGY

DOUGLAS
FARROW



Baker Academic

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Control Number: 2018014185
ISBN 978-1-5409-6039-9

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18 19 20 21 22 23 24 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Douglas Farrow, *Theological Negotiations*
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for Anna,

who on our silver anniversary remains marital gold

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Preface

Half a millennium ago, the Protestant Reformation created new and tragically bloody borders in Europe, fundamentally altering not only its already tumultuous political terrain but changing permanently its philosophical and cultural landscape. There are plenty of books about that, but this is not one of them. It is a book of theology, a book whose author is insufficiently embarrassed by the fact that theology contributed to the tumult and bloodshed to consign it to the margins of thought and culture, as the men of the Enlightenment proposed and pretended to have achieved. Of course, they achieved no such thing. What they achieved was a very different kind of theology, the kind that secularizes rational discourse about God to make it serve purely temporal ends. That such discourse perforce ceases to be rational, that it reverts to being mythological, either did not occur to them or failed to embarrass them. (Even Kant, to whom it did occur, was prepared to indulge in it or at least to excuse those who did, so long as they did it on his terms.) Which is one reason why what came after them was even bloodier than what went before them. But there are plenty of books about all that too, including some recent history-of-ideas books such as Michael Gillespie's *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Brad Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation*, and (most recently) Carlos Eire's *Reformations*. This is not that kind of book either. It is a book devoted to certain contiguous theological loci that are of perennial interest to Christian thinkers and to the Church and that long before the Reformation, as well as during and after, have been sites of controversy.

At the heart of the book lies an interest in the dialectic of nature and grace, which is explored not only in its own right in chapter 2 but also in various epistemological (chap. 1), soteriological (chaps. 3 and 4), sacramental (chaps. 5

and 6), anthropological and ecclesiological (chaps. 7–9) dimensions. Running throughout these explorations there is a timely subtext that treats Catholic and Protestant differences and seeks to negotiate, not a set of compromises, but rather a fresh way of seeing the differences. It is certainly my hope that, where it succeeds, this book might contribute to advances in ecumenical theology. It is likewise my hope that Catholic and Protestant and even Orthodox theologians will find the book stimulating in itself, quite apart from any ecumenical concerns they might have before—or after—reading it.

Among the many books of my late mentor and friend, Colin Gunton, is one called *Theology through the Theologians*. The present book is somewhat like that, though it is less occasional and, in its way, a little more ambitious. Not that I fancy myself a proper scholar of any of the major figures who appear here: Anselm, Aquinas, and Luther especially, not to mention Calvin and Barth, or Ockham, Descartes, Kant, and the later nominalist thinkers (such as Mill and Raz) with whom I deal in passing, or indeed the author of Hebrews. Rather, this is just another case of someone learning as they write. Those who think I haven't learned well enough may wish to set me straight on any number of points, and I will not be ungrateful.

It is unusual to begin a book of original essays with one already published, especially if it appears with relatively minor modifications. But I think readers will agree that it belongs here, and of course most readers will not have read it where it first appeared, namely, in the English edition of *Nova et Vetera*; my thanks to that journal for allowing it to appear in both places. It is from this essay that I have taken both the inspiration and the title for this book, which reminds me to say that more than a few of its chapters, beginning with that one, had their origin in papers presented to the Fortnightly Philosophy and Theology Seminar here at McGill. To colleagues in that venture I am also grateful, as to the graduate and undergraduate students who have read with me and discussed Anselm, in particular, at some length.

In chapters 2 through 7 it is to Anselm and Aquinas that I keep returning. Aquinas, of course, is always indispensable, and often satisfying. Where he is not satisfying, however, I find myself driven back to biblical motifs better developed in earlier thinkers such as Irenaeus, Augustine, and Anselm. The last of these has come to play a larger role than I anticipated he would. Anselm was the first to encounter and to grasp the scope of the problem of nominalism, that philosophical and theological and political movement which has so dramatically altered Western civilization and continues, as chapter 7 observes, to do so today. Should any of my readers feel that chapter 7 should really have been a second volume, I will not demur; but events are moving so quickly now that delay seems ill-advised. Nominalism is Western civilization's

wounded side, from which is flowing, not water and blood, but blood and fire. To stem that flow it is necessary to see in nominalism what Anselm saw, something the chapter's long arc attempts to reveal.

The central chapters treat the soteriological and doxological issues which, for the Church, have always been and must always be the most important. Of Luther, who features in chapter 3, it must certainly be said in his favor that he had a keen eye for what really mattered; against him, it may fairly be said that he got some of these things badly wrong and that his tongue was often sharper than his mind. I hope I haven't proven such an example of that myself as to put off his present-day admirers altogether. To contemporary representatives of views and practices Luther himself derided on the radical side of the Reformation, I express the same hope. More specifically, I extend thanks to Le Centre d'études anabaptistes de Montréal and to Regent College in Vancouver for hosting events in which earlier versions of chapter 5 were read and patiently heard, despite content controversial both to the Radical Reformation and to Calvinists. And here I want to say that I am especially grateful to Professor Alan Torrance of St Andrews, a longtime friend, for his willingness to respond to the version read in Vancouver. He is of course absolved of any and all responsibility for its claims, some of which he vigorously disputes.

As I looked back through his father's essays in that connection, I met once again thought after thought, motif after motif, that have governed my own subsequent work in theology. Many of them came to fruition in *Ascension Theology*, which (though decidedly Catholic) owes much to T. F. and J. B. Torrance. Yet anyone who has read that book will know that, in its own fifth chapter, I suggest that the problem of Pelagianism in ecclesiology, and more particularly in doxology, is not just a danger among Protestants, as it is among Catholics, but is rather deeply rooted in Protestantism as such. Readers who were puzzled by that claim will find it elucidated somewhat here. These two chapter 5s, together with my *First Things* article on the elder Torrance, form a kind of trilogy in which the question "Whose offering?" is pressed.¹

Pressing that question inevitably raises the topic of transubstantiation, which is treated in chapter 6. Having already ventured something in *Ascension Theology* toward a better grasp of that doctrine, particularly in its eschatological dimensions, it seemed right to venture a little more here, this time by way of a sustained engagement with Aquinas. His recent expositors

1. Douglas Farrow, "T. F. Torrance and the Latin Heresy: Praising and Critiquing One of the Twentieth Century's Greatest Theologians," *First Things* (December 2013): 25–31. My subsequent essay, "Discernment of Situation," *First Things* (March 2017): 39–43, brings the same critique *mutatis mutandis* to bear on contemporary Catholicism.

(including friends whose essays appear in the text or notes) notwithstanding, I remain troubled by the difficulty of doing justice to the eucharistic *conversio* in its temporal aspect by a strict deployment of the substance/accidents distinction. Here, further negotiation may well be necessary, there being many unasked questions and unsolved problems. As for those, Protestant or Catholic, who are inclined to dismiss talk of transubstantiation as tangential to the real interests of Christianity today, I beg them to think again. What is more characteristic of contemporary Western culture than the resurgent gnosticism to which philosophical and liturgical forms of nominalism have brought us? As I try to show in chapter 7, our contemporary fascination with the will and its autonomy is very much at the expense of the body, and of course it is precisely to questions about the body that discourse about transubstantiation drives us.

A word about chapter 8: It too treats a soteriological issue that from the outset was crucial to the Church. In this case, however, that issue—the relation between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ under the *berit hadasha*—was for a very long time sublimated and neglected, until in the nineteenth century it began to press for attention again. From the latter part of the twentieth century it has been a site of no small controversy in circles Protestant as well as Catholic. If the Jerusalem Council had to ask and answer the question about the place of Gentiles in what was then a Jewish Church, today we must ask and answer questions about the place of Jews in what is a decidedly Gentile Church. The requisite negotiations are as humanly delicate as they are theologically demanding. The approach taken here may please only a few, but the arguments, I hope, will garner the attention of many. To Matthew Levering, who helped shape them, and to the entire crew in Manhattan who first listened to them, some with a certain horror no doubt, a debt is due. This chapter too might better have been a book, but there are others more qualified to write it.

And chapter 9? I wrote this meditation on Hebrews for a session in San Antonio at the Society of Biblical Literature, after which a number of people asked me for it. It seems to fit in just here as an antidote to what is described in chapter 7 and as a word of warning to Jew and Gentile alike, made more urgent by signs that the times of the Gentiles may be drawing to a close. The misconstrual of autonomy that now prevails in our society, if not corrected, will certainly destroy society itself along with individual souls. The former, being a temporal loss only, is not as serious as the latter, but it is serious enough; and the only possible corrective, whether for the soul or for society, is a recovery of the fear of God. That, I think, is what theologians and preachers most need to say now, without neglecting their other tasks. When it comes

to the fear of God, there can be no negotiation. God is God, and the border between man² and God is negotiable only by way of the mediation of the Holy One of God. That is the message of Hebrews, which is as much a tract for our times as for its own.

2. Throughout this book, as in all my books, I use gendered language freely, in the classical mode of my sources, whose anthropology I largely share. Those who will not acknowledge that God made “man” male and female are today legion, but I am not among them.

Abbreviations

General and Bibliographic

- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. A. Cleveland Coxe, 10 vols. (New York: Christian Literature, 1885–87; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1997)
- CD Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75)
- CDH Anselm, *Cur deus homo / Why God Became Man*
- CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici*
- Civ. Augustine, *De civitate dei / The City of God*
- DC Anselm, *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio / The Compatibility of God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Human Freedom*
- DCD Anselm, *De casu diaboli / The Fall of the Devil*
- De Pot. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia / On the Power of God*
- DEC Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990)
- DS Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Adolf Schönmetzer (Freiburg: Herder, 1997) / Handbook of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals
- DV Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate / On Truth*
- DZ Heinrich Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari from the 30th edition of the *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2002)
- EQP Benedict XIV, *Ex quo primum*
- Haer. Irenaeus, *Adversus omnes haereses / Against Heresies*
- In Rom. Aquinas, *In epistolam ad Romanos / Commentary on Romans*

- LW* *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. American edition, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–86)
- Mor.* Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae / On the Morals of the Catholic Church*
- NPNF¹* *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st series, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (New York: Christian Literature, 1886–89; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
- NPNF²* *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (New York: Christian Literature, 1890–1900; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
- PG* *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–86)
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
- Pros.* Anselm, *Proslogion*
- Quod.* Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales / Miscellaneous Questions*
- Sent.* Lombard, *Libri quattuor sententiarum / The Four Books of Sentences*
- SCG* Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles / On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*
- ST* Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province; available with other works by Thomas Aquinas at <http://dhspriority.org/thomas>)
- Supp.* *Supplementum / Supplement to the Summa Theologiae*
- Trin.* Augustine, *De Trinitate / On the Trinity*

Old Testament

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|-------|---------------|
| Gen. | Genesis | Song | Song of Songs |
| Exod. | Exodus | Isa. | Isaiah |
| Lev. | Leviticus | Jer. | Jeremiah |
| Num. | Numbers | Lam. | Lamentations |
| Deut. | Deuteronomy | Ezek. | Ezekiel |
| Josh. | Joshua | Dan. | Daniel |
| Judg. | Judges | Hosea | Hosea |
| Ruth | Ruth | Joel | Joel |
| 1–2 Sam. | 1–2 Samuel | Amos | Amos |
| 1–2 Kings | 1–2 Kings | Obad. | Obadiah |
| 1–2 Chron. | 1–2 Chronicles | Jon. | Jonah |
| Ezra | Ezra | Mic. | Micah |
| Neh. | Nehemiah | Nah. | Nahum |
| Esther | Esther | Hab. | Habakkuk |
| Job | Job | Zeph. | Zephaniah |
| Ps(s). | Psalms | Hag. | Haggai |
| Prov. | Proverbs | Zech. | Zechariah |
| Eccles. | Ecclesiastes | Mal. | Malachi |

Deuterocanonical Books

Sir. Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)

Wis. Wisdom of Solomon

New Testament

Matt. Matthew

Mark Mark

Luke Luke

John John

Acts Acts

Rom. Romans

1–2 Cor. 1–2 Corinthians

Gal. Galatians

Eph. Ephesians

Phil. Philippians

Col. Colossians

1–2 Thess. 1–2 Thessalonians

1–2 Tim. 1–2 Timothy

Titus Titus

Philem. Philemon

Heb. Hebrews

James James

1–2 Pet. 1–2 Peter

1–3 John 1–3 John

Jude Jude

Rev. Revelation

1

Theology and Philosophy

Recovering the Pax Thomistica

The theology included in holy teaching is different in kind from that theology that is part of philosophy.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.1.1

For as soon as we allow two different callings to combine and run together, we can form no clear notion of the characteristic that distinguishes each by itself.

Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* 1.1.A

However legitimate or possible this other task may be, the task of dogmatics is set aside when it is pursued.

Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1.1 §2

With these opening aphorisms—the apparent agreement of which masks still more fundamental disagreements—I may be suspected of stacking the deck, having surrounded an eminent philosopher with two eminent theologians, one on each side; but one of the latter is also an eminent philosopher, and the latter in any case do not see eye to eye on the relation between theology and philosophy. By considering the view of each, I hope to clarify my own view just a little and perhaps yours as well, whatever disagreements we shall

discover between ourselves. I hope at all events that you will not have occasion to think (as Kant might) that I have leapt, “like Romulus’s brother, over the wall of ecclesiastical faith” by meddling in reason; or indeed that I have only “meddled” with reason.¹

If we mean to speak of the relation between theology and philosophy, however, we should begin with some highly provisional attempt at definition—highly provisional because nothing stacks the decks like definition! Philosophy, of course, is notoriously difficult to define, and its literal meaning does not suffice to distinguish it from theology. As a working definition I will offer this, cribbed in part from our philosophy department’s website: Philosophy is the pursuit of clarity about ourselves, our world, and our place in it, for the sake of the good life;² in its academic dimension it involves inter alia the study of logic, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics.

Of theology I will say: It is discourse about deity, and the creature in relation to deity, that is disciplined by metaphysics—this is so-called natural or philosophical theology, “in which divine things are considered not as the subject of the science but as principles of the subject,” as Thomas has it—and/or by Scripture, liturgy, and dogma—this is revealed theology, in which divine things are themselves the subject.³ In its academic dimension revealed theology demands, in addition to philosophical and cultural studies, careful study of what is contained in the sources of revelation.

1. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 252.

2. What is missing on that site (www.mcgill.ca/philosophy) is direct reference to the good life, without which philosophy cannot be taken literally as a love of wisdom. Kant, as Gilles Deleuze notes in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 1, “defines philosophy as ‘the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason,’ or as ‘the love which the reasonable being has for the supreme ends of human reason’ (CPR and Opus postumum, A839/B867)”; or, more fully, as “a science of the human being, of his representations, thoughts and actions” that “should present all the components of the human being both as he is and as he should be—that is, in terms both of his natural functions and of his relations to morality and freedom” (Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 288).

3. Thomas distinguishes between knowledge of divine things “as their effects reveal them” and “as they reveal themselves.” Hence there are “two kinds of divine science, one, in which divine things are not considered as the subject of the science, but as principles of the subject, which philosophers pursue and which is known as metaphysics, and another, which considers divine things themselves as the subject of the science, and this is the theology which is handed down in Sacred Scripture” (*Super Boetium De Trinitate* 3 q. 5, a. 4, co. 4). In his *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, Kant defines theology generically as “the system of our cognition of the highest being” (in *Religion and Rational Theology*, 342), but he also distinguishes between rational and revealed theology while subdividing the former into *theologia transcendentalum*, *naturalem*, and *moralem* (346).

Both natural and revealed theology aim at establishing sound speech about God (what Plato calls οἱ τύποι περι θεολογίας, *Republic* 379a), but the one works with what can be known of God by way of divine effects in creation, and the other devotes itself to the whole knowledge and counsel of God, as disclosed especially in God's redemptive self-manifestation.⁴ Which is to say, revealed theology also pursues clarity about ourselves, our world, and our place in it, and does so precisely for the sake of the good life; but it knows quite concretely, from its own sources, what natural theology, on some accounts, also has an inkling of, namely, that "humanity is directed towards God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of its reason" and that the good life lies in the direction of God, who is goodness itself.⁵ It knows this with a definiteness and a detail that natural theology lacks, and it speaks of God with a directness proper to itself.

I say "on some accounts" because of course this basically Thomist view is not everyone's view. Kant and Barth, for example, do not share it. Kant denies revealed theology both the independence and the superiority that Thomas ascribes to it while at the same time severely restricting the natural theology that Thomas inherited from Greek and Christian sources. Barth not only restricts natural theology but also denies its validity. He emphasizes the grandeur of revealed theology but thinks that grandeur greatly imperiled by natural theology:

Of all disciplines theology is the fairest, the one that moves the head and heart most fully, the one that comes closest to human reality, the one that gives the clearest perspective on the truth which every discipline seeks. It is a landscape like of those of Umbria and Tuscany with views which are distant and yet clear, a work of art which is as well-planned and as bizarre as the cathedrals of Cologne or Milan. . . . But of all disciplines theology is also the most difficult and the most dangerous, the one in which a man is most likely to end in despair, or—and this almost worse—in arrogance. Theology can float off into thin air or turn to stone, and worst of all it can become a caricature of itself.⁶

4. Obviously it is only as revealed theology—theology that is happy to take direction from Scripture and tradition, to incorporate their claims into its arguments, and indeed to make their claims the focus of its arguments—that theology is a discipline distinct from philosophy rather than a mere subdivision of it. As Aidan Nichols observes, its special task is "the disciplined exploration of what is contained in revelation," an exploration that makes the highest demands on reason; for "the wonder, curiosity, and ever-deepening pursuit of truth implicit in the act of faith generate a variety of questions" that must be systematically addressed. *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles, and History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 33f.

5. *ST* 1.1.1.1 (F. C. Bauerschmidt, ed. and trans., *Holy Teaching: Introducing the "Summa Theologiae" of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005], 32).

6. Quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth*, trans. J. Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 244, from Barth's 1934 Calvin lectures in Paris.

It is most likely to do so, according to Barth, where it follows the path of those who “think first of cause and effect, of the infinite and the finite, of eternity and time, of idea and phenomenon,” rather than of the self-determination of God for man in the person of Jesus Christ.⁷ Natural theology, if by that we mean right reason and true speech about God based on something other than God’s self-revelation in Christ, is beyond the capacity of fallen man and a repudiation of divine grace.

Thomas, for his part, was resident on both sides of the border between philosophy and theology, inhabiting the borderlands as one who sought consistency and coherence between their respective attempts to speak of God. If this distinguishes him from Barth and Kant, how much more from those who, at some distant extreme, shrink altogether either from philosophy, as Barth did not, or from theology, as Kant did not (or not quite)? The *pax Thomistica*, as we might call it, both respects the border and regards it as a friendly one. But let us look at Kant, then at Barth—for otherwise we cannot understand Barth—before returning to Thomas.

Kant’s Philosophical Imperialism

We ought really to look first at the Franciscans; that is, at Ockham and the nominalist philosophers who set out on the trail that eventually led around to Kant.⁸ But for brevity’s sake we go directly to Kant, the mature Kant at that—the Kant who waited out King Frederick William II before issuing *The Conflict of the Faculties*, in which he tried to put these disciplines in their proper places.

Kant, as you know, drew certain distinctions between the higher faculties (medicine, law, and theology in ascending order) and the lower (philosophy). The former, in which people train for professions, are statute or canon based, while the latter is truth based. The former are regulated by the government with a view to generating effective public servants; the latter is free and self-regulating, insofar as it pursues truth for its own sake. The higher faculties

7. CD 2.2:148. Barth is thinking first, but not exclusively, of the tendencies of Reformed scholasticism, over against which he is offering a novel doctrine of election.

8. Like Ockham (see Gordon Leff, *William of Ockham* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975], 359), Kant also knows that God is inscrutable and that theology is no science. But unlike Ockham, Kant refuses to take on authority truths either about God himself or about God’s relation to the world; all that is left to him is the philosophical constraint of theology that was already operative in Ockham, though for Kant theology arises only as an inference from practical reason. On Kant’s unsuccessful attempt to provide an answer to the nature/freedom problem posed by Ockham’s nominalism, see Michael Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 39ff. and 258–63.

must be scrutinized by the lower, then, as regards truth; but the lower is not scrutinized by the higher. With the help of the lower, the higher faculties can learn to interpret and deploy their respective canons to the maximum benefit of society by approximating more closely a rational view of their own subject matter. The professionals they train will in turn influence for the better the government that regulates them. Some day the government may even come to recognize that the lower faculty, by virtue of this role, *is* the higher, that its free and dispassionate counsel is most to be prized.⁹

On this scenario the biblical theologian (the one, that is, who deals with revealed theology or *theologia empirica*) must be contrasted sharply with the rational theologian (whose efforts are devoted to natural theology or *theologia rationalis*).¹⁰ Likewise, “ecclesiastical faith,” which expounds Scripture dogmatically, must be contrasted with the “pure religious faith” that is the product of natural reason. The one, as we know already from *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, is the sum of “certain teachings regarded as divine revelations”; the other, “the sum of all our duties regarded as divine commands.”¹¹ The one may vary from community to community or from culture to culture; the other, precisely as “a purely rational affair,” is universal. Which is to say: there may be many churches or systems of worship, each more or less adequate in its way as a medium of the moral truth that underlies them all. But it is the typical mistake of the theology faculty, and of the biblical theologian, to suppose that the historical particularities to which it professes allegiance (or at least devotes scholarly attention) are somehow essential to pure religious faith. And it is philosophy’s task to expose this error, as Kant himself sets out to do.¹²

Kant, in other words, reduces the study of revealed theology to a professional discipline in the service of public morality. He does not deny that it is scholarly; indeed, he allows that as an empirical study it is scholarly in a way that natural or rational theology (quite deliberately) is not.¹³ He does not

9. Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 261.

10. “A biblical theologian is, properly speaking, one *versed in the Scriptures* with regard to *ecclesiastical faith*, which is based on statutes—that is, on laws proceeding from another person’s act of choice. A rational theologian, on the other hand, is one *versed in reason* with regard to *religious faith*, which is based on inner laws that can be developed from every human being’s own decrees” (ibid., 262, italics original; cf. 346).

11. Ibid., 261.

12. Biblical particularities—the historical and ritual elements of Judaism and Christianity—are the husks that must be stripped from the kernel of authentic religion: *Nunc istae reliquias nos exercent* (ibid., 263, quoting Cicero).

13. The faculty of philosophy has an empirical branch, but here we are dealing with pure philosophy; more specifically, with the metaphysics of morals (ibid., 256).

deny either its utility or the loftiness of its aims. After all, it deals not merely with the body or the body politic (these belong to the faculties of medicine and law respectively) but with the citizen himself and his character, and may come even to a consideration of eternal life. But the biblical theologian must be made to understand that “the moral improvement of the human being is the sole condition of eternal life.” Moreover, he must be made to understand that Scripture is at best an indirect guide to moral improvement and eternal life; indeed, that “the only way we can find eternal life in any Scripture whatsoever is by putting it there.”¹⁴ He must learn to discover the abiding rational kernel of morality (the true substance of religion) beneath the transitory historical husk (the accidents of tradition). He must recognize that faith invested in the historical particulars themselves, or in the dogmas that arise from those particulars, is irrational. Faith is a posture that reason may produce and adopt for itself in recognition of the limits of human conformity to reason and of reason’s own limits; but this remains faith *in* reason. It invests nothing in supposed historical manifestations of the supernatural.¹⁵

Now for Kant the opposition between the higher and lower faculties is dialectical, inasmuch as they share a “final end” in the public good.¹⁶ That opposition must therefore be adjudicated. But it is the lower faculty itself that will do the adjudicating, producing *concordia* from *discordia*, since it is the lower that is characterized by freedom and truth.

Where theology is concerned, a major conflict arises with philosophy over the public interpretation of Scripture; this above all must be adjudicated. Kant lays down firm ground rules, “philosophical principles of scriptural exegesis for settling the conflict.” First, texts that “transcend all rational concepts . . . may be interpreted in the interests of practical reason,” while texts that contradict practical reason *must* be so interpreted. There is to be no appeal, then, to dogmas such as the resurrection, the incarnation, and the Trinity (which, “taken literally, has no practical relevance at all”); nor to the putative supernatural events on which dogma is based.¹⁷ Second, there is to be no denigration of doubt. “The only thing that matters in religion is *deeds*.”¹⁸ Third, there is to be no appeal to grace, if grace means the influence of an external cause in the performance of good deeds. Texts that seem to do so

14. *Ibid.*, 263.

15. “But it is superstition to hold that historical belief is a duty and essential to salvation” (*ibid.*, 285).

16. This final end, as regards theology, is the cultivation of “inner religion” (*ibid.*, 264, though elsewhere Kant speaks, curiously, of “final aims”), which produces better deeds and better citizens (see note at 281).

17. *Ibid.*, 264f.

18. *Ibid.*, 267, italics original.

must be Pelagianized by the interpreter.¹⁹ Fourth, if a “supernatural supplement” is sometimes required to quell the accusing conscience, the *possibility* of such may be allowed in the rational interpretation of Scripture so long as no attempt is made to specify its character or to make definite our knowledge of it—we may allow for *fides qua*, as it were, but not for *fides quae*.²⁰

The price of peace between biblical and rational theology, then, or between the faculties of theology and philosophy, is the capitulation of the former to this philosophical policing of its sacred texts; and for such attention, Kant insists, theology should feel grateful. Alternatively, the following compromise is proposed: “If biblical theologians will stop using reason for their purposes, philosophical theologians will stop using the Bible to confirm their [own] propositions.”²¹ A sharper rebuke is hard to imagine, and it leaves us certain that Kant’s exercise in accommodation is based on practical necessity rather than on interdisciplinary respect. Biblical theology, revealed theology, has no credibility except what philosophy can lend it for the sake of its service to morality. The only contribution biblical theology can make from its own resources is to provide vehicles of the imagination that can be commandeered to philosophically determined ends. Religion itself has become in Kant a philosophical concept, and Christianity “the Idea of religion.” Christianity in its historic manifestation, however, is a disposable object. As for Judaism, and the Judaizing sectarianism that still plagues Christianity, pure moral religion is its “euthanasia.”²²

What shall we say about all this? No doubt Kant encountered many a Euthyphro whom he wished, like Socrates, to cure of pious impieties.²³ But it will not do, I think, to give an account strictly in terms of the parlous state of Protestant (and Catholic) theology at the time; that would require a different kind of critique altogether, and a different kind of cure. Nor will it do to reduce the whole business to a misunderstanding about Christian doctrine,

19. “Grace is none other than the nature of the human being insofar as he is determined to actions by a principle which is intrinsic to his own being, but supersensible—the thought of his duty” (ibid., 268; cf. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, first section). Likewise, “Christianity is the Idea of religion” (Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 269), rather than something supernaturally revealed; it is to be governed not by biblical theology but by rational theology.

20. Texts or dogmas that tend toward a “supernatural supplement” (Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 268) must be consigned to discourse about the “vehicles of moral faith,” not to discourse about moral faith itself. “The teacher should warn [the people] not to ascribe holiness to dogma itself but to pass over, without delay, to the religious faith it has introduced” (267).

21. Ibid., 270, emphasis original; cf. 251.

22. “The great drama of religious change on earth, the restoration of all things,” will take place when there is “only one shepherd and one flock” (ibid., 276).

23. Some of these will have been housed in theology faculties known to Kant, though at Königsberg he seems to have had friends and collaborators on that side (F. T. Rink, e.g.).

though Kant permits himself a generous helping of such misunderstandings. Nor yet will it suffice to give an account that is primarily political or cultural. A glimpse of what is really happening here is available at the point where Kant apparently deploys the epistemology of the Meno dialogue (not the Euthyphro) against the biblical theologians: “For the concepts and principles required for eternal life cannot really be learned from anyone else: the teacher’s exposition is only the occasion for him to develop them out of his own reason. But the Scriptures contain more than what is in itself required for eternal life; part of their content is a matter of historical belief, and while this can indeed be useful to religious faith as its mere sensible vehicle (for certain people and certain eras), it is not an essential part of religious faith.”²⁴ One does not reason from inspiration, he insists,²⁵ nor is history “entitled to pass itself off as divine revelation.” Only a moral interpretation of Scripture, a philosophical interpretation, “is really an *authentic* one—that is, one given by the God within us,” who speaks to us only by way of our own moral reason.²⁶

This reminds of the famous maxim of Lessing, indispensable to the Enlightenment, that “accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.”²⁷ In Kant, as in Lessing, there is a Meno revival, we might say, that opposes itself to everything that has intervened in the meanwhile; that is, to all the tiresome “relics” of Jewish or salvation-historical modes of thought that have corrupted the exercise of reason and the idea or rational archetype of religion that is the true genius of Christianity. Kant is more concerned than Lessing to separate the epistemological from the onto- and cosmo-theological dimensions of Platonism, which indeed he rejects. He is not quite so committed, perhaps, as Lessing (or later, Hegel) to the substitution of universal history, the history of the race, for the particular histories of Israel and the Church.²⁸ But he is equally concerned to disestablish the latter. If there is to be theology at all, it cannot be allowed to root itself in that soil. Which is to say, it cannot be “revealed” theology in that sense,

24. “Now the faculty of biblical theologians,” he continues, “insists on this historical content as divine revelation as strongly as if belief in it belonged to religion. The philosophical faculty, however, opposes the theology faculty regarding this confusion, and what divine revelation contains that is true of religion proper” (ibid., 263).

25. “One does not argue on the basis of an inspiration” (ibid., 265). Is this also an allusion to the Meno dialogue?

26. Ibid., 271. Hence he opines in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* that one may do with the sacred text as one pleases, so long as it is made to serve moral reason.

27. *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power*, in G. E. Lessing, *Theological Writings*, ed. and trans. H. Chadwick (London: Black, 1956), 53.

28. Though, in his treatment of the law faculty, Kant shows that he has his own way of doing this, through a “philosophical prophecy” about “the whole scope of all the peoples on earth” in their “progress toward the better” (*Conflict of the Faculties*, 304).

and it cannot be doctrinal. It cannot be taught, much less taught by authority. It is revealed only by and to reason. It is not *discovered* (as by Moses at the burning bush) but rather *uncovered*, because it is not accidental or particular but necessary and universal.

I said that Kant reduced the study of revealed theology to a professional discipline in the service of public morality; *pace* St. Thomas it was not truly a science in its own right.²⁹ But at stake, then, was not simply the relation between the human faculties of faith and reason, or between the university faculties of theology and philosophy—though Kant tried, with no small success, to reverse their positions and influence. What was at stake (though Kant was probably not thinking of this) was almost everything contained or implied in the first question of the *Summa*. Providing a negative rather than a positive answer to the very first article of that question—“whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required”—Kant also opposed most of the remaining articles. And it is worth observing that, like Thomas, he linked his answer to the doctrine of grace, a doctrine he was at pains to deny, even if it meant denying Luther as well as Thomas.³⁰

Not to put too fine a point on it, for Kant (though his own language is juridical rather than military) the borderlands were a battle zone, and in the battle of the borderlands Kant’s aim was to conquer and occupy: no *amicabilis compositio* can be permitted.³¹ The mark of divinity for any purported revelation, he says, or “at least the *conditio sine qua non*, is its harmony with what reason pronounces worthy of God.”³² For Thomas, knowledge of God transcends reason’s capacity to work things out for itself, and what reason can work out for itself, if only with great difficulty, is made plainer and more obvious by revelation; things uncertain (for example, did the world have a beginning or did it not?) are sometimes settled by revelation.³³ Whereas for

29. Kant takes Ockham’s part, as already indicated. Should Scotus be mentioned in this connection as well? By prioritizing will over intellect, does Scotus already reduce theology to *scientia practica*, making metaphysics the new queen? Or does he make theology a still higher science precisely because it is practical—that is, relational—having as its end the possession of God? But this does not concern us here, since no such thing crosses Kant’s mind.

30. See again *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, which consciously reverses the Reformation scheme.

31. “This conflict cannot and should not be settled by an amicable accommodation” (*Conflict of the Faculties*, 260). By way of contrast, see D. C. Schindler, *The Catholicity of Reason* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

32. “The kind of characteristics that experience provides can never show us that a revelation is divine; the mark of its divinity (at least the *conditio sine qua non*) is its harmony with what reason pronounces worthy of God” (*Conflict of the Faculties*, 270).

33. “It was necessary for man’s salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason” (*ST* 1.1.1).

Kant, substantive knowledge of God is not possible and the supposed science of revelation has no real content of its own at all, whether speculative or practical. The very idea of revelation is useful only in the form of a hortatory “as if”: what reason demands of us in the moral sphere must be received *as if* it were a revelation from God, a command of God.³⁴

Barth’s Theological Totalism

Friedrich Schleiermacher, who just a few years later was charged with finding a proper place for theology in the new University of Berlin, tried to get around all this by locating religion and theology in the sphere of *Gefühl*. Religion, he proposed, would be deemed neither knowing *nor* doing, but feeling; theology, an attempt to articulate the deep sense of awe and dependence arising from an intuition of the unity of all things. This was in some sense a feint or at least a half measure, as Troeltsch later observed, since Schleiermacher refused to let go entirely of a historical redeemer and a historic redemption; christology was still to control theology. The likes of Ritschl and Harnack provided for subsequent generations something of a more Kantian character by directing historical scholarship into biblical criticism and a skeptical examination of the development of dogma, while making theology over into a moralistic discipline in the service of social progress. But Karl Barth, who had drunk deeply from both these streams in his formative years, became disenchanted by the latter in particular when, at the outset of the Great War, he discovered how easily a theology reduced to ethics could fail its great ethical tests. A theology committed to soundings of *Gefühl* did not seem to him adequate either, even where Jesus was proposed (per Schleiermacher) as the instrument of measurement. So Barth set about reviving revealed theology.

34. “The *divinity* of its moral content adequately compensates reason for the *humanity* of its historical narrative which, like an old parchment that is illegible in places, has to be made intelligible by adjustments and conjectures consistent with the whole. And the divinity of its moral content justifies this statement: that the Bible deserves to be kept, put to moral use, and assigned to religion as its guide *just as if it is a divine revelation*” (Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 284f., italics original). It is worth remarking that this “as if” is the mirror image of Anselm’s. Anselm, having discovered truth through revelation, attempts to display it for reason as if reason alone were discovering it. Kant, having discovered truth through reason, allows revelation to display it as if it were the property of revelation. But revelation cannot with authority say other or more than that; it is reason alone that speaks, as Benjamin Whichcote put it, with “the very Voice of God” (*Moral and Religious Aphorisms* [London: Mathews & Marrot, 1930], no. 76, p. 11). Kant, by the way, is mistaken in thinking that Anselm tried “to establish the necessity of a highest being through mere concepts” (*Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, 349). Anselm tried only to show that reason’s reach for God falls into incoherence if it tries to bracket out God’s self-existence (see below, p. 204f.).

The way he went about that invites, in its totalism, analogy with Kant. Not that Barth thought that theology could take charge of philosophy; far from it. But Barth had no place at all for natural theology, or no place that he recognized as such.³⁵ God, argued Barth, *is* Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness; that is, Father, Son, and Spirit. What is known otherwise, under the rubric “God,” is not in fact God, whether this putative knowledge arises from religion or from first philosophy. For Barth natural theology cannot coexist alongside revealed theology, since the latter is all an affirmation of grace and the former all a denial. Natural theology is theology that wants to say in advance what God can or cannot be, to make God submit to what reason pronounces worthy of God. Revealed theology is *theologia relationis*, theology that reports what it has actually heard from God and so permits reason to be reasonable where God is concerned. The former is presumptuous, and in its presumption both artificial and misleading. The latter is obedient, and in its obedience enlightened and enlightening. Both, humanly speaking, are impossible enterprises, but the latter is (in Franz Overbeck’s phrase) the impossible possibility.

A simple illustration of these competing totalisms: Kant thinks Paul’s argument, “If Christ had not risen . . . neither would we rise again,” invalid.³⁶ As for the premise that Christ himself rose, he proposes that moral considerations moved Paul to accept as true a tale otherwise “hard to credit”—the tale being made to serve moral purposes accidentally rather than essentially.³⁷ So even the question of the resurrection of Jesus is historically and theologically inconsequential; what can reasonably be said about the subject of resurrection is determined already by Kant’s moral philosophy. Barth, on the other hand, takes the resurrection of Jesus to be a fact of the utmost

35. T. F. Torrance pointed out to Barth that there was room inside his theology for a form of natural theology, even if he rejected it as a *preambula fidei*; see the preface to his *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) and the chapter on “Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth,” in *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

36. Kant (*Conflict of the Faculties*, 264) does not actually bother himself with this enthymeme, which contains a valid argument that can be construed as follows:

Every gift of God to the people of God is a gift given first or pre-eminently to Jesus.

Resurrection is not a gift given first to Jesus.

Therefore resurrection is not a gift of God to the people of God.

Paul of course rejects the minor premise and accepts the major—just the reverse of Kant’s view.

37. Cf. Lessing, *On the Proof of the Spirit and Power*, 55, where it is suggested that the resurrection reports may at least be worthy of deliberation and doubt, but for the purposes of establishing sound metaphysics and morals they can be ignored with the same impunity as “the old pious legend that the hand which scatters the seed must wash in snail’s blood seven times for each throw.”

consequence—ontologically, morally, and epistemologically too. The cross and resurrection of Jesus are a “bar” to every attempt of fallen man to penetrate the truth about either man or God; at the same time they are the “exit” or way of escape from man’s dilemma. Just because of the resurrection, the truth about God and man that is concentrated in Jesus Christ is self-authenticating. It, or rather he, is capable of reaching back to embrace us even if we, from our own resources, are incapable of reaching out to find or embrace him.³⁸

Barth thus sides with Kierkegaard, who recognizes exactly what the Enlightenment thinkers are up to and what is at stake in their return to the Meno epistemology. In his thought experiment at the outset of the *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard makes the point that what confronts us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the possibility that the Greek philosophical tradition, and the Enlightenment with it, is working inside the wrong circle, so to say; that it has presupposed the essential divinity and truthfulness of the soul and consequently produced an epistemology that does not actually correspond to the human condition. What is more, it has understood truth and divinity in ways that effectively negate the value of time, matter, and individuality. Therefore it cannot take seriously what someone like Paul wants to say about the resurrection, a concept to which it is closed *a priori* and absolutely. Even to have conceived of working in some other circle, such as Paul’s, is an impossibility for it—but it must nonetheless reckon with this “impossible” possibility.

Kierkegaard in turn is siding with a tradition extending back to Justin Martyr, who in his *Dialogue with Trypho* had already made the same basic point; or rather, the old man he encountered by the sea, who converted him from Platonism to Christianity, had made it. But I digress. My own point is that the Christian tradition can meet the kind of natural theology it encounters in Kant only with an equally totalizing claim; there is no middle ground here. Barth himself looks to Anselm rather than to Justin or Kierkegaard to explain how he thinks theology, rational theology, is to be done. Their circle comprises *fides, intellegere, probare, delectatio*, in that order. Faith explores its own inner *ratio* through an intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of what is grasped by faith—for example, the resurrection or the Trinity—which issues in demonstration or proof of its surprising propriety and beauty (its *convenientia, decentia, pulchritudo*, etc.) and hence also in joy, delight, and praise (*eucharistia*).³⁹ Theology, in other words, cannot survive on the crumbs falling

38. Any demand for *independent* proof of the resurrection ignores the Risen One methodologically and systematically, which he thinks futile and indeed perverse.

39. Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides quaerens intellectum* (London: SCM, 1960), 13ff.

from Kant's table or from any other philosophical table. It has its own feast to enjoy, and in enjoying it may show philosophy something new, something philosophy did not know how to conceive for itself.

Think, for example, of Nicæa's notoriously controversial *ὁμοούσιον*, the implications of which pried apart *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* so as to give ontological weight to the idea of personhood. Or Chalcedon's equally controversial exception to the Aristotelian principle that there is no *φύσις ἀνυπόστατος*, blind adherence to which had produced the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, but the overcoming of which produced not merely two-nature orthodoxy but (inter alia) an unprecedented world of Christian art. Think of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, which comes to mind from a long list of examples because its marvelous thirteenth book took the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and showed that, without it, human reason, human morality, and the human drive for happiness are deprived of real hope for fulfillment and must wither away in pointlessness and despair. Kant, of course, has his own worries about that and his own rather hesitant and, historically speaking, ineffective solution—pounding ever harder on his “as if,” something we have long since ceased to do—but nowhere does he demonstrate any real grasp of the alternative presented to him by an Augustine, an Anselm, or an Aquinas, much less a Paul. In Kant we seldom encounter anything more than caricatures of these men or of their ideas, though here and there he expropriates something for his own purposes.

But what of Barth? Barth too is problematic, in that he seems to have no room for natural theology even where the latter does not mean to be totalizing. Barth finds the doctrine of God in Kant “quite intolerable,” since Kant fails to respect the Thomist maxim, *Deus non est in genere*, and so does not learn from God how to be reasonable but vainly tries to teach God how to be reasonable (CD 2.1:310f.). Yet Barth balks at that other Thomist maxim, *gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*, from which Aquinas draws the conclusion that “natural reason should minister to faith as the natural inclination of the will ministers to charity.”⁴⁰ In Barth's mind, Kant and neo-Protestantism

40. ST 1.1.8, ad 2; cf. *Super Boetium* 1.2.3, co. 1: “I answer that it must be said that gifts of grace are added to those of nature in such a way that they do not destroy the latter, but rather perfect them [*dona gratiarum hoc modo naturae adduntur quod eam non tollunt, sed magis perficiunt*]; wherefore also the light of faith, which is gratuitously infused into our minds, does not destroy the natural light of cognition, which is in us by nature. For although the natural light of the human mind is insufficient to reveal those truths revealed by faith, yet it is impossible that those things which God has manifested to us by faith should be contrary to those which are evident to us by natural knowledge. In this case one would necessarily be false: and since both kinds of truth are from God, God would be the author of error, a thing which is impossible. Rather, since in imperfect things there is found some imitation of the perfect, though the

generally are no more than extensions of the Catholic error embodied in this *non tollit sed perficit*. Natural theology, even in the Christian tradition, is for those who think they already know what “God” and “man” are before encountering them concretely in Jesus Christ, where they are mutually interpreted and interpretable. Natural theology is for those who are certain, therefore, to impose on Jesus a false interpretation that prevents, rather than facilitates, any real knowledge of either God or man. It is for those who refuse to see in the Crucified One the death of their own miserable attempts to approach God.⁴¹

For Barth natural theology is a sin of the intellect that must, so to say, be nailed to the tree. We need to be clear, however, about what he means by natural theology. Natural theology not only posits knowledge of God by way of a general revelation given with creation and accessible to unaided reason (as Paul says in Rom. 1:20, “ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made”), it also employs this knowledge in a perverse attempt to control the knowledge that is possible through special revelation. It makes general revelation into a prolegomenon for special revelation in such a way as to establish in advance the conditions under which the latter can be received and understood. In doing so it seeks a path from anthropology to christology, and from a prior knowledge of God the creator to a posterior knowledge of God the redeemer—a path that no longer lies open to reason, if ever it did. In other words, it ignores the fall.⁴² Indeed, it ignores the fact (as Barth has it) that the covenant of redemption is the inner basis for the covenant of creation. It reverses the ontological and epistemological relation between the two. “There is a way from christology to anthropology, but there is no way from anthropology to christology” (CD 1.1:131).

Natural theology therefore posits the *analogia entis*—an analogy of being between God and man rooted in the act of creation—as its own condition of possibility, when the only genuine analogy is an *analogia gratiae* rooted

image is deficient, in those things known by natural reason there are certain similitudes of the truths revealed by faith.”

41. A message well represented, thought Barth, by the prodigious finger of John the Baptist pointing to Christ in Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece.

42. Barth denies that “the turntable between philosophy and theology” is the man who can be analyzed “in the light of a divine revelation from creation.” Natural theology wrongly thinks that this man, or rather this analysis, can serve “as the *introitus* to the inner circle of a true theology grounded in a *revelatio specialis*.” Such an enterprise, however, is possible only “in the realm of Roman Catholicism, since this presupposes that God’s manifestation in our creatureliness, the creation of man which is also the revelation of God, is in some place and in some sense . . . directly discernible by us.” Whereas the truth of the matter is that “this direct discernment of the original relation of God to man . . . has been taken from us by the fall” (CD 1.1:130).

in the act of redemption. Even if it does so retrospectively, in the light of revelation, it nonetheless supposes that what revelation shows it is simply the truth about what already exists: man's capacity for God, a capacity that has survived the fall and manifested itself in countless expressions of human reason and culture, which grace now affirms, supports, and perfects. But for Barth this amounts to a denial of grace:

Grace which has from the start to share its power with a force of nature is no longer grace, i.e., it cannot be recognised as what the grace of God is in the consideration and conception of that divine act, as what it is in Jesus Christ. And therefore revelation which has from the very outset a partner in the reason of the creature, and which cannot be revelation without its co-operation, is no longer revelation. At any rate, it is not the revelation which takes place in the act in which God opens Himself to man in pure goodness; in which He does not find an existing partner in man, but creates a partner; in which even the fact that God is known and knowable is the work of His freedom. (CD 2.2:531)

Barth thus “leaves no room for any knowledge of God apart from the knowledge of humanity's reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ.”⁴³ Outside of that all is idolatry, whether open or subtle idolatry.

As severe as this sounds, it does not amount to a complete rejection of philosophy or of any positive relation between philosophy and theology, only of philosophical pretensions to independent knowledge of God or of the real truth about man, who must indeed be understood by analogy with God—the *analogia gratiae*. Taking up the gauntlet thrown down by Kant over the proper method of reading Scripture, Barth allows that no one reads Scripture without philosophical spectacles of one prescription or another. “We cannot basically contest the use of philosophy in scriptural exegesis,” he says; “where the question of legitimacy arises is in regard to the How of this use.”⁴⁴ Indeed, the use of philosophy “is not only unavoidable as such, but legitimate, just as it was not only unavoidable but legitimate when, just as he was, in his poverty and rags, the prodigal son arose and went to his father.”⁴⁵ But this means that “there is no essential reason for preferring one of these schemes to another.”

43. Keith Johnson, “Reconsidering Barth's Rejection of Pryzwara's *Analogia Entis*,” *Modern Theology* 26.4 (2010): 645. Admittedly, my account here to some extent conflates the earlier and the more considered perspectives of Barth.

44. CD 1.2:729f. “It is no more true of anyone that he does not mingle the Gospel with some philosophy, than that here and now he is free from all sin except through faith.” Note that Barth shares with Kant the view that the only border worth talking about is the interpretation of Scripture.

45. CD 2.2:729. “My mode of thought may not be of any use in and by itself, but by the grace of the Word of God why should it not be able to become useful in His service?” (CD 1.2:731).