

### Karl Barth, 1886-1968

The real experience of the man addressed by God's Word is the very thing that decides and proves that what makes it possible lies beyond itself.

He is not sure of himself but of the Word of God, and he is not sure of the Word of God in and of himself but in and of the Word. His assurance is his own assurance, but it has its seat outside him in the Word of God, and it is his assurance in this way, as the Word of God is present to him.

In sum, when Luther speaks of the Word of God and faith he is saying, of course, that where there is no faith the Word cannot be, or cannot be fruitful, but he is saying primarily, and this is the point, that where faith is, it does not have its ground and its truth and its measure in itself as a human act or experience, but even though it is a human act and experience it has these things in its object, in Christ, or God's Word.

Modernist dogmatics is finally unaware of the fact that in relation to God man has constantly to let something be said to him, has constantly to listen to something, which he does not know and which under no circumstances and in no sense can he say to himself. Modernist dogmatics hears man answer when no one has called him. It hears him speak with himself.

God's speech is His action in relation to those to whom He speaks. But His action is divine. It is the action of the Lord. It is thus His ruling action.

Why and in what respect does the biblical witness have authority? Because and in the fact that he claims no authority for himself, that his witness amounts to letting that other itself be its own authority. We thus do the Bible poor and unwelcome honour if we equate it directly with this other, with revelation itself.

Its veiling can change for us absolutely into its unveiling and its unveiling can change absolutely into its veiling. Absolutely, for it is unalterably the same in itself, always the one or the other for us. . . . In what is manifest to us the hidden side is contained, but as a hidden side, so that we can grasp and have it only as such, i.e., only in faith.

To faith, however, this straight line movement is forbidden by the Word of God which calls us from despair to triumph, from solemnity to joy, but also from triumph to despair and from joy to solemnity. This is the *theologia crucis*. . . . The Word of God in its veiling, its form, is the claiming of man by God. The Word of God in its unveiling, its content, is God's turning to man.

It is thus of the very nature of this God to be inscrutable to man. In saying this we naturally mean that in His revealed nature He is thus inscrutable. It is the *Deus revelatus* who is the *Deus absconditus*, the God to whom there is no path nor bridge, concerning whom we could not say nor have to say a single word if He did not of His own initiative meet us as the *Deus revelatus*. God's self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom.

It would be no less God's eternal Word if it were not spoken to us, and what constitutes the mercy of its revelation, of its being spoken to us, is that it is spoken to us in virtue of the freedom in which God could be "God in Himself" and yet He does not will to be so and in fact is not so, but actually wills to be and actually is "God for us."

Because God is antecedently love in Himself, love is and holds good as the reality of God in the work of reconciliation and in the work of creation. But He is this love antecedently in Himself as He posits Himself as the Father of the Son.

The reality of God in His revelation cannot be bracketed by an "only," as though somewhere behind His revelation there stood another reality of God; the reality of God which encounters us in revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity. This is why we have to take it so seriously precisely in His revelation.

God is who He is in the act of revelation. God seeks and creates fellowship between Godself and us, and therefore He loves us. But He is this loving God without us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the freedom of the Lord, who has life from Himself.

We must not allow God to be submerged in His relationship to the universe or think of Him as tied in Himself to the universe. Under the concept of predestination, or the election of grace, we say that in freedom (its affirmation and not its loss) God tied Himself to the universe.

The electing God of Calvin is a *Deus nudus absconditus*. It is not the *Deus revelatus* who is as such the *Deus absconditus*, the eternal God. All the dubious features of Calvin's doctrine result from the basic failing that in the last analysis he separates God and Jesus Christ, thinking that what was in the beginning with God must be sought elsewhere than in Jesus Christ.

The election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man to participation in His own glory.

That the elected man Jesus had to suffer and die means no more and no less than that in becoming man God makes Himself responsible for man who became His enemy, and that He takes upon Himself all the consequences of man's action—his rejection and his death. This is what is involved in the self-giving of God. This is the radicalness of His grace.

If we would know what it was that God elected for Himself when He elected fellowship with man, then we can only answer that He elected our rejection. He made it His own. He bore it and suffered it with all its most bitter consequences.

The Church can understand its own origin and its own goal only as it understands its unity with Israel. Precisely in its Gentile Christian members it must perceive that it would be forsaken by God if God had really forsaken Israel