

AMY MARGA

Karl Barth's Dialogue
with Catholicism in
Göttingen and Münster

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149*

Mohr Siebeck

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Albrecht Beutel

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with Catholicism in Göttingen
and Münster

Its Significance for His Doctrine of God

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

The research contained in this study comprised my dissertation, completed in May 2006 at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, entitled, *Partners in the Gospel: Karl Barth and Roman Catholicism, 1922–1932*. My thanks goes to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Bruce McCormack, who got me started on the fascinating topic of Karl Barth's relationship to Roman Catholicism, and who encouraged me to research the many unpublished lectures and protocols that record Barth's work during his tenure at the University of Münster. I am grateful to the *Nachlasskommission* of the Karl-Barth-Archive, Basel, Switzerland, for allowing me access to several of Karl Barth's unpublished letters, lectures, and other documents.

My very deepest thanks goes to Dr. Hans-Anton Drewes, Archivist of the Karl Barth Archive, Basel, who not only accompanied me in long hours of archival work during my research, but also for his friendship, humor, generosity, and continual encouragement to pursue this research and share it with the academic community. I am grateful for his companionship, and I owe him a great deal.

For the sake of uniformity and respect for the sources of my research, I have chosen to rely almost exclusively upon the German works compiled in the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, published by the Theologischer Verlag Zürich. In order to truly 'hear' Karl Barth in his own words, I have left all the longer citations in German and have provided an appendix of English translations of these. Shorter remarks and citations have been translated and stand within the text.

The revised and expanded work that this book represents is the product of a study leave that I graciously received from Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota, in the fall semester of 2008. For this generous and necessary amount of time, which was fruitful in a multitude of ways, I would like to thank the former Academic Dean, Dr. David Lose, President Rick Bliese, and the History and Theology Division of Luther Seminary, especially the division head, Dr. Alan Padgett. I am grateful

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Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 17, 2009

Amy Marga

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Introduction

At no time in Karl Barth's long career did Roman Catholicism play a more crucial role for him than in the 1920s. This decade saw Barth deliver two out of his three sets of lectures on dogmatic theology, the Göttingen and Münster cycles, both of which directly engaged Roman Catholic thought (the third cycle of lectures makes up the *Church Dogmatics*). Roman Catholicism became a conversation partner that Barth encountered with a directness and concreteness that was unprecedented in his day, and it acted as a conduit for his retrieval of Reformation theology for modern Protestantism. This study investigates the ways in which Barth engaged Catholicism in the decades of the 1920s, especially on several pivotal, material points, such as God's concrete and objective presence in the creaturely sphere, the event of revelation as an act of reconciliation, and the correspondence that exists between human knowledge of God and God's own, triune knowledge. These material issues, on which Barth found clarity and depth through the encounter with Roman Catholicism, led him to what he saw as the heart of the Protestant-Catholic divide: the doctrine of God.

Barth was drawn to Catholicism's commitment to the objective reality of the event of revelation. He shared their concern for a "revelational objectivism,"¹ a term which describes the event in which God crosses the divine-human divide and takes up form in the creaturely sphere. By taking up form among created realities, God is genuinely knowable as an object and not merely as a subjective experience. This revelational event is the basis for theology's scientific pursuit. It can reflect upon God in a methodical and scientific manner because the event of revelation gives the human knower something objective upon which to reflect. God's concrete and objective presence is well represented through Catholicism's numerous forms of piety, such as the Sacrament of the Altar, the organi-

¹ George Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 76 ff.

zation of individuals into the priesthood and monastic life, and the view of God's effects on created realities. These are all examples of how Roman Catholic theology lifts up and dedicates itself to the *Gegenständlichkeit* of God. The German term, *Gegenständlichkeit*, refers in this study to the "objective and concrete presence" of God.

Even before his early conversation with Catholicism, Barth understood well that God's being was an objective reality which possesses its own integrity and veracity outside of the mind of the human knower. His emphasis on the action, freedom, and self-determination of God in the *Romans* commentaries establishes with quite some force that God is not the consequence of human subjective thinking or experience. The clarification that came to Barth's understanding of God's *Gegenständlichkeit* through his engagement with Roman Catholicism gave it staying power in his own theology. His early dialogue with Catholicism was the time when he began to sink God's *Gegenständlichkeit* into the deep roots of God's triune being alone, forming a distinctly Protestant understanding of it.

One can safely hazard to say that the particular kind of encounter that occurred between Barth and Catholicism could not have happened in quite the same way in any other era, nor perhaps in any other location than the Westphalian city of Münster, where the Roman Catholic faith thrives and permeates public life. Barth's engagement with Catholic theology in the 1920s occurred at a time in history – and more importantly at a moment in his own development – when strong cross-currents and the clash of ideas bore the fruit that nourished future generations of theologians. Renewal and a longing for newness pulsed through both Protestantism and Catholicism. The cultural, philosophical, and theological fallout of World War I, the impotency and myopia of the Protestant world, and the new momentum that Catholicism began gaining in the years after the War all came together to form an unparalleled historical moment in which Catholics and Protestants could view one another in a new light. The unique ecumenical encounter between Barth and Catholicism left indelible footprints on the development of Barth's thought. These can be seen across all genres of his work, from his sermons to his dogmatic lectures to his academic lectures on ethics given in Münster to his public lectures and even in the private letters to his friend, Eduard Thurneysen. Likewise, by the end of his life, Barth had left an enduring mark on Catholic theology.

The relationship, however, was complex. The tremendous impact that Barth's *Romans* commentary left on Protestant theology also caught the

attention of many Catholic thinkers. For its part, Catholicism was staging a landscape-altering reentry into German cultural life after decades of languishing in a ghettoized state under external politics as well as internal struggles. Barth was struck by its strength, breadth, and magnetism. His own theology was undergoing profound development, and his ecumenical openness towards Catholicism was no mere gesture of good will or dialogue for the sake of a formal and external church unity. It is more accurate to say that Barth began to explore the Roman Catholic tradition just as his own sense of history was opening up to the thinkers and theology of the past. His dialogue with Catholicism is a search for the genuine common ground that Protestant theology shares with the Roman tradition while not neglecting the church-dividing differences. The sea-changes and ferment on both sides of the confessional divide sparked a mutual curiosity that helped shape both Catholic and Protestant theology throughout the decade of the 1920s and far beyond.

There are two reasons in contemporary Barth studies for the lacuna in our understanding of the role of Roman Catholic theology in the Swiss thinker's earlier thought.

First, while much in Barth research today gives the impression that Barth's earlier dogmatic theology is a well-traveled road, in fact, no study has traced the encounters that Barth had with Catholicism throughout the decade of the 1920s for the sake of analyzing the material development of his thought, as this present study will do. The classic study of Barth and Roman Catholicism by Hans Urs von Balthasar² still retains an authoritative voice when it comes to the major differences in thought forms and paradigms between the two traditions. Indeed, as this study will show, parts of his conclusions regarding Barth's *later* theology can actually be more accurately applied to Barth's thought in the earlier period of the 1920s. Another study, by Wilhelm Neuser, provides a rich composition of biographical and historical details of Barth's tenure in Münster, but it only cursorily treats the encounter that Barth had with Catholic theology.³ Bruce McCormack's ground-breaking work on the development of Barth's theology from his *Romans* commentary through his mature doctrine of election in 1936 gives a very brief account of Barth's encounter with Catholicism while Professor for Dogmatics and

² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*. (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976); English translation: *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Edward T. Oakes, transl., (San Francisco: Communio Books/Ignatius Press, 1992).

³ W. H. Neuser, *Karl Barth in Münster 1925–1930* (Zürich: TVZ, 1985).

New Testament in Münster,⁴ and Lidija Matosevic has recently studied several public lectures during Barth's time in Münster in an effort to explore his move to overcome "medieval" thought forms in Protestant theology.⁵ No study has traced the encounters that Barth had with Catholicism throughout the decade of the 1920s for the sake of analyzing the material development of Barth's thought, as this present study will do.

Second, scholarship on Barth's engagement with Catholicism has tended to latch onto single themes that have grown out of the relationship in order to try to understand the nature and function of particular concepts in the history of theology. Such is the case with the recent interest surrounding Barth's relationship to the *analogia entis*.⁶ Although these kinds of targeted and thematic studies are interesting, they neglect the broader context of Barth's engagement with Catholicism, which clarifies the patterns of his exposure to the *analogia entis* and other forms of Roman thought. The research given in the analysis before us offers a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of how Barth's encounter with the living tradition of Catholicism led him to explore and encounter the commitments he had to liberal Protestantism and to Reformation theology in fresh and unexpected ways.

This is the first study of Barth's relationship to Catholicism in the 1920s that makes use of both "cycles" of dogmatic lectures that Barth gave in that decade: the Göttingen dogmatic lectures, given between 1924–1925 while Barth was Honorary Professor of Reformed Dogmatics at the University of Göttingen, and the Münster dogmatic lectures, given between 1926–1928 during Barth's tenure as Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis at the University in Münster. The Göttingen lectures on dogmatics makes up the three-volume "*Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*" in the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, while the bulk of the Münster dogmatic lectures remain unpublished with the exception of the prolegomena, which was published in 1927 under the title, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*. These unpublished lectures on dogmatics find their home in the Karl Barth Archive, Basel. The Münster dogmatic cycle, similar to the cycle given in Göttingen, stretched over three semesters: from the winter semester of 1927 through the winter semester of 1928. (The Göttingen cycle had stretched from spring seme-

⁴ Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 376–391.

⁵ Lidija Matosevic, *Lieber katholisch als neuprotestantisch. Karl Barths Rezeption der katholischen Theologie 1921–1930*, (Kempten: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), 22.

ster, 1924 through the winter semester of 1925/26. Barth gave the final section of his Göttingen cycle, on eschatology, during his first semester in Münster, 1925/26.) Further, this study will make use of the unpublished student protocol book which contains notes taken by the students who attended Barth's seminar on Thomas Aquinas' theology given in Münster in 1929. These student-generated protocol books also record the historic visit which the Jesuit, Erich Przywara, paid to Barth's Thomas seminar. As a supplement to these materials, the analysis before us also utilizes the unpublished student protocols of the seminar that Barth gave once he moved from Münster to Bonn in the winter semester of 1931/32. These student protocols cover the seminar's topic, "The Problem of Natural Theology." Unpublished letters between Barth and Przywara provide insight into this unique relationship as well. An analysis of these important and somewhat neglected documents fill the paucity of research on Barth's development into a self-conscious Reformation theologian and a teacher of Christian theology. They open up new avenues into the material concerns of Barth's earlier period, and demonstrate how his openness towards Catholic theology brought him the remarkable opportunity to clarify and deepen his own theological commitments in conversation with a living tradition of the Christian faith, the endurance of which has been tested by the ages.

An analysis of Barth's early dialogue with Catholicism also demonstrates that this was an open and direct relationship that did not follow any script or set of preconditions. Barth did not take one, fixed methodological approach to his dialogue with Catholicism nor did he treat it like a historical artifact or a specimen for contemporary theological science. In fact, at times, he took a very atypical and therefore controversial, attitude towards it. Leading Protestant thinkers like Emmanuel Hirsch and Reinhold Seeberg disdained the way Barth saw Roman Catholicism as a vital stream of Christianity and a genuinely modern challenge to Protestant theology. They interpreted Barth's ecumenical efforts as a breaking up of the "common fate" of Protestant theology.⁷

⁶ See for example, John Betz, "Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part One)," *Modern Theology*, 21:3 July 2005: 367–411; *ibid.*, "Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two)," *Modern Theology*, 22:1 January 2006: 1–50; David Bentley Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003). An older attempt that focuses on the *analogia entis* is Eberhard Mechels, *Analogie bei Erich Przywara und Karl Barth*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1974.

⁷ See Karl Barth, "Der römische Katholizismus als Frage an die protestantische Kirche," in *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Hermann Schmidt, 303–343, III, *Vorträge und kleinere*

Even long time acquaintances like Karl Heim were not satisfied with how Barth chose to present Protestant concerns in light of the renewal movement in Catholic theology.⁸ In contrast to these reactions, Catholics were beginning to take a keen interest in Barth's theological project, the most important figure being Erich Przywara, who was willing to enter into the uncharted waters of dialogue with the Reformed thinker.

One of the reasons for the unconventionality of this direct relationship lay in Barth's decision to face Roman Catholic theology head on. Early in his academic career, he unapologetically began to study the theology of Thomas Aquinas, which he first explored in 1923 with a colleague, Erik Peterson, while in Göttingen. Peterson showed Barth that Thomas' theology had vitality and substance, which deflated the stereotypical impression of Catholic theology as a dusty relic from a gothic past. Barth even perceived parallels between his own dialectical doctrine of revelation and that of Thomas. Thomas' theology upheld an objectivity of the doctrine of God that liberal Protestantism had long ago forfeited to the forces of history and the power of human psychology. This medieval teacher understood the divine dynamics of revelation. Yet, as Barth dug deeper into Reformation theology and the Reformed tradition, he began to view Thomas less as a teacher and more as the representative of modern Catholicism. This necessitated serious engagement from Reformation theology. Thus, Barth set out to provide a fresh Reformation perspective on Catholic theology. As the Münster dogmatic lectures evidence, Barth sought out ways in which Catholics and Protestants could find common ground regarding Christian doctrine.

Such an intellectually honest approach to Protestantism's long-standing and traditional opponent defies easy labeling. It must be asked whether categories such as "dialectical catholicity"⁹ are appropriate descriptions of the dynamic of Barth's relationship to Catholicism. Rein-

Arbeiten 1925–1930. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1994), 318 note 37 [hereafter "Der römische Katholizismus als Frage"]; "Roman Catholicism: A Question to the Protestant Church" in *Theology and Church. Shorter Writings 192–1928*, translated by Louise Pettibone Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 307–333. All citations come from the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, [hereafter KBGA], and are translated by the author. Where there are English translations, they will also be cited. See also Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Barth-Thurneysen Briefwechsel Band II. 1921–1930*, in *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Eduard Thurneysen. V, *Briefe*. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1974), 597 [hereafter BT–II].

⁸ See Karl Heim, "Offene Brief an Karl Barth." *Die Furche* 14 (1928): 17–22.

⁹ Reinhard Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity': *Sic et Non*." *Modern Theology* 16 (2000): 137–157.

hard Hütter has described the relationship this way based on the swing in Barth's rhetoric in a public lecture he gave on Catholicism in 1928, entitled "Roman Catholicism as a Question to the Protestant Church."¹⁰ Hütter sees Barth's rhetoric as a dialectical move that characterizes the ecumenical strategy that he takes with Catholicism. In this particular lecture, Barth moves from favoring Catholic theology and rejecting Neoprottestantism to challenging Catholicism's doctrine of revelation and affirming overtly Reformational categories. The strategy of "dialectical catholicity", according to Hütter, is to avoid the pitfalls of both Catholicism and Neoprottestantism, and revive Reformation categories as the proper stance against Catholic doctrine. As Hütter sees it, this "dialectical catholicity" allows Barth to navigate between the two poles of Catholicism and Neoprottestantism, with the goal to "reconnect contemporary Protestantism with the Church of the Reformation and thereby make it again 'genuine.'"¹¹ Reformation categories thus become a "critical principle"¹² which Barth wields over against Catholicism.

It is true that Barth dove deeply into Reformation theology in his response to Catholicism. But Hütter's characterization of Barth's ecumenical strategy as a "dialectical catholicity" suggests that Barth utilized a fixed and particular strategy for dealing with Catholicism, when in fact, as our research shows, he did not have one. For instance, in the Münster lectures, Barth took Catholic theology seriously enough to try to use their concepts and language as a part of his own theological reflection, but he abandoned this way once he gained a deeper insight into how the Reformation doctrine of salvation shaped the doctrine of revelation.

Although Barth's way between Neoprottestantism and Catholicism throughout his *Church Dogmatics* I/1 is dialectical in shape,¹³ Barth preferred Catholicism because there were genuinely shared commitments between the two traditions on key doctrinal issues. However, by the late 1920s, Barth's interest in these shared commitments were shelved while he dedicated most of his attention to the menacing rise of Nazism and the *Deutsche Christen*. A potential *rapprochement* between the two churches was sidelined and not revived until the years leading up to Vatican II. Because Barth never employed a fixed ecumenical strategy such as

¹⁰ See Barth, "Der römische Katholizismus als Frage" KBGA 303–343; "Roman Catholicism: A Question" 307–333.

¹¹ Hütter, "Karl Barth's 'Dialectical Catholicity'", 142.

¹² *Ibid.*, 146.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 142.

a “dialectical catholicity” for dealing with the challenge of Roman Catholicism, he was able to take hold of the unparalleled opportunity to engage more directly and honestly with Catholicism than any Protestant thinker in his day.

Barth let himself be freely challenged by the beautiful structure of Catholic theology, and in so doing, he sharpened many of the rough edges of his own thought on the Roman tradition’s solid grindstone. One of the most penetrating observations of Barth’s theology came from Erich Przywara, the Jesuit intellectual who was a keen observer of Barth’s earlier work, and who is best known for his highly creative work on the *analogia entis*. Przywara, who was born and raised in Poland, is one of those figures in history whose singular mind perceived the tenor and flow of his particular – and particularly complex – historical moment. He brought together insights and projects from many different disciplines, opening the way for Catholicism to maneuver itself into the modern currents of the twentieth century while remaining astonishingly true to the theology of Thomas Aquinas. He is the most significant Catholic critic of Barth’s theology before the late 1940s, and was the teacher and mentor of probably the most influential Catholic critic of Barth’s theology, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Przywara’s critique penetrated into Barth’s early notion of divine objectivity – God’s *Gegenständlichkeit*. He pointed out that the Protestant concept of transcendence that shaped Barth’s early dialectical theology actually hindered a clear expression of God’s concrete and objective presence in revelation. In Przywara’s view, the fatal flaw in Protestant theology was that it makes the Incarnation impossible because it denies that God is genuinely present within the created world. Przywara’s early challenge to Barth’s doctrine of God lay in how to express that God is an object to be known, how to express that there is a *Gegenständlichkeit* to God’s presence which is accessible to the human knower, but not produced by any human activity. Theology must articulate a God who is both Lord over the creaturely veils used in revelation but also genuinely ‘knowable’ as an object within them. In other words, theology must reflect upon what it means that God has become incarnate in Jesus Christ – and therefore knowable and present in history.

While Przywara’s early insight into Barth’s doctrine of revelation set the stage for a serious discussion and unparalleled respect between the two thinkers, Barth’s time in Münster as Professor for Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis broadened his vision and opened him up even further to a direct encounter with Catholic theology. During his tenure

there, from 1925–1930, Barth’s theology of the Incarnation deepened, and he focused his attention on the explicit connection between God’s act of revelation and God’s act of reconciliation. This new convergence of revelation and reconciliation allowed Barth to speak more concretely about the grace of God that is present in creation. Such a consideration of God’s presence in creation through the Incarnation provided a natural opening into frank and direct connections with Roman Catholic theology, which is apparent in his dogmatic lectures of those years.

These dogmatic lectures given in Münster also reveal the assumptions under which Barth was working at the time. They are assumptions that opened him up quite dramatically to the concerns and commitments of Catholic theology. The first assumption held that the order of the Incarnation presupposes the order of creation. A second is that there is an “original relationship” between God and the human being that is distinct from and external to the relationship which God enjoys with the human in the man Jesus Christ. Third, Barth granted that the grace of reconciliation peacefully coincides with sinful creatures in a way that produces the paradox of the saint and sinner or the “blessed sinner.” These three presuppositions surrounding Barth’s doctrine of the Incarnation enabled him to find a significant amount of common ground with Roman Catholic theology, and allowed him to take seriously their concerns about creation, grace, and the knowledge of God.

At the same time, during Barth’s tenure in Münster, the connection between doctrine of reconciliation and revelation began to exert an increasing force upon his theology, and it began to bring with it a decidedly new tone to his engagement with Roman Catholic theology. He became bolder about arguing that the event of God’s Word is never a neutral event. It is an event of reconciliation that is grounded in the unified action of the God as Creator, Reconciler, Redeemer¹⁴ and rooted in

¹⁴ The assigning of the ‘names’ “Creator”, “Reconciler” and “Redeemer” to the Triune persons of the Godhead is by no means employed here as a way to avoid the traditional language of Father, Son, and Spirit for the Trinity. I am following Barth’s own lead here, especially as he lays out the activity of the Triune God in his 1929 lecture, “The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life.” There, he speaks of God as Creator [*Schöpfer*], Reconciler [*Versöhner*] and Redeemer [*Erlöser*]. Naturally, Barth never intended these titles to be a substitute for the names, Father, Son, and Spirit, which he uses freely throughout his Göttingen and Münster lecture cycles, as well as throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. But it is clear that he uses the alternative titles as well, quite often and unproblematically. Certainly this arises out of the profound actualism present in his theology in the 1920s, and the attention he was paying at the time to the unity of the being and activity of God, which we will explore further in the present study.

God's singular will. Further, created reality, which determines the nature of the veils that participate in revelation, only exists in the act of living and moving through time. Thus, the veils employed in God's revelation are constantly *becoming* that which they are by virtue of the fact that God the Reconciler acts upon them and creates them into something new, namely, into witnesses to God's grace. The act of reconciliation is an act of creation. Likewise, knowledge of creation comes through no other way than through knowledge of reconciliation. Therefore, knowledge of God the Creator must come through the actions of God as the Reconciler. Reconciliation is an act that has consequences not only for material objects which participate in God's revelation, but also for the human mind. God's act of reconciliation, which is the core of the event of revelation, is an act of God upon the human mind.

After four years of teaching in Münster, Barth came to see Catholicism and the theology of Thomas less as teachers and conversations partners and more as the most important opponent that modern Protestantism would have to face if it were going to be true to its Reformation roots. He saw a gap in the connection between God's action and the way of human knowledge to God in Catholic theology, which is why he would eventually accuse it of having a "theology of the First Article."¹⁵ Theology cannot have an epistemology that is based on the abstract concepts of First Cause or Creator, and at the same time affirm that the *being* of God is based on the grace of reconciliation. Theological epistemology and theological ontology must both lead to the same God. Knowledge must follow the ontology of grace and reconciliation. Consequently, Barth would be led to reject the *analogia entis*, for he interpreted it as a concept that encapsulates the entire Catholic economy of grace in its peaceful transition from creation through the easy waters of reconciliation to redemption. It does not take seriously the central and unavoidable fact of Christianity, namely, that God's reconciliation of the world means a death to sin, an interruption to the order of creaturely things, and an extinguishing of all ways to knowledge of God which grow out of the natural human's unreconciled power of reason. In Barth's view, Catholic theology has no real expression of the dialectic between sin and grace, and no real sense of the direct action of God on – and on behalf of – all

¹⁵ Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/1, *Studienausgabe* (Theologischer Verlag Zürich: 1986), 86 [hereafter cited as KD]; *ibid.*, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 80 [hereafter CD].

creaturely existence. It is precisely on this point of the unreconciled human mind and the unreconciled knowledge of God, especially as it is represented in the *analogia entis* as a central tenet to Catholic theology, along with the specter of God the Creator and First Cause who has little to do with grace and reconciliation, that friendly exchange between Barth and Catholic theology broke down.

Although the end of the decade of the 1920s saw Barth polemicizing against the *analogia entis* and distracted by developments in German politics and the Church, he did not simply ignore the insights which he had gained into revelation and God's *Gegenständlichkeit* through his encounter with Catholic thought and Erich Przywara. The theme of God's *Gegenständlichkeit* can be seen once again at the forefront of Barth's concerns in his mature epistemology in the *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, published in 1940. He had arrived at the conclusion that the Incarnation as a work of God *ad extra* could not be the primary way through which God's objective and concrete presence is defined. Jesus Christ, the one who makes objective knowledge of God possible, is a part of God who *in God's very being in eternity* acts as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer – Father, Son, Spirit. Early in his dogmatic theology, in Göttingen and Münster, Barth had not been explicit about the triunity and eternity of God's action of taking up human nature, so his theology there did not occupy itself with precise and consistent descriptions of God's objectivity. His earlier doctrine of revelation did not make explicit that God's objectivity is a part of God's being and is not a predicate of God in any other way. His earlier dogmatic theology is also not clear on the issue of how human knowledge of God's objectivity is shaped by the objectivity that was first and foremost part of God's eternal triune being. Barth had been assuming that the work of God in becoming 'objective' – and therefore knowable – is a work *ad extra*; it lies on the outside of God's life as a triune being because it lies in the relationship between God and created realities by virtue of the Incarnation. Moreover, Barth had been assuming that this relationship does not necessarily involve a transformation of creaturely reality. When God places God's being into a dialectical relation of hiding and revealing, God does not disturb or alter the nature or function of the creaturely veils of revelation in any way.

But this logic regarding God's *Gegenständlichkeit* evolves in Barth's thought. As it does, it leads him into very different ontological and epistemological assumptions than those of Roman Catholicism. In the *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, Barth gives the clearest expression God's *Gegen-*

ständlichkeit as something that is based in and *fulfilled* in the Trinity, i. e., in God's eternal life. The objective knowledge of God is already fulfilled within the eternal triune being, which Barth terms a "primary" objectivity. God is then objectively known by humanity through a "secondary objectivity." This new clarification regarding the ontological priorities about God's objective presence to creaturely realities and the order of knowing that follows it diverted Barth away from the common ground that he had held with Roman Catholicism during his tenure in Münster. The order of knowing God that grows out of God's own Trinitarian being and the objectivity that it already contains in itself follows a very different logic than the Catholic understanding of God's presence in creation and God's character as Creator to be known.

In order to set out the finer material points that mattered for the development of Barth's epistemological vision in relation to Catholic theology, the various themes involved have been broken down into five chapters that correspond roughly to the genetic development of Barth's theology throughout the decade of the 1920s.

Chapter one will briefly sketch the history and historical context of Barth's relationship with Catholicism and the highlights of this enduring conversation. Chapter two will focus on the concern with God's *Gegenständlichkeit* that Barth dealt with throughout his seminal dogmatic lectures, given in Göttingen between 1924 and 1925. Chapter three is devoted to the cycle of dogmatic lectures given in Münster and the three presuppositions that accompanied his understanding the event of revelation and the Incarnation. In this chapter, it will be shown how easily Barth was able to bring the terminology of the *analogia entis* into his own theology, and how the criticism which Hans Urs von Balthasar later lobbed at Barth's mature theology actually applies to this period in Barth's life. Chapter four will investigate the material challenges to Barth's understanding of the unity of God's action in revelation and reconciliation which Erich Przywara pointed out during his historical visit to Barth's seminar on Thomas in 1929 in Münster. It lays out the deepening actualism that shaped Barth's theology at this time, and shows how this actualism aided him in reaching a radical expression of the Reformation doctrine of reconciliation over and against that which is a part of Catholic theology. Finally, chapter five will return to the theme of God's *Gegenständlichkeit*, and demonstrate how Barth's mature epistemology centers his doctrine of revelation completely upon the doctrine of the triune God whose own self-knowledge in eternity sets the precedent