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God and True Being: Loving in Freedom

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God and True Being: Loving in Freedom

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts /
Science in Department from William & Mary

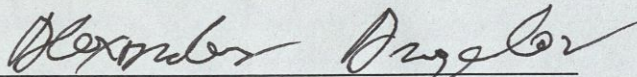
by

Travis Slocumb

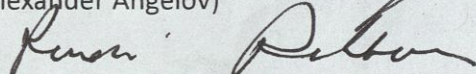
Dedicated to Granny

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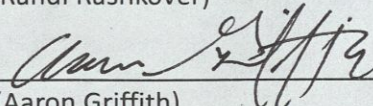
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Introduction:*i: Cosmology and Eschatology*

A central biblical tenet is that love is the ultimate purpose of being.¹ Christian theologians have tried to explain the process by which one obtains love and develops a relationship with the divine.² As this thesis will demonstrate, the common theme in ‘Apocalyptic’ Christian theological and philosophical discourses is that God elects the believer and affects them through His incarnation and participation in the unfolding of His revelation. The main purpose of my thesis is to highlight what love means from within Christian reasoning, and to explicate an authentic experience of love. Alongside of that, I will bring into the discussion a perhaps unexpected interlocutor, Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976). Heideggerian phenomenology centers on a deep exploration of the nature of being, with a critical emphasis on authenticity. Heidegger connects the seemingly ethereal feeling of being to a tangible material reality. He invites us to cross into an authentic experience, both physical and spiritual at the same time, but without any discussion of God.

The main theologian I will invoke in order to show how God is the essential source of the Heideggerian ‘being-with,’ as well as any authentic experience, is Karl Barth (1886-1968). Read together, Heidegger and Barth teach us how love authentically exists, and from whom it emanates. As per Heidegger, love is an embodied form of being; and as per Barth, love is the unfolding of an authentic relationship with an incarnate God throughout human time, and ultimately into the ontology of transcendence.

¹ “God is love.” (1 John 4.16).

² From St. John to Maximus the Confessor or Soren Kierkegaard to Cardinal Ratzinger, love has always been a central theme across all Christian theologies.

Along with Barth, I contend that authentic love may only be found in freedom, and that freedom is born of God. In order to elucidate this love, we will point to the metaphysical love of God in the Trinity (*Chapter 1: Cosmology & Eschatology*). Then we will look at the implications of God's Incarnation, to show the reader how God's actions in human history are not merely eschatological, but are a demonstration of unconditional love which is the only prerequisite of authenticity (*Chapter 2: God & Love*). Finally, *Chapter 3: Humans in God's Apocalypse* clarifies how one can only find their authentic self and the answer to being-with by looking into the mirror of divine love.

Love which results from freedom in God is an easy concept to tout. Most ideologies subscribe to a metaphysical bond before or as a part of a higher entity. The Christian's entity is 'God,' and more specifically, a God which exists in relation to itself, and draws its creatures into this relationship. This God is known in its actions throughout history, which speak to its nature and how it regards its Creation. While love as God's highest end for Creation is obvious from the definition, 'God is Love' in the New Testament, there is an available cosmology to be unpacked which may reveal the way that God's love is to be found in history before His final act of revelation. Regardless of the ways in which God may touch them in the present life, Christians believe that God's purpose will be revealed in a New Creation that will come through His action alone. Therefore, a succinct eschatology will be necessary for understanding how love flourishes between humans and Creation, and thus points towards the truth of Being. Karl Barth and contemporary 'apocalyptic' scholarship will enable us to define this cosmology and eschatology. Martin Heidegger will ground our theology in phenomenology to reach towards this Christian metaphysic of love from a creaturely perspective.

The Apostle Paul's cosmology is fundamentally tied to his eschatology. The primary theme of his thought is the 'two ages;' the present age where godless powers reign over helpless created beings, and the coming age when God will restore humans to their proper place. As Jürgen Moltmann puts it, "here we have the transitory world-time of sin and death; there we shall see the new world-time of righteousness, justice, and eternal life. When God sent the Messiah Jesus into this world, and raised Him 'from the dead,' the time of the new world already dawned in the midst of this old one."³ The majority of Paul's writings reckon with this time between times in the context of the early church. Paul's eschatology is the very formation of morality amongst his disciples: The way to align yourself with God, and thus with others, is always in the context of hope and its strength.

We must first establish the problem, Sin. In her article, "Neither Height nor Depth: Cosmos and Soteriology in Paul's Letter to the Romans," Pauline scholar, Beverly Gaventa, highlights the narrative conflict between human and 'anti-God' powers in Romans, most particularly, our "captivity to Sin and Death."⁴ In Romans, Sin and Death are not merely transgressions and physical deterioration, but cosmic forces that seek to oppose God and His reign over Creation. Sin enslaves people against God, and its primary weapon is Death.⁵ For Paul, you are either ruled over by God or His enemies, and whichever you choose is apparent based on the fruits of your actions.⁶ Gaventa notes the terminology rooted in warfare that Paul uses in Romans: 5.10 characterizes us as former 'enemies' of God, 7.11 writes of Sin taking the law as a way of killing Him, 16.17 speaks of God crushing Satan under the feet of the Roman believers; and when writing of Christ, Paul says that He was 'handed over' in 4.25, and that God

³ Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 72.

⁴ Gaventa, *Neither Height nor Depth.*, 189.

⁵ Romans 5.21: Sin rules through death.

⁶ Romans 6.13: No longer present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

did not ‘spare’ Him in 8.32.⁷ Gaventa’s article notes the way that Paul writes of familiar concepts through the unfamiliar lens of cosmic conflict.

Gaventa analyzed Barth’s commentary on Romans 9-11, which replaced Israel with the church to highlight a conception of universal sinfulness. By saying that the Church may be understood theologically as Israel, Barth argues that those within the Church have no right to ascribe more righteousness to themselves in God’s eyes, despite their relationship with Christ. Paul describes Abraham’s faith as a miracle granted to him by God, ensuring that “God’s point of view is strictly protected from any human point of view.”⁸ Understanding faith from God’s perspective reveals all men to be sinners—it levels those within and outside of the church onto one equal plain of fallenness, and raises Christ above all. According to Barth, Israel’s distinctiveness lies only within God—Moses and Pharaoh both stand on the same ground before Him, because both acted according to *election*, which is beyond any human understanding. Gaventa’s purpose was to reveal that the gospel for Paul meant “the exclusion of any and all forms of human arrogance.”⁹

Often the Christian experience of God is predicated upon what its creeds say about the election of the individual. In the Orthodox Church, this is seen in the liturgy itself, where the believer is swallowed into God’s glory with icons, incense, and the Eucharist. Or in Barth’s reformed tradition, election defines one’s entire worldview in relation to the other—if you are chosen by God before time, you have a greater sense of ownership over the world. The importance of the mysterious doctrine of predestination is for the believer to know that their election by God—their ability to have a relationship with Him—is conditioned and created entirely by His power. This leads the believer not to limit God exclusively to what is heavenly or

⁷ Satan is the composite of Sin and Death.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

to understand their relationship with God only through that of the creature to creator; but rather, to know the spirit of God who suffers through the contradiction of sinful reality in his essence, as revealed in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.¹⁰ Man's goal in his search for God is God Himself. One comes to "encounter the possibility of election only in the form of promise," and to find the spirit of God that exists both in suffering and exaltation.¹¹ Christians are called to focus on the true and good in God's Creation; however, knowing that He exists in every place can enable someone to love the other in any place.¹²

Karl Barth wrote that "Christianity without eschatology has nothing at all to do with Christ."¹³ Walter Lowe said that his early commentary on Romans "throbs with an apocalyptic urgency."¹⁴ In his analysis of Barth's commentary on Romans 13.11-14, John Barclay noted that salvation "stands on a continuum with the present and is getting progressively nearer." One project in *Romerbrief* was to make eschatology apophatic. Barth's conception of Paul's eschatology used the equation " $x(3 + 8 + 2 - 7)$." X is eternity, and the numbers in the parenthesis are time.¹⁵ Whatever may happen within time does not change the nearness and quality of the eschaton. In his translation, Barth began Romans 13.11 with: "And do this, knowing the time," which implies that everything Paul would say after about living morally is reliant on their knowledge of the time.¹⁶ However, Barth translated 'time' into 'augenblick,'

¹⁰ "The one who thinks of the Lord only as the Creator of what is governed by generation and corruption is, like Mary Magdalene, mistaking Him for a gardener. This is why the Lord, for our benefit, shies away from the touch of such a person who has not allowed himself to ascend to the Father, when He says, 'Do not touch me.' For he knows that the one who approaches Him with such an inferior preconception will be misled." St. Maximus the Confessor, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, 157.

¹¹ Barth, *Romans*, 344.

¹² Phil 4.8

¹³ The original source of this quote is unknown to me, but can be found in Gaventa's presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4-r_vUsvEc&ab_channel=PrincetonTheologicalSeminary

¹⁴ Lowe, "Prospects for a Postmodern Christian Theology," 19.

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lja8J-hX-C0&t=1530s&ab_channel=PrincetonTheologicalSeminary

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *Romans*, 492. "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation closer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk decently as though it were already day: no

which does not mean any period of time, but ‘moment.’ What is thus being discussed is not the last things, an eschatology where Jesus returns at a point in history, “but a reality that impinges upon the present.”¹⁷ Paul is drawing attention to the eternal moment, the instant between times that is not actually in time—it is “invisible and incompatible,” the fulfillment of time, the end of time, because it is eternity itself.¹⁸ Each present moment is subsumed under the shadow of eternity, in which to live ethically, because the coming of Christ lies outside of time altogether. What does the cosmic power of Sin, and God’s hiddenness outside of time, have to do with a sanctifying love? Love comes forth authentically between people as a result of their unification, which is realized when nobody postulates a greater relation to God than the other. Recognition of Sin cuts the gap between people formed by pride, and union occurs when they have something to stand for together. In Christianity, this is hope.

While a systematic theologian, Jurgen Moltmann has been noted to dwell within the realm of Paul’s apocalyptic thought.¹⁹ In his work, *The Coming of God*, Moltmann argues for universal salvation through a theology of the Cross. Jesus died for all of humanity, and therefore all of humanity will be saved. “The Christian doctrine about the restoration of all things denies neither damnation nor hell. On the contrary: it assumes that in his suffering and dying Christ suffered the true and total hell of God-forsakenness for the reconciliation of the world, and experienced for us the true and total damnation of sin.”²⁰ Moltmann followed Martin Luther’s interpretation that Christ descended into Hell spiritually while physically nailed to the cross. Christ’s utter pain and dereliction guarantees God’s eternal election and care for a mankind opposed to His purposes—to hope in anything less would be to insult the wounds of God.

reveling and drunkenness! No chambering and wantonness! No strife and jealousy! But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof!”

¹⁷Ibid

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹ See the introduction to: Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harinck, *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology*.

²⁰ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 251.

Because God chose Christ to be *the most* assailed of human beings, we can be sure no others will swallow any greater rejection. The crucifixion opens a contradiction within the person of God that swallows up all of those who suffer unholiness within their temporal lives. Moltmann continues with Hans Urs von Balthasar by explaining that the God-forsakenness of sinful men and women is ‘damnation’ itself. “They experience the hell they themselves have chosen. But Christ’s descent into hell says that even in their hell Christ is their companion and brother.”²¹ For Balthasar, this guarantees that those in hell are brought into the fellowship of the Trinity. Universal salvation is necessary to our understanding of love, because it allows everyone to be viewed equally from the perspective of hope. Their election in Christ’s death makes hope visible in His resurrection. This hope sees the necessary redemption of every ‘lost cause’ in Christ’s promise of return. It is difficult to love without a promise that love has an end purpose; for the Christian, this end is sure, and does not allow any excuse to abandon those who are temporarily fallen because of Sin.

ii: Heidegger

Heidegger asks the question of who we are and how that structures our ontology; “*who* is it that Dasein is in its everydayness?”²² The daily tasks we engage in, what Heidegger calls our ‘structures of being,’ answers this question. It may mean any number of things for what the human task is in relation to his world; but for the purpose of this paper, our concern is how our ‘being-in-the-world’ structures human interrelations, and what that may reveal about authentic love; or more specifically, how God reaches into these relations for them to become authentic.

²¹ Ibid., 253.

²² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 111.

In the previous sections of *Being and Time*, Heidegger clarified “that a mere subject without a world ‘is’ not initially and is also never given.”²³ Nobody’s being can be determined in a vacuum apart from their encounter with other beings. For Heidegger, our substance does not come from a predetermined unity of body and soul, that exist in their own categories, but we are our existence. Our experience of others determines the essence of our being. “Dasein initially finds ‘itself’ in *what* it does, needs, expects, has charge of, in the things at hand which it initially *takes care of* in the surrounding world.”²⁴ Our understanding of the world that we see ourselves disattached from is determined by ‘*taking care.*’ I exist in a world that has significance to me because of the ways I work for that world and myself within it.

Heidegger understands humans as being entirely dependent upon their world for their self-understanding. Within that self-constituted world, we are always found with others; “Dasein is essentially being-with.”²⁵ ‘Being-with’ structures ontology even while humans are alone. Heidegger goes as far as to say that “being-alone is a deficient mode of being-with.”²⁶ Because we can only understand ourselves through connections with other people, even when alone, our known purpose lies within the other. However, there exists for Dasein a ‘being away’ that is encountered in ‘Dasein-with,’ due to modes of “indifference and being alien.”²⁷ “Dasein as being-with lets the Dasein of others be encountered in its world.”²⁸ We each inhabit our own world constituted by our care for it. While this world determines who we are ontologically, and is created by our connections with other people, humans are still capable of a fundamental disconnect in their interrelations, because our world can take precedence over the other who exists deficiently as a part of that world. I hope to prove with Heidegger, that, because the world

²³ Ibid, 113.

²⁴ Ibid, 116.

²⁵ Ibid, 117. Dasein means human existence, or a person.

²⁶ Ibid, 117.

²⁷ Ibid, 117.

²⁸ Ibid, 117.

is our self-determinative factor, the way we approach the other can be authentic to our care for it, or can be marred by the effects of Sin. We either find the other as they are meant to be encountered, in a healthy relationship to our care for the world, or we find the other as an extension of our selfishness for that which lies beyond our grasp, and our relationships are engendered by evil.

People encounter others as open for interrelation, because being-with is essential to their ontology. Heidegger argues that, though *taking care* is not entirely structured by our being-with, it is always determined by our *being toward* others we encounter in our being-with; being-with is Dasein itself, and thus “is not taken care of, but is a matter of *concern*.”²⁹ *All of our actions that structure our being-in-the-world, our cares—eating, sleeping, cleaning, etc.—are rooted in a concern for our Dasein-with—our mode of being-in-the-world which is dependent on the other.*

Heidegger explains different modes of concern. There is the positive possibility of taking the ‘care’ away from the other, to “*leap in* for him.”³⁰ This is disburdening the other with whatever job they have in relation to their being-in-the-world. There is concern which *leaps ahead* of the other in his “*existentiell potentiality-of-being*.”³¹ Heidegger speaks of ‘authentic care’ for a concern which does not have to do with what is being taken care of, but only the existence of the other. Rather than replacing the other with something to be cared for, there is the possibility of freeing one for their own care by making him “transparent to himself.”³² Often our shared dwelling is solely constituted around what is being taken care of for that dwelling. This can cause groups of people to enter “the mode of distance and reserve.”³³ This occurs most often when Dasein-with is encountered in a competitive environment. ‘Authentic alliance’ is available

²⁹ Ibid, 118.

³⁰ Ibid, 118.

³¹ Ibid, 119. ‘Existentiell’ means what one may accomplish in the world with their subjective existential capabilities.

³² Ibid, 119.

³³ Ibid, 119.

when interrelations are characterized by people who have grasped their being-in-the-world for themselves and leave the other free in objectivity. One mode of concern does another's job for them and constrains them, the other frees them by assisting them in the context of their own free self-relation. It is a matter of treating others for who they are in themselves, rather than for who we would have them be.

Heidegger claims that, "as being-with, Dasein 'is' essentially for the sake of others."³⁴ Our human essence does not lie wholly in any particular analysis of being, but rather, in our capacity to exist for our neighbors. This is the crux of this essay, an existential alignment towards the other rooted in our being(-with-God), that determines the way we choose to see ourselves in relation to the world. This alignment is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, yet can be overlooked because of a lacking confidence in salvation. One cannot be sure of salvation if it is not inclusive of the other, because of our interconnectedness.

An example of this existential alignment is Paul's declaration of death as gain while choosing to remain alive for the sake of his congregation.³⁵ God is in control. God has a reality above and superior to what created beings know. God wishes the very best for each individual being. And thus, the question that Tillich approached, why do we continue to be? The other. With the heavenly mindedness of Paul, believers can taste Christ's rest with enough tangibility to know their purpose in God's realm, and that God wishes this bliss for them too.³⁶ The conscious choice and understanding of God's providence to live purposefully expands the love one has for the other, because they are the tightrope to walk between a fallen reality and heaven. They are the only reason to be. While this is true from God's point of view; it can only be understood for

³⁴ Ibid, 120

³⁵ In Phillipians 1.22-26, Paul struggles with whether he would prefer life or death in relation to his care for the congregation.

³⁶ Col 3.1-4

Jesus' sake from a lived, human perspective—because that is how God chooses to share His being. Philosophy would have us orient ourselves to the other in the recognition that they are our purpose; however, it is theology's ideal to orient us to God first, that our love may be authentic.

This essay will not seek to work its way to an ideal place of human being. It will instead try to describe most accurately the way of being within which a human properly oriented to God happens to exist. Nobody may be there yet, perfectly; but there are moments of clarity when the ray of God's grace overcomes the surrounding darkness, and it is the theologian's job—like an artist—to depict this light, which is contingent upon God's own being and action. God does not act for human beings to work their way toward that action (though He does require assent). God acts and we must be there to describe it, so our reader's faith is touched by the original source of that sunshine, even perhaps despite our words. Karl Barth's teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann, described the task of dialectal theology as using a thesis and antithesis in order to create a free space in “hopes that God Himself will intervene since only God can say his Word.”³⁷ While I do not deign to undertake the task of dialectical theology in this essay, my intentions are rooted in the same understanding of God's speech.

³⁷ Chrisophe Chalamet (August 1, 2004). *Dialectical Theologians: Wilhelm Herrmann, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann*. Theologischer Verlag.

Chapter 1: Cosmology & Eschatology

i. Introduction

The quest for a theology of freedom within the Pauline corpus is primarily evangelical.³⁸ As Phillip Ziegler notes in his work, *Militant Grace*, this theology (which began as Martin Luther's attempt to reform Roman Catholic soteriology) must be shifted towards eschatology to be upheld. Knowledge of God can be directed towards Christ's New Kingdom to be received as a gift. "Discipleship is and remains solely an eschatological possibility arising from the gracious call and command of Christ the Lord. As such, it is the shape of the human life of faith now militant in love during the time that remains."³⁹ Ziegler remarks that this quest most notably began with Karl Barth in the second edition of his commentary on Romans. Barth wrote this in response to liberal theology, because he was "looking for comrades [who] were also about to reach out for the Bible, and the New Testament" in the same confusion that preoccupied him.⁴⁰ Barth wrote during the turmoil of WWII, when German churches were using theology to justify Hitler's actions. He found a message of radical love and freedom in Paul's Romans, which far exceeded the power and care people were willing to attribute to God during that time. Barth's reading of Paul placed his entire person and vocation within the "eschatological parameter."⁴¹ There existed, for him, no understanding of God displaced from Paul's promise-oriented focus on being-in-Christ. "Grace is the self-consciousness of the new man."⁴² Most theologians saw this work not as an ordinary exegesis, but a new way to read the Bible altogether.

³⁸ This term refers to a strain of European theology and not the American church denomination.

³⁹ Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and The Future of Christian Theology*, 200.

⁴⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgaFoDYkYuM&ab_channel=kbarthorg

⁴¹ Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 3.

⁴² Barth, *Romerbrief*, 215.

The first task of Apocalyptic theology is to examine the way in which “we ourselves have been contextualized; and not just conceptually, but actually.”⁴³ Ziegler describes the recognition of Christ’s eschatological coming as a “divine seizure of reality.”⁴⁴ Whether it is the media’s depiction of power, or a smaller narrative we believe about another’s worth, the knowledge of who God says we are in His gospel will always push and pull our reality valuations, and the way they cause us to interact with ourselves and the world. God’s reality “presses in upon us,” and until we are aware of it, we cannot do right service to Him.⁴⁵ Barth’s *Romerbrief* highlights the *alien* or *negative* “character of divine activity in the world.”⁴⁶ The revelation of God is so gracious that it can only appear foreign to people accustomed to the world’s standards of good and evil. Recognition of divinity in the negative goes as far back as Plato, with eternity in the closeness of death. However, we must know contradictory knowledge of God in historical actions that are connected to the ground we stand upon, rather than as a divine negation of what we think we can know as created beings. Barth notes that this platonic error makes our knowledge of man contingent upon the awareness of our own limitation, which would restrict God to an idealization of man, because in it His “being consists only in a hypostatized summary of His non-being in relation to all other kinds of being.”⁴⁷ The resurrection of Jesus can tell us more about God’s grace than His closeness in death, because it was an earthly act that happened within familiar terms; and it is God’s own act, not one of our cognition. “The totality of our human will and intelligence, future as well as past, has been superseded by the pre-eminent, ineffable, and invisible power of our eternal future existence—Futurum aeternum—the future of the non-concrete possibility of God.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Lowe, “Prospects for a Postmodern Christian Theology,” 19.

⁴⁴ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 23.

⁴⁵ Lowe, “Why We Need Apocalyptic,” 51-52.

⁴⁶ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 24.

⁴⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 305.

⁴⁸ Barth, *Romerbrief*, 191.

Barth has been criticized for being too Platonic in his Romans commentary, but most scholars acknowledge that this was amended by the Christology in his *Church Dogmatics*, which was more favorable to history's task in theology. This thesis will rely heavily on *Church Dogmatics*, which sometimes falls short of 'Apocalypticism' because of the way it grounds Biblical thought in modern philosophy. "It remains tethered to certain defining features of the intellectual milieu in which it was forged as well as to categories and forms inherited from the longer theological tradition that serve to frustrate its fuller advance."⁴⁹ Barth's full corpus is a spearhead to Apocalyptic theology, but not its fulfillment. As this essay will sample Pauline theology for the sake of a metaphysical assumption, it will assume Barth's full work within the Apocalyptic school, without trying to expand any definitions or categories of a movement which is still in its youth. It will suffice to know for the present that Apocalyptic theology is associated with strong hope in a gracious, sovereign act of God in the future, which creates radical love as its present form of gratitude.

ii. Apocalypse as Eschatology

The hope of Apocalyptic theology we have discussed comes from the transcendent God who has promised in the resurrection of His son to create new what is old, dead, and lost within the world. Only hope can lift one out of the present realm of suffering to see God's glory amidst the mundane. Only hope can sustain faith in a way which trusts God with knowledge of His promise. It is faith in God which creates freedom for life. But faith must be sustained and emboldened by hope. Hope forms true faith, faith leads to freedom, and freedom creates the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 25.

space between humans which is necessary for authentic love. But to get to any of these virtues, we must begin with hope, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.⁵⁰

Apocalyptic hope begins with a dualistic portrayal of the present age of Sin and Death, and God's coming New Creation. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus' return, wherein He will destroy the anti-God powers which reign over the cosmos, and establish a New Creation that was promised before the fall as God's final creative act. The hope of the New Testament is not an abstract longing for something better which does not acknowledge the present hopelessness of the world. It distinctively defines the current life as death, our plight as suffering, and the human ability to desire or seek good as helpless without a divine miracle. "Faith...is the gracious address of God to man."⁵¹ To the apocalyptic imagination, faith is an unnatural occurrence which flips the boat on all human thoughts and occurrences—it can only be "loaned to man by God."⁵² Paul notes something concrete and particular to the mind that is won to Christ in this world: "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind."⁵³ All of these distinctions which clarify the hidden unknowability of God are characteristic of the present age. Apophaticism is a given norm within the context of an evil world. It is not that God wishes to remain hidden, but Sin works to cloud our vision of Him. From the standpoint of ancient apocalyptic Jewish thought, the New Age is the coming time of perfection. Apocalyptic Judaism expected this at the Messiah's coming, which is one reason why messianic Jews rejected Jesus, as he did not effect that change.⁵⁴ Christians have the same expectation of Christ's return. But why didn't the incarnation bring New Creation? Why is God's Israel subject to a longer time of

⁵⁰ From the Nicene Creed.

⁵¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1*, 18.

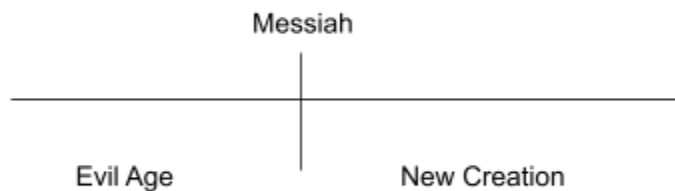
⁵² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1*, 238.

⁵³ Romans 12.2.

⁵⁴ Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan's Apostle*.

waiting? And most importantly, what does the Christian expect at the eschaton—what do we have to hope for?

From the time of the fall of Adam, the Jewish depiction of the salvation of the world could be seen on a horizontal line, with Sin and Death on one side, and the Messiah's return on the other.



With the advent of Christ, the Christian perspective adopted what theologians termed the ‘now-and-not-yet’ reign of the messiah.



This is the time between times, when God has revealed Himself most fully in His son, yet has not brought about the radical change that is promised at the eschaton. God is very present in Christ ‘now,’ though heavenly perfection remains a ‘not-yet.’ Hope begins with a recognition of this not-yet, which despite being a sure promise that we “see through a glass, dimly,” is an unknown destination for God’s people that must be hoped for to remain true.⁵⁵ It is eschatology’s purpose

⁵⁵ 1 Cor 13.12 (MEV)

to feel its way towards this hazy future and enliven the imagination of believers, so that hope grows into a lived reality.

In his *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann wrote, “the discovery of the central significance of eschatology...is undoubtedly one of the most important events in recent Protestant theology.”⁵⁶ For the reformers, the gospel was equated with the promise inherent to it. For Barth, the Word of God—how God reveals Himself to the Church—is oriented towards God’s eternal promise. From here, Ziegler argues for the necessity of placing standard protestant doctrines onto an eschatological framework. “It is precisely eschatological statements and these alone, i.e., statements which relate to this eternal reality, that can claim real and proper meaning as statements about temporal relations.”⁵⁷ *Sin has hidden God from our eyes, the New Testament tells of God’s character when He will be fully revealed, which must inform our faith in who God is for us now.* Karl Barth defines the future with God as grace itself. But what is this grace?

God’s promised self is the same God who was revealed in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Hope opens the possibility for God’s freedom to descend into human deficiencies, no matter their particularities. God’s fullest self-revelation was on the Cross; to have a theology of hope, we must begin with one of the Cross.

“[I]n the thoroughly real event of Christ’s crucifixion, God’s war of liberation was commenced and decisively settled, making the Cross the foundation of Paul’s apocalyptic theology.”⁵⁸ Divine ‘invasion’ is the word used throughout apocalyptic theology to define the commencement of God’s work for humanity upon the Cross. From the many theological

⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 37.

⁵⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, 464.

⁵⁸ Martyn, *Galatians*, 101. From: Davis and Harink, *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology*, 166.

accounts of Christ on the Cross, we know there is endless interpretation to be done, because the manner in which it was effective for humankind was infinite, as God is Himself. The language of invasion shows how God chooses to reveal Himself to us. He did not announce from the heights of heaven that He loves and forgives us infinitely, nor did He consummate His work with humanity in His initial act of incarnation. Rather, He became incarnate to join us in His project—which we have failed—and He went to the Cross to reveal His love *alongside* us. In Paul’s letters, the Cross takes theological revelatory significance above all else, and comes to the fore in his preaching. Because unlike philosophy, which takes the world as it is and works towards divinity, Israel’s God has chosen to enter our reality and act against sin and rebellion by taking it into Himself. “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”⁵⁹ The Cross is God’s decision to descend to humanity, rather than let it enter heaven by force. God chooses to reveal His power in an act of His own humiliation, because this event expresses His infinitude through forgiveness. A heavenly world of forms cannot declare forgiveness authentically to human particularities, nor can right action bring us into His grace—*because God would not be for us if He allowed any human action to create the relationship that He chose to effect in His freedom.* “But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles.”⁶⁰ In the incarnation, God affirms the world He has made; on the Cross, He invades what is hostile to Himself by suffering His own wrath, which “opens up the divine self-seclusion and reveals Him as power and love.”⁶¹

The importance of a *theologia crucis* is not to form a cult of the worldly Cross, but to remember in each act of worship that the Christ in heaven is the same as the crucified one—that He regards our being, and the faults which mar it ontologically, each and every time, the same

⁵⁹ 1 Cor 2.2

⁶⁰ 1 Cor 1.23

⁶¹ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 166.

way He was revealed in His act of divine invasion. Christ now does dwell in heaven, beyond our imagination, but His characteristics and love are known in past actions as an event. False worship comes from not acknowledging the Cross in Christ's divine nature, or lacking belief in the Resurrection which proclaims His self humiliation as an act of power and lordship. But what about the crucifixion creates this theological necessity of salvation, or "fact of forgiveness," which is the defining act of grace?⁶² Following His cry before His death, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the overwhelming theme of Moltmann's, *The Crucified God*, is Jesus' God-forsakenness.⁶³ The Son sacrificed Himself, the Father grieves this loss, and the Spirit enables the communication of pain and abandonment. In order to fully understand how this pain within the Godhead creates salvation, we must follow Calvin and Luther's interpretation of Christ's descent into hell as a *spiritual* experience, whilst He hung on the Cross.⁶⁴

The common critique of atonement theology is that it makes God seem wrathful and punishing towards His Son. This is a crass misunderstanding of the Godhead itself. The pain of the Cross is God's way of expressing the expansion He took upon Himself to include sinful beings in His life and future, whilst enabling their freedom. On the Cross, Jesus suffered the eternity of 'Hell' which humans have merited from the way they have been touched by evil. Hell may be understood as the wrong which follows one from a choice which creates or enforces evil. The freedom to choose in Creation necessitates a corresponding moral compass which relates to the outcome of choice. God wishes the best for His Creation. God holds the compass. God wants there to be recompense for the oppressed—His wrath is a cleansing love. By this logic, however,

⁶² Barth, *Romerbrief*, 190.

⁶³ Matt 27.46

⁶⁴ The orthodox interpretation is that Jesus went to a physical hell after he died according 1 Peter 3.18-20. The two most known reformers, Jean Calvin and Martin Luther, chose to interpret those verses concerning Christ's descent spiritually.

nobody would be worthy of God. Jesus' placement in hell is *atonement*, because it is His way of acknowledging a care for morality within Himself, while taking responsibility for the mistakes outside of Himself. An act of *kenosis* (divine self-emptying) was required for God to create the human, and this was most fully revealed on the Cross. Kenotic theology needn't presuppose good with evil (as it is critiqued for); rather, it shows the pain God was willing to suffer so that His creatures would never eternally stray from Him. Therefore, on the Cross, Jesus suffered the worst fate and punishment of any created being within time. Nobody can enter into the depths of 'Hell,' where Jesus went; and nobody can exist for as long and painfully outside of God's presence as He did. "In this way Christ disturbs the absolute solitariness for which the sinner strives; the sinner who desires to be 'damned' away from God, finds God again in his solitariness, but God in the absolute powerlessness of love, who in the Not-Time unpredictably puts Himself on the side of the one who damns himself."⁶⁵ Jesus' sacrifice could not have been "for the sins of the whole world," if He did not suffer the entirety of Hell, and thereby abolish it.⁶⁶

Yet, if Christ has abolished Hell on the Cross, why do we still suffer its consequences? Hell's end exists eschatologically, when its harrowers, Sin and Death, are overthrown by Christ. While Christ's death does reveal God's eternal love for humanity, His Resurrection and promised return bring this divine reality to its consummation. Moltmann defined the Cross as the eschatologically defining feature of this age. There is no coming to God without His descension and humiliation. God's relationship with humanity must be born by suffering. We may look forward to a heavenly reality to infect the present with its love and beauty; however, it is not a

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 253.

⁶⁶ 1 John 2.2

Christian hope without the Cross standing before it as a doorway of forgiveness, which we have yet to fully obtain.

What does this tell us about the individual now? What do the two core tenets of Christianity—the Cross and Resurrection—create for those who seek their life in truth during the ‘not-yet.’ In short, faith. But it is faith in the Christ who is as bound to the Cross and Resurrection as Moses is to the Law. Here it becomes our job to align all ‘truth statements’ in Christianity to the being of this person, Jesus Christ; and from there, to observe the metaphysic which springs forth from this abundant relationship. As such, it is revealed that hope is grace. Karl Barth defined sin as a “fish out of water” for the new man in Christ.⁶⁷ Faith becomes true in the Resurrection, a new life which brings all fallen realities under scrutiny.⁶⁸ Everything old is questionable, insofar as it lies outside of the realm of divine forgiveness for every person. It is not so much what is unredeemed that lies under our judgment, but the lack of hope for what is already dead. God ceases to be a static and indifferent logos, but the moving force behind a history of active love within the Church. “God is not somewhere in the Beyond, He is coming and as the coming one He is present.”⁶⁹

iii. Apocalypse as Cosmology

We have established that, in order to talk *apocalyptically* about the Christian message, we must use the language of imminent eschatology as it was familiar to the New Testament authors. The message of apocalypse is radically oriented toward the future. But how does this define our current world? How does it create the terms we use to understand our broken reality?

⁶⁷ Barth, *Romerbrief*, 200.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 199.

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 144.

The beginning theme of Moltmann's, *Theology of Hope*, is that cosmology must itself become eschatology. He defines Apocalyptic as "an eschatological and historic interpretation of the cosmos," so that the cosmos does not become our defining factor of reality, but can be "taken up in terms of history into the process of the *eschaton*."⁷⁰ The importance of this redefinition, is that the world currently presents itself as a static factor in our knowledge of God, never moving forward into something positively better—and no matter how far humanity may progress, is always subject to mechanisms of death and decay. In Apocalyptic, we define 'the universe' as the time-between-times, because we wish to approach every way the cosmos presents itself to us in the light of God's future. The New Creation is only communicated through faith in Christ; it re-shapes all of our understandings of current existence, and won't be found through human reason or strivings. "Christ is the one who takes possession of us by a powerful work of love and thereby secures for us a place within the sphere of his own dominion."⁷¹ The New Creation depends on God's miracle. The faith that the New Testament speaks of is an entire re-orientation of one's world for the sake of discipleship in Christ. The New Creation began in Christ, continues in his followers, and will be consummated—for the whole world—in Christ once again. The New Testament considers followers of Christ a New Creation in themselves, before its consummation.⁷² Because Christians have placed the first foot into this new world by faith, the cosmos which awaits transformation becomes a different place for them—one characterized by healing and transformation. "Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly 'natural' thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded."⁷³ Just as Christian faith is in the unknown God, as its hope only provides a hazy view of the future,

⁷⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 136.

⁷¹ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 48.

⁷² 2 Cor 5.17

⁷³ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 98-99.

the Apocalyptic definition of the cosmos requires one to see the universe as unknown, mysterious, and ultimately miraculous, if it wishes to remain true to the God whose primary act of self-revelation did not belong to the natural world, but was the Resurrection of His Son from the dead—a regenerative act which points away from all natural conceptions of the way we understand our environment from human rationality.⁷⁴ Because our definition of the universe includes the new age of God, we must expect resurrection in the cosmos on a daily basis within our being and that of the Church. If we were to rely on a natural theology which seeks God in something other than revelation, or Resurrection, we would not be conditioned to expect and have faith in the intervention of God Himself for our continuous healing and growth in Him.

Moreover, Moltmann notes, Apocalyptic allows a religious eschatology the freedom to include everyone within the categories of suffering and exaltation. It is not just Christian martyrs who are prided in God's realm, but all of Creation "will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God."⁷⁵ The universality of applied suffering to God's glory allows for greater solidarity amongst believers, non-believers, and the rest of Creation. Not only does joy in God become non-tribal, but it includes that which does not have the same intellectual recognition of Him. "Will my dog go to heaven?" is the question on the lips of every child believer. It may seem funny, but apocalyptic theology includes all of Creation in God's plan for redemption for two reasons. 1) God works not only through the human heart in a gnostic fashion, but in everything open to the senses. The salvation of a dog, or even a single blade of grass, shows how God never creates without purpose, no matter how purposeless it may sometimes appear because of suffering. 2) Following Calvin, it does not attribute salvation to any act of creaturely will, but only to God. This frees us to view the other

⁷⁴ 1 Cor 13.12.

⁷⁵ Rom. 8.21.

without judgment, because God chooses to be his judge instead—positively so, in eternity.

“Without apocalyptic a theological eschatology remains bogged down in the ethnic history of men or the existential history of the individual.”⁷⁶ When God rises above every creature, making His will the only eternal knowledge we have of us and our neighbor, shared love naturally springs forth, because his desire for a universal reconciliation of the cosmos was brought about on the Cross, as an incarnate and painful creaturely sacrifice. The Cross unites the entire cosmos with Jesus’ dying body, revealing the eternal power of love when the same body was lifted from the tomb. Apocalyptic values all of Creation, and it proves that love is not to be found somewhere ‘out there’ in God, but in the other, through God.⁷⁷

iv. Anthropology in Cosmology

We have defined how apocalyptic theology shapes our understanding of the cosmos. But what of man in the cosmos? To arrive at a metaphysic of love—between people—we must define how apocalyptic theology shapes anthropology. Most importantly, this theology begins with God. One of its goals is to show the futility of trying to work from man to God. God reveals Himself through Jesus Christ, and we must take all we can know about man from that event. Through revelation, we try to see all of the world through God’s eyes rather than our own. Because God Himself is relationship, the bonds we share with others are the second most valuable connection we have besides that with God.⁷⁸ The God-man relationship has been established as infinite and painful love from His end (and only from His end), on the Cross. Where do we find God’s love between men, or how does this knowledge inform the way we understand love between men? I

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 137-38.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 136.

⁷⁸ Matt. 22.36-40 Jesus’ two greatest commands, to love God and neighbor.

will begin with the doctrine of God's self-relationship, and work from there to exposit how this penetrates the world as God's 'theater of revelation.'⁷⁹

For Barth, man in the cosmos is not addressed as such. The Bible refers to man only in his God-relationship, not "in his 'nature'—which really means his self-understanding."⁸⁰ It is not only that man is addressed differently by God's revelation, according to His covenantal love; but man loses meaning in himself, according to his own devices and self-understanding. He loses his very being in the wake of God's re-defining grace. Because the grace of God also must appear as His judgment in a world which does not know Him. God's grace is "transcendent, and irresistible," because it runs contrary to how fallen man can know himself in an evil age.⁸¹ Does this doctrine commonly known as total depravity mean that man is inherently evil? Does man's enslavement to Sin tell us more about him anthropologically; or is this captivity, qua the existentialist individualists, a sociological phenomenon? We must first investigate what it means Christologically for man to recognize himself as 'fallen' and 'saved,' and then incorporate that language into ontology to guide our phenomenology.

Barth does not follow the typical (American) Evangelical formula for recognizing one's participation in Sin. The ontological fact of one's own marred nature can only be recognized through participation in Christ. This is because the true nature of sin does not have to do with the reaction of man's conscience to an evil world, but with those who are enemies of God's grace, because they have not come to knowledge of Christ's salvation. Either you are 'in Christ' or you are 'in Adam,' and all categories of applied anthropology must deal first with these distinctions. Barth goes as far as to say that 'anthropological postulates' oppose grace.⁸² To find the 'positive

⁷⁹ Barth's term. [find quote]

⁸⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 2.I, 112.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 144.

answer' for the 'readiness of man' in relationship to God, "we shall not have to dwell any further on man as such, whether in his possibility or in his reality," because man (and Barth makes sure to include even the 'regenerate man') is always a contradiction to himself, to the grace of God which would make him the self he wishes to be.⁸³ It is only through Christ that man can recognize what he wants for himself, and then in Christ that he knows he is never this reality and can only attain it in eternity, forcing him to find ideality in forgiveness, and hope for the future. So where do we know of man's 'readiness for God,' according to Barth? Is there any place for an apocalyptic ontology, or is this possibility decimated by our account of sin? "We have only to speak His name, the name of Jesus Christ, and in this name we say the one thing, but also the most positive thing, which is to be said about man's readiness for God."⁸⁴ Why just the name of Jesus? Is there not more concrete knowledge of man? Here once again we follow the logic of Resurrection. According to the New Testament, only God creates life from the dead. God has chosen to reveal Himself most fully in Jesus. For Barth, we do not want to dwell in any realm of thought which exists away from the power inherent to Jesus' name—the power which is not blind to wisdom, but contains the impenetrable mystery of the Trinity, which can only be had in God's power and free choice: God's truth is only known to Himself, and Jesus exists for us as God's 'last word.' Our desire to know ourselves in truth must be a desire to know God in His being and self-relationship, because truth itself is eschatological and therefore unrevealed.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 153.

⁸⁵ 1 Cor 2.6. Ibid, 154.

Chapter 2: God & Love

i. God's Freedom

We have established that all truth, even human truth, exists only in God—because of the nature of man's eschatological existence, either in Christ or in Adam. In Adam he is blind to all truth, in Christ he knows he is blind to all truth—save God's grace and mercy. Therefore, in order to know man, and reach towards the metaphysic we desire, we have to understand God and the depths of love which can only exist in Him. For Barth, God's being is determined, from a human perspective, by freedom. We may have to do with God, only because God chooses a relationship with us. God is not under any necessity in His being to act towards us. The reason we may know of God is because in His act of revelation, He reveals also that He is God. "Bearing witness to Himself, but also veiling Himself by means of this sacramental reality, God comes before man as the One who addresses him and who is to be addressed in return, a He who says 'thou' to us and to whom we may say 'Thou' in return."⁸⁶ How, therefore, has God revealed Himself to us? In His act of veiling and unveiling, where is the truth which speaks to human reality?

God is freedom. God is absolute. And He "has His absoluteness decisively in Himself."⁸⁷ God's absoluteness makes the world relative to Himself, and His relationship to Himself. Our only knowledge of God's freedom can be from the perspective of the world, which finds freedom in His being. The world, and however it strays from Him, can never be hostile to His being. God's aseity is such that we must form our understanding of the world in knowledge of His

⁸⁶ Ibid, 58.

⁸⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 309.

freedom from it. “God’s freedom in relation to all that is not God signifies that He is distinct from everything, that He is self-sufficient and independent in relation to it, and that He is so in a peculiar and preeminent fashion—as no created being confronts any other.”⁸⁸ This knowledge of God’s freedom must pre-structure any metaphysic between created beings which tries to find its source in God. A created being *is* dependent upon others in its confrontation with any other. Knowing God who is free can structure this metaphysic away from a reflection of human weakness tied up in the other, and create a relationship of *love in gratitude*, rooted in God’s strength.⁸⁹

For Barth, God’s trinitarian existence is related to the way that He reveals Himself. The Father is revelation itself, the Son is scripture, and the Holy Spirit is the Church’s proclamation of God’s revelation active in His Son. God’s revelation does not exist in anything other than Jesus Christ—living and active as God’s mode of being which reveals the Father to Himself, bringing human beings into this act of self-disclosure through that which binds it, the Holy Spirit. Revelation becomes alive to human beings when it is proclaimed by the Church in Word and Sacrament; but it is not therefore contained in any respect by us. Revelation is God’s eternal plan for the creation and reconciliation of the cosmos, this plan is most fully realized and revealed in Christ’s act of atonement and resurrection; and because revelation consists of God’s *eternal* plan, it cannot be fully accessed by humans as such, and will only direct their attention to Christ. This focus on Jesus is necessary for man’s cognition of a God who remains free and beyond his grasp, because, the Cross and Resurrection most accurately define God’s love for humanity, and reveal that God’s very being is found in His action. We can only truly speak of our

⁸⁸ Ibid, 311.

⁸⁹ This is relate to Heidegger’s *authentic alliance*, which will be covered later in this essay.

being in relation to God's being. Love exists in an imitation of God, and is revealed by an event which entails a different truth than that which comes from an inaccessible metaphysical reality. "This is the fact which makes the recollection of God's past revelation different from reflection on its own timeless ground of being."⁹⁰ Love must move between persons like that which defines the bond between the Father and the Son.

God's revelation exists outside of time, but is revealed to Creation in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as the acting agent between the Father and Son. It may then be asked how this 'self-closed circle' becomes available to humanity?⁹¹ For Barth, Proclamation as the Holy Spirit is how we conceive of God's revelation in time. But Proclamation, as expressed through the Bible and Sacrament, is never something which announces itself by taking authority. God speaks through the Bible, by witnessing to Himself in Christ. The Bible doesn't exist alone as God's revelation, but can be used by God to become such if it points towards the eternal truth of His atonement. "Revelation is itself the divine decision which is taken in the Bible and proclamation, which makes use of them, which thus confirms, ratifies, and fulfills them."⁹² This is not the focus of our concern; but it is necessary to show how Barth's conception of God's truth which exists only in itself may descend to human understanding, and breach through the anthropology which would always otherwise point away from Him. Despite God's apparent distance from us and our inability to broach His mystery on our own strength, because of Sin, His revelation as that proclaimed by Christ's atonement shows, by His strength, that we are much closer than we can ever know. "To say revelation is to say 'The Word became flesh,'" and this is to say that God is with us in our humanity, and accepts us at our worst representation of it—but it is also to say that, as the Word becomes flesh and thus God's revelation descends to human

⁹⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, 101.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 306.

⁹² *Ibid*, 118.

Scripture, so this incarnate Word must be accepted by faith, as Proclamation—but faith, just as Scripture itself, does not exist within any human possibility or facet, but can only come from God Himself.⁹³ Therefore, God descends to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ as an act of His love towards us, and the entire descension and reception of this act is itself only perceived and responded to based on God's action inside of His event. God acts in Jesus Christ. Humans receive this action in faith. But faith itself comes from God, because faith is through God's Spirit, which exists as the mode of love between the Father and the Son. Faith comes from nothing within man or creation, but only God, and faith is interpreted through Jesus Christ as God's being in action. It is necessary for all talk of faith and relation to God within an apocalyptic framework to begin and end in God. One of Paul's famed beliefs was divine predestination. While a mystery, predestination claims that only God decides what happens for good and evil within His creation. Predestination is Apocalyptic, because, like the doctrine of Christ's atonement, it places the necessity of anything willed into the hands of God alone, and takes all responsibility for salvation away from humanity. Within such a scandalous doctrine, God's action is both 'militant,' and trustworthy. When religion begins and ends in God, faith is true to its source, and Christ is effective as that which exists for life and prospers true being. Faith in God's revelation is nailed to the Cross of Christ, and cannot be found within a 'theology of glory,' which would posit a God who dwells within a human capacity for divinity. The truest exposition of love shared in humanity was on the Cross, and is found in a God who can always forgive and re-orient our being towards Him.⁹⁴

⁹³ Ibid, 119.

⁹⁴ Luther and following Protestant theologians critiqued any theology which was not formed by the Cross as a 'theology of glory,' and as such something which distorts God's love as revealed on the Cross into something which exists in our own transcendence.

For the purposes of this paper, it is most necessary to associate the Father with God's eternal plan for the universal reconciliation and sabbath rest of mankind, the Son with God's self-sacrifice which enables this plan, and the Holy Spirit as the relationship between these two modes of God's being that defines it as love. The Holy Spirit is not some aspect of God distinct from Himself, roaming around creation like any other spirit. The Spirit is the nexus of God's self-revelation which takes place in itself. "God reveals Himself ... If we really want to understand revelation in terms of its subject, i.e., God, then the first thing we have to realize is that this subject God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect."⁹⁵ Mankind was created "by the Word of God for the Word of God."⁹⁶ God affected man's creation, affected their reconciliation with Himself, and also affected their response to their reconciliation with Himself. No part of man's relationship with God lies outside of Him. It is thus the job of any theological anthropology or social metaphysic to trace the being of God within human interactions back to revelation. If we attempted to create our own metaphysic which could be defined alongside revelation, existing as some independent human reaction to it, then we would not be true to this school of thought. God is the stage, actor, and audience of Himself—this is why Barth calls reality the 'theater of revelation.'⁹⁷

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in essence, not simply in purpose. If God reveals Himself in Christ, God has decided to speak his Word to humanity, "God's presence is always God's decision to be present."⁹⁸ And as such, God's presence in Christ means a veiling of the Godhead. God reveals His being in the action of His movement in Christ—God the Father, while exalting Himself through Christ, is also exalting Christ, and thus remaining unknowable beyond

⁹⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, 296.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 239.

⁹⁷ 1 Cor 13.12., (find CD quote)

⁹⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, 321.

our knowledge of the Christ event. Therefore, the God of the New Testament always creates a response from His human follower—*not an attempt to grasp at Him in His transcendence*. God’s goodness is a divine mode of existence. “If the goodness and holiness of God are neither experiences we can manufacture nor concepts we can form for ourselves but divine modes of being to which human experiences and concepts can at least respond, then their conjunction, their dialectic, in which both are only what they are, is certainly not a dialectic which we can know, i.e., achieve for ourselves, but one which we can only ascertain and acknowledge as actually taking place.”⁹⁹ Barth goes on to highlight Biblical stories where the only response of its character has been to follow God, such as Christ’s calling of Peter when He says that “flesh and blood” have not revealed his divinity to him.¹⁰⁰ The prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New were not heroes who rose above humanity. They stood amidst everybody else, as astonished by God as those around them. All of this is to emphasize the revelatory significance of the Spirit, which brings humans into a relationship with the Triune God, not by having them transcend their humanity, but by revealing it to them in the light of Christ.

We must emphasize in Barthian terms what the trinity means for us—how can human speculation on a concept, wholly other, deliver a metaphysical definition? The Barthian understanding of the Trinity, in this regard, is that it reveals Christ as Lord, which is apocalyptic in nature. The Trinity does not come to us in these terms as an understanding of God rooted in philosophy and rational speculation; but rather, “the biblical concept of revelation is itself the root of the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹⁰¹ But what does it mean to acknowledge Christ as Lord? Here we may finally descend to anthropology. Apocalyptic theology posits Christ’s present Lordship primarily in the Church and each believer. His Lordship (which is grounded in His

⁹⁹ Ibid, 330.

¹⁰⁰ Matt 16.17.

¹⁰¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1*, 334.

promised coming), is apophatic and unfinished, and cannot be traced specifically in the world, but remains in the realm of contemplation and action grounded in revelation. While this may appear unsatisfactory for modern philosophy, as with all theology founded only upon God, it cannot hold true if it is not dependent on faith. It is our cause to show this faith to be that which, as Dostoevsky once claimed, makes living with belief in Christ preferable, even if it was proven beyond all doubt that He never existed. This statement from the Russian author may appear senseless if you attempt to speak of Christ with a positive and empirical purpose for the world—it will be the goal of the following section to show why this crass irrationality stands for life and love, from a human perspective.

We have maintained that God's freedom consists from our perspective in the way that He relates to our world and thus the only place we have to speak from. God is always free. He does not need us—we are not an extension of His being like an arm or a leg which He must rely on, but one He pours His love into for the creative joy of sharing Himself. He doesn't gain anything from us that He does not have in Himself, and therefore we can only speak of our relating to Him insofar as He relates to Himself. The world is God's revelation, insofar as the world contains God. The world between humans contains God, insofar as humans have faith in Him from a divine miracle of His love. God's freedom from the world means that God is free *for* the world. From the time of the reformers, faith has been understood to be entirely from God, and not an exercise of free will. The world contains traces of God's faithfulness, because He controls it as the director of a play.

ii God is Love

God is love lies definitively on the lips of all believers. But do we know what we say in this? It is not the love which we can point to in ourselves, or in the world. This does not mean that it does not have a place amongst us—but while God is love, love is not God. We have illustrated how God is defined wholly in his triune self, and before we expound how this self touches the human being, we will have to further investigate the third mode of God's being, the Spirit, which creates this self-relation.

The Holy Spirit is not a relationship from man to God as such, but from God to God. “The creature needs the Creator to be able to live. It thus needs the relation to Him. But it cannot create this relation. God creates it by His own presence in the creature and therefore as a relation of Himself to Himself.”¹⁰² Returning to the previous section, God's presence within man is not an arbitrary happening. While God sustains everything in creation, and thus is posited by pantheists to be within everything, He may hold creation at a distance from His glory and still cause it to run. But the God we are speaking of both sustains His creation, (“for He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous”) and indwells it according to His own purposes (“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”)¹⁰³ When God is within human beings, the crown of His creation, or the Temple for His Holy Spirit, it is solely to “achieve His revelation in [them.]”¹⁰⁴ The purpose for this, though humans are His enemies, is to make them mirrors of Himself, of His

¹⁰² Ibid, 450.

¹⁰³ Matt. 5.45, Eph. 3.17.

¹⁰⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1*, 450.

eternal revelation and plan for redemption. “It is thus reality in that He does not merely come to man but encounters Himself from man.”¹⁰⁵

The Holy Ghost is a power distinct from and yet subordinate to the Lord Jesus Christ. In subordinate we don't mean lesser, for the Holy Ghost is just as much God as Jesus or the Father; rather, it means that He always points to the truth of God revealed in Christ, and thus to the universal love available between the Father and the Son in God's freedom. The Holy Ghost is not an internal spirit that every person is born with (though it does dwell internally), but the power by which people participate in the Godhead through the healing of the world. Barth reflects, contrary to Roman Catholic Dogma, that the Holy Ghost *does* provide assurance of the grace of God in this life. Where can this be found? We return to the Cross. The entire nature of this life can only speak paradoxically of God, because of suffering. Therefore, the Holy Ghost reminds believers of the paradox of God's suffering, to prove that His grace is sure, *because it came through suffering*. As the Spirit which always attests to Christ, the Holy Ghost makes Christ's cry of dereliction, 'abba father,' one which reaches the lips of believers in their pain, as children of God who have been 'crucified with Christ.'¹⁰⁶ “The promise brings us assurance in so far as it brings us the possibility of that cry 'Abba Father' which in our mouth and heart is the smallest thing but before God is the greatest thing, the one thing, as the cry of His own spirit in us.”¹⁰⁷ The Holy Ghost's deity is necessitated by faith as well. If faith in God were something that we could conjure by introspection upon our human nature, then the Spirit revealing Himself as God in the believer would not be necessary. Faith and the Holy Ghost are intertwined. “To have the Holy Spirit is to let God rather than our having God be our confidence.”¹⁰⁸ It is yet another

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 451.

¹⁰⁶ Gal 2.19.

¹⁰⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, 459.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 462.

feature and understanding of God which reduces the human will and understanding to find silence before the awesome mystery of His being.

Because the Holy Spirit exists as that which testifies to the love between the Father and Son; and thus, for humanity, love's eschatological definition, He puts those whom He envelops in the backseat, because they become one with the life of God, who exists as the law and its judge. "The dogma of the Holy Spirit means recognition that in every respect man can be present at God's revelation only as a servant is present at his master's work, i.e., following, obeying, imitating and serving, and that this relation—as distinct from that of human servant and master—cannot be reversed in any way or at any point."¹⁰⁹ This may appear bad news to the obstinate human will; but it is the opposite. In Jesus it is revealed that God wishes only the best for humanity—and we do not thus mean some inaccessible moral law—but rather, quite simply, infinite bliss, joy, and connection with all other created beings, made possible by God's own work and self-humiliation. What often gets in the way of God doing work in the life of a believer, is that they do not want Him to humiliate Himself for them. In pride, they do not want God to do that which God wants most, to let Him love them, which requires descension and suffering in a fallen world, that God freely chose to join with Himself. To let the Holy Spirit assign one to the backseat, is to let Jesus take the wheel. And this means to let God be fully God—to operate and take responsibility for all aspects of the believer's life no matter the cost, because this is love, and it is required in a fallen world.

"Love is God, the supreme law and ultimate reality, because God is love and not *vice versa*."¹¹⁰ We can only define real love *within* God. The Father dwells alongside Jesus, to be revealed by Jesus. We must not allow any God to exist behind God, as we can only know Him as

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 468.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 483.

Christ. If real love is the *relationship* from God to God, and God has revealed the crux of His being on the Cross, we translate this love which exists beyond us in God to our understanding of humanity, when we know that God would explore the depths of hell and take it upon Himself for the reconciliation of every aspect of creation. Everyone will be forgiven at Christ's return, because God would have failed if He let anyone get away from Himself. The Holy Spirit translates this reality to us, precisely because He exists to point us towards the Son. Apocalyptic Christianity does not worship a Jesus who exists distantly, to judge our actions at the end of time; but one who is closer to us than our own selves, because His purpose is to bring the future into the present—the future of universal reconciliation between created beings and God. This love culminates in God, existing towards us in personality and relationship. God is not simply Father because He is creator, but He is Father through His Lordship in Jesus. The Love of God manifests in us through a new birth, and therefore we become the place where His Lordship is revealed. We come to know God as personality, because His action of love in opposition to Sin is poetic, beautiful, and catches believers within a spiritual and creaturely gratitude for His being. “But God has and is the nature which as such is spirit, spiritual nature, personal nature, the nature which has not first to be the object of the knowledge and will of another, which is not nature only in this antithesis but also beyond this antithesis, which is as much the subject as object of a knowing and a willing. It is the freedom of God that the antithesis between nature and spirit is overcome in Him.”¹¹¹ Everything that makes this possible, the begetting of the Son from the Father, Barth says is “*the divine mystery*.”¹¹² And from this, we know that the love which exists in the Godhead revealed in Jesus Christ is superior to any love we can claim to know on our own understanding.

¹¹¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 543.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 433.

Barth defined God's being as action. In order to understand that "God is love," we will investigate this claim.¹¹³ God's being as action is one of grace. God can be defined primarily by grace. Grace exists because without it we are blind to God. Knowing God is the goal and reward of any religious thought and action—grace allows this. Grace opens up the truth of being to us who are stagnant in our thoughts about God and ourselves. "To think is to confine yourself to a single thought that one day stands still like a star in the world's sky."¹¹⁴ "God's revelation breaks through the emptiness of the movement of thought which we call our knowledge of God."¹¹⁵ In a reality which is dying, our being will always be oriented towards death. But the being of God moves in the opposite direction, of life. Therefore, His love is unexhausted for us, and as such can create an inexhaustible love for the other in a believer's life, because they are infused with His being. We can define the being of God as grace, because He is a triune God who never ceases to communicate love between Himself. Humans are blessed enough to be caught up in this love, and we categorize our knowledge of Him into definitions like 'Apocalyptic,' because the way we become one with this reality is contingent upon time and history, as we cannot escape these fundamentally limited ways of relating to God. Time creates and defines our current being, and it is prudent to live within these 'limitations' in the knowledge of our own being; however, from the perspective of God, true being which is love is constrained by these concepts, and would be insulted if sought as an end itself within temporal definitions. The being of God's love is known most well to us by His action in Jesus Christ; but the love shewn forth on the Cross is one drop in God's river of love flowing inside Himself from the Father to the Son. Therefore, if we are to contemplate temporal being alongside Heidegger, we must do so with the knowledge that our being is stagnant and untrue in relation to God's being outside of time.

¹¹³ 1 John 4.8

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 5.

¹¹⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 74.

Knowing God to be grace, and that grace exists fully within the Godhead as a relationship, means that we cannot reduce it to any of our own anthropological postulates. Man becomes different when touched by God, only because He is brought into the Godhead.¹¹⁶ We have to do with the “overflow of His essence,” which can be pinpointed as God’s action in history.¹¹⁷ Before turning to historical revelation, we must emphasize that we do not know true love apart from God, because though God can be defined as the sum of all good things, He cannot be limited to our knowledge of this sum, because He will always be greater than that in Himself. “The recognition of divine attributes cannot be taken to mean that for us God is subsumed under general notions, under the loftiest ideas of our knowledge of creaturely reality, and that He participates in its perfections.”¹¹⁸ This is all to say that God’s love is free, because God is free! The freedom of God cannot be separated from His love, and vice versa. God is free because He loves Himself, and God is love because He is free in Himself. God’s love could not spill over to us perfectly, as revealed on the cross, if He was not free from all of our conceptions of love and being, in order to act with *the most* love, in our being. Let us now focus our attention on this revealed in history.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 144.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 273.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 333.

iii. God in the Apocalypse

We have defined God's love in Himself, in His triune nature. God's being has poured into human history through His actions of love towards us, first in Israel, then in Jesus Christ.¹¹⁹ We have already examined the Cross and Resurrection as the primary event of God's revelation, let us now speak more broadly of how God has worked in this event, why it is Apocalyptic, and the importance of speaking about God's love in relation to His action, rather than remaining in the realm of broad metaphysical speculation. The God of the apocalypse, realized in human history, is the same triune God who exists far beyond our reach in the infinite love shared inside of Himself. However, we cannot reach out and touch this God—because of Sin, we can only let Him come down to affect us. We can accept God's love, we cannot foster it. Therefore, in order to remain true to the being we have explicated, we must stay close to the way that He has chosen to speak to us within the binds of time and matter, which are not our enemies, qua Plato, but will one day be subsumed by a New Heaven and New *Earth*. To remain in metaphysical speculation is to make time and matter our enemies, which will breed creaturely hate—the opposite intention of God's action. “Here, the Creator and the creature are temporally agglomerated in a perichoretic interpenetration of eternal divinity and temporal creatureliness in which God has become time without ceasing to be eternal.”¹²⁰ Heidegger believed that all metaphysics is nihilism, because of the way it tries to transcend created realities. Part of our purpose in focusing God's revelation on His event, is to save Christianity from becoming akin to escapist philosophy, and moreso, to emphasize God's intention to act salvifically, *within* the world. True love between

¹¹⁹ This is not to say that God's being of love pours into other elements of human history in ways unknown to Christian Scripture. However, Christian scripture acknowledges this reality, as God is known to take care of those whom He has called and those He hasn't. I will address the non-Christian in God's love in the following chapter.

¹²⁰ <https://blog.lexhampress.com/2016/09/30/2016930gods-time-for-us/>

humans cannot ascend to the heavens to find its reality, but must remain grounded in Creation. A platonic non-creaturely love creates an expectation of a greater love than the other can provide. It must find love in a reality that is shifted and bolstered by Jesus Christ to remain satisfied with the other, because it sees the crucified Lord within them and their personal history.¹²¹ We cannot equate God with something that we think is generally good, because we are flawed, and our knowledge is limited. Because of this, God narrows knowledge down for us in His action—so that we mustn't look anywhere else than Him.¹²² In His action, God gives Himself, which is love. “If we define this action of His as the love of God, and therefore God as the One who loves, and (in the proper sense) as love, our gaze must always be directed strictly on the fact, i.e., on God's act, and must not be allowed to wander under the influence of a concomital and suppositious general idea of love.”¹²³ God's goodness is found in His act of communication with us. In the divine descension, God reveals to us that He is Lord; His Lordship means fundamentally that He is in control—“it breaks in upon us with the unique and incomparable thrust of eternal truth and reality itself.”¹²⁴ Jesus is the Son of God, not simply because God needed to make a son for our sake. The reality of a God *for us* exists in His becoming. We know of God's eternity by the constant flux of his temporal being, always acting in the same way for salvation, because of Sin.

We no longer include God in the cosmos as something to feel after, according to ancient philosophy or human conscience. To transcend oneself in understanding is to re-configure one's knowledge according to the reality of God in Jesus Christ, as man addressed by God. In modern evangelical circles, this can seem immediately exclusionary. It is a crass and unfortunate error. In Jesus Christ, man is addressed as one amongst the many; and because the relationship of the

¹²¹ This will align with Heidegger's concept of entanglement, just with the addition of Sin.

¹²² Heidegger's ontology of being as existence necessitates our understanding of God's being as act.

¹²³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 276.

¹²⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1*, 424.

many to God, morality, or anything to be prized in this life, is determined in God, and election acts in ways which are beyond human understanding and language—*the person faced by God in this manner can do nothing but respond to Him in a humble love and interest for the rest of humanity*. We know that this love exists for each person equally, and thus cannot help being curious about the hidden God dwelling within the life of every other.

With talk of revelation, we must always acknowledge its master. Barth was known for his critique of natural theology, because it sought a way to find God through human reason without God's direct intervention. The New Testament is clear that God uses human reason; but we cannot know anything of God without His supernatural act. Barth's qualm with natural theology was another way of re-emphasizing the importance of God's own action, directing human wills towards revelation.¹²⁵ He defined natural theology as one which "grounds itself on a knowability of God distinct from the grace of God."¹²⁶ Therefore, for Barth, all of theology and any following disciplines (for our sake ontology and anthropology) have to be grounded in Christology to make any claim on the truth; because in Christ we let truth claim us.¹²⁷

Moreover, because of His freedom, God is able to spiritually affect and guide those in life who may never acknowledge His name. God's election can be invisible. "God is not found of them that seek Him. And this simply because He is God and willeth to make Himself known to both—as God."¹²⁸ Barth almost equates 'faith' in Christ as a work, thus implying the possible invisibility of election. It is a mystery, however, because he also believes in a conscious faith as an act of the will—because election is entirely up to God, it need not adhere to our understanding

¹²⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 140.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 143.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 148.

¹²⁸ Barth, *Romerbrief*, 408.

of this willing. Thus, faith in Christ remains the center of our religion; however, it is faith as a relationship with Christ as the full revelation of God, and who establishes this relationship as a gift which thus cannot be grasped onto, but only believed in. The purpose is to create consciousness of the person of Christ as the face of God—this perception holds onto Christ, as someone wholly other, and not the object of our own will. The necessity of this actual person, God, in one's life, is faith—not an extension of our own personality, which would become a source of pride that destroys the possibility of transcendent love. There is no intellectual requirements for this relationship; it requires only the person of Jesus for an acknowledgement of truth and safety from damnation.

We have established, based on the doctrine of election, that God is able to influence people for His purposes even if they do not confess Him with their lips. Let us investigate how this happens upon closer inspection. We can assume that humans are spiritual beings based on New Testament verses that scrape against ontology.¹²⁹ Humans have something within them which guides their being according to rules and aspects of the creature which can go beyond the rational mind. We have said before, qua Heidegger, that the human is experience. But this does not deny the existence of a spirit within our being, which creates the way we form experience. Barth highlights God's ability to indwell the creature. "He can inspire and guide it at a deeper level than it knows how to do itself—ininitely nearer, better, more deeply, yet not in dissolution but in confirmation of His own divine singularity, and again not in dissolution but in confirmation of the singularity of the creature."¹³⁰ Thus, God's Spirit can dwell alongside another's spirit; or more abstractly, God can dwell within a person, to guide them according to desires and impulses that affect their rational mind from the inside out. It is the believer's hope

¹²⁹ 1 Thess 5.23, Hebrews 4.12.

¹³⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 314.

and wish that this will always be the case for them, but that does not mean that it is contingent upon one's desire for it. Why would God do this? Is this not immoral—if it is the way God has elected and rejected people, does this not turn Him into a demon, as Barth asked in *Romerbrief*? God can work within the natural law, God can work in miracles, God is free to change the playing field according entirely to His purposes. He is not restricted in any way, and the reason this God is not a demon to the Christian who believes in His power, is because He has revealed his character on the Cross, and has promised in His Word to never stray from this mercy—similar to the Old Testament covenant with Noah.

In order to know God in Himself as love, we emphasize the necessity of apprehending all of revelation in Jesus Christ. It would be easy to call Christianity any number of things if we were to choose one aspect of Christ and set it above the totality of his being-as-God. “Any deviation, any attempt to evade Jesus Christ in favor of another supposed revelation of God, or any denial of the fulness of God’s presence in Him, will precipitate us into darkness and confusion when we realize the abundant variety of the divine presence grounded in the divine freedom.”¹³¹ There is indeed a variety of benefits to the divine presence known most fully as Christ. And we can even suppose that various religions realize some of these attributes of God when they praise metaphysics of love or aspects of Creation, and that Christian denominations opposed to Apocalyptic thought do have to do with Jesus Christ. However, wherever Christ is not recognized as the fullness of God, and therefore spiritually as the Lord of this world, we will find that our metaphysical understanding becomes easily confused, because His presence will create contradictions to each of our hostile understandings of the world, and therefore what we worship within it. The object of Apocalyptic theology is again to acknowledge Christ as Lord over and against all other forms of knowledge.

¹³¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 319.

God's reality of goodness cannot be questioned for a true faith resulting in authentic love. When speaking of the characteristics in God, we do not need to reference a variety of 'ultimate values' to parse through, but only the one sovereign Lord who is good in Himself and has spoken His Word into creation.¹³² All goodness is *united* in the being who is the source, the speaker, and the receiver of Himself—as the Trinity is united, so is the God who acts within history. Thus, when one accepts this God in His united holiness, it cannot be done in fear, because God is without fear, and it is only done in God Himself. It is to “accept God's grace in thankfulness, to be contently replenished by it.”¹³³ It is even to grieve God if we do not accept his will to remove our distress, because God has participated in our pain—in Christ—*with sympathy*. God's sympathy has become empathy on the Cross, and reveals that God's supreme desire to remove suffering “springs from His inmost nature and stamps all His being and doing.”¹³⁴ God's holiness consists in the action which comes from his sympathy. To be holy oneself is to “cleave to His grace.”¹³⁵ It is not to become like God through one's will, but in the resultant change which comes from being touched by Him, to be always grateful towards Him in the acknowledgement of His power as love. Eternal life is not only found after death, but is God's own life which touches ours today.¹³⁶ So God demands to heal us, and the way He does so is through a continuous substitution—*God takes responsibility for each movement of our will*. We cannot be healed if we do not accept that God has determined this through His suffering. Because of the nature of the Cross, we also know that God has suffered *once* to reveal His forgiveness—and

¹³² Ibid, 326.

¹³³ Ibid, 367.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 369.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 364

¹³⁶ 'Eternal life' is translated as 'life unto the age' within Hebrew Scripture. This means that eternal life has directly to do with the next age of life found in Christ. As Christ enters our life, so does the eternity which is inherent to His being, the eternity of universal sabbath rest.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/eternal-life/#:~:text=Tim%3A%20Well%2C%20Jesus%20adopted%20this,%E2%80%9Clife%20unto%20the%20age.%E2%80%9D>

thus his healing. If we were lovable this might not be necessary. “The love of God always throws a bridge over a crevasse...It is the alien and hostile other that God loves.” We are unlovable until our reconciliation with God. The substitutionary healing and forgiveness of the Cross is necessary *every moment* for communion with Jesus as Lord. We know all of God’s purposes for us point towards sabbath rest with Him; but because this is meant for all people equally, God’s renewing mercy and grace in our lives exists to make itself known to the other. Heaven exists as the resting place before resurrection, and is more fulfilling than earth; believers who know this as their home can only find meaning in the neighbor, and thus themselves, because Paul says that *love* will survive in some mysterious way as a fruit from this age to the next; we thus assume that there will be more gratitude for this life in the next if one has loved more: “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”¹³⁷ So we re-emphasize that the other is the existential part-time calling of every believer, because their only true vocation is Sabbath rest. The other must be found in Christ, because love dwells in God through Him. It is no use living for the other if it is not in love, as the fruit for which we labor, and love can only be worked towards in the free space created by God’s forgiveness...*love as God is found holistically in Jesus Christ.*

¹³⁷ 2 Cor 9.6.

Chapter 3: Humans in God's Apocalypse

i. Actors in Revelation

We have discussed God very much. It is the nature of Apocalyptic Christian thought to begin everything with God and move downward to all forms of knowledge from there. But it is not the purpose of this thesis to leave all discussion of man behind for pure theology. We are concerned with *authentic human love* from our perspective; we want to know the truth of being, in our being. We have established that we can't begin with our being to know truth. So let us take knowledge of God in his apocalyptic action and triune nature to ground a metaphysic of human being which is traced back to Him. More specifically, let us answer the question of who the human is in God's apocalypse—how do we see ourselves from God's view rather than our own?

Humans only know God as an “object of our cognition” through God's good pleasure.¹³⁸ The fact that God appears to us is miraculous. When we imagine humans relating to God, we see them picked up into His nature as beings completely alien and hostile to it—God must cover over our entire self with His being to bring us into Himself, and even then, we still exist fundamentally outside of His holiness. We will thus argue that truth in human life consists only in a response to God. Barth notes that the Hebrew word for truth, ‘*emmeth*,’ means a lived state of authenticity in a particular reality. “The truth of man's being...can consist in nothing other than in man's response...to the way and work of God.”¹³⁹ Because, in order to correspond with God's truth, you become one with God's reality in Christ. What is God's reality in a world opposed to Him? It is Jesus. The reality of Christ comes to man in the form of a person, and thus

¹³⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 206.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 207.

cannot exist within natural truth values. “He Himself is the truth...If we know the truth, it can happen only by the liberation which comes from the truth itself.”¹⁴⁰ This is the opposition between philosophy and theology. Philosophy believes truth to lie in our thoughts about truth, and theology knows truth exists only in itself, and our reason is limited to being signposts to it, or reflections on an experience of it. Philosophy uses words to find God (or truth), and theology attempts to describe God after He has found us.

Let us return to the term *invasion*—used by apocalyptic theologians to describe God’s movement in the world, which is reflected in the believer’s life. Often in philosophy, participation in God’s being has only to do with some part of the believer, such as their soul or liturgy. Apocalyptic theology says that God invades the believer’s entire life, and it becomes a fully embodied and historical participation in His being. We do not see God affecting us only extrinsically, but bringing us into Himself as participants. “In Paul’s gospel ‘revelation’ (*apocalypsis*) denotes God’s redemptive invasion of the fallen order of things such that reality itself is decisively remade in the event...the event of reconciliation in Jesus Christ is *constitutive of reality*”¹⁴¹ God is not held at a distance, as only the moral judge of one’s will. God can affect the will, and the actions surrounding the willing individual to participate in His being. This love found in the joy of God’s existence always overflows to other beings, and it is the beginning of Christian ethics.

We have established God’s freedom from all human concepts and experiences, what does His freedom say about His purpose for us? *The spiritual disposition of a humanity shaped by God’s apocalyptic action is that of freedom created by hope in God alone—this mechanistically resolves itself in a human love grounded in Him.* It is mechanistic because of the emphasis that

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 208.

¹⁴¹ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 170, 175.

Apocalyptic places on action grounded in the will of God and not human beings. If it is God's will to act as the source of a freeing love in someone's life, and that person is aware of Christ and His Law, then they will naturally act in the love which is closest to God's being—mercy, patience, and righteousness. Let us begin with the freedom of God in a person's life, and why this is necessary for love.

Forgiveness is essential to authenticity, because it is the primary mode of exchange between God's being and ours. There is no God-relationship to the Christian without a modicum of forgiveness. Why would a God who always loves us, in a world created by Him, always need to forgive? It is not because God has a low view of the human being, or because God wants His people to be crippled by a sense of guilt. We live in a world dominated by the power of evil. And the way evil addresses us is through condemnation, and guilt. We cannot see God through the hazy lens of our own battered conscience. What is God's love to a being convinced of its own ill-will? God's forgiveness orients our will towards His, because it is the natural higher love—it fills our being with a sense of worth and purpose, because it reveals that we exist for a reason above our own decisions and mistakes. Evil actions result from a wrongly oriented love, or a mistaken sense of the rationality in love. Evil forms the will to see the world as shaped by and for its own purposes. We speak of God *invading* the believer's life to change their reality to His own. *But the change exists, concretely, in forgiveness.* We say that forgiveness creates a God-relationship, because the world created by God is, on its own, oriented towards His beauty. Sin creates a reality for its slaves by guiding their ontology to desire evil for the sake of their good—but it is a lie; as it never purposes joy, which can only come from God. Too often, the formula presented is that of forgiveness being necessary for the individual to know God, or be loved by Him, because they are a 'spiritually dead' creature existing only for 'fleshly purposes.'

In reality, forgiveness creates a God-relationship, because God always loved the sinner, and reveals to them in each moment that their created reality is loveable by Him too. But it is loveable in a way which is always meant to reveal His glory—the end purpose being His eternal sabbath feast. Sinning is each moment when the will moves towards a godless reality, not because it is immoral from the creaturely perspective, but because God cannot imbue a dirtied conscience, resistant to grace, with His glory. “Your pain is incurable. Because your guilt is great.”¹⁴²

Barth describes finding God’s grace, His freedom, and the following dualism which results in a struggle between the old and new life as being ‘shattered on God.’¹⁴³ While God Himself remains unknown, the reality He creates in a believer’s life is abundant and knowable, as the fight between Sin and Grace. Paul describes Christians as ‘soldiers’ for Christ, because this war is something which they share incredible passion for, and can only rejoice in—it is not as if God subjects people to be His soldiers, and they have no other choice because He is God; rather, the Christian knows that the fight is entirely within God’s hands, to be determined by Him, and thus find themselves fighting within passivity to His will. They actively seek for Christ within their life, as addicts to His grace, but they passively watch Him do all of the work, with knowledge that it is His good pleasure to do so, and not something out of their reach. If someone ‘proclaims the gospel,’ or does any ‘work’ for Christ, it is as if they are introducing someone to a reality, a person, which does all of the work and shares all of the cake. As Hermann said, only God can speak His word—it is the joy of a Christian to watch Him do so.

¹⁴² Jer 30.15

¹⁴³ Barth, *Romerbrief*, 270.

But where does this intersection take place, the bestowal of divine freedom from God to man? Revelation. The freedom to know and love God creates a new man, with new longings and desires for Him. God comes to reveal Himself in the humans He chose as His actors. “In Holy Scripture man in the cosmos is addressed upon this echo and reflection, and starting from revelation he is referred back all the more surely to revelation itself.”¹⁴⁴ The Biblical witness does not place much value on man in the cosmos addressed as a person, but only as one taken up into God’s revelation.¹⁴⁵ From a cosmic perspective, sin is anything which worships Sin as lord. Barth notes that in the creation story, when Adam and Eve sinned by choosing the knowledge of good and evil, or trying to grasp “the possibility of choice,” the “strife against grace, is designated as the real sin.”¹⁴⁶ Earlier in *Romerbrief*, Barth defined grace itself as forgiveness. Therefore, in order to remain on God’s side in His cosmic battle, we must allow grace to reach us through forgiveness. The world is the place where revelation and reconciliation will occur, and because God declares it a ‘good,’ there is a way for the creature to orient itself towards it, in freedom. Naturally, we do not seek freedom. Barth and Calvin go as far to say that we unwillingly align with God, according to His sovereign will. This is bad news to anyone who does not know the goodness of divinity in Christ; but otherwise, Barth argues, it is essential to the gospel for God Himself to re-order our wills, because we cannot trust ourselves to always choose Him. Grace and forgiveness do not present themselves to man as ‘timeless’ or ‘abstract’ truths, according to ancient Greek philosophy, revealing a distant, perhaps ambivalent deity; but they are revealed in the moment of Jesus’ Resurrection, which becomes *the* moment of eternity for those who believe.¹⁴⁷ God appeared in time for humanity in Jesus Christ, revealing his will

¹⁴⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2.1, 111.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 118.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 121.

for them through the event of the crucifixion and Resurrection, and nothing else can speak so closely to His truth. In order to know the necessity of freedom grounded in this event for the right relationship with Creation, we have to know of Sin as an accuser, and the corresponding moral ontology of human beings which allows us to be condemned.

The biggest risk for man, according to Barth, is the belief that one does not *need* grace. It is the creeping thought, in the wealth of life (be it emotional, material, relational, etc.), that we are *rich*—in the eyes of ourselves, and in the eyes of God. To always need grace is to always need forgiveness. To always need forgiveness is to always be poor before God. And to be poor before God, is the greatest blessing for man—because in our poverty, God fills us with His wealth. “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”¹⁴⁸ At the core of faith in God, and thus at the core of human being, is a sense of morality, for the ability to live well, and for the ability of others to live well. Edward Backman argues in a debate on the existence of God, that the question at the center of belief is not ‘what?’—what is scripture, or what exists in the cosmos(?), it is not ‘how?’—how was the world created, or how am I to relate with God(?), but always ‘*who?*’—*who is the God in control of the world, for me and my neighbor?* In this *who*, we ask other questions of God’s care for the world, and how he distributes it—but it always returns to the moral aspect of God in relationship with a mankind ontologically oriented towards the care for itself in community.¹⁴⁹ Only a knowledge of God which proposes a universal eschatological care for humanity can cure this search for *who*, because this God *will* make all things right in the end, free of charge. Therefore, when human

¹⁴⁸ 2 Cor 12.9.

¹⁴⁹ Backman, Edward, “Ten Minutes for the Proposition ‘God is.’” St. Mary’s College, St. Andrews.

beings become mirrors of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, they shine with the power of the future, because their primary joy and consolation lies in a hope which rests on an unseen faith in this moral character of God. To be rich in oneself and poor in God leads to a reality "entangled in guilt and sunk in death," because it denies the moral ontological nature of man, which creates the desire for universal harmony amongst men. Thus, one cannot move forward but an inch in a life of authentic joy without being forgiven for the ways that they inevitably act against this concern, even in an outwardly ethical existence. Life itself this side of eternity will always be stuck within the mire of Sin and Death.¹⁵⁰ "Marry, and you will regret it; don't marry, you will also regret it; marry or don't marry, you will regret it either way." Kierkegaard's pessimistic existentialism is true in a world where disappointment lies around every corner. Only when we can understand the source of disappointment, which is most often Sin, and not the decisions we make in good conscience, can we see that Christ rose above this power in order to redeem any act of will, to appease the torn conscience which prefers to sin out of resentment rather than accept forgiveness. God's redeeming love can trump any act of will. *We pretend to be rich without God only because we are embittered by what has happened in our own will, without the knowledge that Sin created circumstances for pain, regardless of the decisions we make.* Forgiveness creates the free space to know Christ through anything, and thus to turn any created pain into a redeemed love, as He will one day do for all people through the promised *invasion* of divine grace. Moral beings cannot welcome freedom ontologically without forgiveness.

The purpose for all God-man relationships is to be "pointed to revelation for the sake of revelation and in agreement with revelation."¹⁵¹ For Barth, the human reality addressed by the

¹⁵⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 133.

¹⁵¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 125.

Word of God goes very deep. It is not as if the human is touched only on the outside by God, to therefore address themselves back to God according to their own accord. The revelation of God has the power to penetrate the deepest (and perhaps darkest) pits of man for him to become “awakened to his real existence.”¹⁵² When addressed by God, we do not merely intellectually acknowledge the fact of forgiveness, but it becomes real to us through the way we emotionally react with the world. The spirit of God can only bring real peace, because it translates the reality of God’s triune love to the sinner in need of His grace as forgiveness. When this occurs, the gratitude towards God for his promised eternal reconciliation becomes love for fellow men, because shared creaturely love comes naturally from a joy for being. Joy sprouts from knowledge of being’s purpose, directing every ‘existentiell’ act. It is very possible and likely that the non-believer experiences this joy, for God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous;” however, only the believer can associate this joy with truth, the locus of all human striving, and God’s promised eternal peace.¹⁵³

The low anthropology is ‘total depravity:’ Every part of man is equally sinful, and we are reliant on God’s grace to reorient all of our being to Him. Many are critical of this, as they want to see what is good in humanity, or they believe that the soul or root of emotions are naturally closer to God than other faculties of understanding such as reason. Understood properly, total depravity does not need to sever our trust in humanity’s sanctity. But because we are fallen, to understand our limitations forces us to press forward in hope towards our resurrected goodness. To know that we “ourselves ... do not resemble God,” or that “we are not master[‘s] of God,” means to place more trust in God, and thus allow his grace to be the central factor driving our

¹⁵² Ibid, 134.

¹⁵³ Matt 5.45.

lives, existentially and spiritually.¹⁵⁴ And to confess the triune God is to allow His judgment upon our present nature. To know that God is hidden from our sight is not to be resigned; it rather causes us to act more truly in relation to a world which is sinful, in which we cannot catch a break without God. And to confess that God judges us in order to redeem us, is to know that He is indeed very close, but not within our nature or that of the world—it is to know that God is close as God and not how we may imagine Him. This is all part of Paul’s project to ‘renew the mind’ of his followers. We may always love, as creatures in need of love, but we may not always share God’s love, if we do not understand our relationship with Him. Authentic love is God’s love. Yet even this knowledge which aids relationship, is God Himself. To know God is to be caught up within God’s own self-knowledge, communicated from the Father to the Son in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵ There is no point in Barth’s doctrine of God where the human relationship with God rests inside the human, or outside of God. “Knowledge of God is then an event enclosed in the bosom of the divine Trinity.”¹⁵⁶ Logically speaking, no being should desire a disconnect with divinity, and God’s apocalypse in Jesus Christ reveals that He does not abandon anyone to this reality.

What is this relationship, concretely? It is gratitude. When God claims a person, He claims the life that they live, the air that they breathe, for them to know Him in all that they do. There is, of course, ‘negative participation,’ where the creature is in God, but cannot know Him as God. But a life of faith is ‘positive participation,’ which causes the creature to see all of themselves and the world within revelation, and thus give thanks because God has shown His beauty in their own lives through the event of Christ’s resurrection.¹⁵⁷ “So if you have been

¹⁵⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 190.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 204.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 205.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 243.

raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”¹⁵⁸ Paul says that believers are already raised with Christ. Their reality becomes that of the New Creation. Most simply, as the New Creation is perfected dwelling with God, their thanks is godly gratitude from a joy which is true to their being. All of this lies in faith. Faith is being at home with God.¹⁵⁹ As a supernatural gift, grounded in hope, it cannot expect to result in something seen or felt holistically. It may create realities of God’s presence and healing which are tangible, but it will not swallow the creature wholly into eternity. Faith itself “is far too radical and shattering for us to be able to direct it seriously to ourselves.”¹⁶⁰ We are too weak, and it will always rise out to God, an acceptance of His power expressed through love. “God’s loving is an end in itself.”¹⁶¹ The faith known in love shows God’s purposes to *always be love*—no matter how ambiguous or questionable they seem at present. God’s acting love is His being. He never reveals Himself outside of love. All human action and contemplation become silent and humble gratitude before Him; but this itself ends in love, as God shines through the individual by acting freely upon him, in him, and besides him, so that his entire life fades from Sin in the reality of His self-expression. Like a shining city set on a hill, the ‘man of revelation’ displays God as love to his fellow men, because God points to His being from that of their own. God’s reality invades our microcosms of work, relationships, and ‘everydayness,’ by showing eternity to always exist above and before them as the ultimate end and authentic source of love.

¹⁵⁸ Col 3.1-4

¹⁵⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 247.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 279.

ii. Acting in Freedom and Love

The metaphysic of love is essentially acting in care, with knowledge of weakness, knowing the purpose for this weakness is greater joy in intimacy, and knowing that God is fully sovereign and will use His power to do anything to make it possible. All of this knowledge is found completely in the person of Jesus Christ.

Everything to be said about the relationship between theology and anthropology is that, “real man is the man who stands before God because God stands before him.”¹⁶² Hopefully we have scratched the surface of what it means for God to stand before man. That is not, however, the purpose of this thesis. We are concerned with the reality *between men*, which can speak of God. It is necessary to address God’s truth before that of other beings, as truth begins and ends in God. But our truth concerns the human being, especially in a religion which finds the created person sacred as such. If we were to develop a doctrine of theosis, in which the human eventually adopts the essence of God, perhaps we could say that truth does not at all descend to our nature. I am unsure of *theosis*; however, even if we affirmed its truth, a metaphysic which is specific to the created human would be necessary, because of the present hidden nature of God. “In faith itself we are forced to say that our knowledge of God begins in all seriousness with the knowledge of the hiddenness of God.”¹⁶³ Therefore, whether we become gods according to Eastern Orthodox tradition, or we hold onto a human nature which can only delight in God, our knowledge of God is predicated on His hiddenness in hope, and we must work with the created realities we now share to understand how He unveils His being towards us through our relationships with each other. Moreover, this theology will have something to say to unbelievers

¹⁶² Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 66.

¹⁶³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 183.

about how the Christian may view all shared relations of love, which extends beyond believers, because of the mysterious nature of election. Finally, we will pinpoint something concrete for the believer to identify with the love of God, because we know that this love always exists in freedom and for the purposes revealed in Jesus Christ—the reconciliation of Himself with all people, and thus the reconciliation of all people to each other—that God has descended to humanity in pain and dereliction from Himself for this cause, that this act of God occurred in freedom, because God’s being is grace, mercy, and patience; and to share in God is to share in these attributes, regardless of whichever created realities act in support, opposition, or distortion of them. “We are not wrong, we do not overlook or neglect anything, if we affirm that His love and therefore His whole being, in all the heights and depths of the Godhead, is simply grace.”¹⁶⁴

The reason we always start with God in truth is not to be gnostic and disattached from the world, but because the world and ourselves are a mystery, and can only be understood through the lens of God—love. We share in God through love of the other. God’s love does not come to us as something disattached from Himself; by loving us and showing us how to love, God loves Himself. We may know God in love, and perhaps not even acknowledge God’s self in His love. Because our knowledge of God is limited based on His act, love must be defined by this act, and not an abstract metaphysic derived from the mind. The human imagination is too fallen to find God’s realities in its own in contemplation. God’s goodness *is his communication of that goodness*.¹⁶⁵ The ‘sacramental reality’ at the heart of Christian worship and understanding of God’s life is necessary, because it is the acting out of God’s revelation of Himself, His goodness, to man. We participate in God when God makes Himself known to us through this act of communication—God infringes upon our reality, and it takes the form of prayer, worship, and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 358.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 276-277.

the Eucharist, because God has chosen to touch our time with His divinity within and through our limitations, though it is not necessary for Him.¹⁶⁶

Barth says there are human experiences which come from and point towards the reality of God's active spoken Word. He is careful to specify that they cannot point assuredly to God's activity, but they exist through the Word of God, in the Word of God, and are made apparent through particular created experiences. Our anthropological postulations cannot be limited to certain things within creation. It is an all-inclusive event within the use of man's reason, emotions, and spiritual nature. "Acknowledgement of God's word relates to the purposiveness of God's word."¹⁶⁷ There is a "spirituality of the Word of God," which comes naturally from being brought into Christ's reality.¹⁶⁸ It is not Augustine's prayer of bringing God only into the heart, and silencing all of the realities outside of that interior light.¹⁶⁹ It is closer to Heidegger's ontology of experience over against a blind dualism. All of your self must be brought into the reality of the Word, and this includes an intellectual and bodily realization of Christ's gift of heaven upon a constant rapture into His love and mercy which naturally creates peace and goodwill amongst men, who otherwise might not have a reason to care for each other. "The final thing to be said is that while the attitude of acknowledgement *vis-a-vis* God's word is really an attitude of man, an act of his self-determination, nevertheless it is the act of that

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 62.

¹⁶⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, 205.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 208.

¹⁶⁹ "But what do I love when I love you? Not the beauty of any body or the rhythm of time in its movement; not the radiance of light, so dear to our eyes; not the sweet melodies in the world of manifold sounds; not the perfume of flowers, ointments and spices; not manna and not honey; not the limbs so delightful to the body's embrace: it is none of these things that I love when I love my God. And yet when I love my God I do indeed love a light and a sound and perfume and food and embrace—a light and sound and perfume and a food and an embrace in my inward self. There my soul is flooded with a radiance which no space can contain; there a music sounds which time never bears away; there I smell a perfume which no wind disperses; there I taste a food that no surfeit embitters; there is an embrace which no satiety severs. It is this that I love when I love my God." Augustine, *Confessions*, X.6, 8.

self-determination of man whose meaning and basis, whose final seriousness and true content, whose truth and reality, cannot be ascribed to man himself but only to his determination by the Word of God.”¹⁷⁰ This denies the criticism of Barth which says that his theology has nothing to do with human reality. He is just insistent upon tracing its origin back to God. This reality is created by the extent to which one knows themselves to be confronted by revelation through Scripture and Proclamation. There can also be an intellectual acknowledgement of divinity within one’s life without necessarily pinning it to Christian theological postulates. It is better if it dwells within Christian theology, because it is the most substantial, rational, and lasting way to acknowledge God in one’s life—however, it must remain unnecessary, because God is free to act in someone’s life, though they might have opposition to Christianity due to the failings of the Church.

God has loaned us faith in Him, a *relationship*. This results in experiences which point towards His being. God is “He who makes Himself ours.”¹⁷¹ The fact that we are, to begin with, God’s enemies, makes the appearance of revelation within our life serve as an either/or. Either Jesus, God, and the eternity which puts finitude into a perspective beyond itself, serving in love; or the powers which presently dictate the human understanding of right and wrong in a morally ambiguous universe.¹⁷² Jesus is beyond being, *qua* Tillich, on the Cross He has shown God’s aseity which stretches past our moral philosophical conceptions.¹⁷³ “The man who according to the Bible came to share in God’s revelation and became obedient to it had no motives or grounds for this, he was not instructed or persuaded, he followed neither his own reason or conscience nor the reason or conscience of other men—all this might also happen, but the Bible has little to

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 208.

¹⁷¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, 380.

¹⁷² Ibid, 406-407.

¹⁷³ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*.

say about it and it is not the important thing in this matter. He was simply confronted with this ἐξουσία [power] and he bowed to it and not to anyone or anything else. He obeyed a command.”¹⁷⁴

Regardless of whether we affirm the doctrine of theosis or not, all Christian doctrine regards the spiritual life as growing closer to God in essence, and thus becoming holy by being enveloped in His love. Theosis says this love turns one into God Himself, those who disagree argue that we can only ever imitate God and His love, but not share in His essence. Nonetheless, our love and holiness is only ever manifest through that of God. And God’s love is maintained by His aseity, by the freedom within His being which determines His act. Therefore, we must imitate this being in our valuations of human love, and can thus say determinatively that *human love requires spiritual freedom to become manifest authentically in accordance with God.*

Martin Luther most accurately defined this freedom in his “On Christian Freedom,” where he argued for Christian freedom based on Christ’s forgiveness. Some theologies of sanctification overlook forgiveness, treating it as a one-time event which becomes unnecessary as the believer grows closer to God. Freedom, they believe, becomes a cause for sin—if we are growing closer to God daily, we will not desire freedom from Him or from the love in service which He effects. However, God’s aseity means that to be close to Him means to come closer with the spiritual concept of freedom. The forgiveness of our sins as effected by the Cross, is the realization of this freedom—but the Cross is the revelation of God’s being in act. Therefore, we do not separate the Cross from God’s being, and we stress the constant necessity of forgiveness for godly love in a world controlled by Sin—or, ‘the accuser,’ whose name suggests the purpose of condemning us, and therefore blinding us to God. Sanctification is therefore not a matter of

¹⁷⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, 306.

the creature imitating the creator through his own devices. Grace is required every moment for this freedom to be made manifest within one's life and in their heart. Grace is the reality which translates the being of God—beyond all of our conceptions of morality and beauty—into our life, and into our self. Grace is God's loan to men, to be accepted and realized, which pushes one out of a sinful world into the reality of Christ's reign. Because God's love is grounded in His freedom, this necessarily creates a reality of freedom for love, because love points towards the eschatological reality of Christ's return, and becomes a desire for believers within their own being which is not forced on them emotionally, but becomes a spiritual reality through God's invasion into their lives—because we are ontologically oriented towards the other based on the initial purpose for our creation.

Chapter 4: Martin Heidegger and Being

i. The Suspicion of Phenomenology

Here we will expand on the idea of freedom and love from the creaturely (though spiritual) perspective that was addressed above. We are starting with the assumption that God's presence entails hopeful joy, and that love springs forth naturally from knowing Him.¹⁷⁵ We shall investigate Heidegger's claims of being in time to better understand the metaphysic that springs forth from God's intervention into our created reality.

The Trinity, qua Barth, may be understood as different modes of God's being—God's being in itself is our starting point for knowledge of man's being. “In the superiority of bringing forth from God in God over bringing forth by God, in the superiority of the freedom in which God posits His own reality over the freedom in which He posits a reality distinct from Himself, in the superiority of the love in which He is an object to Himself over the love in which the object is something that exists by His will in distinction from Himself—in this superiority lies the significance of ‘begotten, not made.’”¹⁷⁶ For good reason, theologians are skeptical of phenomenology rooted in man's experience over God's being—Heidegger poses this risk to an extreme, based on his postulation of *existence as being* in his magnum opus: “True being is in itself distinguished as absolute and relative being...If being and not grace is the criterion of truth, this reverse is inevitable.”¹⁷⁷ But God's being revealed as grace—Jesus Christ—is no final object of cognition we can grasp onto to form an organized ontology based on language and temporal

¹⁷⁵ John 15.10-12: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

¹⁷⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1.1, 433.

¹⁷⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 2.1, 240.

conceptions. The being of God revealed in Jesus is too good to be considered our ‘final word’ in a quest for the truth of being. Ontology rooted in humanity may seek finality in what we can cognize. Heidegger’s being-towards-death, which seeks to evade this problem, will need to be re-oriented as a being-toward-Jesus, with knowledge that “we have already referred to Him by speaking of God’s temptation and of God’s comfort as the divine reality by which the *circulus veritatis Dei* in which we move is encompassed.”¹⁷⁸ This *circulus veritatis Dei* is the self-enclosed circle of divinity found in the Trinity, and the way it reaches humanity. “This divine reality is Jesus Christ Himself.”¹⁷⁹ Thus, the question of human being in cognition will be re-oriented to the “veracity of cognition of God.”¹⁸⁰ Because, the doctrine of God with which we are concerned cannot equal a doctrine of being, as being is a concept derived from human experience and knowledge. We investigate the being of the God who “is who He is in His works.”¹⁸¹ Heidegger seeks to direct all questions of being to the human *concern* for their world (their own works); there may be compatibility between a theology rooted in God’s action and Heidegger’s ontology of existence.

We have established, from the theological perspective, that the determinative factor of human being this side of eternity is Sin. There is no entire salvation which now exists. Moreover, this power is dominant, invasive, and can only be conquered by God—not the human will. Sin is the “structured reality which holds sway over the present age,” it impacts our ontological state.¹⁸²

Let us bring this understanding into conversation with Heidegger’s world-valuation, ‘The Worldliness of the World,’ and the apocalyptic understanding of being contextualized into the

DNA of Sin.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 251.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 245.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 260.

¹⁸² Davies, *The Apocalyptic Paul*, 37.

¹⁸³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63.

Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' is the process in which people are thrust into the world and shaped by it in ways which are beyond their control. 'Thrownness' is essential to 'being-in-the-world.' "World is an ontic concept and signifies the totality of beings which can be objectively present within the world."¹⁸⁴ "Initially and for the most part, Dasein is taken over [benommen] by its world."¹⁸⁵ The world is a separate entity from our being, our choice, and yet creates who we are. 'Entanglement' means that, once we are in that world, we are controlled and created by particularities which are a product of our thrownness. A subject which exists on its own, an 'I,' is never given—it is always created by aspects of being-in-the-world which are beyond our control. Heidegger's concern was that previous phenomenology had not taken 'worldliness' into the account of human being. For Descartes, the world is *res extensa*, separate from the being of Dasein, which is characteristic of the soul/body dualistic ontology seen throughout medieval philosophy. Heidegger seeks to understand the 'spatiality' of Dasein—how our being cannot be detached from the world.

For Ziegler, the very nature of 'thrownness' has to do with being overpowered by Sin. "Any decisive change in human existence is a consequence of a change of lordship."¹⁸⁶ Sin both creates and is the context under which we engage in evil. Ziegler draws a direct line between human knowledge and the ways that Sin clouds our judgment. Only an event as all-inclusive as the Cross, one which "opens up 'fissures' beneath our knowing that drop it 'into an abyss,'" which re-orientes our entire being towards God, can overcome the power of Sin.¹⁸⁷ How does Christ find one in their 'thrownness?' How does grace overcome the subjective places in one's life which sin has always dominated?

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 64.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 111.

¹⁸⁶ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 132.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 133.

Being-in-the-world means that our taking care has always to do with things. But what creates thingliness, value? “That which is handy is not grasped theoretically at all, nor is it itself initially a circumspect theme for circumspection.”¹⁸⁸ *Circumspection*, for Heidegger, is the way we view things in the world according to their use value. *Things are what they are meant to do.* A tool is not something in itself, but it is its use for whomever handles it, for their own care of the world. Using tools is grounded in one’s prior orientation to the world. Things can have value or not depending on man’s existential alignment towards his own being. Useful things are always signs of someone’s larger world-allignment. A tool can make a man aware of his worldview to a greater or lesser extent. If they are content in their job, and the alignment of their self towards the other, a tool will be a source of joy, because it is a sign of their concern for it. Successful ontology frees mere objects in the world to become means of ‘heedful circumspection,’ an aspect of being which, in our case, points towards the joy of God.¹⁸⁹

Relevance, for Heidegger, is how tools affect our circumstances. He uses the example of a hammer fixing a roof and providing shelter from bad weather. This can have relevance for man if it is free for its ‘inner worldly handiness.’¹⁹⁰ What relevance might the hammer have for the apocalyptic framework? Because apocalyptic does not focus much on particulars, only the cosmic action of God in Jesus Christ, is it relevant for circumspection? Because faith is necessary for everything apocalyptic, it can say something about anything circumspect, contingent on an interior acknowledgement of the tool in question. Apocalyptic theology says that eternity enters the present through Jesus Christ, through faith. Its focus on eschatology is for the sake of our imagination, but that does not make it irrelevant to the everyday. Through prayer and an acknowledgement of the power in Jesus’ name—whether it is fixing the roof, eating a

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 69.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 82.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 84.

meal, or receiving the Eucharist—God’s spirit, attached to that person, will enter into finite moments and create within them a touch of eternity—thereby effecting, concretely, for those moments to become signposts of infinite healing and restoration. Every act of *concern* is for the maintenance or fixing of our world, and thus can point towards its ultimate redemption.

Christians partake in the Eucharist to symbolize Christ’s sacrifice and return, but each moment in life can become a sacramental reality that is infected with God’s love through faith. So the relevance of a hammer is still to fix a roof—but it can have the spiritual significance of redemption for one who acknowledges it with faith. This does not mean that one has to willfully be conscious of every small aspect of life with faith; rather, faith which addresses something like a hammer is an extension of trust in Christ for every aspect of one’s being.

“‘Being-in-the-world...’ stands for a *unified* phenomenon.”¹⁹¹ Being-in means being in close enough proximity to something that you can touch it. When we come into contact with other human beings, our worlds are touching. ‘Taking care’ is essential, because our world necessitates it. “Again, the perception of what is known does not take place as a return with one’s booty to the ‘cabinet’ of consciousness after one has gone out and grasped it.”¹⁹²

Being-in-the-world is essential to knowing the world—you cannot extract knowledge of being without experience.

In all of phenomenology, we are getting at relevance. “[Dasein] primordially gives itself to understand its being and potentiality-of-being with regard to its being-in-the-world. The for-the-sake-of-which signifies an in-order-to, the in-order-to signifies a what-for, the what-for signifies a what-in of letting something be relevant, and the latter a what-with of relevance.”¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 53.

¹⁹² Ibid, 62.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 85.

So what is relevant, for us? The Cross and Resurrection. But where does this action translate to human relevance? It is spiritual. Heidegger notes that we always encounter the world and its systems of relevance, with *possibility*. We are dizzyingly free. (Kierkegaard) We have choices to make, in order to be. (Sartre) And while these choices are predicated on our thrownness and entanglement, they still encounter us as free subjects. Christianity provides an answer to the human problem of relevance, or how to approach a world which is free in its relevance, by posing to change the heart in a manner which would relate to it authentically. God puts understanding within the believer's heart, not to know everything, and certainly not to know Him beyond a mystery, but to regard the world with love—with the knowledge that every tool, every way of relating to the other in our own chains of relevance, is important insofar as it is in love, not as a command, but because it has to do with God, and we participate in His being when we know love in all of our encounters with the world.

Our thrownness is most revealed in our personality, or our self. Why do we have it, and where does it come from? “The who is what maintains itself as an identity throughout changes in behavior and experiences, and in this way relates itself to this multiplicity.”¹⁹⁴ All of our following inquiries are opened up by Heidegger's claim that this ‘who’ may not be our true ego. We are aiming at personality, because this grounds the way we relate to others. But what is a self? Nothing. As Kierkegaard explains it, a self is a relation which relates to itself.¹⁹⁵ The way we ground who we are and the actions we make is based on the story that we tell ourselves, and the exactitude of our decisions is based on the firmness of that story. This is not based on any real thing at all, but the degree to which we trust our ability to judge from the *experiences* we

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 112.

¹⁹⁵ Kierkegaard's full understanding of personhood can be found in *The Sickness Unto Death*. For Kierkegaard, you have a relation between the infinite and finite aspects of your being, and your self is this relation relating to itself, or understanding itself within the contrasting aspects finitude and infinitude. The importance for this essay is that you have no strict ego, but are torn between two different aspects of your being.

have had. People establish these stories from the positive memories they know. If I experience something beautiful or transcendent at some point in time, I will trust the story that I have created as a result of that, and thus allow my self to grow within it. Everything in the world which creates these relations—the mind, soul, spirit, beauty, love, truth, family, etc.—are counted for nothing except on the day they are resurrected, according to Apocalypticism. We do not know God. We have faith in Christ; and thus our self is fully in Him—yet in Him, the Godhead reveals itself as hidden, but always *for us*.

From Heidegger's thrownness, and our doctrine of Sin, we know that the way most people's selves are formed is mostly by evil—a force outside of one which is against them. Therefore, the Christian is called to not judge the other—which is impossible, without a re-orientation of their self towards hope. As interconnected beings, (being-with) we automatically look to others for our validation or truth. But when the other is flawed, we needn't see it as something inside of them, true to their will, but an object of their thrownness, which has been caused by entanglement in evil, beyond our knowledge. We must bring evil into the sphere of God. It is the prayerful commitment of honesty, to ask why evil would exist, giving God responsibility for it as the creator and governor of our world. To subsume *evil* within the truth of a *good* God is to reveal that evil is a mystery—that its purpose cannot exist in our understanding, and thus all thoughts of it should be redirected to God as our father, responsible for our being, making evil become more like a mosquito attached onto another's being, rather than something inherent to it—like a nothingness that they have childishly chosen to engage in, because God's control over them and their reality, his love for them, existent in power, says that it is never necessary, and is far weaker than the reality we know in Jesus Christ. Moreover, to judge one's evil is to really judge the evil inside of oneself, because we cannot know anyone in truth outside

of the knowledge we have of our self, from the experiences we have had. Fundamentally, faith in Christ reorients one's being to *love* as an eschatological parameter for being. In the end, as an act of God's will, all humans will live in a state of perfect love for each other—rooted in the love of the Trinity. The way that Christ reaches into our 'thrown' 'entangled' lives is to shift our internal assumptions about our personal history to know a morally perfect end. From here, our question is: what to do with the self that is reborn?

ii. Phenomenology as Response to Revelation

Can Apocalyptic thought engage existentialism? How does being-in-the-world touch our present themes of Sin and Resurrection, which are broader categories than those of interconnectedness and care? Does apocalyptic even need to serve an 'existential justification' in order to probe the 'fundamental structures of Dasein?'¹⁹⁶

God knows Himself in revelation, so we come to God's knowledge of Himself for knowledge of ourselves. "The Word of God in which He gives Himself to be known by us is none other than that in which He knows Himself."¹⁹⁷ For Heidegger, time is necessary for all of our valuations of being. God is beyond time, however. When we find being-in-Christ, we find being in judgment, because all of our ontological determinations are created by our eschatological expectations, which will always require forgiveness from the judgment we bring upon ourselves. "To be sinners means that we have come to a place where our existence is absolutely inconceivable because at this place it can only be a plunge into nothing...in different ways our whole being is responsible to Him."¹⁹⁸ So we must find our being-towards-God, which

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 16.

¹⁹⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 435.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 444.

is determinative of our being-in-the-world. “And for this reason the truth of man’s being, thinking, speaking and acting can consist in nothing other than in man’s response with a corresponding faithfulness to the way and work of God, to God’s faithfulness.”¹⁹⁹ And God only exists for us in his works, which determine how we deal with His being. However, God’s being is not bound to His works—He remains free to determine Himself apart from how He has expressed Himself. The Word of God most revealed in His works remains free, because He has revealed His freedom within them as well. God’s work is where “God Himself gives us Himself to see.”²⁰⁰ Barth postulates that God comes to us as an *event*, entering our temporal relations through knowledge of the Cross and Resurrection. A God beyond being and time enters into *our particular time*, by witnessing to his acts within history, which transcend all of time. Our task is to attempt to trace the ways that this mystery affects our personal history. But most concretely, the way that we respond to God’s faithfulness is with gratitude, a divine gratitude, because His faithfulness always attest to the fact that He is *for us*, in heaven, earth, hell, or wherever He should find us.

Heidegger understands that the world is something in and of itself, yet is created by man’s understanding of himself within it. However, his qualm with Descartes’ ontology is that it failed to take *worldliness* into account—it examines man without his relationship with the world. There is a ‘spatiality’ to our encounter with the world. We find ourselves relating to a world which we must try to understand, and thus filling a particular space within that world, knowing it at various distances depending on who we are—our personality. Our actions are driven by concern, which stems from care for ourselves. Space is determined by the world worlding and human beings caring for it—it comes between those two factors of being, not as something in

¹⁹⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2.1*, 207.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 260-261.

itself, but as an axis by which man orients himself to the world around him in concern. “The ‘surrounding world’ does not arrange itself in a previously given space, but rather its specific worldliness articulates in its significance the relevant context of a totality of places that have been circumspectly assigned.”²⁰¹

Heidegger says that, when we choose to inhabit a certain part of the world with ‘circumspect heedfulness’ (awareness of our concern), we are de-distancing ourselves from it. We first discover a part of the world which might relate to our concern for it, and then we de-distance ourselves from that, narrowing the space which might have come between our being and that which we are hoping to engage with—whether it is a hammer or a person. Space is not anything in itself. It is not a subject. It exists between Dasein and aspects of the world which are available for it to engage with. “‘The world’ as a totality of useful things at hand is spatialized to become a context of extended things which are merely present. The homogeneous space of nature shows itself only when the beings we encounter are discovered in such a way that the worldly character of what is at hand gets specifically *deprived of worldliness*.”²⁰² Being deprived of worldliness is similar to Kierkegaard’s and Camus’ concept of ‘the absurd,’ when the individual is so far removed from the world that all of existence feels alien to their ego. They cannot function in the world, because they are distant from it; and according to Heidegger’s existential analysis, this is because they are failing to express ontological concern for it through everyday acts of care. The job of someone lost in despair by falling into the absurd is to push himself back into the world; for us, faith will be required for this action, and yet will result in the same expressed care for the world, grounded in something deeper than the world. Let us now return to the subject of being-with, as introduced in part one—we will hope to prove that other

²⁰¹ Ibid, 102.

²⁰² Ibid, 109.

humans are the main part of the world which Dasein must de-distance himself from, in order to find true being.

The way we approach others for Heidegger always has to do with the ‘chains of relevance’ within which we are already entangled. If we are absorbed into this world whilst being-with others, then we are not ourselves, as the other comes before our world in our taking care of it. The way that we distance ourselves in relation to others has to do with the different ways in which we care for the world. When Dasein is concerned with taking priority over others in their relation to the world, it creates the mode of *distantiality* between them, thus removing the mode of *authentic care*. On the other hand, if Dasein is subservient to the other, their being is taken away from them. The ‘who’ we are trying to define, is *the they*—those alongside Dasein in his everyday being-with-one-another. The they is not personal, it has to do with the general population which surrounds Dasein, and in which their power to care for the world is ‘entrenched.’²⁰³ Thus, *relationships do revolve around power*, (Nietzsche) around the ability for Dasein to care for the world, and the way in which he chooses to factor this ability into his being-with. To be-with others authentically is to let averageness become the qualifying factor of being. Regardless of the ways different people relate to and judge the surrounding world, when they are together, there must be a modicum of sameness which necessitates finding joy in the ‘being of everydayness’ alongside them, experiencing it through them.²⁰⁴ It removes exceptionality between people. “Every priority is noiselessly squashed. Overnight, everything that is original is flattened down as something long since known...Distantiality, averageness, and leveling down, as ways of being of the they, constitute what we know as ‘publicness.’”²⁰⁵ ‘Publicness’ is an accurate way of knowing Dasein in the world, because it is obscure—it does

²⁰³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 122-23

²⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

not attempt to get at matters of being-with through precise translations of ontology, but instead claims the truth of Dasein within the context of muddled and unknown human interrelations. For Christianity, when one knows that the only important defining aspect of their being—God, through faith—comes to them entirely through God’s own free desire and humiliation, pride is squashed and one can help to *disburden* the other of the condemning effects of Sin, because their ego no longer stands in the way of joy.

Being-with retains its “stubborn dominance” over the being of man, because of its unique ability to accommodate “Dasein in its tendency to take things easily and make them easy.”²⁰⁶ While being-with, nobody is their own self, but they all form a unique entity which is only capable of being when they are engaged through interconnection. All of the modes of being which Heidegger has attributed to “being-among-one-another: distanciality, averageness, leveling down, publicness, disburdening of one’s being, and accommodation” create the “constancy of Dasein.”²⁰⁷ This constancy does not come from something objective within or beside Dasein, but always returns to being-with. To authentically become a self, for Heidegger, you must recognize the way that your ontology aligns with the other. From a Christian perspective, there is an Other besides Dasein who determines one’s constancy above their relationships with others. However, that does not deny that man was created with the initial purpose for creaturely interrelation, and that Heidegger’s ontology can inform the way we understand our purpose, once it has been established by God. We are created for the purpose of being-with, and only God can spiritually allow us to perform this authentically.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 124.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

When one feels the freedom to decide and act, and it is love in freedom, that which guides their actions is God Himself. It is not as if God says to do something, and then says that it is Him saying it, though He certainly can and does do this. Rather, He provides a human freedom which is grounded in His power, to decide and act within these parameters. Barth's theology insists that God Himself is grace—that grace, according to Paul, always acts in freedom and love.

Now that we have explicated Heidegger's ontology of being as *concern*, let us direct this focus on concern to the other, aligned with Barth's analysis of God's being as act. Our ontology is about 'authentic alliance,' where people are bound together powerfully by love, and yet remain free for authenticity.²⁰⁸ This freedom in love is defined, more concretely, by *considerateness* and *tolerance*.²⁰⁹ There will never be enough space between people for God to enter if God does not also put the traits of forgiveness into their heart. It is all in God, but it corresponds to modes of affection that come from His forgiveness, which is the axis of His love, in order that He Himself becomes the object of said love, because He only enters into an empty space where there is room for His holiness. All real love must then come from Him, because otherwise Sin would destroy it. While it may be creaturely; if it is authentic, with traits which speak towards His freedom, then it must be from Him. When humans share their being with each other, it results in empathy, because empathy comes forth from experience, and culminates as the human way of coping against Sin in their truest ontology. Empathy is created, for Heidegger, based on the deficient modes of being-with that we have stated in the introduction. "Its special hermeneutic will have to show how the various possibilities of being of Dasein themselves mislead and obstruct being-with-one-another and its self-knowledge, so that a genuine

²⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 119.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

‘understanding’ is suppressed and Dasein takes refuge in surrogates; this positive existential condition presupposes a correct understanding of the stranger for its possibility.”²¹⁰ Thus, self-knowledge can be necessary for authentic being-with, because if empathy is the human mode of coping with Sin, in God, then we must have knowledge of our self to share in love with others. This might appear problematic for our doctrine, because we know that only knowledge of God is necessary for this. However, connection with God brings out empathy and self-knowledge, which is possible within the parameters of a connection already established by Him; and Heidegger is acknowledging that this necessitates an openness towards the other in order for a connection to occur—this openness is created by forgiveness, and filled with God. Heidegger next asks the question of who this Dasein is, which is created by caring for the world and relating to others? He seems to think he does not exist authentically within himself, that he is not really a self, because he is created by circumstances and the others swallowed up within his thrownness. Can such an understanding of emptiness in being itself stand alongside the Christian view of ontology? Yes, if we know our worth in relationship to God, and not ourselves. This is not to deny the sacred within the human heart, only to bring out the necessary connection with God that this beauty requires to flourish.

For a creaturely reality to be grounded in God, we return to the Trinity. There is a love between the Father and the Son which is mimicked by human beings, as they participate in this love most accurately revealed in the person of Jesus. By proclaiming the name of Jesus, and the mystery behind that name, we are establishing the relationship held in the Trinity. To be brought into the godhead means to mimic it in every created reality; and as God is most accurately known in a relationship with Himself, so creaturely bonds defined by this revelation known historically through Jesus find their end in a love which exists as one small utterance of infinite

²¹⁰ Ibid, 122.

love. This will inevitably mimic aspects of created beauty, but only because the love enters into people empty enough to allow God's regard for His creation to flow forth between them. "It is in God that the father-son relation, like all creaturely relations, has its original and proper reality."²¹¹ The Father's relation to the son is that of begetting. This act is defined by God's willingness to create and associate with a reality distinct from Himself, within Himself. It is love which makes God "an object to Himself."²¹² For human beings, when the object separate from ourselves is defined to ourselves in the freedom of connection which exists between us, it can be associated with this act of God's self-relation. The way we know this act of begetting is when God suffers in His incarnation and death—God gives Himself to be sacrificed and remains defined by the love between Himself despite the imperfection of Christ's godforsaken reality. For us, this results in an infinite forgiveness, necessary for connection with God and others, because of Sin. Therefore, we can positively say that traits such as (but not limited in terms to) *considerateness* and *tolerance* are associated with God's self-relationship, because being forgiven in a world where sin is inevitable necessarily creates desire for this mode of love to exist for the other whom we are interconnected with. But because we are free to never connect with the other at all, because God has made us free, this love comes forth authentically, as it is not necessitated by God or anything else. Love becomes all gratitude, because it was created before time existed in God's self-relationship, and enacted throughout history in His choice to share that relationship through revelation. Thus, when one becomes confronted by revelation, the response is *grateful love*, because gratitude is associated with God's being, which is love. It is accepted with open arms that want only to share in God's being, because it is the truth of our being, determined in our history which opens us up towards eschatology.

²¹¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 432.

²¹² *Ibid*, 433.

iii. The Freedom of Being and Love

Heidegger defined ontology as “an existentiell modification of the they as an essential existential.” Others always factor into being and create a unique entity which becomes personality when they successfully relate to each other—this entity is the authentic form of human ontology, as God created man for the sake of community, and God is relationship. Being-with disburdens Dasein. The disburdening is necessary in a world controlled by Sin, which makes being itself a burden without God. Ontologically, we cannot say that people must find community to be free from evil—there are countless examples of monks and hermits who have found the peace and love of God in fully secluded environments. However, we are approaching this question from an existential point of view. While humans do not need each other to access God, He desires community for the fullest mode of fellowship with His being. We are approaching Heidegger’s ontology with the question of, *what are we to do, and who are we to be, if we want to live most in accordance with God’s revelation for us*. In Barth’s theology, it is clear that God most desires an acknowledgement of Himself in relationship with Himself from the human perspective; but we also know that the revelation of God in Christ was enacted for the sake of a humanity which God had plans for outside of our direct experience of Him as a lonely object of the soul. This can be seen most clearly in the Church, though it is by no means limited to it. Heidegger’s mode of authentic alliance and a theological concept of love grounded in revelation will display the *experience of God found between humans which most accurately points back to His action within history, where men may not even acknowledge His name*.

The place where men love is where they meet God. “The point is that it is nakedness pure and simple before God which is acceptable to Him; it is the status of childlikeness and misery which renders men accessible to His justification and salvation.”²¹³ The questions we have are of men living in the world with concrete tasks, histories, and various other world-placements which affect their being. Love, for Barth, requires an existential formula. It is not something disconnected from our daily lives and histories. We cannot transcend our being to find this love. Rather, the God who transcends us, descends in order to make Himself apparent as an acting agent. “It is in the actual tension and movement of human life...that our existential concepts emerge.”²¹⁴ Saying the word ‘God,’ for Barth, does not mean a disattached reality from the world which exists, for us, on its own. ‘God’ means relationship—the connection between man and divinity which only exists for us in the relationship He has already created. Because we speak of God in relation to our historic lives, this theology is not for its own sake, among human capacities, but happens according to His will. Ethics dissolves the conversations we have about God which we believe may come from our own ability, in order to re-direct it towards its only and ultimate pre-ordained plan. God’s will is that we consider Him ethically, existentially. This is not something which happens within the realm of human particularities. We still do indeed speak of ‘uncreated light,’ of ‘Resurrection,’ and the mysterious power of God’s essence; however, all supernatural theology happens within the realm of our everydayness, in order to impose upon it and redirect it towards God’s ultimate purpose. We are reconciled with God powerfully through Christ’s Resurrection, that God may also reconcile us with our neighbor. But because it is *first* through these supernatural qualifications, an ethic of human love can only point back towards the

²¹³ Barth, *Romerbrief*, 408.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 425.

gospel. The world poses us with a need to make decisions, to will our actions into place, and “Christ, the mercy of God, provides the answer.”²¹⁵

Morality for the church is found within criticism of every aspect of human existence. For Barth, because of the necessity of a sovereign God’s action, ethics is a very risky and dubious task. The man who exhorts others must be also bring himself down along with them—as exhortation is reliant on the limitations of human being in relation to the other. Ethics cannot dwell on a surface level understanding of human love or compassion, it must cut ‘down to the roots’ of human sin and misfortune.²¹⁶ The only decisive ethic is God’s mercy, which ends in human pity and compassion, because it acknowledges that all evil is done in the course of a fallen world—it is ‘beyond all concreteness,’ and must always be attributed to the power of Sin over against the human desire to condemn others.²¹⁷ “Grace means not judging, because the judgment has already taken place.”²¹⁸ One of Barth’s most provoking claims is that of the consoled rather than good conscience. Because grace requires one to always be forgiven, in an evil world, one cannot have a clear conscience. One can only be comforted, and thus available to console others, who have not been shown God’s forgiveness in Jesus Christ. A clear conscience will exist in the New Creation; but the world is not finished yet, and thus love, pity, and compassion, require one to rest only in this comfort. Moral exhortation without the call to forgiveness is Titanism to Barth, ‘preached from the pinnacles of humanity,’ forgetting God along the way.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Ibid, 427.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 428.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 429.

Barth claims that there is no ‘pure act of thought’ or ‘pure act of will.’²²⁰ The sinful nature of this world excludes action which is not marked by ‘eros,’ the form of love which is home to one’s selfish creaturely desires. However, there is one action which marks God’s protest against the form of this world—the Cross. Some actions, in their ‘transparency,’ may guide one’s mind to the New Creation, if they are marked by the Cross.²²¹ It is one’s thoughts, for Barth, which define them as a new being. God’s will, communicated through the event of the Cross, replaces our conceptions of being. It is about orienting one’s mind towards this act, that it might become one with God’s—or one with the regard which God has for His creation—the amount to which one’s mind becomes united to God’s being and intentions is up to Him. There is nothing creative or *new* to our own thoughts. “There is—and this is what we mean—a thinking of the thought of grace, of resurrection, of forgiveness, and of eternity.”²²² This thought occurs in our willingness to question the meaning of finitude in the face of eternity. This thought, patterned after the crucifixion and resurrection, collapses all of our conceptions of what it means to live in the face of eternity. Grace—God Himself—is enough for ethics. Love, and our definition of it, begins and ends with God, who has chosen us within His son. It is “like the turning of a key in a lock,” which requires nothing but one motion, looking to Christ, in order to function.²²³

²²⁰ Ibid, 434.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid, 437.

²²³ Ibid, 437.

Conclusion

i. Love

The end of existentialism is not a perfect existence. It finds imperfection that can only rely on Christ if it desires to attribute any good to the world and oneself. It begins by looking inward to try and understand oneself, and if it goes far enough, all it will find is confusion. It ends by looking outward to that which is to come—awaitance and hope of renewal and true authenticity.

We began with the assumption that the cosmology implicit in ‘Apocalyptic’ theology would elicit a particular metaphysic of love. We have discovered that Apocalyptic cosmology is swallowed up in an eschatology of Christ’s coming. This eschatology not only creates hope within the believer, but being grounded in the Cross, it also forms a sure confidence in the salvific nature of God, affecting the believer’s perception of God before the eschaton. So how, then, does this hope *create* the implicit metaphysical bond between those who are shaped by it? It begins in the strength of hope, and is refined in the ‘broad place’ of God’s freedom in Christ.²²⁴

We return to the portion of *Romerbrief* where Paul’s morality was expressed in Barth’s translation as being entirely contingent upon the time. Humans must fall so in love with God that they love because God Himself is love—they want nothing more than to share in the being of the Trinity. The forefather of contemporary apocalyptic scholarship, Ernst Käsemann, wrote that “Paul sees the divinity of God revealed in the Cross because the Cross is the disclosure and destruction of the illusion that man can transcend himself, either through his presumption or by his own piety; the Cross leads us back from the illusory heroism to the humanity of

²²⁴ Psalm 18.19

creatureliness.”²²⁵ True love is found in this wantonness before God. It is when God removes the idols from the human heart, creating gratitude for His being, and fills the space between people to become Him. Real ontology is experience, that of being-with. And this ontology, sourced in God’s being, creates a rich experience of love between people that is beyond their particularities, because it is humbled in their own need of forgiveness, and comes from a being far beyond particularities, willing connection that is a parable of His New Creation, where every being will live in harmony.

Dostoevsky’s claim that Christ would remain in him even if His existence was proved false can be grounded in the richness of life shared in the passion of love. When Dostoevsky visited a new place, his fascination never was with its inherent beauty, but the people who lived there and experienced it day to day. He embodied the belief that there is more passionate truth to be found in others than anything else in the world. Christ is the key to authentic ontology, because He reveals a God who values human connection above everything else within Creation. Christ also reveals a hope for the future where perfect love will be shared between every being that He created. When one knows this future, when one knows God, they cannot help but take all of their interest in other people, because everything else in life or death falls away except for love. When one worships a God who desires love over everything else, one loves in a manner which is truest to their self. And in love, in gaining their being by giving it away, people are acting out the most essential aspect of their ontology, being-with. Every inch of distance that one creates between themselves and other beings takes part of their self away. Christ, who promises perfect spatiality in the future, who is incarnate love, gives someone their truest self in Himself.

²²⁵ Ernst Käsemann, ‘The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul.’

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