

Eschatology Barth never wrote his eschatology, which he had intended to be the fifth volume of his *CD*, titled "The Doctrine of Redemption." Nevertheless, the basic outline of Barth's eschatology can be reconstructed from the earlier volumes. Moreover, the publication of Barth's early lectures on eschatology from Münster (1925/1926), part of the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, makes it possible to describe the design of Barth's eschatology.

Barth's eschatology differs from previous publications on the subject in that he does not begin with the question of the immortality of the soul and its whereabouts after death. For what happens to the human being is not the subject of eschatology, but only what *hope* sees in "*Jesus Christ*, and everything else that must be mentioned, as *his* deed, as a predicate of *this* subject" (*Unterricht* III, 437). Jesus Christ's Parousia is at the very center of eschatology. According to Barth, it must not be understood in *analogy* to the *incarnation*. True, the redeemer is none other than the recon-

ciler, but the manner of his presence is entirely different. He comes “entirely *unconcealed*” (444) and will be visible to all eyes.

At the same time, Barth emphasizes that Christ’s visible coming will take place on a particular day in a particular place, thus making clear that we are dealing with the redemption of none other than this *world*. The reminder of Christ’s coming day prevents us from falling into a wrongheaded dualism, one that does not expect anything new in the *history* of the world, but instead hopes for the new only in some fabricated world. The new event for which Christians hope will take place within the history of this world.

Construing the Parousia as an event within *time*, however, means neither that our time is closer to the Parousia than any present that has passed nor, or much less, that our time or the future brings about Christ’s Parousia. Indeed, the Parousia-Christ will appear at a particular hour, yet he reaches “all generations in all places” at the same time (448). Any boasting is excluded especially because it is not history that brings about the Parousia. Instead, the day of Parousia arrives because Christ arrives. The Parousia-Christ “remains the *subject*, he does not become the predicate of history” (450). Precisely for this reason, humans cannot bring about this day—that is, neither by any supposed history of progress initiated by them nor by their tendency to waste the environment in a way that leads *creation* to the brink of destruction. Christians do not hope for the perfection of this world’s processes, but for Christ “to relinquish his concealment in heaven and reveal . . . the glory of human nature in *his* person directly, visibly” (469).

Of course this *revelation* cannot be understood as a merely noetic apocalypse, as Barth has often been charged of espousing. For Jesus Christ’s new presence corresponds to his new and perfecting work: the resurrection of the dead. The concept that characterizes the doc-

trine of *reconciliation*, that is, that the person and work of Jesus Christ cannot be separated in *Christology*, is valid also for eschatology. The person of Christ cannot be conceived without his work, nor can the Parousia be understood without the resurrection of the dead.

The unity of the Parousia with the resurrection of the dead can be illustrated with the pneumatological insight that Christ cannot be conceived of without his congregation. Being called by Christ, Barth writes, means “nothing less than: *belonging* to him, even being one with him through the *Holy Spirit* in a way that, apart from this, only the persons of the *Trinity* belong to each other, are even *one*” (467). For this reason the unconcealed revelation of Jesus Christ in his Parousia means that our lives will become revealed and those, who belong to him, will rise from the dead.

In accordance with 1 Corinthians 15, Barth conceives of the lives of the risen ones as in continuity with their present lives, but also in discontinuity with them. Eternal life involves individual lives as well, which the risen ones will live as subjects. Eternal life neither means the dissolution of our individual life into an all-fulfilling divine life nor the conservation of our individual lives in God’s memory. The redeemed will lead their individual lives as subjects of this life.

In contrast to our present lives, however, we will live our eternal lives as the reconciled, which we already are now in Christ. Yet in the resurrection of the dead, the contradiction that characterizes our present existence will be eliminated, that is, being children of Adam and, in Christ, children of God. The identity as children of Adam, which we still are, will come to an end, so that we can live as children of God. That is why the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead at the same time imply the Last Judgment.

According to Barth, the meaning of judgment becomes clear only when we keep in mind that the coming judge is

none other than Jesus Christ. Since he who has been judged in our place is the judge, the judgment means “a passing to corruption, but also a becoming new; and both are for the whole world and for all men” (*ER*, 69). Barth repeatedly uses the image of the purifying fire to describe the process of waning and becoming new in judgment: In the Last Judgment, humans will be faced with the purifying fire of God’s *love*, by which God wants to sanctify humans for the eternal life that they were already freely given in Jesus Christ. But since quite a few works “will be . . . destroyed” in this crucible “as if . . . it had never been” (*CD IV/2:637*), redemption does not take place without the most severe “reduction and subtraction” (*IV/3.2:928*). We—and with this Barth always means all of *humanity*—will have to forfeit parts of our lives. This also shows that the Last Judgment is not about dividing humanity up in two parts. Instead, it is about judging the world in such a way that humans can live together in the *kingdom of God*.

This expectation of Christ’s coming, of the resurrection of the dead, and of the Last Judgment shapes the life of Christ’s congregation. In his doctrine of the redemption, Barth would likely have brought this fact to bear in a twofold way. The doctrine of reconciliation discusses not only reconciliation in Jesus Christ, but also presents how the Holy Spirit appropriates reconciliation for individual Christians. In a similar vein, Barth’s doctrine of redemption would have shown how the Holy Spirit leads the congregation to the coming one. In this way Barth would certainly have clarified that the time in which we are waiting for Christ’s coming is not a time of darkness. Instead, as the time of the Holy Spirit it is blessed with a variety of lights. Still we have to wait for the great light of the Parousia, but the preceding lights inspire us to do so in confidence.

Just as Barth’s doctrines of creation and reconciliation lead to chapters about the *ethics* of creation and reconciliation,

Barth would also have finished his doctrine of redemption with an ethics of redemption. The coming Christ asks us if our actions sufficiently reflect the new that we are awaiting—or if we adapt our deeds too much to those old structures and forms that are bound to pass away.

C. Asprey, *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth’s Göttingen Theology* (2010); I. Dalferth, “Karl Barth’s Eschatological Realism,” in *Karl Barth*, ed. S. W. Sykes (1989), 14–45; G. Etzelmüller, . . . *zu richten die Lebendigen und die Toten* (2001); J. C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth’s Eschatology* (2000); G. Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?* (1999).

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