

Week 5: Christocentric Theology

Barth's *Church Dogmatics*

- K. Barth, *The Humanity of God*, London 1967
- MacCormack, *Barth's critically realistic dialectical Theology*, Oxford 1996, part iv
- J. Thompson, *Christ in Perspective. Christological Perspectives in the theology of Karl Barth*, Edinburgh 1978.
- G. Hunsinger in: Webster (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*
- T. Hart, 'Was God in Christ' in: id. *Regarding Karl Barth*, Carlisle 1999
- R. Jenson, *God after God*, Indianapolis 1969.

Barth II

- Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is strictly christocentric.
- Therefore Christology cannot be limited to one particular topic.
- How does it shape the work as a whole?
- Christocentric focus has led Barth to negative and positive assertions. The negative ones are better known, the positive ones probably more important.

Barth III

- Major decision is rejection of 'natural theology'.
- Any attempt to speak theologically apart from Christ (analogy of being; 'anthropological' theology of liberalism)
- Barth sees danger of universal approach → Christianity is reduced to one instance of a more general truth.
- Instead, theology ought to be concrete.

Barth IV

- Revelation does not mean a set of propositions, but becoming aware of reality.
- Jesus is the revelation of the Word of God because in him our eyes are opened to the reality of God and the human being.
- Barth thus is less 'orthodox' than has been claimed.
- Can be seen as forerunner of 'postmodernist' emphasis on specificity (J. Derrida; cf. G. Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*).

Barth V

- Focus on Jesus Christ means that theology is based on the notion of reconciliation.
- God revealed himself as being aligned to humanity.
- God revealed the human being as exalted to the divine image.
- These are orthodox categories, but modified within a christocentric system:
- Doctrines of God, creation and Fall cannot be articulated independently of the Christ event.

Barth VI

- The consequence is that everything stands under the proposition that the world has been reconciled to God; sin truly is 'nothingness'.
- All the initial negations of the CD are modified in light of this insight:
- In light of faith the world is full of signs pointing to God.
- In light of the Christ event the history of religions takes on a positive significance.

Barth VII

- Has Barth turned wholly idealistic and left his dialectical phase behind?
- No, because God's revelation is at the same time his concealment.
- We do not grasp his being, but see his salvific will.
- Incarnation and reconciliation are not necessary consequences of God's nature (as in Hegel), but God's free decision to align himself with humans.
- Therefore, theology does not turn into a metaphysics of a loving God.