A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT OF *THE REVOLUTION OF GOD* IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH.

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.

> *We ought to speak of God. We are human, however, and so cannot speak of God. We ought therefore to recognise* both our obligation and our inability *and by that very recognition give God the glory.* This is our perplexity. The rest of our task fades into insignificance in comparison.[1]

> But the claim is issued... in spite of our powerlessness. It is disclosed to us that we do not view and think of God, that we cannot speak of Him; and because this is disclosed to us, it is brought home that this is the very thing which has to happen no matter what the circumstances, that we must not fail to do it... it is impossible for man not to proceed to think of God, or be silent about God. When it is issued, man is convicted of his inability to think and speak of God. And when it is issued, it is required of man that in spite of his inability, and even in his inability, he should still do both. (CD II,1 p212)[2]

The paradox evident in these quotations from Barth's writings forms the centre of his theology. On the one hand, humanity is incapable of speaking of God. On the other hand, it is imperative for humanity to speak of God. This dilemma is resolved by God's act for humanity in Jesus Christ, giving rise to a human response of faith and obedience. Humanity *can* speak of God only because God has revealed Godself. Hence, all theology and praxis begins doxologically, in praise for God's initiative of grace.

This thesis proposes that Barth's perception of this initiative of God is best expressed in the concept of the **revolution of God,** which provides a paradigm from which to recover the liberative and humanising intention of his theology. Hence, this theology implies human praxis which participates in the divinely instituted process of transforming human reality. In this way Barth simultaneously speaks of God and humanity, without confusing the deity of God and the humanness of humanity. This provides a way beyond both quietism and the legitimation of

power, choosing instead permanent confrontation with power in the interest of true humanisation.

Such an approach is suggested by Paul Lehmann in a 1972 article describing Barth as a "theologian of permanent revolution".[2] Also, in the same year, the doctoral thesis of Frederich-Wilhelm Marquardt devotes significant attention to Barth's concept of the revolution of God within his analysis of Barth's socialism.[3] This thesis is a more extensive analysis of the revolution of God within the wider framework of Barth's theology.

Methodology.

Methodologically this thesis develops "from praxis to theory and back" under the assumption that it is praxis which verifies theory.[5]

The **first chapter**, rather than providing a biographical outline, uses the method of 'theology as biography' to theologically analyse specific activities in Barth's life, enquiring whether his praxis justifies deeper examination of the concept of God's revolution. Because of the doxological starting point of Barth's theology his appreciation of Mozart provides a logical frame of reference within which three events are considered: Firstly, his response to the 1914 manifesto signed by German liberals legitimating the military policy of the Kaiser; secondly, his refusal to make the oath of allegiance to Hitler; and finally, his understanding of the inclusion of Hungary in the Eastern bloc.

With this foundation, the **second chapter** analyses the development of the concept of the revolution of God in his early theology, from the pastorate at Geneva and Safenwil to professorship at Gottingen and Munster. Barth's quest for a way of simultaneously speaking about God and humanity without separating or uniting the two is prompted by disatisfation with liberal and religious-socialist models, grows into a dialectic approach, and matures in an analogical method based on Anselm of Canterbury.

In **chapter three** analogical thinking is examined as the epistemological basis of God's revolution. In the Anselmian concept of God as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* Barth finds an understanding of God sufficiently radical to be the Archimedean point upon which all reality depends. Here God is understood as the self-existent One who, by grace, takes the initiative for humanity in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God in Godself is also God for humanity. This implicit inseparability of the being and the act of God finds its historical analogy in the Chalcedonian two-natures christology. Jesus Christ, as truly God and truly human, is the historical manifestation of the revolution of God.

Jesus Christ, as the revolution of God, is the exclusive subject of the **fourth chapter**. Here Chalcedonian christology is analysed, and the implications of Barth's understanding of the person of Jesus are explored. It is argued that Jesus embodies the revolution of God which seeks to bring true and full life to humanity. The historical correspondence of Jesus, as the 'royal man', to the being and act of God leads to three conclusions:

Firstly, a human community based on radical solidarity with the poor and lowly; secondly, the de-absolutising of all human thinking and action under the No of God; and thirdly, the decisive Yes of God to the human search for the best historical analogies to God's revolution.

Finally, the **fifth chapter** deals with questions about the relationship between God's revolution and human revolution. Here it is concluded that, read from the perspective of the revolution of God, Barth's theology always demands revolutionary human praxis geared to the transformation of reality. God's No de-absolutises human movements of resistance to ensure that human praxis does not merely replace one form of oppression with another. The Yes of God inspires the permanent human quest for true human life corresponding to God's love and justice.

Because of the importance of the re-reading of Barth to current issues, debate with contemporary theological formulations is unavoidable. Nonetheless, it is not the intention of this thesis to compare Barth to other theologies. Rather it is to understand from 'within' the contribution of the concept of God's revolution to theological discourse and human praxis.

Further, the pervasiveness of political issues in the context from which this thesis is written determines that these issues be given methodological priority. However, it is recognised that the revolution of God has the broadest implications for all dimensions of christian ethics.

In summation, the revolution of God provides a hermeneutical key which exposes the liberative nature of Barth's theology. In this concept God and humanity, theory and practice, faith and history, and theology and politics, are creatively related without divinising the former, nor denying the latter. This means that theology moves within the frontiers of politics without ceasing to be theology. It has the tasks of keeping politics human and ensuring that human revolutions actually bring qualitative transformation.

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I am also thankful for the financial assistance from the Human Sciences Research Council, acknowledging that all opinions in this thesis are my own, and not those of the council.

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freedom and understanding they have shown me, and dedicate this thesis to them.

NOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION.

1. Karl Barth, "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry", in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1928, p186.

2. References to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* will be annotated within the text in the form: (CD I,1; I,2; III,4 etc.) followed by the page number. Where the German original, *Kirchliche Dogmatiek*, has been consulted for clarification the page numbers are indicated after the letters KD.

3. Paul Lehmann "Karl Barth, Theologian of Permanent Revolution", in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol 28, 1972.

4. Frederich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Bespiel Karl Barths*, Munchen, Kaiser Verlag, 1972.

5. Jose Miguez Bonino uses this phrase as a chapter title in his book *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1983.

CHAPTER ONE

THE REVOLUTION OF GOD: A THEOLOGICAL-BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH.

Many biographical resumes of the life of Karl Barth have been written and another would be superfluous. There is a need for a different approach, found in the concept of 'theology as biography', providing access to the theological concepts implicit in the life of the person concerned. This approach, as introduced by McClendon, hypothesises that theologians "may do better work" if attention is given to "compelling biographies".[1] It is the examination of how life is lived under the governance of a particular vision of God and human existence. The central assumption is that "a theology on the basis of biographical experience... may shed light on" affirmations about God.[2]

Implicit here is the dialectic of praxis and theory in human life. Biography, as the arena of this dialectic, uncovers how praxis and theory interrelate. Biographical praxis is the 'window' into the life of the subject, upon which basis critical theological reflection is possible. Metz describes this as follows:

> Theological reflection can be expressed in the biographical mediation of theory and praxis as the biography of a life led on the basis of faith or as the history of the witness borne every day to that life.[3]

Consequently, 'theology as biography' is theological reflection on the praxis of the subject considered, in order to better grasp the life-vision of that subject. It is not simply biography because the agenda is explicitly theological, nor is it entirely theology for the basis of reflection is biography. Through biography the theological search for the "essential metaphor" is

undertaken by examining the biographical subject's use of traditional human symbols.[4]

Lehmann suggests that Barth's theological quest was for an essential metaphor which gave expression to "the humanity of God for the sake of the humanisation of human life in this world and the next".[5] Following this suggestion, the purpose of this chapter is to reveal how Barth's quest is expressed in specific biographical incidents. And further, because no theology or biography is ever totally objective, the specific question asked here is does Barth's practice lend credence to the assertion that this 'essential metaphor' can be paradigmatically summarised as the *revolution of God*. Differently stated this asks: What, in the praxis of Karl Barth, justifies a deeper enquiry into the concept of the revolution of God? How is the revolution of God grounded in his life and what light does this praxis throw onto the concept of the revolution of God?

Of necessity, therefore, the biographical sketch that follows is selective. The intention is to do theology using biography not merely to retell a well told story. To this end four cameos of Barth's life are considered. His appreciation of Mozart broadly reflects central characteristics of his theology. Within this framework the subsequent three incidents illustrate the praxis implicit in his theology. These three incidents are firstly, Barth's response to the manifesto of liberal intellectuals in 1914; secondly, his refusal to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler; and finally, his attitude to the East-West conflict after

the inclusion of Hungary into the Eastern bloc. Although diverse, these foci on Barth's life find a common theological centre in his understanding of the revolution of God.

1.1 MOZART AND THE FREEDOM OF GOD.

The centre of Barth's appreciation of Mozart is found in the freedom with which the composer practised his art. Barth perceives in Mozart's music an unparalleled human correspondence to the freedom of God. Mozart embodies an attitude which reflects a rootedness in a revolution which comes from God, and yet at the same time enables human participation in the fulness of life. As Barth confesses in his *Letter of Thanks to Mozart*:

> With an ear open to your musical dialectic, one can be old and become young, can work and rest, be content and sad: in short, one can live.[6]

But, in Mozart, this does not imply a cautious and balanced equilibrium:

> We will never hear in Mozart an equilibrium of forces and a consequent uncertainty and doubt.[7]

On the contrary:

> What occurs in Mozart is rather a glorious upsetting of the balance, a *turning* in which the light rises and the shadows fall, though without disappearing, in which joy overtakes sorrow without extinguishing it, in which the Yea rings louder than the ever present Nay.[8]

This turning establishes the permanent confrontation between light and shadows, joy and sorrow, justice and injustice, in which the certainty of the triumph of the former over the latter is assured and even achieved. And because of the certainty of victory there is a freedom for life which cannot be discouraged or dissipated by adversity. Barth theologically locates the "mysterious centre"[9] of Mozart's music, and thus the source of

this revolutionary freedom, in the grace disclosed to humanity in Jesus Christ. God's original revolution is the *turning* which allows the 'light to rise' and the 'shadows' to fall. Because of this revolutionary centre, Mozart's music (and Barth's theology and praxis) includes a certain "recklessness" which liberates the hearer for a fuller experience of human life. Villa-Vicencio aptly concludes:

> When this "recklessness" transcends his (Barth's) music appreciation and penetrates his politics it is realised that Barth was no more a cautious and balanced political theologian than Mozart was a theologian of equlilibrium.[10]

This exposes the anarchistic tendency in Barth's thinking to which more attention will be given in the final chapter.

Yet the freedom derived from the certainty of victory does not imply chaos, but has distinct limitations beyond which freedom ceases to be freedom.

> From the beginning, he (Mozart) moved freely within the limits of the musical laws of his time... But he did not revolt against these laws; he did not break them.[11]

Mozart used the musical law to express his freedom rather than restrain it, in short, he played within the limits of life's possibilities. Liberated from the primary need to prove, confess or communicate something, his music almost unconsciously issues, in its humility, in the praise of God. Barth concludes that in contrast to Bach and Beethoven, Mozart does not wish to say anything:

> Mozart does not wish to say anything: he just sings and sounds. Thus he does not force anything on the listener, does not demand that he make any decisions or take any positions; he simply leaves him free. Nor does he *will* to proclaim the praise of God. He just does it - precisely in that humility in which he himself is, so to speak, only the

> instrument with which he allows us to hear what he hears: what surges at him from God's creation, what rises in him, and must proceed from him.[12]

In this way the relationship between the revolutionary centre of his music and the composer himself is made explicit. For Barth, Mozart embodies a prime example of the the way in which human freedom simply reflects the freedom of its master. It provides the framework within which life is to be taken seriously, but not ultimately so, for only God is absolutely serious. On the other hand it portrays human life as a game with limits and possibilities, and the one who plays it well is able to explore the possibilities without transcending the limits. Because the 'turning' that makes true human life possible is beyond human control, all real human existence and action reflects, and is both limited and inspired by the revolution, the turning, that comes from God.

1.2 LIBERAL THEOLOGY AND THE BASIS OF POLITICAL ACTION.

Whilst recognising that a long process was responsible for Barth's break from liberal theology, a single event stands out as the point of no return. (The process is examined more closely in the next chapter.) More than any other incident, the signing of a manifesto in support of Kaiser Wilhelm II's military policy by ninety-three German intellectuals, including many of Barth's teachers, represented the failure of liberal theology. Barth, at that time a pastor in Safenwil, described his response in these words:

> For me personally a day at the beginning of August in that year (1914) was the *dies ater*, when ninety-three German intellectuals published an endorsement of the military policy of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his councillors, on which to

> my horror I found the names of almost all the theological teachers whom hitherto I had confidently respected. If they could be so mistaken in ethos, I noted that it was quite impossible for me to adhere any longer to their ethics or dogmatics... So far as I was concerned, there was no more future for the theology of the 19th century.[13]

Liberal theology, with its emphasis on religious experience, revealed its social captivity to the prevailing stuctures of authority. The failure of his theological masters to extricate themselves from the Kaiser's ideology of war indicated, for Barth, a deficiency in their theological method and foundation. The critical theological factor was that the god of liberal theology did not provide an adequate basis for liberating social action. At the same time Barth was equally disillusioned with the prevailing socialist models. As early as 1911, on the basis of his experience with workers at Safenwil, Barth had criticised the Swiss religious socialists for failing to live up to their own goals. Theologically, for Barth, the connection between the kingdom of God and socialist praxis had been too clearly established. Barth insisted that because he could not identify with the *ethos* of these intellectuals and socialists he also had to question their *ethics* and *dogmatics*.[14]

Yet, his reaction to both these positions was more than intellectual indignation at a poor theological model. It was a questioning of theological foundations because of the praxis which emerged from them. Further, Barth's response was more than a critique of particular theologians, it was a negation of the god presupposed by an entire theological ethos in the interests of the true, radical God. In a real sense this moment represented the 'death' of the liberal god for Barth. Any god

which was so easily co-opted into a *status quo* or organically connected to an insufficiently radical alternative, could not be God at all. At the root of the failure of both liberalism and religious-socialism Barth discerned a deficient doctrine of God. The *practice* of the intellectuals, particularly of his respected teachers, and a critique of prevailing socialist praxis led to a renewed search for a sound theological foundation for social praxis.

Significantly, Barth did not arrive at this insight solely as a result of an intellectual dilemma, nor did the need for a new understanding of God emerge from religious experience. It was concrete political reality that exposed the inadequacies of prevailing theological models and necessitated new ones.

This had two distinct consequences for Barth's theology. On the one hand, from that time the ruling passion of Barth's theology was the affirmation of God as God in contrast to all else. The search was for a concept of God which obviated all hyphens and syntheses between heaven and earth, liberating God from ideological captivity. On the other hand, Barth's pre-occupation with theology was for the sake of an adequate basis for human praxis. This 'wholly other' God was at once transcendent and immanent. Implicit in this discovery are the two poles of the dialectic in the theology of the revolution of God: a situation which is in need of radical negation and transformation on the one hand, and God who calls *all* human achievement and systems into question on the other. The

Kierkegaardian "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and humanity was firmly established in Barth's mind and theology.[15] Whilst theology begins with praxis, only this 'wholly other' God is sufficiently radical to provide adequate impetus for ongoing human participation in the transformation of reality. Notably, Barth did not turn exclusively to socialism to find an alternative basis for praxis, although he remained a committed socialist for the rest of his life. He turned to theology to find a "better basis for...social action".[16] This enabled him, in the name of the true revolution of God, to maintain a critical distance from all human options. His disillusionment with religious-socialism indicates this. From this time Barth was conscious of his own praxis being no more than a parable of the praxis of God. His actions could only point to the revolution of God.

This did not, however, place Barth into neutral paralysis of praxis. Indeed, the refusal to conform to the military policy of the Kaiser was itself radical praxis. And further, in 1915 after formally joining the Swiss Social Democratic Party he wrote to his friend Thurneysen: "faith in the greatest does not exclude but includes within it work and suffering in the realm of the imperfect".[17] The revolution of God did not absolve him from participation in the business of human politics. On the contrary, it compelled him to seek and support the best human options available. God's revolution both inspires and limits human action. To use Barth's later words: The revolution of the wholly other God contains both God's No and Yes to humanity.

The impetus for Barth's 'new' approach was shaped by the prevailing social conditions and the theological responses thereto. It was with a preoccupation with praxis, particularly in the industrial context of Safenwil, that Barth emphasised the dynamic dialectic between social reality and theological theory. Against the collapse of dialectic thinking evident in both the liberal identification with German Nationalism and the religious-socialist confusion of the kingdom of God with the Marxian utopia, Barth reasserted God as wholly other. A theology based on religious experience was exchanged for an eschatologically conceived theology. The liberal question of who God is for humanity was transformed into the question of who God is in Godself as a basis for God's being for humanity.

1.3 GOD'S REVOLUTION AND HITLER: THE LIMITS OF HUMAN AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM.

In 1934, as a professor at Bonn University, Barth refused to make the required oath of allegiance to Hitler. Few incidents in Barth's life more powerfully illustrate the implications of his theology of the revolution of God. By refusing to make the oath Barth praxiologically defined the limits of human authority and freedom implicit in God's revolution. He was saying that Hitler did not have the *authority* to require such an oath and he (Barth) did not have the *freedom* to comply with the oath.

In the revolution of God, by definition, all human authority and freedom is limited and derived from the authority and freedom of God. Firstly, with regard to **authority** Barth saw it as his responsibility to the state under Hitler to proclaim the limits

of its dominion. Thus Barth's action, whilst seeming to be *against* the state was actually done *for the sake of* the state. The refusal to take the oath was not the rebellious act of a political anarchist but the responsible act of a true patriot.[18] As a professor Barth saw himself as a "state appointed guardian" of the limitations placed by God on human authority.[19] The refusal was meant as a call to repentance to the prevailing order in the interests of just and true government. The sovereignty of God demanded resistance against the existing government in the interests of better government. Again the ruling passion of the first commandment implied that the authority of the political order is derived from the authority of God. Government can only require allegiance from its subjects that does not conflict with ultimate allegiance to God. It must be noted that Barth was willing to make the oath if it included a qualifying statement. In Barth's words:

> I did not refuse to give the official oath, but stipulated an addition to the effect that I could be loyal to the Fuhrer only within my responsibilities as an Evangelical Christian.[20]

Consequently and secondly, with regard to **freedom** Barth saw his own freedom as limited by the freedom of God. Compliance with the prescribed oath would have constituted a breach of the freedom of God in the name of his own freedom. God alone is absolutely free. Human beings derive their freedom from God's freedom. Barth was simply not free to make the oath. He was confronted with the classical choice between obedience to God and obedience to human authority. In such a situation the Christian is only free to obey God. To refuse to obey God is to surrender the freedom of God,

and thus human freedom. It is to choose captivity. Barth chose freedom and paid the human price for that choice.

In praxis the supreme authority and freedom of God has far reaching consequences. It requires of the Christian to constantly weigh up all human allegiances in the light of supreme allegiance to God, and demands that the Christian only exercise the freedom which affirms and points to the freedom of God. It does not mean that Christians will not have human allegiances nor claim human freedoms, but rather that the allegiances chosen and the freedoms claimed must reflect participation in the revolution of God, from which authority and freedom derive their being. The revolution of God therefore prevents human authority from becoming *tyranny* and human freedom from becoming *chaos*.

The issue of the oath also provides an insight into Barth's character. He was placed under enormous pressure by the state, the university and some of his colleagues, including Rudolf Bultmann, to submit himself to the oath. The only support he received was from a group of his students who composed the rhyme:

> Karl, we know, is hardly vile
> and yet he has to go on trial.[21]

Despite the attempted coercion Barth resolutely stood his ground. His understanding of Jesus Christ, demanded faithfulness which did not consider human cost, but asserted the sovereignty of God. He did not look to the left or the right for support or justification, for God alone justifies or condemns. He proceeded, as a lonely individual in a crowd, to be true to his faith. Yet, as indicated above, the God in whose name Barth refused to make

the oath is not removed from human community. On the contrary, this refusal proclaimed God's negation of all that denies true human community, and affirmed the human search for a state which more closely corresponds to the justice of the kingdom of God. Such complete commitment married to Barth's deep understanding of community and co-humanity indicates that God's revolution creatively exposes the inseparability of the individual from the community, and the community from the individual. The limits and possibilities of human freedom are always realised in community.

1.4 EAST AND WEST AND GOD'S PERMANENT REVOLUTION.

The East-West conflict continues to have currency nearly forty years after the intense criticism of Barth's position on the inclusion of Hungary into the Eastern bloc. Barth did not regard it the most urgent priority to expose the dangers communism held for the church and theology. He rather chose to enter into the debate under the rubric "The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change". He suggested that the Hungarian church should neither set itself up in principled opposition to or support for the new order, nor retreat into an apolitical neutrality. It should instead be "so independent... and so sympathetic that it is able to summon the representatives of the old and new order alike... to humility, to the praise of God and to humanity, and can invite them all to trust in the great change (in the death and resurrection of Christ) and to hope in his revelation".[22] The task of the Hungarian church was to accept responsibility for the state by pointing the representatives of the new order to the origin and source of all true change - the death and resurrection

of Jesus Christ. In other words Barth called them to proclaim the revolution of God as the foundation of all human transformation, in the interests of ensuring that the new political dispensation actually made a qualitative difference to the society.

A barrage of criticism followed. Reinhold Niebuhr accused Barth's theology of being too transcendent and, therefore, incapable of reasoned political judgements;[23] Herberg charged him with "despicable neutralism" and "indifference to political actualities";[24] West contended that a primary emphasis on grace tended to neglect social analysis, whilst Brunner "publically asked Barth why he did not 'issue a call to oppose communism and make a christian confession' as he had done against National Socialism".[25] Notably all Barth's critics were from the West.[26]

Although Barth remained a socialist, his praxis with regard to Hungary reflects more than his consistent commitment to socialism. It also reveals something of his understanding of the revolution of God. The assumption of Barth's critics was that the logical alternative to communism was the 'christian West'. They expected Barth to enter Hungary supportive of Western christendom. In Barth's analysis this would be more problematic than a provisional acceptance of communist rule. Barth neither inclined towards Eastern communism nor towards Western anti-communism but in the final analysis he regarded "anticommunism as a matter of principle an evil greater than communism".[27] He simply believed that a provisional acceptance of communist rule provided a better human context for participation in the

perpetual revolution of God than the Western alternative. Neither alternatives could be regarded as the final word. Barth recognised the negation of the revolution of God in the identification of Western culture and lifestyles with the Christian gospel. His praxis in Hungary was thus more a resounding No to the West than a Yes to the East. The task of the theologian in this context was, in Barth's mind, proclaim divine justification as the basis of human life and, therefore, justice as the foundation of the true state. It was the situation that determined the form this proclamation should take. It was not Barth's theology or mind that had radically changed, it was simply being applied differently to another context. The influence of Barth's own context in this regard must not be under-estimated. Lehmann shows how Barth saw his task as "proclaiming justice as the love of God in action" and *not* providing for the self-justification of prevailing structures of power in his Western context. Barth's silence on Hungary was deliberately and prophetically chosen in the light of this task:

> It is very much *to* the point and required of Christian faith and obedience to alert those who live under the dehumanisation of capitalism and who seek to justify themselves by anti-communist fanaticism that - since the compound injustice with hypocrisy - they are the worst case. The mote and the beam, the serpent and the dove, the sheep and the goats have never been more perceptively and politically conjoined with the poetry and politics of the Old Testament prophets, nor more faithfully applied than by Barth's deliberately chosen silence on Hungary.[28]

In this regard the depth of social analysis in Barth's response on this occasion is the cornerstone of his prophetic insights. Only with profound understanding of human reality could Barth have perceived in 1948 what is much clearer to us now. The

different conclusions reached by Barth and his adversaries illustrates the decisive role played by ideological commitment in theological debate. Barth's predisposition toward socialism was bound to give rise to conclusions conflicting with those arising from a commitment to capitalism. The real question is which ideological commitment bears greater analogy to the eschatological kingdom of God. There is a continuity and discontinuity between the praxis of human beings and the praxis of God. Barth's praxis implies that the continuity is at least as significant as the discontinuity. He passionately held to the infinite qualitative distinction, but he consistently, after analysis, chose the best human option.

1.5 TOWARD THE REVOLUTION OF GOD.

In summation, these glimpses at Barth reveal some pertinent directions for theology.

Firstly, theology only becomes liberating memory when it is grounded in corresponding praxis. Moments of the intrusion of God's grace into human experience do not occur theoretically. One may well question whether Barth's theology would have had any impact at all apart from his commitment to social and political engagement. Theology is truly a journey from praxis to theory *and back to praxis*. The revolution of God must find parabolic human form or we have not yet done theology.

Secondly, the *content* of the revolution of God remains the grace of God but the context of human action determines the *form* God's revolution will take in praxis. In every new situation a return

to reflection on the grace of God calls into question all the previous shapes humanity has atttempted to give to the revolution of God. Barth's creative freedom in being able to bring new and revolutionary theological insights into different situations is testimony to this. This is indeed a window into the freedom of God. Theology is thus *theologia viatorum* not because its content alters but because it finds new form as the context alters. The revolution of God provides the content and the human context, the form of human praxis.

Further, this biographical analysis of Barth's theology demonstrates the validity of deeper penetration into Barth's thought in order to more fully understand the revolution of God. Nonetheless, the praxis that forms the background to the theology analysed in the proceeding chapters is fundamental to understanding that theology.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. James Wm McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1974, p89.

2. ibid. p90.

3. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, London, Burns and Oates, 1980, pp220-1. Metz builds on the theology of Karl Rahner which he defines as "biographical dogmatic theology or the mystical biography of a Christian believer today"(p223).

4. Paul Lehmann, "The Ant and the Emperor", in Donald McKim (ed),*How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986, p46.

5. ibid. p46.

6. Karl Barth, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986, p22.

7. ibid. p56.

8. ibid. p55.

9. ibid. p53.

10. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's 'Revolution of God': Quietism or Anarchy", in Charles Villa-Vicencio (ed) *On Reading Karl Barth in South Africa*, in a manuscript soon to be published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p8.

11. Karl Barth, *Mozart*, p46.

12. ibid. p37.

13. Karl Barth, *Evangelische Theologie im 19.Jahrhundert*, Zurich, 1947, quoted by Helmut Gollwitzer in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Selections*, p14f.

14. ibid. p14.

15. Barth refers to his own method in these words of Kierkegaard in *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Edwyn Hoskyns, London, Oxford University Press, 1933, p10.

16. George Hunsinger, *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, Philadelphia, Westminister, 1976, hereafter *Radical Politics*, p203.

17. James Smart, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, London, Epworth Press, 1964. p28.

18. In chapters four and five of this thesis I will, however, suggest that Barth's theology has an anarchistic dimension that

can be characterised as *eschatological anarchism*, in contradistinction to political anarchism.

19. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth*, London, SCM, 1976, p257.

20. ibid. p255.

21. ibid. p256.

22. ibid. p355.

23. Reinhold Niebuhr, quoted in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p182.

24. Will Herberg, *Community, State and Church*, New York, Anchor, 1960, p57.

25. Busch, p355.

26. C. West, *Communism and the Theologians*, London, SCM, p313.

27. Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, Edinburgh, St Andrew, p63.

28. Lehmann, "The Ant and the Emperor", p45.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT.

The first chapter justified the need to investigate the concept of the revolution of God in the theology of Karl Barth as a basis for identifying the intention of his theology, which is to transform (or revolutionise) the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of God.

The phrase 'revolution of God' itself occurs infrequently in the writings of Karl Barth. This is not surprising because Barth increasingly saw his task *theologically* and , therefore, used theological and religious-metaphorical language rather than explicitly *political* terms. This does not mean that Barth distanced himself from politics. Rather, as the previous chapter indicates, he consistently maintained that theology provides the proper foundation for politics. In his earlier writings Barth showed a willingness to use the political terminology of revolution, and his reluctance to use similar language in *Church Dogmatics* does not mean that the essence of the concept no longer applied. The purpose of this chapter is to give some content to the hypothesis that the *concept* of the revolution of God, despite the lack of explicit terminology, provides a comprehensive paradigm for the whole of Barth's theology.

This is done by exploring the development of the concept in Barth's earlier writings, setting the scene for an examination of the key concepts of the revolution of God in his mature theology. In so doing a hermeneutical key is identified that unlocks the radical dimensions of the Barthian perspective, and rescues his

theology from conservative misappropriation.

The development of the concept of the revolution of God finds its context within Barth's quest for an acceptable theological basis for social and political praxis. Barth's theological pre-occupation is not with understanding reality but with transforming it. The question is: does he provide us with a theological approach that enables the transformation of reality? Before addressing that question it is necessary in this chapter to trace the development of his theology from the perspective of the concept of the revolution of God. Whilst the task of the early part of this chapter partially overlaps with the second biographical cameo of chapter one, the focus is sharpened. The question now relates to the actual content of the concept of the revolution of God as it developed. Repetition will, however, be restricted to essential factors.

2.1 THE PHASES OF BARTH'S LIFE.

In order to properly locate the discussion of the development of the concept of the revolution of God it is necessary to briefly outline the phases of Barth's life. Whilst such phases tend to oversimplification and reductionism, for the sake of analysis it is useful to make approximate distinctions. Barth's theological development is usually traced through specific periods of his life which can be summarised as follows:[1] (i) His student years during which he was schooled in nineteenth century theology under teachers such as Adolf Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann.[2] (ii) The Geneva and Safenwil experiences plunged the young pastor into the

dynamics of worker and trade union relations, making an impression that would last throughout his life. It was during his sojourn at Safenwil that Barth became aware of the limitations of both liberal theology and religious-socialism. This period culminated in the publication of the first edition of *Romerbrief* in 1919, which, because of its contemporary ring and radical position created a theological sensation.[3] (iii) This instituted the period experienced by Barth as *Zwischen den Zeiten*, during which he served as professor of theology at Gottingen and Munster. This period provided Barth with the opportunity to consolidate his theological foundations in preparation for his radical political struggle against Hitler and National Socialism.[4] The conclusion of this phase is associated with the publication of the second edition of *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, which Barth later described as his most satisfying work.[5] The beginning of the writing of Barth's mature theology in his *opus magnum, Church Dogmatics*, and his most radical politics evident in his participation in the church struggle in Germany characterises the next phase.[6] This and the subsequent periods of Barth's life are considered in Chapter Four. In this chapter, with these periods of Barth's life as a framework, the development of the concept of the revolution of God in the time leading up to *Anselm* is analysed.

It is important to note that Frederich-Wilhelm Marquardt, in his *Theologie und Sozialismus*, examines the concept of the revolution of God in relation to his thesis concerning Barth's socialism.[6] He points out that Barth's understanding of the revolution of God

should not merely be seen as an alternative to the Leninist revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, but a radicalisation thereof.[7] The purpose of this thesis is, on the other hand, more specific. It is to examine the theological concept of God's revolution itself and its development as a theological formulation.

2.2 BEYOND LIBERALISM AND RELIGIOUS-SOCIALISM.

An examination of Barth's perspective while pastor at Geneva and Safenwil reveals one who is at once a product of his liberal teachers and a herald of a new kind of theology. In the address to the Labour Unions of Safenwil in 1911 Barth sought to make a direct connection between the goals of the kingdom of God and the goals of socialism, between Jesus Christ and the "movement for social justice".[8] The theory was neither completely undialectic nor completely dialectic. A synthesis between God and humanity could exist at the level of goals and limits (theory) whilst at the level of strategies (praxis) an antithesis prevailed. On the matter of socialism, humanity and God coincided in theory but digressed in praxis. At this stage of his theology God could be clearly and directly identified with a human option. God's revolution and human revolutions had similar goals but different methods.

Four important factors emerge from this early period:

Firstly, the presupposition behind Barth's whole theological endeavour, even at this stage, was to ground his social and political praxis in an adequate theological base.

Secondly, although Barth drew somewhat definite lines between human and divine in theory, he demonstrated that he was openly critical of the way in which socialists of that time were applying that theory:

> When I talk about the movement for social justice, I am not talking about what some or all Social Democrats are *doing*; I am talking about what they *want*.[9]

Consequently, Jesus was not simply a socialist: "Jesus is more socialist than the socialists".[10] In this theological criticism of socialism from the left Barth was, in a rudimentary way, beginning to see socialism (and human revolution) from the perspective of Jesus rather than Jesus from the perspective of socialism. Jesus was already the criterion for Barth's social praxis although, at this stage, he (Barth) was quite undialectic about the relationship between Jesus and human action. There was an "inner connection that exists between what is eternal, permanent, and general in modern social democracy (socialism) and the eternal Word of God, which in Jesus became flesh".[11] This implied an *organic* connection between the kingdom of God and the praxis of humans which was to become increasingly problematic for a sound theological basis for social praxis. Nonetheless, the major thrust of this early theology was a radical questioning of capitalism, but the corollary was that current forms of socialism were also inadequate. Nonetheless, the salvation of both christianity and socialism lay in their being seen as inextricably bound to one another:

> *Real* socialism is real christianity in our time.[12]

Jesus "opposed that material misery that *ought not to be*" and

instilled in people the Spirit that "transforms matter".[13] This was essentially a revolutionary theology which, in Marxian terms, sought to overthrow of existing relations of production. Yet although Barth's theology was already revolutionary, it was not yet grounded in the revolution of God alone. The idealistic confidence in human ability implicit in both nineteenth century liberal theology and religious-socialism still characterised Barth's theology.

Thirdly, Barth conceived of the relationship between God and humanity as reversible. There was both a movement from God to humanity and a reciprocal reverse movement. He could hold to the twin phrases: "Jesus *is* the movement for social justice, and the movement for social justice *is* Jesus, in the present".[14] The point he was making was clear: pastoral and socialist praxis were integrally related. However this approach tended to make God so imminent that God's transcendence was compromised, thus falling foul of Feuerbach's charge of anthropomorphism. This was the approach of the religious-socialists which ultimately proved inadequate for Barth. The seeds of Barth's impending break with religious-socialism were sown.

Fourthly, the major pre-occupation of Barth's theology became the relationship between faith and history. This is evident in his more comprehensive approach to the doctrine of God in an essay entitled "Faith in a personal God" published in 1914.[15] Here he developed a twofold thesis: God's presence is personal and God's transcendence is absolute. These theses seemed to posit an irreconcilable juxtaposition between God as absolute and thus

abstract, and God as personal and thus anthropomorphically limited. Barth sought to reconcile the dilemma by grounding the religious experience of the personal God in concrete reality and insisting on the primacy of praxis:

> Experience, praxis or whatever one wants to call it, is the obvious presupposition, the source of all religious utterances.[16]

In this way Barth sought to reconcile Schleiermacher's theology of immediate experience with the new influence of the religious-socialists, all within the framework of liberal theology. However tentatively, this heralded the beginning of a new search for the relationship between faith and history beyond the idealism and relativism of liberal theology. Barth would ultimately have to conclude that the relativistic presuppositions and method of liberal theology provided no adequate counter to the critique of Feuerbach, nor a sound foundation from which to talk about the real subject of theological discourse - the sovereignty of God. All liberal theology, when speaking of God collapsed into immanent synthesis or abstract transcendence. The basic criterion sought by Barth, namely, a concept of the sovereignty of God that included both the transcendence of God in Godself and the immanence of God for humanity, had not been found. As a result of of liberal theology's faith-history synthesis, human revolution and praxis had become too direct a reflection of the revolution of God. With this background the relationship between faith and history, theory and praxis, God's revolution and human revolution became the primary pre-occupation of Barth's theology from this time.[17]

Increasingly, Barth came to see the relationship between theology and human praxis (particularly politics) as that between the absolute and the relative. Political formulations were not the "idealisation of compromises and concessions" in a relative world, but "provisional and imperfect realisations" of the absolute.[18] The former approach implied idealistic complacency whilst the latter signalled *permanent discontent* with human formulations, and demanded a continued search for better realisations of the absolute. Nowhere is this clearer than in Barth's critique of Friedrich Naumann, a prominent German political liberal:

> It is one thing to live in the world of relativities and to become completely satisfied with aesthetic good pleasure at how wonderful it all is, and quite another to live in a world of relativities with a constant disquiet and longing (*Sehnsucht*) for something better which is to come, for the absolute goal of a humane social life beyond all temporal necessities.[19]

This anticipates what was to become a fully fledged permanent revolution of God against all human options in more mature Barthian theology. The proposal was to take the absolute sovereign and transcendent God with the utmost political seriousness. Only the political consequences of the sovereignty of God could provide an adequate basis for revolutionary social praxis. It is interesting to note that the permanent discontent with all human formulations of the absolute would later be equally applied to theological statements and ecclesiastical structures.

Barth's theological suspicions about the inadequacy of the liberal framework for theology were merely confirmed when, in

the incident discussed in chapter one, his liberal teachers endorsed the war policy of Kaiser Wilhelm II.[20] His epistemological and methodological break with liberalism had already begun.

Of contemporary note is the continuity and discontinuity between the emergence of Barth's theology and the more recent emergence of liberation theology. In short, both rediscovered the primacy of praxis; both defined theology as reflection on concrete human activity; both saw the need for a theological basis for revolutionary politics. However they were to follow divergent paths from their discovery. Barth set out to reformulate theology emphasising the unity and sovereignty of God against all human options, whilst the liberation theologians emphasise social analysis in the search for the most realistic human options for the liberation of the oppressed.[21] Whilst a full explication of this theme is beyond the scope of this thesis, the questions raised by this evaluation will receive greater attention in the fifth chapter.

2.3 CLEARING THINGS AWAY.

An older Barth in reflecting upon the period after his break from liberal theological methodology and religious-socialism had this to say:

> How we cleared things away! And we did almost nothing but clear away. Everything which even remotely smacked of mysticism and morality, of pietism and romanticism, or even of idealism, was suspected and sharply interdicted or bracketed with reservations which sounded actually prohibitive! What should really have been only a sad friendly smile was a derisive laugh.[22]

Having theologically come up against the stone wall of God's sovereignty, and politically disillusioned by religious socialist praxis, a new theological approach was indicated. This was primarily initiated in the first edition of the *Epistle to the Romans* (hereafter *Romans*) and the *Tambach* lecture, both in 1919.

2.2.1 The Radicalisation of Revolution.

Under the influence of Kierkegaard and Blumhardt, amongst others, Barth developed his theology with the presupposition of the infinite qualitative distinction between God and humanity, heaven and earth. His theological pre-occupation was that only the assertion of God as God provides for a revolutionary theology worthy of God. In this period Barth developed the concept of God as "wholly other", which was the relativising and orienting framework for all human activity:

> God's sovereignty alone becomes the concrete ground, limit and orientation of all human thought and action.[23]

The first edition of *Romans* still contained traces of the reversible, organic relationship between God's kingdom and human activity. Barth could say, on the one hand, that political strategies can receive no direct theological sanction:

> Let there be strike, general strike, and street fighting if there must be, but no religious justification or glorification of it...; military service as soldier or officer, if it must be, but on *no* condition as military chaplain...; social democratic but not religious socialist.[24]

Yet, on the other hand, he could look forward to the time when, through human participation in the "*absolute* revolution that comes from God", a new socialist world and socialist church founded on Marxist dogma would emerge.[25] This implied that there

was still an organic relationship between a particular human programme and the eschatological kingdom of God. Although human revolution and God's revolution were dialectically related, an historical synthesis of the two was organically conceivable. Barth had not yet found a completely adequate theological formulation that circumvented the pitfalls of liberalism and religious-socialism.

Tambach

The *Tambach* lecture on "The Christian's Place in Society" represented another milestone in the development of the concept of the revolution of God.[26] Here the No of God to all human activity received greater emphasis. This lecture contained the first reasonably well-developed exposition of the concept of God's revolution. The revolution of God is described in Hegelian dialectic language and perceived as a movement "from above":

> A movement from a third dimension, so to speak, which transcends and yet penetrates all these (human..ASB) movements and gives them their inner meaning and motive; a movement which has neither its origin nor its aim in space, in time nor in the contingency of things...[27]

This movement is manifested in Jesus Christ, who is the "*absolutely new from above*", the antithesis to all that is human and relative.[28] This antithesis is rooted in the Kingdom of God which is the original and final synthesis, "the revolution which is before all revolutions".[29] It is only from the perspective of the antithesis which derives strength from the synthesis that the human condition (the thesis) aquires significance:

> Only from the standpoint of an antithesis which has its roots in the synthesis can one accept the thesis so calmly.[30]

Jesus, as antithesis, is the negation, the divine No to all human activity and revolution, and the consistent reminder that everything has its origin and destination in God as the original synthesis. This does not, however, mean the paralysis of all human action. All human activity receives its grounding and orientation from the antithesis, Jesus Christ.

Nonetheless, an inconsistency remains in the relationship Barth posits between the divine and the human. Two approaches to the relationship between human activity and divine reality are evident. On the one hand he described the human movements of protest as an "integral moment in the kingdom of God";[31] whilst on the other Barth sought to relate relate divine and human activity in terms of analogy:

> And even more clearly brought out in Jesus is the fact that the transitory is *only* a parable. His very unconcern for the things and events he relates makes it quite clear that he sought their original and creative element and not the mere things and events themselves, but in their idea, their heavenly analogue.[32]

and again:

> Our little *within* belongs to the realm of analogies, and it is from *beyond* that realm that we draw our life. There is no continuity leading from analogy over to divine reality.[33]

The former approach tends to maintain the organic link between the heaven and earth, divine and human revolutions; whilst the latter provides the foundation of a more dialectic approach in which God and humanity can only be indirectly related. It is also pertinent that at this early stage in Barth's theology the concept of analogy was evident as the mediatory link between the revolution of God and human revolution. Through the concept of analogy Barth was able to begin to formulate a revolutionary

theology that found its source and centre in God's transcendence, whilst at the same time providing a basis (not a baptism) for human movements of protest. Analogy provided a way of indirectly relating God's revolution and human praxis, which simultaneously de-absolutised human action and gave it foundation.

The purpose was not to discourage human resistance but to radicalise praxis on the basis of the revolution of God. In this sense Marquardt is correct in concluding that the "revolution of God radicalises the function of the Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat".[34] Only a recognition of the potential of the "world as it is" to bear no more than analogous witness to the kingdom of God, as the original synthesis, provides a sufficiently radical grounding for human revolution:

> Only out of such an affirmation can come that genuine, radical denial which is manifestly the meaning of our movements of protest.[35]

The concept of analogy is central to the mature Barthian understanding of the revolution of God and is more fully discussed in chapters three and four below.

Also of significance was Barth's definition of the revolution of God as the "new from above" because this emphasis continued to find prominence throughout his theological project, and is central to the concept of God's revolution. The perception was that the qualitative transformation of human existence was only possible from without, in Godself. In short, only God was truly revolutionary.

The Second Edition of Romans

When the second edition of *Romans* appeared the break with the liberal past was complete.[36] No traces of the former organic connection between the human and divine realms remained. Further, by this time the inadequacies of the October revolution in Russia were becoming apparent and, consequently,this edition of *Romans* reflected a greater suspicion of human revolution. This suspicion necessitated a greater emphasis on the divine negation of the *hubris* evident in all human activity. Nothing on earth could be organically related to heaven. Barth described his method as follows:

> ...if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing both negative and positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth'. The relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy.[37]

Following this system Barth developed a theological basis for human praxis grounded in the revolution that comes from God alone. At this stage the source of revolution of God was found, as before, in the grace revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and its indirect relation to humanity in the great positive possibility of loving one another. The emphasis was, however, different.

Here Barth tackles the problem of revolution head on in considering the role of revolution under the "great negative possibility" of submission to the state.[38] Marquardt aptly summarises the difference between the first and second editions of *Romerbrief* in asserting that in the former edition God is

viewed from the perspective of revolution, whereas in the latter revolution is viewed from the perspective of God.[39]

In the second edition Barth criticises human revolution from an almost anarchistic perspective, insisting that revolutionaries are inevitably overcome by the illusion of believing that in the face of the 'old' they could represent the 'new'. Ultimately, the revolutionary tends to give new form to the old evil of existing government. He asks the pertinent questions:

> Is there anywhere legality that is not fundamentally illegal? Is there anywhere authority which is not ultimately based upon tyranny?[40]

It is in the answer to these rhetorical questions that the real birth of revolution lies:

> From this perception of the evil that lies in the very existence of the existing government, Revolution is born.[41]

Hence, Barth's criticism of the current revolutionary praxis rested not so much in the wrongness of revolution *per se*, but in the failure of human revolution to be radical enough in bringing about a new order. The revolutionary "stands so strangely near to God" and "so much nearer the truth" and is in perpetual danger of trying to do what God alone can do.[42] The revolutionary begins by aiming at the "impossible possibility" of the true Revolution of love and forgiveness, but ends up choosing the "possible possibility" of revolutionary discontent and hatred.[43] Only God can be truly revolutionary, only God is capable of bringing the necessary transformation *from the outside*. Barth's comments on the reference to *the power* in Romans 13:2 is apposite:

> There is a precedent judgement, not for the existing order, but against revolution. This judgement is based upon the fact that the real revolution comes from God and not human

> revolt. To the revolutionary, the *power* represents the sovereign right of the divine Revolution.[44]

Because it is God alone who pronounces a sufficiently radical No to the power of existing authorities, all revolution that is independent of this No is actually rebellion against God. The judgement upon human authority originates in God and therefore real revolution comes from God alone, and humanity can only witness to this judgement. Further this implies a permanent revolution in which God consistently negates all human rebellion and human structures, which inevitably contain the seeds of their own dissolution. At this stage a heavy emphasis upon the No of God to all human activity was in danger of eclipsing a somewhat less distinct Yes.

This Yes was located in the possibility of a revolutionary praxis which gains its grounding and orientation in the "great positive possibility of love". Only on the basis of this love could human participation in the revolution of God be transformed into positive action which testifies to a qualitatively new reality:

> We define love as the 'Great POSITIVE Possibility', because in it there is brought to light the revolutionary aspect of all ethical behaviour, and because it is veritably concerned with the denial and breaking up of the existing order...In as much as we love one another we cannot wish to uphold the present order as such, for by love we do the 'new' by which the 'old' is overthrown. [45]

This meant that although no temporal synthesis could be conceived between the kingdom of God and human kingdoms, humanity could participate in the revolution of God by transforming and limiting human revolution with the positive possibility of love. Participation in this love rescues human revolution from being overcome by the evil present in the existence of human

government. Love enables the transformation of the established order by something new 'from above' which ensures that revolution does not merely become the source of its own undoing, but actually contributes to the creation of a more just human order.

In *Romans* this love is grounded in the knowledge of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. It is only when human beings have stood before God and been touched by God's freedom that they can recognise in every human neighbour the otherness of Jesus Christ. Love consequently operates independently of the one being loved, and is able to love all human beings freely without preference:

> Love, being altogether independent of its object - the concrete 'neighbour'! - is, for that very reason, altogether bound to it. Love beholds in every concrete neighbour only the parable of him who is to be loved; but nevertheless it does really see, it really does see in every temporal 'Thou' the eternal, contrasted 'Thou' apart from whom there is no 'I'. Love, therefore, is love of men, of concrete, particular men; and it is this precisely because it has no preference for any particular man... Love is 'eternal, levelling righteousness' (Kierkegaard), because it justifies no man according to his desire.[46]

This relationship of love is therefore not merely the confrontation of one human being with another, "but God who confronts God"[47], and is, therefore, a revolution in and of God alone. It is a revolution humanity can never own, and yet, because of the grace of God, humans are elected to share in it, thus making an impossible possibility possible. Only this revolution is radical enough because it deals not only with the inadequacy of human structure but also with the root of all human disorder - the human incapacity for love.

Lehmann, commenting on Barth, has shown how love alone can

preserve revolution from its own destruction, love alone is able to ensure that revolution consistently remains humanising. Furthermore it is only *this* love, namely, the love in which God confronts God, that is able to guarantee humanisation.

> Love exalts the humanity of the neighbour above the cause that proclaims its advent, and transfigures the passion of revolution so that its promises may in truth be born.[48]

2.4 EMERGING QUESTIONS.

Because a more comprehensive evaluation of love in relation to the revolution of God will follow it will suffice to raise two questions at this stage.

The first question concerns the theory of the revolution of God, whilst the second raises the relationship between God's revolution and human praxis.

Firstly, the theological adequacy of the foundations of the revolution of God must be tested. If God's revolution is to provide an adequate theological base for revolutionary praxis, then how does God in Jesus Christ enable communication between God and humanity across the infinite qualitative distinction? A deeper ancilliary question here is: How do we understand God in such a way that the critique of Feuerbach is overcome? This relates to Barth's search for a theology which includes both an understanding of God as God exists *in Godself* and God as God acts *for humanity*. Up to now Barth's epistemology was essentially theocratic in contrast to his later exclusively christocratic theology. Whereas, at this stage Barth conceived of Jesus only as the *antithesis*, later he would emphasise the twofold nature of

Jesus as the immanent theological foundation of the antithesis, original and final synthesis, and the thesis. In Jesus alone God's revolution is revealed. Because of the earlier stress on the No of God Barth tended to attribute to Jesus the primary role of negation. However, as his theology developed Jesus was seen as primarily embodying the affirmative Yes of God which includes the No. Before, the No of God's revolution was located christologically and the Yes was found in a theocratic concept of the kingdom of God. Later, Jesus became the only source for understanding both the Yes and the No of God's revolution *as well as the basis for understanding true humanity.*

In this way the three elements of *Tambach* , the thesis (humanity), the antithesis (Jesus) and the original and final synthesis (the kingdom of God), all co-incide in a Chalcedonian christology. This christology provided Barth with a way of formulating the revolution of God which affirms both God in Godself and proclaims God's act for humanity. In short, whilst Jesus was once included in the revolution of God, he is later seen as embodying the whole revolution within himself. This is developed in the fourth chapter.

Secondly, we must explore the ethical content of love and the relationship of that content to the theological foundations implicit in the first question. If the theological concept of the revolution of God is to provide impetus and orientation for human revolution then what is the nature of the concrete ethical activities consistent with love? In other words what does it mean to love one another in practical realisable terms?

Barth's search for answers to these questions led him into the realm of dialectic thinking. This period extended from the writing of the second edition of *Romans* until the publication of *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* in 1929. During this phase all traces of undialectic thinking were systematically removed, causing Barth himself to raise questions in later reflection on this period:

> What if the result of the new hymn of praise to the majesty of God should be a new confirmation of the hopelessness of all human activity?[49]

This was certainly not his intention, but in the heat of the prophetic moment, *might* he have overstated his case? Had Barth given such prominence to the revolution that comes from God that human revolution paled into insignificant paralysis? Had human activity been so thoroughly de-absolutised that human beings were historically helpless? Barth himself raises a similar question in reflecting upon this period:

> Was the impression of many contemporaries wholly unfounded, who felt that the final result be to stand Schleiermacher on his head, that is, to make *God* great for a change at the cost of *man*? Were they wrong in thinking that actually not too much had been won and that in the final analysis it was only a new Titanism at work?[50]

In terms of the question we have raised above: Had Barth not become so pre-occupied with the theory of God's revolution that human praxis, whilst remaining a theoretical possibility, was virtually impossible? Had transcendence been emphasised and immanence paralysed? Was the No of God so loud that the yes of God was bearly audible?

Whilst these questions must be considered it must also be asked:

Does such prophetic and revolutionary theology does not, by nature, communicate its message with broad sweeping strokes that may later appear to be overstatement? Is this not necessary in the iconoclastic process of destroying the old and bringing in the new? Would Barth have been able to pursue his theological task in the same way if he had not first ruthlessly cleared the theological deck? Looking back it is difficult to conceive of how Barth could have reached his later position without this prior de-absolutising period. Indeed, things had to be cleared away to provide the context for a more integrated approach.

Nonetheless, we must also recognise that the seed of a more positive theology which acknowledged both the No and the Yes of God was already evident. As early as 1922, when talking to a ministers about "The Need of Christian Preaching", Barth insisted that the No of God is also the Yes:

> The person who says that the Bible leads us to where finally we hear only a great No or see a great void, proves only that he has not yet been led thither. *This* No is really Yes. *This* judgement is grace. *This* condemnation is forgiveness. *This* death is life. *This* hell is heaven. *This* fearful God is a loving father who takes the prodigal in his arms. The crucified is the one raised from the dead.[31]

This indicates the purpose of Barth's turn to dialectic thinking not as the negation of human praxis in favour of God's revolution, but the de-absolutising of human formulations and actions, in order to introduce the necessary humility *without* falling into the despair of relativity. On another occasion in 1922, under the title "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry", Barth clarified the need for dialectic methodology. Having posited the perplexity of the task of ministry as the

dilemma of being obliged to speak of God whilst being unable to do so, he suggested that dialectic theology provided a way ahead which, rather than denying the validity of human actions and formulations about God, placed them in proper perspective:

> The genuine dialectician knows that this Center (God) cannot be apprehended or beheld, and he will not if he can help it allow himself to be drawn into giving direct information about it, knowing that *all* such information, whether it be positive or negative, is *not* really information, but always *either* dogma *or* self-criticism. On this narrow ridge of rock one can only walk: if he attempts to stand still, he will fall either to the right or to the left, but fall he must... Our task is to interpret the Yes and the No and the No by the Yes without delaying more than a moment in a fixed Yes *or* a fixed No.[52]

Barth's use of dialectics is bound to be misunderstood if it is not seen within the context of its purpose to provide an alternative to the idealistic and positivistic notions of human praxis evident in both liberal and religious-socialism. Its final goal was to lead the theologian up to the "gate which can only be opened from within".[53] All human formulations and praxis can do no more than bear testimony to what God has done in Godself and for humanity. The No and the Yes of God stand as the permanent revolution, the "*Archimedean point* from which the soul, and with the soul, the society is moved".[54]

Nonetheless, Barth ultimately considered the dialectic approach to be inadequate in providing a sound theological foundation for this Archimedean point because it implied such separation that the incarnation could become inconceivable. This could result in talk about God which was unrelated to human praxis. It was the study of Anselm that led Barth to find in an *analogical* epistemology, a more adequate basis from which to speak about God

and humanity in such a way that the being of God, God in Godself, was inseparable from the act of God, God for humanity. Because this methodology dominates the rest of Barth's theological project, it is necessary for it to form the starting point of the next chapter which will seek to interpret the epistemological foundations of the revolution of God.

Finally, however, it may also be argued that it was in his early dialectic period, especially *Romans* and *Tambach*, that Barth's theology was most explicitly revolutionary and that the theology that followed represented, in some measure, a withdrawal into a detached academic discipline. Certainly Barth did not ever restate his position as sharply or polemically as during this period. This does not mean, however, that Barth's theology was any less revolutionary. Rather because of his shift to a more metaphoric and theological language the revolutionary cutting edge of his theology was obscured to less discerning readers. Herein lies the genius and the problem of *Church Dogmatics* and the use of the *analogia relationis*.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. The most comprehensive biography of Karl Barth is written by Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth*. Examples of shorter biographical sketches are: John D. Godsey in Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, pp7-33; Thomas F. Torrance *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*, Edinburgh, SCM, 1962; and by Helmut Gollwitzer in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Selections*, pp 1-28. Hunsinger also traces Barth's theological development in the essay "Toward a Radical Barth" in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*.

2. This period extended from 1904 to 1909.

3. This period extended from 1909-1921. Karl Barth, *Romerbrief*, Bern, G. A. Baschlin, 1919. Hereafter *Romans* (1919).

4. Villa Vicencio states in *On Reading Karl Barth*: "Contrary to what many commentators allow, this 'quiet' period of Barth's theological quest provided a firm foundation for his most revolutionary politics." p4.

5. Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, London, SCM, 1960.

6. See Frederich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, For further discussion on this matter see also Robin M. Petersen, *An Analysis of the Nature and Basis of Karl Barth's Socialism*, unpublished MA thesis, UCT, 1985.

7. See Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus* p135f:

> Die "Revolution Gottes" ubernimmt bei Barth prazis die funktion der revolutionaren Diktatur des Proletariats im Leninismus.

and again on p138:

> Die "Revolution Gottes" radikalisiert die leninistische Funktion der proletarischen Diktatur und verdrangt sie so aus Barths politischen Vorstellungen.

8. Karl Barth, *Jesus Christ and the Movement for Social Justice* in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p19.

9. ibid. p21.

10. ibid. p30.

11. ibid. p21.

12. ibid. p36.

13. ibid. p28.

14. ibid. p19.

15. George Hunsinger, "Toward a Radical Barth" in Hunsinger *Radical Politics*, p194.

16. ibid. p195.

17. see Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's Revolution of God", p4.

18. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p198.

19. Quoted in ibid. p199.

20. Chapter one gives a more comprehensive discussion of this critical break in Barth's life.

21. This is touched upon in an essay by George Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and Liberation Theology" in *The Journal of Religion*, July 83, Vol 63, No 3.

22. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, London, Collins, 1967, p39f.

23. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p204.

24. Romans (1919) p381 as quoted by Hunsinger, ibid. p208.

25. Barth, *Romans* (1919) p332 as quoted in Hunsinger, ibid. p208.

26. Karl Barth, "The Christian's Place in Society", in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1928. (Hereafter *Tambach*)

27. ibid. p283.

28. ibid. p286.

29. ibid. p299.

30. ibid. p305.

31. ibid. p298.

32. ibid. p306.

33. ibid. p321.

34. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, pp126-144.

35. Barth, *Tambach*, p299.

36. Karl Barth, *Romerbrief*, (2nd Edition, 1922). English translation by Edward Hoskyns: *The Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933. Hereafter *Romans* (1922).

37. ibid. p10.

38. ibid. p476ff.

39. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p143.

40. Barth, *Romans* (1922), p479f.

41. ibid. p480.

42. ibid. p478.

43. ibid. p481.

44. ibid. p485.

45. ibid. p493.

46. ibid. p495f.

47. ibid. p495.

48. Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics*, New York, Harper and Row, 1975, p47, (hereafter *Transfiguration.*)

49. Barth, *Humanity of God*, p41.

50. ibid. p40.

51. Karl Barth, "The Need of Christian Preaching" in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p120.

52. Karl Barth, "The Word of God and The Task of the Ministry", in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p206f.

53. Barth, ibid. p212.

54. Barth, *Tambach*, p295.

CHAPTER THREE

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE REVOLUTION OF GOD.

The previous chapter raised the questions confronting Barth in the search for an adequate theological basis for the revolution of God. In summary these are: How can we talk of God's revolution without denying humanity? On what epistemological basis is it possible to speak about God without making the incarnation inconceivable? What provides an acceptable theological basis for the Archimedean point which limits and orientates all human activity? The challenge was to find a way of ensuring the inseparability of God's being and God's act, God in Godself and God for humanity. The search was for a conceptualisation of God grounded *outside* of human necessity and yet not removed from the sphere of human experience. Hunsinger summarises the questions:

> Ever since 1915 Barth's problem had been this: If theology starts from the experience of faith and reflects on it (Schleiermacher), then how does theology ever get beyond the subjectivism, relativism and anthropocentrism of this object of reflection (Feuerbach)? How can theology get beyond the subjectivity of faith to the objectivity of God as he is in himself and in his relationship to man? How can theology find a consistent basis for taking God rather than faith as the concrete reality from which theological concepts are derived? How can theory and praxis be consistently grounded, limited and oriented in terms of God' sovereignty alone?[1]

Dialectics had provided a way of founding the revolution of God outside of human imperatives, but the loud No of dialectic negation allowed only a negative basis for human praxis. If God's revolution is the basis for all human theory and praxis then it had to be grounded in God alone *but* it must also provide a *positive* basis for human participation in that revolution. This demanded a concept of God which located the dialectic No within

the framework of the divine Yes to full human life. This quest led to the discovery of the *epistemological* foundation for God's being in Anselm's analogical method, and the discerning of the *theological* basis for the unity of God's being and act in a re-appropriation of the Chalcedonian doctrine of the two-fold nature of Christ. The former is the subject of this chapter, the latter will be discussed in chapter four. The purpose of this chapter is to show that Barth's quest for a concept of God which neither identifies nor separates God and humanity culminates in his analysis of Anselm. Here Barth finds an acceptable *positive* epistemological basis upon which to talk of both God and humanity without deifying humanity, or portraying God anthropomorphically. It is this concept of God that gives the revolution of God its most radical foundation.

3.1 ANSELM AND THE BEING OF GOD.

As indicated, the period from the second edition of *Romans* to *Anselm:Fides Quaerens Intellectum* was characterised by a dialectic epistemology. Now, in Anselm Barth is able to find a way of talking about God which enables a positive relationship between God and humanity without emphasising God at the expense of humanity or humanity at the expense of God.

This approach is rooted in Anselm's famous formulation of the concept of God: *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* (something than which nothing greater can be thought).[2] With this concept Barth establishes the object of theology independent of, (but not in contradiction to) human faith, thus simultaneously

answering Feuerbach, *and* providing a sufficiently revolutionary foundation for human existence and praxis. The formulation provides at the same time for the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and humanity, and the positive possibility of human thinking and acting in relation to God. It is gives definition to the God who alone is revolutionary enough to be the ground, limit and orientation of human resistance. It was under the inspiration and limitation of this understanding of God that Barth participated in resistance to Hitler and National Socialism.

Consequently, the necessity of God can be understood as internal to Godself, rather than an external necessity in the faith consciousness of humanity. This concept of God is not "the highest man has conceived" nor is it the "highest man could conceive", it is an object which is "something completely independent of whether men in actual fact conceive it or can conceive it". This independence of God is affirmed in response to Feuerbach's charges of anthropomorphism levelled at liberal theology. God is by definition incomprehensible. Barth clarifies:

> It is so chosen that its actual conception, as well as the possibility of its conception, emerges as being dependent upon an essentially unexpressed condition. All that the formula says about this object is, as far as I can see, this one thing, this one negative: nothing greater than it can be imagined; nothing can be imagined that in any respect whatsoever could or would outdo it; as soon as anyone conceives anything which in any respect whatsoever is greater than it, in so far as it can be conceived at all - then he has not yet begun to conceive it or has already ceased.[3]

This formulation does not describe the nature of God, but merely establishes the concept of God and allows for the possibility of

better understanding that concept from another source, namely, revelation. It is revelation that establishes the connection between the name of God (ie. the concept of God) and the nature of God. Anselm's formulation secures the being of God in Godself, whilst revelation is God's free self-disclosure of God's being in God's act. The *aseity* or self-existence of God is assured on the one hand, whilst God's free self-revelation allows for the human understanding of God. Hence, the Anselmian concept of God actually presupposes the idea of divine revelation.[4] God can only be understood if God chooses to reveal Godself to humanity. This relationship between the being of God and the act of God in revelation is foundational to Barth's entire *Dogmatics*.

Barth suggests that Anselm develops a single argument in which two levels are evident, firstly, the *general* and, secondly, the *special* existence of God.[5] God's *general* existence shows that God is not a figment of human thought, nor an idealisation of humanity, but a self-existent reality:

> God does not only exist in thought but also over and against thought.[6]

God's *special* existence refers not only to the existence of God in the sense that other things exist, but establishes the uniqueness of God in relation to all other existent things. God is not only "one of the items in a complete inventory of the universe", but the self-existent reality which forms the origin, basis and orientation of all that exists apart from God:[7]

> God does not only exist in the manner of other existents (over against thinking, independent, in true objectivity). But God exists in the uniquely true manner that befits the Existent One who is at once the Origin and Basis of all reality behind the concept of existence.[8]

Such a definition of the existence of God establishes the principle that God, as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*, cannot be derived or interpreted from any conception based in human experience. God is knowable only through the gracious act of self-revelation and remains incomprehensible apart from this act.

It follows that only God is ontically rational and the source of all rationality, and rational knowledge and enquiry about God as the object of faith must be derived from the object itself and not from faith. With this God, which cannot be conceived not to exist, as the ontic basis and source of all knowledge, it is then possible to speak of a corresponding or analogous noetic knowledge resulting from a faith-encounter with the object of faith as God reveals Godself to humanity. Barth insists that this correspondence is in fact essential:

> Corresponding to the basis in faith there has to be a reason in knowledge; to the ontic a corresponding noetic necessity.[9]

Faith in a rational being can do no other than lead to a search for the rational understanding of the object of faith. The human formulations about the object of faith derive both their necessity and rationality from the ontic necessity and rationality of God. However, the 'knowledge' of which Barth speaks is grounded in the faith that is inspired by God's revelation. It is the knowledge of faith (*intellectus fidei*).

> The knowledge, the *intellectus*, with which Anselm is concerned is the *intellectus fidei*. This means that it can consist only of positive meditation on the object of faith. It cannot establish this object of faith as such but rather has to understand it in its very incomprehensibility.[10]

Yet this faith is not irrational, because it finds its basis in God who is ultimate rationality.

Anselm taught Barth that the process of 'proving' God is fundamentally a problem of understanding and not of proof. Therefore, in noting that Anselm speaks of God whilst speaking to God, Barth insists that the believer is concerned to expound the "knowledge that is peculiar to faith, the knowledge of what is believed from what is believed".[11] Hence, in order to *verify* talk about God it is necessary to first *clarify* it from the perspective of faith. The task of theology is therefore to enable faith to seek understanding: *Fides quaerens intellectum.* Whereas dialectic methodology insists on the impossibilty and crisis of all human formulations about God; this new method demonstrates that a positive affirmative connection can be made between God's rationality and human reason, God's revolution and human revolution, faith and history. These seemingly exclusive conceptual pairs, although remaining qualitatively different, were now positively related to one another in an analogical relationship grounded in faith which seeks understanding. Herein lies the epistemological roots of the *analogia relationis* and the *analogia fidei* which, as will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, provides the sought after "inner material connection" between God and humanity, faith and history, God's revolution and human revolution.

In the next chapter it is argued that this 'inner material connection', established by God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ

as both *truly God* and *truly human*, provides the historical 'turning point' which makes human praxis possible. In the *analogia fidei*, as the positive relationship between theory and praxis, God's revolution and human revolution, humanity can discern God's original and final Yes. Consequently, the No of the dialectic chasm is subsumed by the Yes of this analogical relationship as faith positively seeks understanding:

> Faith is not in conflict with understanding, but differs from it only in degree (not in kind). Understanding starts from the object present in faith and arrives at rational knowledge of it.[12]

Yet, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, as a new epistemological foundation for theology, also places important conditions upon theological discourse. These conditions replace the dialectic as the source of humility in theological debate, whilst at the same time providing for the positive nature of theology obscured in dialectic thinking. This objective conditioning of theology exposes the limitations of all theological statements, while simultaneously affirming the possibility of theological statements as analogies to the object of faith. Because of the object's free decision to make its rationality accessible to humanity through revelation, analogous human formulations of the divine can be attempted. Yet, theological certainty is to be regarded as relative, whilst the certainty of faith derived from the absoluteness of God, which theology seeks to understand, is not. Further, because of this relativity, progress in theology is possible as it seeks to understand the object of faith within the limits of the criterion of theology: the Scriptures. It is this note of progress which heralds the permanent quest for better

understanding and better analogies to the incomprehensibility of God. Theology does not, however, merely repeat Scripture but seeks to understand the object of faith in the light of, and without contradicting the Scriptures. Finally, true to Barth's emphasis on praxis, theology must be grounded in faith that is in the final analysis obedience to God:

> ,..it goes without saying that where faith is really faith, that is to say obedience, the fight between bats and owls over the reality of the sun's rays will just not happen and that a theology that is grounded on the obedience of faith will be positive theology.[13]

Here again we encounter the inseparability of theory and praxis, faith and history, God's revolution and human revolution, in Barth's thinking.

In summation this shift in Barth's theology affects the concept of the revolution of God in two ways: Firstly, it provides Barth with a theological grounding, distinct but not remote from faith, for God as the original revolution from which all revolutions derive their existence. God is at one and the same moment both nearest to hand and most distant:

> God Himself is the nearest to hand, as the absolutely simple must be, and at the same time the most distant, as the absolutely simple must also be. God Himself is the irresolvable and at the same time that which fills and embraces everything else... God is simple... -so simple that He reduces everyone to silence, and then allows and requires everyone boldly to make Him the object of their thought and speech. (CD II, 1, p.458)

The door opened to the assumption of God's existence as the proper basis from which faith seeks to make understandable the God who has elected to make Godself accessible to humanity. In this way "understanding can only be derived from God , and not God from understanding".[14] God is God's own basis and no

independent verification of God is required. Hence, God's revolution is God's alone and cannot be derived from, nor validated by any other reality. Barth met the force of Feuerbach's critique by establishing God as the primary reality upon whom all secondary realities depend. This truly revolutionary God does not need to be demonstrated, merely understood and obeyed.

Secondly, this concept of God is not based on the negative "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and humanity but rather on the positive possibility of analogous relationships between the reality of God and human formulations about God. Since theology is *fides quaerens intellectum* its task is to seek to understand the object of faith by using appropriate, but relative, analogies by which the absoluteness of God could become intelligible to finite humanity. The search for these analogies proceeds in the humble recognition of the limits of human understanding:

> The attempt may and must be made within the limits of human cognition, to ask about the truth, to distinguish the true from the false, and continually to carry the "approximation" further - although always knowing that the goal is as such is attainable only to faith and not to our viewing or conceiving as such. This means, to seek after better human views and concepts in closer correspondence with their object, and therefore, so far as we are able, to make the witness to the reality of God more complete and clear. (CD II,1, p204)

In this way Barth is able to retain the dialectic's positive purpose of emphasising the transcendence of God, whilst overcoming the radical separation between God and humanity by primarily defining the problem as one of understanding. This

means that God's revolution is not only made intelligible to humanity as God elects to make Godself known in Jesus Christ, but through this self-revelation a positive analogous relationship between the revolution of God and human revolution becomes possible. The primary task of theology is then to understand the essence and nature of the revolution of God in Jesus Christ, because Jesus *is* the historical correspondence to this revolution from above. From this task the true possibility or impossibility of human revolution will emerge. To put it in Barthian language, the true starting point of theology is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and not the faith of humanity. Consequently, the only basis for human theory and praxis is the transcendence of God made immanent in Jesus. Jesus is the ground, limit and orientation of all human statements, praxis and revolutions.

And yet, the intention of the dialectic method is not lost. The designation of God as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* preserves the essential emphasis on the incomprehensibility of God and the qualitative distinction between God and humanity. Nonetheless, God and humanity are positively related through the faith that seeks understanding, ensuring that humanity is not deified and God is not anthropomorphically conceived. For this thesis, human revolution is both de-absolutised and constructively directed by the revolution of God.

By way of critique we need to note two matters. The first, of philosophical interest, cannot be developed within the context of this thesis. The second forms the basis of a critique which will be more full developed at a later stage.

Firstly, it is a philosophical mystery how Barth makes the connection between the general concept of God as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* and the particular Christian conception of God. Surely God can be conceived in this way by people of all theistic faiths, particularly revelation based faiths - a proposition which Barth might not support. There is no logical reason why the analogous understanding of God issuing from faith in a God other than that of the Christian faith should not be equally valid. This plunges us into the murky waters of having to devise or derive criteria for the evaluation of that which is properly basic in talk about God.[15] Barth himself would probably reply that whilst this is an interesting philosophical question it is out of place within the discipline of Christian theology. To which the reply is that in an increasingly pluralistic religious context such matters demand consideration. Nonetheless, this question will take us too far from the heart of this thesis and this brief note will have to suffice.

Secondly, the formulation *fides quaerens intellectum* may have provided Barth with a way beyond the charge of Feuerbach but it falls foul of Marx's critique of Feuerbach:

> Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.[16]

Whilst the emphasis on obedience (praxis) in Barth's theology is never absent, and the whole of his project is directed towards finding an adequate basis for human praxis, would it not have been more consistent for him to speak rather of faith in search of *transformation* or *praxis* rather than understanding? In this

way the praxiological goal of Barth's theology would have been methodologically entrenched. Further, understanding is presupposed in the concept of transformation and therefore nothing of Barth's emphasis would be lost. Could much of the subsequent misappropriation of Barth's theology not have been avoided had he made it clear from the outset that his final purpose was to attest to the transformation of reality in Jesus Christ, and human action that corresponds to that transformation? It is not enough to make obedience a qualification of faith's search for understanding because understanding too easily becomes an end in itself. Obedience must be seen to be the primary search of faith with understanding as a qualification. It is precisely this inversion of Barthian methodological priorities that a Marxian critique requires, and evidence of this method is to be found in the emergence of liberation theologies.[17] The danger of this reversal lies in the possibility of becoming so pre-occupied with human praxis that the theological basis of that praxis, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, can be neglected.

3.2 THE ESSENCE AND NATURE OF GOD.

From these epistemological foundations it is possible to expand upon the essence and nature of God as the basis for the revolution of God. Throughout his theology Barth is "consumed with a passion for God", but this passion is not for a deity removed from the realities of history but for One whose essence and actions are inseparable.[18]

This reinforces the impression that, for Barth, theory and praxis

– even the theory and praxis of God – are indissolubly linked. The God who is *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* reveals Godself as God for humanity and hence the being of God in Godself cannot be isolated from God's act for humankind. Yet, the being and the act of God are also not to be identified with one another. Separation would imply a God removed from and unaffected by human history, identity would result in a God which is merely an anthropomorphic projection of human needs and desires. The only way beyond this dilemma is to ensure inseparability of the being and the act of God *without* identifying them. This is evident throughout Barth's theology:

> For God will be known as the One He is. But precisely as the One He is, He acts. It is as this One who acts, however, that He will be known.(CD II,1 p26)

But this God has acted in human history in Jesus Christ and therefore God does not exist for humanity apart from Jesus:

> The Word, and therefore God Himself, does not exist for us apart from the human-being of Christ.(CD I,2 p166)

In the *Humanity of God* Barth expands:

> It is when we look at Jesus Christ that we know decisively that God's deity does not exclude, but includes His *humanity*... How could God's deity exclude His humanity, since it is God's freedom for love and thus His capacity to be not only the great but the small, not only in and for Himself but also with another distinct from Him... It is His act. *His* is and remains the first and decisive Word, *His* the initiative, *His* the leadership... but we must, however, look further and recognise the fact that actually His deity *encloses humanity in itself*. In Him the fact is once and for all established that God does not exist without man.[19]

All this is possible only because God is the One who loves in the freedom of God's trinitarian essence. As trinity God is free to be God, sufficient in Godself, devoid of external necessity, and as such, free to elect to be the God of humanity. In this sense

the trinitarian structure of Barth's theology becomes apparent. It is this initiative and decision of God, to be the God of humanity, that is disclosed in the act of God in Jesus Christ. The two operative concepts that give definition to the essence and nature of God are included in title of chapter 28 of *Church Dogmatics*: "The Being of God as the One who Loves in Freedom". It is therefore to an examination of God's love and freedom that attention is now given. Marquardt argues that the understanding of God as the One who loves in freedom is Barth's application of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach:

> God is not a basis for interpreting the world but the fact which really transforms it... Those who think that it establishes a theological ontology of transcendence are wrong. Those who see that it is essentially political are correct.[20]

Barth's quest is not for an intellectually satisfying concept of God, but for a way of comprehending the incomprehensible as a basis for radical political praxis. This God who loves in freedom provides that basis.

3.2.1. The Love of God.

Following the concept of the unity of the being and act of God, Barth insists that "God is" means "God loves". God's act is "that of One who loves" and this love is only accessible to humanity because it is revealed in God's act.[21]

> If we say with 1 Jn 4 that God is love, the converse that love is God is forbidden until it is mediated and clarified from God's being and therefore from God's act what the love is which can and must be legitimately identified with God. (CD II,1 p276)

This love, revealed in the act of God, discloses God's existence in Godself as the one who loves without external compulsion.

God's love is primarily the intrinsic love within the Holy Trinity which precedes, but it includes God's extrinsic love toward humanity. The extrinsic dimension of love is dependent upon and reflects the primacy of the intrinsic love. God loves because God is love. Hence, because it is not human misery that makes love necessary, God's love toward humanity is independent of the human condition. The necessity of God's love is grounded in God's being alone. God's act of love causes humanity to be 'taken up' into God's eternal love and thus love is restored as the foundation of all human being. But this revolutionary act, in which God includes humanity, is God's alone, it is the revolution of God's love. Love as the essence of God's trinitarian being creates the foundation and limit for all other loves. The centrality of Barth's analysis of love necessitates a return to this theme when considering the praxis of God in Jesus Christ in the following chapter. For now it is enough to conclude that God's free act of love toward humanity establishes a revolution for humanity that is grounded in God alone, and yet includes total human transformation.

3.2.2 The Freedom of God.

Also basic to the being - act paradigm is the concept of the freedom of God. It follows from what has been said above that if God is *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* only God is truly free and God's freedom is the pre-supposition of all knowledge of God and hence all other freedoms.

The freedom of God, Barth suggests, is God's very own. Ontically it is the freedom within God's trinitarian essence of the Father

for the Son and the Son for the Father in the unity of the Spirit. Noetically "it is the sovereign grace wherein God chooses to commit Himself to man."[22] Hence, the freedom of God is primarily a freedom *for* and not *from*. Yet within this freedom God is, on the one hand, independent *from* all that is not God, whilst, on the other hand, the dependence of all that is not God upon God is maintained. Flowing from the proposition that God is free in Godself, Barth comments:

> When we have established this first proposition that God is He who is free in Himself, we can express His aseity in a second proposition, that He is the One who is free from all origination, conditioning or determination from without, by that which is not Himself. (CD II,1 p307)

It follows that:

> There exists no synthesis in which the same attribute, whether being, spirit, life or love, can be predicated in the same sense both of God and of something else. (CD II,1 p310)

In transcedence God's freedom is the freedom to be the Creator of the creature, as well as the One who at any moment can transform (or terminate) the being of that creature. Nonetheless, God chooses to exercise a freedom in immanence in which God does not remain aloof from creation, but becomes present to creation in that which is not God:

> He does not detach Himself from it (the creature) in an alien aloofness, but is present as the being of its being... God can allow this other which is so utterly distinct from Himself to live and move and have its being within Himself. (CD II,1 p314)

However, God's freedom in transcendence cannot be isolated from God's freedom in immanence. Only because God is incomprehensibly transcendent is God free to immanently reveal Godself as being *for* humanity. This divine immanence is supremely manifested in

the revelation of Godself in Jesus Christ, who is the "possibility of all other possibilities" of the exercise of the freedom of God.[23] The freedom of divine immanence cannot legitimately be sought anywhere but in Jesus Christ in whom God has loved the world in freedom.

Consequently, the freedom of God disclosed in Jesus Christ, is the sole origin and limit of all human freedom, and any search for the content of freedom apart from God's freedom will inevitably lead to idolatry. For this reason Barth asks and answers an important question:

> Where else can we learn that freedom exists and what it is, except in confrontation with God's own freedom offered to us as the source and measure of all freedom?[24]

Accordingly, the only way to discover true humanity and freedom is to start with the essential freedom of God from which all freedom is derived. Human freedom is, therefore, not a 'natural' attribute of humanity but a gift of God's grace, and any talk of this natural freedom must be secondary to, and included in this gift. All revolutionary human struggles for freedom derive their concrete meaning and orientation from God's freedom alone. Human freedom divorced from the freedom of God is captivity.

It is within this consideration that Barth's polemic with natural theology must be seen, for only within the pre-supposition of God as the One who loves in freedom can God truly be God. Natural theology undermines the freedom of God by positing a source for the knowledge of the essence of God apart from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Gollwitzer shows that

it was precisely for the reason that natural theology reduces the transcendent freedom of God from a revolutionary concept to a merely reformist one, that Barth so scathingly attacked Brunner. Gollwitzer clarifies:

> Reformism thinks in terms of the permanence of the system; revolution is a transcending of the system. A revolutionary attitude reaches for the qualitatively new in the light of which the *status quo* appears as the old which can and ought to be overcome, as that which can no longer be regenerated by its own powers.[28]

But the noetically new, the true revolution, can only come from the ontically different, the True Revolutionary, who is made accessible to humanity in God's free self-revelation in Jesus Christ. For Barth, it is this definitive act of God which discloses *both* the trinitarian being of God in Godself and the act of God for humanity. Only *this* God has a sufficiently revolutionary existence over and against humanity; only the act of love in freedom of *this* God can truly radically transform human existence. The proper basis for human existence, love and freedom can only be found in divine existence, love and freedom. God's revolution establishes the foundational possibility or impossibility of human revolutions. An analysis of the content of the revolution of God in the person of Jesus Christ, undertaken in the next chapter, will further expand upon the nature of love and freedom. And in the fifth chapter the relationship between the freedom of God and the command of God receives attention.

In summation, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Barth's long search for the possibility of talking about God and humanity, whilst neither seperating nor equating the two, finds its basis in the God who is *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari*

possit and has revealed Godself to be for humanity as the One who loves in freedom. This alone provides a foundation from which the revolution of God addresses humanity in such a way as to introduce the *qualitatively* new into the old status quo. This concept of God is free from all reversible relationships and organic connections between Godself and humanity, and is a true Archimedean point for all human activity. Herein Barth's understanding of the Gospel in *Romans* as the "hinge" rather than the "door" is given its full theological foundation, for in Godself the whole of created reality finds its centre, the reason for its existence and the possibility of its transformation.[24]

Yet human praxis is given positive potential through the *analogia relationis* in which relative, but indispensible, parables of the being and act of God are enacted by human beings in history on the road towards the full understanding of the object of faith. In this way faith in the God who lives and loves in freedom necessitates corresponding human responses. The revolution of God not only makes human revolution possible but imperative. Nonetheless, the relative nature of these little human revolutions will make it equally imperative that the revolution be a permanent process which does not end until faith has achieved full obedience and understanding. But what shape will human revolution take and to what must it correspond? Consequently, it is instructive to analyse the free act of God's love in the person of Jesus Christ for He is the revolution of God incarnate. The being-act paradigm of God finds its immanent parallel in the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures of Christ

as truly God and truly human. This is the centre of the revolution of God.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. George Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p220.

2. This translation from the latin used by John Hick, *Arguments for the Existence of God*, London, Macmillan, 1970, p70, seemed to best capture the sense of Anselm's phrase, (hereafter *Arguments*).

3. Barth, *Anselm*, p75.

4. Gordon Watson, "Karl Barth and Anselm's Theological Programme", in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol30, 1977, p39.

5. Hick, *Arguments*, p90.

6. Barth, *Anselm* , p101.

7. Hick, *Arguments*, p91.

8. Barth, *Anselm*, p101.

9. ibid. p52.

10. ibid. p40.

11. ibid. p102.

12. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p221.

13. Barth, *Anselm*, p35.

14. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p223.

15. Of particular note in this regard is the work of Alvin Plantinga: "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" in *Nous*, Vol XV, 1981; see also "Is belief in God Rational?", in *Rationality and Religious Beliefs*, edited by C. Delaney, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1979.

16. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" in Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (eds), *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, New York, Anchor, 1967, p402.

17. Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach has been widely appropriated by various tendencies in liberation theology. James Cone, for instance, as a black Theologian, uses it in relation to christian praxis in *Speaking the Truth*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986. The pre-occupation with transforming and liberative praxis underlies the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo, Jose Miguez-Bonino, Leonardo Boff, Hugo Assman, Otto Maduro, Allan Boesak, and other theologians from the third world.

18. H. V. von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, p151.

19. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, p46f.

20. F. W. Marquardt, "Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth", in Hunsinger *Radical Politics*, p68; see also Marquardt's expanded discussion of this theme in *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p236ff.

21. CD II,1 p275.

22. Barth, *The Humanity of God*, p65.

23. CD II,1 p317.

24. Barth, *The Humanity of God*, p67.

25. Helmut Gollwitzer, "The Kingdom of God and Socialism", in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p92.

26. Barth, *Romans* (1922), p35.

CHAPTER FOUR

JESUS CHRIST: THE REVOLUTION OF GOD.

Presupposing an understanding of the epistemological foundations of Barth's thinking, which grounds the revolution of God in God alone and not in any idealisation of humanity, we now move to his central concern. From the conceptualisation of God as that beyond which nothing greater can be conceived, Barth now takes a Kierkegaardian leap of faith to the assumption that this divine being has revealed Godself to humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Ultimately, God's revolution is christological as God's objectivity is made accessible to human cognition in the revelation and election of Jesus Christ. In Jesus the revolution of God is given form and content because this Jesus establishes and discloses the possibility of the qualitative change in which the alienation of God from humanity and humanity from God is overcome and true and full humanity is restored. This reconciliation happens on the basis of the two natures of Jesus as both truly God and truly human.

4.1 TWO-NATURES CHRISTOLOGY.

> Any sound christological discussion will necessarily start not only with an explanation of the *vere Deus* which declares the equality of Jesus Christ with God, but with an explanation of the *vere homo* which declares his equality with us. (CD IV, 2, p26f)

With this starting point Barth clarifies that in Jesus it is not only possible but imperative to talk simultaneously of God and humanity without either identifying or separating them. This christological centre makes possible a 'theological anthropology' which allows for the true knowledge of humanity as well as a

theology which allows for the true knowledge of God.[1] Later Barth stated it as follows:

> ,..exactly in this way Jesus Christ as this Mediator and Reconciler between God and Man, is also the *Revealer* of them both. We do not need to engage in a free-ranging investigation to seek out and construct who and what God truly is, and who and what man truly is, but only to read the truth about both where it resides, namely, in the fullness of their togetherness, their covenant which proclaims itself in Jesus Christ.[2]

It is in the incarnation of Jesus that God graciously gives Godself, as the One who loves in freedom, to humanity, and at the same time includes humanity within the divine. This movement, which is wholly from above to below, makes possible a corresponding but differentiated movement from below to above. It is, as such, a revolution within Godself conducted on behalf of, and freely given for humanity, yet this revolution includes full participation of both human and divine essence in their union in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Further, this Jesus is *like* other human beings in sharing the human essence, but *unlike* all others in being *truly* human, and is thus the embodiment of a restored covenant between God and humanity. In this unlikeness Jesus has an existence which is revolutionary over and against existing perceptions of humanity, thus calling the prevailing forms of humanity radically into question. As the one in whom true humanity finds both its origin and its reconciliation with the divine essence, Jesus humanises and thus transforms all human being and action. Henceforth humanity is defined in terms of the being and actions of Jesus of Nazareth, and these actions disclose the purpose of the incarnation to be the establishment of the possibility of being

and staying human in the world.[3] Human existence and all human activity, including revolution, are to be seen from the perspective of Jesus. Henceforth, it is Jesus who defines the being and action of humanity.

Accordingly, Barth sees Jesus of Nazareth as the human analogy of divine essence and action. "He reflects God."[4] This analogous or corresponding existence of Jesus provides the foundational possibility for subsequent human activity to also bear this analogy or correspondence.

There are three discernible strata in this analogical conception: *Firstly* and originally, God is God in community with Godself, providing the original thesis from which all analogies are derived; *secondly*, Jesus as the primary correspondence to the being of God amongst and for humanity, locates historically the origin of all human analogies; and *thirdly*, the possibility of human praxis bearing secondary but positive analogy to the act of God in Jesus is established. Jesus is *for* humanity because God is *for* humanity and human existence *for God and one another* is possible because of God's revelatory initiative. Note, however, that both organic connection and reversibility are specifically excluded in these analogous relationships, and as such the analogy is always an *analogia relationis* and never an *analogia entis*.[5] In terms of the discussion in chapters two and three, the inner material connection between God and humanity is not to be found in an organic link but in an analogy grounded in a relationship of faith which preserves the distinction without

breaking the connection. Barth summarises as follows:

> His (Jesus) humanity is not, of course, his divinity. In His divinity He is from and to God. In His humanity He is from and to the cosmos. And God is not the cosmos, nor the cosmos God. But His humanity is in the closest correspondence with His divinity. It mirrors and reflects it. Conversely, His divinity has its correspondence in the humanity in which it is mirrored. At this point, therefore, there is similarity. Each is to be recognised in the other. Thus even the life of the man Jesus stands under a two-fold determination. As He is for God, so He is for man, and as He is for man, so He is for God. (CD III, 2, p216)

Consequently, Barth consistently rejects the Catholic concept of *analogia entis* because it fails to emphasise and clarify the "triumph of grace" in Jesus alone. Even in those passages which the Roman Catholic theologian, von Balthasar, identifies as implying Barth's alleged acceptance of the *analogia entis*, Barth's primary motif of the *analogia relationis* prevails.[6] This is conclusively argued by Berkouwer:

> Barth continues to reject the *analogia entis* radically. It constitutes an attack on the divine initiative shown in grace, it infringes upon the power and the triumph of grace in its antithesis to the inability and lost condition of the sinner. The triumph of *free* grace is *the* counter- pole to the *analogia entis*.[7]

Recognising that Barth would prefer that reference should be to the *triumph of Jesus Christ* as the objective revelation of God rather than the abstract concept of grace, the point, nonetheless remains: the inner material connection between God and humanity is not one of essence, and thus organic, but one of relationship. Anderson argues:

> There is no 'connective tissue' which ties human being to divine being,..Barth argues. One cannot ascend 'hand over hand', by way of an ontological 'umbilical chord', from human being to the being of God. Thus Barth rejects not only the Thomistic doctrine of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) but he rejects the claims of a natural theology which attempts to begin with the assumption of correspondence between the human and the divine and establish criteria for

> our knowledge of or relation to God independently of God's gracious act of revelation.[8]

There remains a qualitative distinction between human and divine being, yet the *analogia relationis* provides for a positive correspondence of unlike entities. This *analogia relationis* is further an *analogia fidei* in that faith, as the gift of God's grace, is the medium which sustains the relationship.

Brunner agrees with Barth's criticism of the Catholic concept of the *analogia entis* as the basis for *theologia naturalis*, but believes that in the light of the biblical principle of the *imago dei* something of the concept must remain. It is in Barth's redefinition of the concept of the *analogia fidei* that Brunner finds a response to this question.[9] Yet, Brunner is correct in asserting that there is no way around the apparent 'anthropomorphisms' implicit in the similarity between human and divine "speech" and "word". Barth later concedes this in developing a "structural" concept of the *Imago Dei*.[10] Nonetheless, the question still remains as to how the limits of the 'apparent anthropomorphisms' allowed under this structural concept will be set. This does not, however, detract from the force of Barth's critique of the *analogia entis* as the basis for natural theology.[11]

The Lutheran concept of the *communicatio idiomatum*, which exhibits a "characteristic inversion of above and below, heaven and earth, God and man", is equally problematic for Barth. It fails to clarify the irreversible nature of the relationship between God and humanity.[12] The *communicatio idiomatum*

hypothesised that "Christ's human nature partakes directly in his divine majesty; his divinity partakes directly in his human suffering", whilst Barth supported the alternative view known as the *Extra Calvinisticum* which Hunsinger clarifies as follows:[13]

> In contrast to the Lutheran view, the Reformed conception was more nearly paradoxical than dialectic: Christ's human nature does not directly participate in his divine majesty; rather, it does so indirectly by remaining finite and creaturely even as it is joined hypostatically to his divinity. By the same token, Christ's divinity does not directly partake in his human suffering; rather it does so indirectly by remaining infinite and eternal even as it is joined hypostatically to his humanity.[14]

In this way Barth assures both the unity and the autonomy of the two natures of Christ in such a way that divinity is not limited by humanity nor is humanity subsumed by divinity. The divine is truly divine and the human, truly human. Barth never changed his mind on the assertion that the only way to counter Feuerbach's critique was to ensure "that man's relation with God is in every respect, in principle, an irreversible relation".[15] The *analogia relationis*, therefore, insists on the humanity of the human and the divinity of the divine, and radically rejects any deification of humanity - an emphasis which persisted from Barth's early dialectic period.

Further clarification of this relationship between the two natures of Christ is found, for Barth, in the concepts of *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis*. The force of these concepts is to establish that, within the unity of the two natures, the humanity of Christ has its *existence in* (enhypostasis) his divinity and has *no other mode of existence* (anhypostasis) apart from this divinity. In this way, despite the unity of the two natures, the

supremacy of the eternal Logos is established and the irreversibility of the relationship is secured.[16]

In summation, the *distinction* between the two natures of Jesus maintains the wholly other existence of God over and against created reality whilst the *unity* of the two natures establishes, through the *analogia relationis*, the inner material connection between faith and history, God and humanity, the revolution of God and human revolution. The former is the No whilst the latter is the Yes of God both spoken to humanity in the person of Jesus.

Of primary significance is that this initiating act and gift of God, which originates entirely in Godself, frames, limits and provides the impetus for all other initiatives. Nothing can be added to what God has said and done in Jesus, it can only be repeated. Human freedom and love is entirely enclosed in the freedom and love of God disclosed in the incarnate Lord. Apart from Jesus there is nothing to say about either humanity or God. In terms of this thesis Jesus is the original and true revolutionary in whom all subsequent revolutions find their genesis, prototype and meaning. Our task is to begin with the humanity of Jesus, and nowhere else, for in understanding him the nature of the revolution of God, and thus the ground, limit and orientation of analogous human praxis, is made explicit:

> In the existence of Jesus Christ, the fact that God speaks, gives, orders, comes absolutely first - that man hears, receives, obeys, can and may only follow this first act. In Jesus Christ man's freedom is wholly enclosed in the freedom of God.[17]

4.2 JESUS THE REVOLUTIONARY.

Who according to Barth, is this revolutionary from whom all

human 'little revolutions' are derived? Once again the caution applies that to ask such a question is to prompt a summary of the entirety of Barth's theological project. Of necessity, therefore, this discussion is selective and indicates the directions in which more comprehensive study would lead us.

The four ways in which the "royal man" corresponds to the existence and nature of God provide us with the clues to Barth's answer to these questions.[18] In this section of *Dogmatics* Barth describes the kingly work of the historical Jesus of the Gospels, who is "very man exalted and reconciled". It is here that the central significance of the humanity of Jesus is emphasised:

> For it is here that the decisions are made. There is no other legitimate way to the understanding of the christian life than which we enter here.(CD IV,2 p156)

The humanity of Jesus, in which Barth locates Jesus in his historical context, provides the logical starting point for this analysis. After describing the distinctiveness of the presence of Jesus, Barth proceeds to analyse the ways in which Jesus, as the true human being, corresponds to God.[19] These correspondences to divine being demonstrate the hypothesis that Jesus is not merely included in the revolution of God but *embodies* that revolution. In the language of *Tambach*: The Original Synthesis (God) becomes the *thesis* (humanity) in order to disclose within Godself and for humanity the *indissoluble antithesis* and the *final synthesis* which makes the radical transformation of reality possible. All of this happens and is revealed in the two-fold person of Jesus Christ and is, as such, a revolution wholly from and of God. The existence of Jesus is described in this context as follows:

> ,..as a man He exists analogously to the mode of existence of God. In what He thinks and wills and does, in His attitude, there is a correspondence, a parallel in the creaturely world, to the plan and purpose and work of God. (CD IV,2, p166; KD p185-6.)

These correspondences serve as windows into Barth's theology which are supplemented from wider reading.

4.2.1 Power and weakness: Solidarity with the Original Synthesis.

The first correspondence is related by Barth as follows:

> The royal man shares as such the strange destiny which falls on God in His people and the world - to be the One who is ignored and forgotten and despised and discounted by men... His power is present to men in the form of weakness, His glory in that of lowliness, His victory in that of defeat. His final concealment is that of His suffering and death as a condemned criminal. He who alone is rich is present as the poorest of the poor. (CD IV,2, p167: KD p186.)

Significant in this context are Jesus' share in the rejection and suffering of God, and the concepts of power and powerlessness. Here we encounter the mystery of the passion, suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth, in which we are confronted by the "Judge who in this passion takes the place of those who ought to be judged".[20] The rejection and passion of the person Jesus is the suffering of God in which the destruction that threatens all creation, and thus God as creator, is confronted by God. It is God in God's free will taking responsibility in this one human being to remove the separation between creature and creator; it is God's resounding and revolutionary No to all that threatens God's creation and creatures. Inevitably the human being Jesus of Nazareth, in bearing correspondence to this No of God, shares the rejection and suffering implicit in the No. Thus, God takes human suffering seriously by including it in the praxis of God in the

humanity of Jesus.[21]

Furthermore, in his humiliation and death, Jesus confronts the powerful of his time with an image of powerlessness and lowliness. This reveals the nature of the power of God as power which comes in the form of lowliness, weakness, humility and even humiliation. Barth contends "that in this humiliation God is supremely God" because it is precisely here that the covenant between God and humanity is re-established on the basis of the obedience of the human being, Jesus of Nazareth.

> In this passion there is legally re-established the covenant between God and man, broken by man but kept by God. On that one day of the suffering of that One there took place the comprehensive turning in the history of all creation - with all that this involves. (CD IV,1 p246)

The *humiliation* of Jesus establishes the turning point, the revolution, that comes from God within human history. Henceforth all power is to be seen in the light of the power of humility and servanthood, the power of powerlessness and weakness. The *humanity* of Jesus revolutionises all human definitions of power, and overshadows and radically questions the glory of the least and the greatest human kingdoms. In Lehmanns words:

> To the weakness of power, Jesus juxtaposes the power of weakness.[22]

Consequently, the humanity of God in Jesus becomes the criterion for the understanding and exercise of human power, which is not to be measured against God's indefinable omnipotence but in terms of the presence and suffering of the human Jesus amongst humanity.

The implication here is, firstly, that only powerlessness is able

to truly effect a transformation in the human misuse and abuse of power, and it is only the weak who can 'evangelise' the powerful in such a way that human existence is truly humanised and the abuse of power is not merely inverted.[23] This means that although theologically speaking the possibility of transformation is established 'from above', in a sociological sense actual human change can only come 'from below' because God in Jesus Christ has elected to reveal Godself 'below'. Hope for true humanity comes not from the rich and powerful, but from the excluded and oppressed on the margins of society. This has profound consequences for ecclesiology. It presupposes a church of the poor and oppressed which actively seeks the transformation of the human reality oppressing its people. The weakness, humiliation and rejection of Jesus is a perpetual and revolutionary negation of all exercise of human power that is manifested as tyranny or chaos.

Secondly, constant confrontation between the prevailing definitions of power and the powerlessness of Jesus is inevitable. Ethically this requires permanent confrontation with human power because failure to do so results, implicitly or explicitly, in the "objective sacralisation of power".[24] This follows from the reality that in a world which has "fallen away" from God the only legitimate place for the true human being, the human being in obedience to God, is in the "same obscure and shameful corner" to which the world has relegated God.[25] The exercise of human power is perpetually negated by a revolutionary reversal of prevailing definitions and an

insistence on the power of weakness. The powerlessness and poverty of Jesus, which is analogous to the powerlessness and poverty of God rejected in the world, can only be given human expression in the form of the refusal of power. This alone provides the necessary impetus for the qualitative transformation of humanity and creation. Brueggemann instructively captures the significance of this reversal of power:

> That tradition of radical criticism is about the self-giving emptiness of Jesus, about dominion through the loss of dominion, and about fulness coming only by self-emptying. The emptying is not to be related to a meditative self-negating, for it is a thoroughly political image concerned with the willing surrender of power; it is the very thing kings cannot do and yet remain kings. Thus the entire royal self-understanding is refuted. The empty one who willingly surrendered power for obedience is the ultimately powerful one who can permit humanness where no other has authority to do so.[26]

Consequently, truly revolutionary human praxis does not consist in the replacement of one form of human power with another, but in the exposure of the weakness of all human power and the affirmation of the power of powerlessness. This affirmation could be interpreted in two divergent ways: On the one hand it could be regarded as the permanent anarchistic negation of all human power; or it could be accused of idealistically ignoring the necessity for and ambiguity implicit in the human exercise of power. Barth's American critics, most notably Reinhold Niebuhr, challenged his theology on this very point.[27] However, the point is: Whilst Niebuhr and others operated pragmatically from within the dominant American exercise of power, and thus reformistically, Barth demanded a more radical questioning of the possibility of the legitimate exercise of human power, and was thus essentially revolutionary - even anarchistic. The

powerlessness of Jesus therefore restated in theological form what Barth had said more politically earlier: there is no form of legality that is not ultimately illegal, no form of authority that is not ultimately based on tyranny. This does not mean that Barth, in practice, denied the necessity of human authority. He merely established the relativity and self-destructive nature of power and insisted on its perpetual negation in the search for truly human life. The only way beyond this impasse exists in a revolutionary affimation of the power of the powerless. This is what may best be described as *eschatological anarchism*, and is more fully discussed in the next chapter.

4.2.2 Solidarity with the poor: Identification with the Thesis.

If the power of weakness alone is truly revolutionary then the second correspondence follows from the first:

> It is of a piece with this that - almost to the point of prejudice - He (Jesus) ignored all those who are high and mighty and wealthy in the world in favour of the weak and meek and lowly. He did this even in the moral sphere, ignoring the just for the sinners, and in the spiritual sphere, finally ignoring Israel for the Gentiles. It was to the latter group and not the former that he found himself called. (CD IV,2 p168-9: KD p188.)

Throughout the breadth of Barth's theology this perspective is consistently clear. As early as the first edition of *Romans*, Barth insists that God "is one-sidedly a God of the lowly" [28] and throughout *Church Dogmatics* the theme is the same. It is important to examine in greater detail how Barth expressed this theme because of its significance for human praxis, as well as its currency in present theological debate.[29]

Firstly, this solidarity of Jesus with the poor is not primarily

founded in a projected humanistic compassion but in Jesus' correspondence to the God who has been relegated to obscurity and poverty by the world. Because God is poor in the world so also is Jesus, and in this poverty re-establishes the humanity of all people who, with God have been banished to the shadows of life. Jesus' solidarity with the *thesis* (humanity) is the logical historical consequence of his identification with the *Original Synthesis* (God). In this way Barth refuses to allow the possibility of God being a projection of human need or experience. Jesus stands with the poor, not because the poor have need, or because their cause for liberation is just, or because they possess any qualities that commend them to God, but *primarily because God is poor in this world.*

Accordingly, it is through and amongst the poor that God is accessible to humanity. And further, true humanity is only possible in community with the marginalised of society. This primary solidarity of Jesus with God inevitably leads, by analogy, to his secondary solidarity with the poor and lowly. Therefore, it is in solidarity with the poor alone that humanity is liberated to bear analogous witness to the being and act of God. The poverty of Jesus corresponds to the poverty of God, and thus the humanity of Jesus amongst the poor is grounded, orientated and limited by God's revolutionary rejection of the definitions of humanness, wealth and poverty of the world. If human praxis is to correspond to divine praxis it must be founded on God's revolutionary partisanship with the poor and lowly and must reflect the same bias. In short, the church and the

christian must opt for solidarity with the poor in correspondence to God's act in Jesus.

Hence for Barth, in contrast to the main stream of liberation theologians, solidarity with the poor is founded in God's revolution from above and not in revolutionary consciousness from below.[30] This does not mean that God's movement from above does not issue in a corresponding human movement from below. The point is that the source and impetus of this human movement is found solely in the act of God. In this sense the humanism of God is the foundation of all humanism and the revolution of God is the basis of all revolution.[31] In his revolutionary humanity Jesus transvalues all prevailing human values and effects a radical reversal in the definition of humanness. It is amongst the ones whom the world has dehumanised and regarded as sub-human that Jesus reveals true humanness.

Secondly and consequently, in Jesus true humanity is revealed as a particular kind of co-humanity, namely solidarity with the poor and lowly, but this solidarity does not have a purely anthropological but a 'theological-anthropological' basis. This co-humanity is *generally* established in the radical being *for* and *with* others of Jesus of Nazareth, in whom it is finally established that to be human is to be together with and for other human beings. There is no such thing as "humanity without the fellowman, humanity of man in isolation".[32] Basic to humanity is, therefore, "eye to eye" encounter and mutual communication with the other, issuing in the giving and receiving of assistance.

Consequently, all idealistic and individualistic definitions of humanity are to be rejected because true humanity can only be derived from the co-humanity of Jesus and must reflect this co-humanity:

> What then is the common form basic to our humanity? Barth says that the criterion for determining this human form is Jesus Christ, the humanity of Jesus. Accordingly, many definitions of humanity are inadequate. For example any definition of man in which man is abstracted from the co-existence of his fellowman is false. Any definition of man as a being in and for himself, as a being opposed to or neutral to his fellowman, or whereby his humanity is subsequently or secondarily determined rather than seen as an essential and primary aspect of being with fellowmen, is false or inhuman.[33]

Barth himself puts it positively:

> The humanity of man consists in the determination of his being as a being-with-the-other... It is not as he is for himself but with others, not in loneliness but in fellowship, that he is genuinely human, that he achieves true humanity... that he corresponds to his determination to be God's covenant partner. (CD III,2 p243)

Thus, in general, humanity that is not solidarity is inhumanity, but, in the light of Jesus' partisanship for and with the poor and lowly we must add that *in particular* humanity is to be defined as co-humanity with those who, with God, are marginalised in human history. It is consistent with Barth to assert that true humanity consists in solidarity with, and partiality towards the poor and lowly, in correspondence to Jesus' solidarity with the poverty of God in the world. For the present theme the revolutionary nature of this analysis of Jesus' act cannot be under-estimated. To assert that co-humanity with the poor is foundational to the definition of humanity, is to judge all human activity that either favours the rich and powerful or inordinately emphasises the individual, to be *inhumanity*.

This definition of humanity also has profound ideological consequences for the limits and direction of human praxis. Amongst other issues, it raises questions about the ethics of economic and political systems which do not give primary consideration to collective existence. Such contemporary issues as the role of private ownership in society, poverty in developing countries, the function of computer-age technology and the economic disparities between the First and Third worlds all beg re-evaluation in the light of this definition of humanity which finds its Archimedean point in the humanity of Jesus.

Barth's rejection of the capitalist economic order, and all reformist modifications thereof, is grounded in this concept of co-humanity. Capitalism denies this collective definition of humanity in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it endangers community with its emphasis on competition and secondly, the idea of the private ownership of the means of production is grounded in the principle of the exploitation of the weak by the strong and thus creates dependence rather than co-humanity. A theology which demands co-humanity with the poor and exploited is therefore, by nature, revolutionary in a capitalist world.[34] This does not, however, imply uncritical acceptance of the socialist programme - that too comes under theological scrutiny, but from a different perspective. In the next chapter we will give closer consideration to these praxiological consequences.

Thirdly, Barth gives wide definition to the terms poor, weak and lowly, insisting that these concepts are softened (made less

revolutionary) by either denying the starkness of the contrasts Jesus makes or reducing them to economic considerations alone:

> There should be no softening of the starkness with which wealth and poverty are contrasted and estimated even in the economic sense. But the Matthean version of the beatitudes guards us against another form of softening, i.e., the limiting of the concepts to a purely economic sense... It is true in every sense, irrespective of the concrete form taken by riches and poverty, that the hungry and thirsty and strangers and sick and captives are the brothers of Jesus in whom He Himself is either recognised or not recognised. (CD IV,2 p170; KD p189.)

A reductionistic definition would remove from the concepts their revolutionary breadth and cause an insufficiently radical transformation of humanity and creation. Barth's insistence is upon a revolution that not only faces economic disparities, but also deals with the moral and spiritual roots of human poverty. Unlike human revolutions, which tend to replace one form of the old order with another, Jesus' solidarity with the poor and lowly embraces and transforms the totality of human poverty, giving rise to a far more radical and true revolution. The danger here is that in a particular human situation the definition of poverty could become so diffuse that the radicality of God's revolution is lost. Positively, however, Barth's definitions liberate human revolutions from a narrow materialism by facing the deeper causes of human misery. Nonetheless, Barth ultimately fails to provide adequate tools with which to give concrete definition to these concepts in specific human contexts. It is not enough to proclaim God's general solidarity with the poor and lowly. The further step of defining God's solidarity with particular poor and lowly people in a given historical situation must also be taken. Just how Barth makes the transition from the general to the particular

solidarity of God is unclear.

It is for this reason that the Barmen Declaration of 1934 has been criticised for not explicitly siding with the Jews in their oppression. Here we are confronted with an example of what Gollwitzer has called "the bourgeois slant even to a theology antibourgeois in tendency",[35] for despite a theology which demands solidarity with the victims of history, Barth has negligibly little to say about the suffering of the Jews in particular, or about the human reality of oppression in general. Apart from the recognition of Jesus' obvious partiality for the poor, it is difficult to understand how a theologian who placed so much emphasis on the Scriptures could have missed the volume of reference to oppression in the Hebrew Bible.[36] Perhaps Lapide is correct in his indictment relating to Barth's acknowledgement of failure regarding solidarity with the Jews because of interests that lay 'elsewhere':

> For a Jewish reader of the Barmen Articles, however, 'elsewhere' can only mean the Church, anxiety for its identity, concern to differentiate it from the false claims of the Nazi Christians, precision in defining the Church evangelically.[37]

Yet, as we shall see, Barth sought, at least theoretically, to replace the proletariat with the church as the locus of human revolution. His pre-occupation with the church is, therefore, an essential moment in the revolution of God. Consequently, others have been more positive in their assessment of Barmen. Cochrane describes it as a "truly revolutionary document";[38] Bethge regards its emphasis on the freedom of the Word of God as "the ground and guarantor of all psychological, personal, social,

economic and political freedoms";[39] and de Gruchy concludes that the power of Barmen does not lie in the faithfulness (or lack thereof) of the Confessing Church but in "its witness to the liberating Lord Jesus Christ".[40] Nonetheless, the ambiguity of the theology of Barmen remains, for it is ultimately in praxis that theology is verified or disputed. Unless this theology enables true humanity within the specific social realities of its context it is open to abuse and misappropriation. As Villa-Vicencio indicates, Barth was not unaware of this need.[41]

Yet the deeper reason for this difficulty with Barmen more probably lies in a class consciousness that prevented Barth (and others) from seeing the revolutionary imperatives of his own theology. If this were not so we would have expected him to develop the christological solidarity *with* the victim into a revolutionary solidarity *amongst* the victims as they seek to humanise their world. For a theology of the revolution of God to form the basis of revolutionary human politics this step is essential. It is, however, a legitimate extension and not a contradiction of Barth's theology to develop this concept of solidarity amongst the poor and oppressed as they change their world from below. What is lacking in Barth is not the possibility of this theology but an emphasis on the oppression that demands such theology. In a word, Barth was neither Jew, nor poor, and the oppression he encountered was not unbearable; but his theology contains within it revolutionary potential.

Fourthly, this solidarity of Jesus means judgement upon the rich and powerful and freedom for the poor and lowly:

> God always takes his stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and deprived of it. (CD II,1 p386)

This decision of God, God's election in freedom to assume human form in the incarnation of Jesus, is both God's resounding No to all who oppress and dehumanise and God's clear Yes to the victims as they struggle for dignity and liberation. This does not imply divine legitimation for the praxis of the poor and lowly, nor does it mean that all rich are immoral and all poor righteous. It merely establishes the rightness of their struggle for liberation from poverty and oppression and provides the framework for that struggle. In short, it discloses the purpose of God as the establishment of true and full humanness for a dehumanised humanity. As we shall see the Yes and not the No is God's final word to humanity in Jesus, and the No is enclosed within, and spoken for the sake of the Yes. Once again, however, we note that Barth's emphasis was on the No to the ruling powers and not on the Yes to the oppressed.

4.2.3 Jesus freedom and human options: The Indissoluble Antithesis

Having clarified Barth's understanding of Jesus' identification with the poor it is vital to now recognise his relationship to particular human programmes. This is described by Barth in the third correspondence:

> The conformity of the man Jesus with the mode of existence and attitude of God consists actively in what we can only call the pronouncedly revolutionary character of His relationship with the orders of life and value current in the world around Him... He did not range Himself and His disciples with any of the existing parties... Nor did He set up against them an opposing party... Why His existence was

> so unsettling on every side was that He set all programmes and principles into question. And He did this simply because He enjoyed and displayed, in relation to all the orders positively or negatively contested around Him, a remarkable freedom which we can only describe as royal. (CD IV,2 p172; KD p191.)

This freedom makes Jesus "a revolutionary far more radical than any that came either before or after Him" because it corresponds to God's ultimate freedom over all of history.[42] It bears testimony to the transitory validity of all human history, which becomes apparent when confronted by the God from whom that history derives its life and frontier. God alone is the ground, limit and orientation of all human programmes and principles, and Jesus is an "unmistakeable sign" of God's "freedom and kingdom and over-ruling of history".[43] As such Jesus' task was not to start his own revolution but to reveal the true revolution that comes from God as the Archimedean point of all human history and praxis.

Even Jesus' apparrent "passive conservatism" in permitting what should be set aside is no more "than a provisional and qualified respect" for the human order, whilst remaining superior to it. More significant, however, are the points at which the superiority of Jesus finds expression in opposition to the prevailing order, revealing the intrusion of the revolution of God. With reference to the biblical analogy of the old and new garments and wine (Mk 2:21f) Barth concludes as follows:

> For Jesus, and as seen in the light of Jesus, there can be no doubt that all human orders are this old garment or old bottles, which are in the last resort quite incompatible with the new cloth and the new wine of the kingdom of God... All true and serious conservatism, and all true and serious belief in progress, presupposes that there is a certain compatibility between the new and the old, and that they can

> stand in a certain neutrality the one to the other. But the new thing of Jesus is the invading kingdom of God revealed in its alienating antithesis to the world and all its orders... There is thus concealed and revealed, both in what we called the passive conservatism of Jesus and the individual signs and penetrations which question the world of human orders as such, the radical and indissoluble antithesis of the kingdom of God to all human kingdoms, the unanswerable question, the irremediable unsettlement introduced by the kingdom of God into all human kingdoms. (CD IV,2 p177; KD p197.)

It is in this sense that Barth still maintains the infinite qualitative distinction evident in the second edition of *Romans*, but now this distinction is christologically rather than theocratically grounded. Essentially, Jesus as the indissoluble antithesis does not deny the existence of human kingdoms or revolutions, he merely exposes their relative character and points them to the kingdom and revolution of God as the basis for their existence. Hence, the revolution of God revealed Jesus of Nazareth, is established as the ground, limit and orientation of all human revolutions and practice.

Historical forces and kingdoms are, in the final analysis, confirmed rather than fundamentally shaken by human activities; their power can only be truly broken by the invasion of the kingdom of God:

> The little revolutions and attacks by which they (historical forces and kingdoms) seem to be more shaken than they really are can never succeed even in limiting, let alone destroying, their power. It is the kingdom, the revolution of God which breaks, which has already broken them. Jesus is their Conqueror. (CD IV,2 p544; KD p615.)

Furthermore, if the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ is supreme, it follows that the principalities and powers of this world have no ultimacy, because "God alone rules" the "kingdom of God is the only true kingdom".[44]

> This divine laughter rings out over the folly of all our crude or refined human imperialisms, and they will inevitably come to grief on this laughter. (CD III,3 p160)

God alone transcends the antithesis of necessity and freedom and to attribute ultimacy to anything other than Godself is idolatry. It is in this connection that Barth understands the destruction of the Third Reich:

> No sentence is more dangerous or revolutionary than God is One and there is no other like Him. All the permanencies of the world draw their life from ideologies and mythologies, from open or disguised religions, and to this extent from all possible forms of deity or divinity. It was on the truth of the sentence that God is One that the "Third Reich" of Adolf Hitler made shipwreck. (CD II,1 p444)

God is both the ruler and goal of all created reality, and all human activities, powers and principalities serve as mere instruments of God's purpose, to establish true humanity. Human powers which deviate from fulfilling this purpose of God lose their instrumentality and legitimacy, and are radically called into question. And there is no human formulation to which this judgement does not ultimately apply.

At this point it is necessary to understand Barth's concept of *Das Nichtige* (nothingness), for it is within this concept that he examines the evil which infuses all humanity and human systems, against which God revolts.

> Nothingness is the danger, assault and menace under which the creature as such must exist. (CD III,3 p363)

As such it is neither God nor creature, but exists as an impossible possibility which can only become known to humanity as the antithesis of the will of God disclosed in Jesus Christ. It is thus the object of God's judgement, that from which God

separates Godself and against which God asserts Godself. In short, it is that, in relation to which God exercises God's freedom as negation, to which the final and absolute No of God applies. Furthermore, the creature itself is incapable of achieving victory over nothingness, this is the domain of God alone, for God alone knows that to which God says No and therefore every human no cannot be more than an analogy to the great No of God.

In the light of this the judgement of God, announced in the humanity of Jesus, on all human programmes, powers and principalities is a negation of the nothingness that endangers true humanity. It indicates that at any and every moment human action is threatened by nothingness, implying that all human programmes inevitably contain the seeds of their own destruction. Only God's revolution is radical enough to deal with nothingness. In the revolutionary freedom of Jesus nothingness is robbed of its power to 'nihilate':

> Because Jesus is Victor, nothingness is routed and extirpated. It is that which in this One who was both very God and very man has been absolutely set behind, not only by God, but in unity with him by man and therefore the creature. It is that from whose influence, dominion and power the relationship between creator and creature was absolutely set free in Jesus Christ... It is no longer to be feared. It can no longer "nihilate". (CD III,3 p363)

For human praxis this means freedom from the kind of captivity or slavish adherence to human political programmes and ideologies that inevitably leads to nothingness and the No of God. It implies a sober assessment of these programmes under the constant reminder that they all contain the seeds of their own dissolution and need to be transformed by the 'new from above', in order to

be liberated from being just another manifestation of the condemned old order. This praxis consists in bearing historical witness to the antithetical and revolutionary freedom of Jesus in relation to human orders and programmes. The question is, and upon the answer to this question Barth's theological project stands or falls: Does the human attempt to bear correspondence to this revolutionary freedom of Jesus lead to ideological neutrality and thus praxiological paralysis? Or does it provide a solid basis from which humanity can engage in a permanent struggle against nothingness? Does Barth adequately consider the ideological character of all human action? If so is this revolutionary freedom of Jesus not simply Barth's theological alternative to what sociologists have called "epistemological vigilance"?[45] By this it is meant: does the No of God function as a permanent reminder and guard against the dangers of ideological captivity? In the next chapter it is argued that the revolutionary freedom of Jesus, coupled with Jesus' co-humanity with the poor, provides a radical theological basis from which to approach human formulations, programmes and structures with ideological suspicion and permanent vigilance. At the same time this theology also establishes a canon against which the humanity of human revolution can be measured in order to ensure that revolution remains humanising. The No of God can also not be seen apart from God's original and final Yes.

On this basis Barth insists that his position does not imply "practical neutrality" because it demands costly testimony to the broken lordship of particular powers in specific histories.[46]

This no of God is, according to Barth, not to be seen as either the first or last word but rather as a continual reminder that there is no organic compatibility between heaven and earth, humanity and God, God's revolution and human revolution:

> And we have to copy this divine separation in all that we have said so far. But again, we do not really know Jesus (the Jesus of the New Testament) if we do not know Him as this poor man, as this (if we may risk the dangerous word) partisan of the poor, and finally as this revolutionary. We have to be warned, therefore, against every attempt to interpret and use him as a further and perhaps supreme self-manifestation and self-actualisation of the old Adam. But this certainly cannot be our last word.(CD IV,2 p180; KD p200.)

Accordingly, the command of God, in correspondence to the life of Jesus, must be heard anew in every historical context, whilst continually under the reminder of the final incompatibility of God's kingdom with human kingdoms. This incompatibility cannot be used as an excuse for apathy. It is an eschatological reminder of the perpetual revolution of God which establishes the positive possibility of human revolutions participating in the new order 'from above', rather than being another form of the old order 'from below'. Barth's emphasis on the freedom of Jesus is thus meant to form the basis of truly revolutionary human praxis, it is, in theory, anarchistic rather than quietistic because its function is to provide a lever with which to ensure perpetual qualitative change within history. The relativising of all socio-political revolution does not deny revolution *per se*. It locates the origin of all revolution in God alone, demanding participation in a more radical revolution in which the *qualitatively new* becomes reality. In practice, however, it is open to quietistic abuse if the move from the general principle

of this revolutionary freedom to its particular application is not clarified. This is the subject of the final chapter.

4.2.4 Jesus as the Yes of God: The final synthesis.

For Barth, the fourth correspondence the humanity of Jesus bears to the nature of God is the most significant because in Jesus the No of God is ultimately only spoken for the sake of the final Yes of God to humanity:

> The decisive point to which we now turn is that the royal man Jesus is the image and reflection of the divine Yes to man and his cosmos. It is God's critical Yes, dividing and disclosing and punishing with all the power of the sword. And in this respect too, as we shall see, there corresponds to it the Yes spoken in the existence and act of the man Jesus. But, like the Yes of God, it is really a Yes and not a No, even though it includes and is accompanied by a powerful No. (CD IV,2 p180; KD p200-1.)

Despite the intensity of the No, God only says No in Jesus in order to say Yes, indicating that God is not against, but *for* humanity. As echoed in the life of Jesus, the No of God is an integral moment in the disclosure of God's love and mercy toward humankind. Jesus reveals that God has originally and finally said Yes to humanity, and that the No is always spoken for the sake of the Yes. However, as Barth clarifies in a sermon in 1959 unless the concealed No has been heard the Yes cannot be appreciated.[47] Markus, eldest son of Karl Barth, perceives this emphasis upon the Yes to be the most significant shift in his father's theology:

> If there was a decisive development in his thinking between 1921 and 1935 - a change from the 'old' to the 'new' Barth, as some have said - it came in the recognition that God, ultimately, says 'Yes' to his creature. [48]

Whereas in the dialectic period the No is dominant, now the No is

uttered for the sake of the Yes.

It is within this framework that all we have said about Jesus must be understood. Jesus' correspondence with God's powerlessness and humiliation in the world, his subsequent radical solidarity with the poor and lowly, and his revolutionary freedom from all human programmmes, can only be properly understood as constitutive moments in God's affirmation of humanity and creation. God does all this for no other reason than to re-establish the humanity of humankind, and exalt humanity to dignity as the crown of God's creation. All this bears true witness to God as the One who *loves* in freedom. God's being in Godself and God's act for humanity cannot be separated.[49]

It is this love that finally distinguishes God's revolution as a positive movement from above, which does not destroy humanity but enables the transformation of human reality, and the destruction of all that brings misery and denies life. All deficient human definitions of power and humanness are negated for the sake of a true exercise of power and true humanness; all relative human powers, principalities and programmes are radically called into question for the sake of the permanent revolution of God, which alone can establish true justice and peace on earth. The Yes of God revealed in the human Jesus comforts humanity in its misery and alienation, assuring it that despite all the misunderstandings and distortions of what it thinks "to be good and true and beautiful and comforting and helpful and liberating and redemptive", God in seeing their misery has brought the good news of its end.[50] Jesus indeed revealed the judgement of God,

but he most decisively disclosed the "true and most inward will of God" as the mercy of God and the coming of God's kingdom of peace.[31]

> The man Jesus is decisively created after God in the fact that He is as man the work and revelation of the mercy of God, of His Gospel, His kingdom of peace, His atonement, and that He is His creaturely and earthly and historical correspondence in this sense. (CD IV,2 p181; KD p201.)

Judgement is thus a servant of mercy and love; the No is uttered for the sake of the Yes.

For the analysis of the revolution of God this determines that God's revolution is ultimately *for* and *on behalf of* humanity and not against it. Everything God has done in Jesus is for the benefit of human beings, so that even when the No of judgement is uttered it is only as a servant of the Yes of grace. By analogy human revolution cannot ultimately be a negation, but rather an affirmation. In the image of the revolution of God, human revolution can only utter a No to a particular prevailing order because it finally wishes to say Yes to full and true humanity for all, even the enemy. Barth's reminder of the nearness of the revolutionary to God is still apposite, but not in the sense that the revolutionary corresponds to the negative No of God, but because of a positive correspondence to the Yes of God. The revolution that only says No is now by definition reactionary because it does not participate in God's original and final Yes.

This revolutionary Yes is evident in many forms in Barth's theology, however, in order to better understand the nature of the Yes it is necessary to expand upon three aspects: Yes as

Justification; Yes as Hope; and Yes as Love.

Yes as Justification

It is within the reality of justification that the No within the Yes of the revolution of God is actually addressed to humanity. In the judgement of God announced in the death of Jesus Christ, humanity which has become captive to nothingness is destroyed. This is completed by the positive act of the resurrection in which the No of God to nothingness is confirmed, and the final Yes of God to humanity is revealed. In Barth's words, "the election of rejected man did not take place without the rejection of elected man", but also " we are dealing with the history in which man is both rejected and elected".[52] Here again in the assertion of rejection for the sake of election the emphasis is on the No for the sake of the final Yes. The divine election and rejection of Jesus becomes the basis of the rejection and election of humanity, and in this way justification becomes the foundation of the possibility of radical human transformation. God does for humanity what humanity cannot do for itself in enabling a transformation from the old to the qualitatively new, in short, a revolution.

But, because of the connection between justification and justice, this revolution has profound consequences for human social praxis. Having heard the Yes of God humanity is compelled to seek the kind of social justice which is consistent with this gift of God. Villa-Vicencio argues that justification provides a radical Archimedean point for human praxis:

> This spiritual centre to a revolutionary struggle in a

> religious community, can be more dangerous than the most revolutionary Marxist theory. When an oppressed people realise that their oppression is not willed by God, and that their political and economic liberation is an inherent part of their God given gift of salvation, they become an irrepressible constituency of people which no oppressor can afford to ignore.[53]

Justification becomes a 'spirituality of justice' which provides the theological infrastructure in the struggle for full and true human life. The source of justice is located in the divine revolution, giving the human quest for justice and liberation a transcendent centre sufficiently radical to ensure real transformation. Human praxis emanating from commitment to this positive centre is bound to be more subversive and more threatening to human principalities and powers than the most radical autonomous human revolution. Further, as is argued in the next chapter, in the light of Jesus' identification with the poor and lowly, this spirituality of justice is to be exercised *with* and *for* marginalised humanity.

Yet, if justification establishes the human perception of the Yes of God as the hinge around which all human praxis revolves, then it follows that the church has no more important a function than to proclaim this justification. This is the thrust of Barth's 1938 essay entitled *"Rechtfertigung und Recht"* in which he insists that the Church *"must have the freedom to proclaim divine justification"*, and the justness of the State will be measured according to the degree to which it grants this freedom.[54] In this way the church in solidarity with the poor replaces the Marxian proletariat as the analogous human locus of the revolution of God when it exercises the freedom to proclaim

justification as the reality that makes the true transformation of human society possible:

> Wherever this right is recognised, and wherever a true Church makes the right use of it (and the free preaching of justification will see to it that things fall into their true place), there we shall find a legitimate human independence; tyranny on the one hand, and anarchy on the other, Facism and Bolshevism alike will be dethroned; and the true order of human affairs - the justice, wisdom and peace, equity and care for human welfare which are necessary to that order - will arise.[55]

To hear and proclaim justification as the Yes of God is thus to locate, in history, the turning point which enables a qualitatively new human situation. The church can perform no greater service to the state than to proclaim this revolutionary transformation of human existence. To criticise the demonic actions of the self-justifying state is an inevitable moment in the declaration of justification through grace alone. And, as is evident in Barth's thinking from 1919, every state is under constant threat of this demonisation. Justification also judges all self-justifying human revolution, indicating that the *just* centre of both the state and its revolutionary alternative are positively proclaimed in the Yes of justification. At the risk of repetition, the No of criticism is uttered for the sake of the Yes of justice.

Yes as Hope

This Yes is the great hope - initially given to the victims of the earth in Jesus' identification with them; given also to the victimisers in Jesus' opposition to them; and shown to all in Jesus' revolutionary freedom from human options which inevitably contain the seeds of their own negation. But this hope is finally

established for all humanity in the resurrection of Jesus which does not introduce the great hope in contradistinction to the rest of Jesus' life and death, but rather confirms that the whole act of God in Jesus is actually, in the end, a Yes to humanity:

> ,..the relevance of the self-manifestation of the risen Christ is to be found always in the demonstration of His identity with the One who had lived and taught and acted and gone to His death. It is true that this One in His history and existence is the reconciliation of the world with God and therefore the new man, the dawning of the new creation, the beginning of the new world. But it is not only in His resurrection that He is this. He became and was and is it in His life and death. The point about the resurrection is that in it He reveals Himself as the One who was and who is and who will be this in His life and death. (CD IV,2 p145)

Consequently the purpose of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus is to create for humanity a great hope which provides the foundation and stimulus for all human hope. Thus Barth in defining Christian hope as the "coming alive of the promise incorporated in the world of men, or as the taking root of the promise implanted in it" sees this hope as human correspondence in thought, word and act to the great hope present in Jesus:

> Where there is the great hope, small hopes are imperative for the immediate future. These hopes have their basis and strength only in the great hope. They are small, relative and conditioned. In their detailed content they may be mistaken and open to correction. But within these limits they are genuine hopes... But this necessarily means that he (the Christian) is daily willing and ready for the small and provisional and imperfect service of God which the immediate future will demand of him because a great and final and perfect being in the service of God is the future of the world and all men, and therefore his future also. (CD IV,1 p121 revised.)

Concretely, participation in the great hope established in Jesus means actively advocating and supporting human options that, in correspondence to the great hope, bring little hopes to humanity. On the other hand it demands the perpetual revision of the

relative little hopes of humanity so that they may more closely testify to the great hope. This human hope is made possible by the great hope established by the revolution of God in Jesus but it can never be equated with the great hope, it can only point to it.

Hence, the revolution of God establishes the resurrection hope revealed in Jesus as the foundation of human revolution, which has the analogous possibility of being a little hope which points to this great hope. It is only because God has introduced something new into human history that people can dare to act in the hope of fundamentally transforming human society. By implication this means that eschatological hope must, of necessity, take historical form in the little hopes despite their relative and imperfect character. Human programmes and formulations can thus claim human allegiance in so far as they reflect this great hope. Equally, human activities that deny and foreclose hope are to be resisted in the name of the great hope. The message here is one of perpetual movement inspired by the great hope, a process which continues until the great hope is fully realised. Briefly stated, this means a permanent revolution grounded in God's revolution.

Further, as Jurgen Moltmann emphasises in *Theology of Hope*, hope is eschatologically grounded in the "future of Jesus Christ".[56] For Barth this "coming again" of Christ does not mean a new "turning-point" in history, but rather a full clarification of what is already established:

> What is the future bringing? Not once more a turning point

> in history, but the revelation of that which is. It is the future, but the future of that which the church remembers, of that which has taken place once for all. The Alpha and the Omega are the same thing.[57]

The *memory* of the christian community is, therefore, central to the question of hope. It is the subversive memory of the act of God done once for all in Jesus that fuels human hope. This has far reaching ecclesiological consequences. It rescues the rituals, liturgies and traditions of the church from a cycle of meaningless repetition, and restores them as *rehearsals of hope* for a liberated humanity. It is in this sense that Avila's description of the eucharist as the "school of liberation" makes most sense.[58] The atmosphere of hope affirmed in the life of the church both liberates and limits human creativity. It liberates creativity by providing a sound foundation and conducive context for acting; and limits creativity by confining it to activities that share in Christ's humanising goal. The entire life of the church is to be a witness to the hope born in the revolution of God that human existence can be made more human.

Nonetheless, unless hope can be located in particular human options in specific contexts it will be romantic utopianism. All talk of hope cannot be isolated from the choices human beings must make between concrete political programmes. Just as it makes no sense to talk of God apart from humanity, so also is it problematic to talk of the great hope apart from the little human hopes. What Barth does not provide are adequate analytical criteria by which political choices can be made. The method by which he made his choices is not explicit in his theology. This will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

Yes as Love

It is the love and mercy of God that forms the essential basis of the Yes of God from which every corresponding human yes is derived. As such, the revolution of God establishes love, particularly God's love, as disclosed in the humanity of Jesus, as the ground and motive of human revolutions. This observation does not differ markedly from Barth's perception of the Great Positive Possibility in the second edition of *Romans*, but it has been more firmly grounded in two-natures christology.

The being and the act of God are united in the concept of love:

> The statements 'God is' and 'God loves' are synonymous. It is in this way, in this identity of being and love, that God reveals Himself to us as He loves us. (CD IV,2 p755; KD p859.)

Consequently, because the essence of God's trinitarian being is love, not only is God free to love humanity, but human beings are liberated, by analogy, to love God and one another. This liberation to love occurs because God has included humanity within Godself, and Godself within humanity in the person, Jesus of Nazareth. God's love becomes the basis of human love as God exercises God's freedom to be the God of humanity in Jesus Christ. Love is then practised by Christians within the definition given to love in Jesus, which for Barth is threefold.

Love is, firstly, *electing love*, grounded in the free act of God, and as such all human love is utterly dependent on this free election of God. It is through the election of divine love that God's Yes is decisively proclaimed. Barth rescues the doctrine of

election from its Calvinistic predestinarian strictures by re-affirming election as an act of the One who loves in freedom. For humanity election is, therefore, a supremely liberating act of God, establishing the unconditional choice of God *for* humanity.[59] Corresponding human love which finds its source in *this* liberating divine love is free to affirm the humanity of the other, even in a revolutionary situation. Such love can, in Lehmanns words, "transform the passion of revolution so that its promises may in truth be born".[60] This both grounds and limits human actions that correspond to divine love. Human revolution cannot be entertained in isolation from this love.

Secondly, this love of God is *purifying love* in that whilst it says Yes to the person it says No to the sin of humanity. In this sense love appears not only as grace but as judgement, and in both cases confirms the Yes of God to humanity which totally encloses God's No. For human love this indicates that although the final purpose of love is to say Yes, a constitutive moment in that Yes may of necessity be an intermediate No. But it will always be a No for the sake of the Yes. Thus, as is argued in the next chapter, love cannot be idealistically conceived. The ambiguities inherent in all human actions cannot be regarded as an excuse for inaction. Humans must love even if the imperfect reflection of God's love in human praxis includes apparrently ambiguous elements. This is particularly true of a revolutionary situation where the human no may include the use of forcible resistance.

Finally, the love of God is *creative love* in that it prompts and

awakens, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the genuine human freedom to love. To be loved by God is then to be given the freedom to love and thus the freedom to act in correspondence to the self-giving love of Jesus. In short, to love is to be liberated to participate in the Yes of God for humanity.

Significantly, in describing the nature of the human act of love Barth does not equate love for God with love for humanity:

> If we try to love God as the neighbour it will not be the God whom we are commanded to love. And if we try to love the neighbour as God, it will not be the neighbour we are commanded to love. If we are not to deviate from the divine revelation, if we really want to obey the one commandment of God, we can only love God and our neighbour. (CD I,2 p410)

God is loved in the sense that the person is *interested* in God before all else as the source of love: "God is for him, and so he has no option but to be for God".[61] Barth's purpose here, consistent with the first commandment, is to establish *in principle* the precedence of God, and love for God, but in practice it does not lead to a "heaven storming" idealism, rather it implies that the human being makes the cause of God for the humanising of humanity his or her own.[62] Failure to make this critical distinction between these two loves creates the danger of what Miguez Bonino has called "radical monism" in which love for God collapses into love for the human other.[63] Such monistic theology would again fall foul of Feuerbach's charge of anthropomorphism, contradicting the intention of Barth's emphasis on the distinctiveness of God's being by reductionistically referring to God only in terms of the neighbour. The relationship between love for God and love for the neighbour is similar to

that between the two natures of Christ in that, on the one hand they cannot be identified for this would deify humanity, while on the other hand to separate them would be to remove the efficacy of God's love in Jesus Christ from human history and thus negate the Gospel. This is more fully explored in relation to human praxis in chapter five.

This love of necessity issues in specific acts of love toward the other to whom the christian relates. However love can never become a generalised concept for all humanity - it always demands specific action toward those in historical proximity to the one who loves.[64] It is to these neighbours, in specific historical relationships to the christian that love must be shown by representing Christ in little analogies to His being and act. Yet again, the ambiguities of the human context do not absolve christians and the church from taking historical options for the concrete actions which best correspond to divine love. The proper limits of this love are found, by Barth, in 1 Corinthians 13, namely, love alone counts, love alone conquers, and love alone endures.

This excursus into Barth's understanding of love, nonetheless, demonstrates that whilst he firmly establishes God's love as the content of God's revolution and the positive basis of all human love, and further that love is ultimately obedience and thus action, he does not provide a hermeneutic whereby the theory can be translated into concrete action. God's revolution *is* a revolution of love and this love not only forms the ground, limit and orientation of human revolution, but also transforms human

revolution so that it corresponds to the revolution of God. Nevertheless, all we have here is a *theological revolution*. What remains to be seen is whether these abstract words can be translated into concrete ones in a particular human context. The real question is still: What form does love take in a specific historical context? What criteria are to be used in defining this form? In the next chapter it is suggested that concrete analogous human actions require the application of adequate social analysis to become reality.

Two final points must be added which apply to all related in this chapter: Firstly, the revolution of God establishes the transformation of reality implicit in the God who has *acted* historically in Jesus Christ. As such this revolution is not mere theory, nor does it simply establish the possibility of human participation in transformation. It predicates a real and actual transformation. Because the revolution occurs *extra nos*, that is, outside of us (humans) in Christ alone, does not mean that the real change has yet to take place. On the contrary, the act of God in Jesus effects a real transformation in the lives and community of those who take the No and the Yes of God seriously. The revolution of God is the *praxis of God* in the Marxian sense of not merely enabling understanding but actually critically transforming reality.

Secondly, it would be a travesty of Barth not to point out that the christology explicated here is not Christ, as Schellong aptly clarifies:

> Barth distinguished quite sharply between Christ and Christology in order to guard against the supposition that proceeds as if Christology were an answer or a method to open all locks, as if it were more than a clarificaton of the conditions under which we who wait upon Christ can speak about the One who is awaited and strain toward him in expectation.[63]

To read Barth apart from an ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ in the midst of the perplexities of human history is to deny the *theologia viatorum* character of *Dogmatics*. Theology is ultimately done, not prior to human action as a theoretical discipline, nor after action as hindsight analysis, but, with Christ in the heat of human conflict - within "the sound of guns booming".[64]

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. CD IV,2 p27f.

2. Barth, *Humanity of God*, p44.

3. This is a descriptive phrase characteristic of Lehmann's writing. see *Transfiguration*, p32.

4. CD IV,2 p166; KD p185.

5. CD III,2 p219.

6. U. Von Balthasar, *Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung Seiner Theologie*, Cologne, Hegner, 1951, p116ff and p124ff.

7. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, Paternoster Press, p190.

8. Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982, p76.

9. CD I,1 p257.

10. CD III,1 p206.

11. This is a synopsis of Emil Brunner's argument in *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, London, Lutterworth Press, Fifth Impression, 1962, pp42-45.

12. CD IV,2 p82-3.

13. See a useful outline of the arguments relating to these concepts in Hunsinger *Radical Politics*, pp133-4. See also E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966 and F. W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, pp257-264.

14. In Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p134.

15. Karl Barth, *Theology and Church*, London, SCM, 1962, p231.

16. See CD I,2 p163f. These concepts are also discussed in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, pp135-8 and Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p267.

17. Barth, *Humanity of God*, p45.

18. See CD IV,2 p156f; KD p175f, also discussed by D. J. Smit in "The God of the Poor" in Charles Villa-Vicencio (ed), *On Reading Karl Barth in South Africa*.

19. ibid. p171.

20. CD IV,1 p246.

21. Jurgen Moltmann develops this in *The Crucified God*, London, SCM, 1974.

22. Lehmann, *Transfiguration*, p25.

23. cf Jon Sobrino, *The True Church of the Poor*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1985.

24. Paul Lehmann, "Karl Barth, Theologian of Permanent Revolution", in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol 28, 1972, p70.

25. CD IV,2 p167.

26. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1978, p94.

27. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Essays in Applied Christianity*, Meridian Living Age Books, 1959, p172ff.

28. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p225.

29. Here I refer to the discussion of this theme arising out of liberation theology recent examples of which are: Gustavo Gutierrez, *The power of the Poor in History*, London, SCM, 1983; Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*.

30. It is the Liberation Theologians solidarity 'from below' that Alfredo Fierro traces to the Marxist perception that "the proletariat is the class that contains the seed of the dissolution of classes... Acceptance of this Marxist hypothesis explains why the theologians of liberation and revolution tell christians they must make a class option". *The Militant Gospel*, London, SCM, 1977. p387.

31. See Joseph Bettis' discussion of the socialist humanism of Karl Barth in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol27, 1974, pp287-305.

32. CD III,2 p277.

33. Stuart D. McLean, "The Humanity of Man in Karl Barth's Thought", in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 28, No2, 1975, p134.

34. see Karl Barth, *Ethics*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, pp163-73; also CD III,4 p534 and in Chapter Five of this thesis.

35. Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p106.

36. Much work has recently been done on the exegesis of the words and concepts for oppression in the biblical corpus. See for example: Thomas Hanks, *For God So Loved the Third World*,

Maryknoll, Orbis, 1981; and Elsa Tamez, *The Bible of the Oppressed*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1983.

37. Pinchas Lapide, "No Balm in Barmen", in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA)*, No 50, March 1985, p42. See also Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Augsburg, Barmen, Ottawa", in *JTSA*, No 47, June 1984.

38. Arthur C. Cochrane, "The Message of Barmen for the Contemporary Church" in Franklin H. Littel and Hubert G. Locke (eds), *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1974, p193.

39. Eberhard Bethge, "Troubled Self Interpretation and Uncertain Reception in the Church Struggle" in Littel and Locke, *The German Church Struggle*, p172.

40. John W. de Gruchy, "Barmen, Symbol for Contemporary Liberation" in *JTSA*, No 47, June 1984, p63.

41. Villa-Vicencio, "Augsburg, Barmen, Ottawa", p54.

42. CD IV,2 p172; KD p192.

43. ibid. p173; KD p193.

44. CD III,3 p157f.

45. "Epistemological Vigilance" is a term coined by Otto Maduro, a Latin American sociologist of religion in his book *Religion and Social Conflict*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1982, p27.

46. CD IV,2 p544f.

47. Rolf Joachim Erler and Renier Marquard (eds), *A Karl Barth Reader*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986, p108.

48. Markus Barth, "My Father: Karl Barth", in Donald K. McKim (ed), *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986, p4.

49. God's being is, nevertheless, always more than God's act.

50. CD IV,2 p180; KD p201.

51. ibid. p181; KD p201.

52. CD IV,1 p516.

53. Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's Revolution of God", p7

54. Karl Barth, "Church and State" in Will Herberg (ed), *Community, State and Church*, New York, Anchor, 1960, p147.

55. ibid. p148.

56. Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, London, SCM, 1967, pp139-229.

57. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, London, SCM, 1949, p134; translated from the German original *Dogmatiek im Grundriss*, Zurich, Evangelischer Verlag, 1947, p158.

58. Rafael Avila, *Worship and Politics*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1981, p81f.

59. KD IV,2 p869f; see also Robert McAfee Brown, "Good News From Karl Barth", in McKim (ed), op cit, p98f; and Geoffrey Bromiley's discussion of election in Barth's theology in *Historical Theology*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978, pp429-437.

60. Lehmann, *Transfiguration*, p47.

61. CD IV,2 p793.

62. ibid. p794.

63. Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and Liberation Theology", p261.

64. CD IV,2 p805.

65. Dieter Schellong, "On Reading Karl Barth from the Left" in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, p150.

66. Barth, *Romans* (1922), p v.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REVOLUTION OF GOD AND HUMAN REVOLUTION.

This analysis began with the praxis of Karl Barth and must now return to the questions raised about concrete human praxis by the theology of the revolution of God. Ultimately, theology must become praxis for it to truly be theology. The central question is: Can this Barthian concept of the revolution of God inspire, enable participation in, or contribute to the human revolutionary processes that dominate reality in many developing countries? Or is it a romantic theological notion that holds out false hope to oppressed people?

Clearly, Barth falls into neither the utopian nor conservative perspectives on revolution.[1] On the one hand he does not romanticise revolution by ignoring the harsh reality that every revolutionary inevitably becomes a victim or executioner, a heretic or an oppressor.[2] On the other hand, he does not demonise revolution as contrary to history and extrinsic to the Gospel. On the contrary, his christology is essentially revolutionary, and his emphasis is on the transformation of human existence. The revolution of God is grounded in a realistic assessment of the dangers of, and the necessity for revolutionary human action. The dangers are confronted with God's resounding No, whilst the necessity is a function of God's final Yes to humanity and creation. Consequently, the thesis tested in this chapter can be formulated as follows: *Barthian theology, understood from the perspective of the revolution of God, always requires a revolutionary praxis* which, under extreme conditions, not only

condones but demands participation in the forcible resistance of a particular *status quo*. Of necessity, consideration is given to Barth's understanding of the use of violence as an *ultima ratio*.

Three qualifications of this thesis are necessary: Firstly, Barth did not develop a human revolutionary theory. His own radical politics was most prominently expressed in resistance to Hitler's tyranny, which was not a classical revolutionary situation. It is of no avail, therefore, to search Barth's writings for an analysis of the 'nuts and bolts' of revolutionary praxis. His pre-occupation is not with revolution for the sake of the *effective* transformation of a particular political situation, but for the sake of *faithful* correspondence to God's revolution.

Secondly, human revolution can never be more than an analogy to God's revolution, permanently under the same judgement of God applicable to all human programmes. God's revolution provides the framework within which human revolution can occur. God's revolution is the criterion by which jugdement can be made as to what is, and is not, revolutionary. The overriding concern here is to ensure that human revolution remains an instrument of God for the humanising of existence. An attempt to analyse these limits and frontiers placed on human revolution is central to this concern.

Finally, the Barthian perspective posits a permanent revolution. Unlike particular revolutionary situations where it is possible to distinguish between 'pre' and 'post' revolutionary phases, Barth proposes a revolution that is a perpetual process which

culminates eschatologically. In this sense Barth's approach exhibits the anarchistic tendencies analysed in this chapter.

5.1 THE COMMAND OF GOD.

Fundamental to human praxis is hearing and obeying the command of God. This command cannot be formulated as a universal casuistry, originating in God, independent of the particular human situation to which it applies. On the contrary, for Barth the formulation of answers to ethical questions happens where the divine, vertical dimension intersects with the corresponding (analogous) human horizontal dimension. Another reminder that God cannot be spoken of without simultaneously speaking of humanity:

> Face to face with the ethical question, we have not only to consider a vertical dimension, the event or rather the many events of the encounter between God's command and human action in a singularity and uniqueness which cannot be anticipated and which scorn regimentation. For these very events all take place - as can be seen both from the divine command and human action - in a definite connexion. Only as an event takes place in this connexion is it, in all its mystery, the ethical event. Only as the vertical intersects the horizontal can it be called vertical. (CD III,4 p17; KD p17-8)

Consequently, the hearing and obeying of the divine command is a contextual matter which cannot be pre-decided, and which occurs where humanity takes both its situation and the Word of God seriously. This relationship between the divine and the human liberates orthodoxy from casuistic strictures, and ascribes the real freedom to command to God, and the real freedom to obey to humanity.

In terms of this thesis the command of God is the aspect of God's revolution which provides the *content* for human action, whilst the specific *form* of that action is defined in the actual

situation of the praxis. Barth's argument with Brunner was that he (Brunner) failed to clarify that the source of the command of God can only be found in the being and act of Godself (and thus in the revolution of God), and not in naturally discernible orders of creation.[3] It is worthwhile noting that it was not until after the publication of *Ethik* in 1928 that Barth recognised the contradiction between the concept of the orders of creation and his christological emphasis. For Barth there is no foundation for command of God and human ethics other than Jesus Christ, the revolution of God. God, as the true revolutionary, can neither be bound to pre-determined dogma nor to universally discernible orders of creation. The One who loves in freedom is free to command and, analogously, humanity is free to obey.

This relationship between form and content is most evident in Barth's reversal of the traditional law-gospel paradigm.[4] Here the gospel is seen as the pre-eminent foundation and content of the law, whilst the law is the form the gospel takes in a particular human situation.[5] For the present thesis the gospel of grace disclosed in Jesus Christ is the revolution of God which frames the *content* and determines the *form* of human praxis. The gospel as content limits and inspires human action, whilst the law as form determines, in a particular context, the shape the gospel takes. Hence law is the result of the intersection between the divine command and a specific human situation.

5.1.1 The *Grenzfall*.[6]

In continuity with the freedom of God to command Barth develops

the concept of the *Grenzfall*. The implicit assumption regarding the command of God is that, in most situations, the content of the divine command is reasonably apparent, and the form of the corresponding human action is not easily disputable. Nonetheless, the *Grenzfall* or borderline situation, recognises that in a given context God is free to command in a way which conflicts with previous commands. In these *Grenzfall* situations the human context itself becomes determinative. This poses the question of how to recognise a *Grenzfall* situation, and what criteria apply in discerning the command of God under such conditions? It is here that adequate social analysis becomes a necessary integral moment in theological discourse.

Consequently, the *Grenzfall* is Barth's image for contextual theology. Barth differs from contemporary contextual theologians in that for him the *Grenzfall* is an exception, whereas contextual theologians regard every situation to be exceptional. Contextual theologians, doing their theology within oppressive situations, regard the *whole* of life to be a *Grenzfall* situation. For this reason they have methodologically integrated models of social analysis into their theology. Whilst Barth implicitly uses social analysis, this analysis is neither made explicit in his method, nor recognised as important in the discerning of the command of God. This critique will receive greater attention later in this chapter. The present point is that Barth did implicitly take the location of human praxis seriously. Yet, it is not a contradiction of Barth to extrapolate this seriousness into a comprehensive social analysis. Nonetheless, the need for the

Grenzfall does demonstrate the difficulty of moving from *content* to *form* in a particular context.

For the relationship between the revolution of God and human revolution the command of God and its corollary the *Grenzfall* has important consequences. Primarily it indicates that human revolution, as an analogy to divine revolution, is inextricably bound to the revolution of God. Legitimate revolution results from the hearing of the divine command which shapes analogous human praxis. Secondly, it suggests that the *form* of human revolution cannot be anticipated in advance, but must be discerned where the horizontal of the human context and the vertical *content* of the divine command intersect. It is to the *content* of the divine command as it impinges upon human revolution that attention is now given.

5.2 HUMAN REVOLUTION UNDER THE NO OF GOD.

In the sub-section which examined the theological proposition of Jesus as the 'indissoluble antithesis' it was concluded that Jesus' revolutionary freedom from all human options is the historical incarnation of God's eschatological critique of human existence. This No of God de-absolutises human structures and activities. The *function* of this aspect of God's revolution is the present concern.

5.2.1 A Theological Hermeneutic of Suspicion.

Theologies of liberation have indicated that the proper genesis for liberating theological theory and praxis is the suspicion that humanisation, in a specific human context, demands radical

'transformation.'[7] For these theologians, because of the reality of oppression, the central pre-occupation is a suspicion that the prevailing theology and ideology serves the interests of the dominant classes of society. This hermeneutic of suspicion arose out of an encounter with Marxist and Neo-marxist thinking and was appropriated by theology because of its liberative potential.

The contention here is that Barth provides within his christology a mechanism which serves a similar purpose to this hermeneutic of suspicion. Barth's own encounter with Marxism that as a reminder of what was always inherent within the Judeo-christian corpus.[8] A combination of the No implicit in the revolutionary freedom of Jesus and the No directed to the rich and powerful in Jesus' identification with the poor and powerless provides a radical basis upon which to approach all dominant theological and ideological traditions with suspicion.

This impression is compounded if additional attention is given to Barth's ommission of the abundant reference to oppression and God's decision for the oppressed in the Hebrew Bible.[9] The point is: theologians do not have to look beyond their own discipline to discover that to suspect human activity, particularly that of the rich and powerful, is implicit in the biblical witness. This is a structural consequence of the 'nothingness' that perpetually threatens all human thought and actions.

The function of this suspicion is a broadened by Barth to include a similar apprehension of revolutionary activity opposing a particular *status quo*. Conscious of the need to secure

qualitative change, Barth suspected every human revolution of merely creating a new form of the old order. Revolution is suspect because it tends to re-arrange the old, whilst the prevailing dominant ideology is disputable because it *is* the old order. Further, this critique of revolution does not originate from a mediating position *between* an existing order and its antithetical revolution. Rather, revolution is questioned *from the left*, because of its tendency to effect an insufficiently radical transformation of reality. Consequently, the Barthian hermeneutical suspicion not only requires the negation of human thought and programmes which re-inforce domination, but also demands of revolutionary praxis permanent vigilance against the danger of replacing one form of domination with another. This relates to Barth's critique of ideology.

The Critique of Ideology.

The question of ideology is tackled under the heading: "The Lordless Powers". In that context ideologies are defined as the consequence of the idolisation of human formulations. This occurs when a human option is objectified and given super human status:

> his (the humans) hypotheses become for him theses behind which he no longer ventures to go back with seeking, questioning, and researching. He thinks that they can be thought and formulated definitively as thoughts that are not merely useful but intrinsically true and therefore binding. His ideal becomes an idol ... making of his ideas an ideology. (CD IV,4 p225)

This negative assessment of ideology bears some kinship to the Marxist concept of false consciousness, which defines ideology as follows:

> Ideology is a false consciousness of social and economic realities, a collective illusion shared by members of a

given social class.[10]

This 'illusion' creates an inverted image of human reality where human hypotheses and systems are given divine ontological status. Both the Barthian and Marxian critiques of religion follow Feuerbach at this point. In this religious inversion humanity creates a god in its own image and then proceeds to worship that god.[11] For Barth that god is an idol, for Marx it represents false consciousness. Barth's quest is for the true God, whilst Marx seeks true consciousness independent of reference to the divine. Religion is ideology, for Barth, because it is an idolatrous objectification of human hypotheses about God.

Such ideology implies captivity which demands rigid human loyalty and judges all human others in terms of whether or not they subscribe to the same standpoint. It contains within it "the solution not only to the personal problem of his own life but to each and all the problems of the whole world".[12] These ideologies manifest themselves in society in at least three ways: Firstly, they are invariably expressed as an 'ism' with the followers being called 'ists' or 'ians'. Secondly, they are characterised by slogans or catchwords which capture human imagination. On this point Barth makes the following important addendum:

> Let us not be deceived: we all listen to the most varied catchwords, we all use them more or less merrily, and in so doing show that we ourselves are people who have been struck and stabbed and snared by systematised ideologies.(CD IV,4 p227)

Barth's awareness of the virtual impossibility of evading the ideological trap is significant. Ideology cannot be escaped and all human life is, to some degree, influenced or controlled by

it. The only humanly possible option, under the pervasive shadow of ideology, is to exercise permanent vigilance against ideological captivity. Whilst idealistically the quest for ideology-free, and idolatry-free human action is the eschatological goal, realistically the entanglement of humanity with ideologies requires permanent awareness of the No of God in Jesus Christ. As intimated in the previous chapter, this is Barth's theological alternative to what Maduro terms "epistemological vigilance".[13] Barth thus locates this permanent vigilance against the dangers of ideological captivity in the No of God implicit in the revolutionary freedom of Jesus. This No is a persistant reminder of the final incompatibility of human praxis with the praxis of God. Hence, human activity is placed in its proper relative perspective. God's is the only absolute revolution. Human revolutions are, by definition, de-absolutised. Functionally, this relativising of praxis liberates humanity for the quest towards the humanising transformation of reality. It guards against captivity to programmes or structures which limit human potential.

Finally, ideology makes use of propaganda to apologetically advertise itself and polemically discredit all opposition. Propaganda is juxtaposed by truth which simply bears witness to itself and needs no manipulative assistance. Critical evaluation of this concept of truth reveals a remnant of the liberal idealism which holds to the possibility of the discernment of a 'truth' devoid of ideological content. Nonetheless Barth's reminder that even the church has not escaped the use of this

propaganda implies that this truth is only eschatologically accessible, and yet it remains as a historical critique of all human perceptions of truth. The point remains: under the revolutionary No of God humanity cannot rest easily with any human formulation or programme. Permanent resistance is not only allowed but demanded.

Yet, this negative definition of ideology is *not* intended to devalue the necessity for the development of human hypotheses. Rather it is a warning against the dehumanising of these hypotheses by allowing them to degenerate into captivity and idolatry. *Barth's passion is to keep these hypotheses human.* It is the No of God's revolution alone which provides the sufficiently radical permanent critique necessary for this task.

Similarly, and under the same heading, Barth approaches the issue of technology by recognising the inherent value of the human harnessing of the energies of creation for the benefit of humanity as a whole, *and* the demonisation of technology when it no longer works for humanity but against it. On the one hand he says about humanity:

> He is to make the earth his own world, to shape it as the theater and tool of his historical existence... He investigates them (the forces of nature), makes them usable by him, and puts them in his service as their lord. This is what he has learned to do, and has done, with increasingly astonishing range from the distant past... to the extent that he does this as real man, that is, man loved by God, created good by him and ordained by him to do this work. (CD IV,4 p230)

However, humanity forfeits this lordship when these natural forces are misused:

> If, however, he slips out of this service, he thereby

forfeits the lordship that should be his. (CD IV,4 p228)

This occurs when, in alienation from God, creation's energies are used to satisfy selfish human wants and goals, thus actually reversing the lordship: instead of controlling natural power humanity becomes captive to its control. Again the No of the revolution of God stands as an eschatological reminder of the dangerous tendency inherent in human behaviour, where that which was intended to liberate becomes a source of bondage. Technology is only legitimate in so far as it is *instrumental* to the humanisation of life.

Hence, the No of God's revolution is not a negation of human action, neither is it intended to lead to relativistic paralysis or ethical quietism. On the contrary this No sets the limits within which human activity is truly human, and specifies the boundaries beyond which this action becomes inhuman and destructive. *Human revolution is only possible within these limits.* Yet, God's final word to humanity is the Yes. The No describes that which falls *outside* of the parameters of true humanity as defined in this Yes. It is logical, therefore, that with regard to human revolution, the ethical content of the Yes should be our primary focus, for the No can only be known as that which the Yes excludes.

Further, the No of God is a persistent reminder to humanity that it can never achieve its own affirmation. Revolution becomes Titanism when it is a self-justifying, self-affirming act. God's grace alone provides the basis for human justification and affirmation. Human activity can never do more than bear analogous

testimony to this affirmation.

> He (humanity) can and should affirm his existence, but only on the presupposition and in relation to the fact that it is already affirmed by his creator who is his primary and true Lord ... He has simply to praise God with his activity... he has not been commisioned to exercise the initiating and consumating function of God. (CD III,4 p552)

This echoes Barth's appreciation of the quality of simple praise to God in Mozart's music, which does not try to *prove* anything.[14] The critical point is that political praxis, and thus human revolution, is not a primary but a secondary activity. It does not seek to justify itself, only God justifies or judges it. Whatever support human beings give to these secondary programmes can only legitimately occur under the decisive No of God. This is the force of Barth's emphasis on justification by faith through grace. He practically expresses this in terms of the espousing of particular forms of human progress:

> The Christian community both can and should espouse the cause of this or that branch of social progress or even socialism in the form most helpful at a specific time and place and in a specific situation. But its decisive word cannot consist in the proclamation of social progress or socialism. It can consist only in the proclamation of the revolution of God against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man" (Rom 1:18), i.e. in the proclamation of His kingdom as it has already come and comes. (CD III,4 p545; KD p626)

The reference here to Barth's positive confidence in human action will be more fully analysed below. Nevertheless, in this 'time between the times', God's Yes is inseparable from the eschatological reserve of the No of God. Here the revolutionary nature of the Yes of God becomes apparent. For God only says No to all relative human proposals in order to even more distinctly say Yes to the perpetual search for better analogies to the

praxis of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The No announces God's revolution against the static acceptance of the *status quo*, in order to say Yes to human praxis as a dynamic search for true humanness. This is the *theologia viatorum* which permanently searches for a more humanising analogy to God's revolution. Herein lies the anarchistic dimension of Barth's position.

Anarchism?

In concluding the analysis of human revolution under the No of God, it is necessary to examine this anarchistic dimension of Barth's approach more closely. Anarchism is an ambiguous concept which requires clarification. Anarchy has been positively defined as "the organisation of society on the basis of voluntary co-operation, and especially without the agency of political institutions, i.e. the state".[15] This form of anarchy is not synonymous with chaos, but seeks a human society devoid of authoritarian structures. Inherent is a general suspicion of human authority.

In Barth's theology, because no human system can satisfy the demands of the revolution of God, a confrontation with the existing bearers of power is always implicit. Even when passive participation in a system is chosen, that participation is provisional and temporary. This permanent human rebellion, in correspondence to the No of God, regards all human states to be prone to the abuse of power, thus incurring the judgement of God. The negation of this abused authority is necessary to the ongoing quest for full and true humanity. The permanent confrontation between light and shadows, justice and injustice, which impressed

Barth in Mozart's music is an image of this anarchistic passion.[16]

Accordingly, Barth shares with anarchists an abiding suspicion of the misuse and abuse of power by the state, but his high regard for the state reflects a rejection of the anarchist's historical hope of "organising society on the basis of voluntary co-operation".[16] Consequently, Barth's anarchy is *eschatological anarchy*, proclaimed not as the political answer to vexed human structural questions, but as the only response radical enough to challenge the existing human relations of power in the world. Ellul, who acknowledges his indebtedness to Barth, concludes that every modern state is totalitarian because of the overwhelmingly powerful means of control at its disposal. Consistent with the present analysis of Barth, he thus opts for a similar anarchist postion:

> It seems to me that an anarchist attitude is the only one that is sufficiently radical in the face of a statist system. For there can be no question of being able to overcome the system by changing it from within... The point is not to enforce a particular view of society but to establish a counterbalance, a protest, and a sign of cleavage. In the face of an absolute power only total confrontation has any meaning.[17]

Here Ellul takes Barth's No to its logical conclusion. For if the true state can only be expected eschatologically, it is the same as denying final legitimacy to any historical state system. The difference is that Ellul is more pessimistic than Barth of finding a provisional and temporal state form which corresponds to the revolution of God.

Yet, neither for Barth or Ellul, does this disavow participation

in the ambivalent and ambiguous human movements of protest and resistance. It is here that human analogies to the final Yes of God must be discerned and obeyed.

5.3 HUMAN REVOLUTION UNDER THE YES OF GOD.

Marx points out the difference between *praxis* and *practice*. The former, from a foundation of critical analysis, engages in the actual transformation of reality, whilst the latter is unreflected, uncritical human activity re-inforcing rather than changing human conditions.[18] In Barth, the Yes of God reflects a similar concern to ensure that human action contributes to qualitative change. The contention is that only God's revolution provides a sufficiently radical foundation for human praxis. Human revolution is only able to realise the "impossible possibility" of establishing a *new* order if it is an analogy to the final Yes of God.[19] The limits of human revolution are defined by the No of God, whilst the content and orientation of revolution are determined by God's Yes. The only True Revolution is that which comes from God. All legitimate human resistance and rebellion can only be participation in this Revolution. Consequently, Barth uses the more modest words of resistance, rebellion and revolt, rather than the word revolution for human activity:

> Necessarily, those who pray for the future sanctifying of God's name cannot accept its present desecration... it will be a humble and resolute striding on earth and in time along a way that corresponds in its direction to the act of God which has already taken place in Jesus Christ... *Rebellion* and *resistance* against the regime of vacillation are necessary. It is the command of the hour, of every hour. This command is issued to us in this time between the times, and we have to obey it... It means *revolt*. The overthrow of

> the regime cannot be an affair of our action. That God himself will overthrow it is what we pray for. But to rise up in *rebellion* against this regime... is something humanly possible.[20]

Human rebellion is the continuous participation of people in the overthrow of *das Nichtige* and all its temporal manifestations. It is the eschatological command addressed to believers in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, calling them to be co-transformers of reality with God. Humanity is not required to undertake the humanly impossible task of initiating revolution; rather, their calling is to claim the 'freedom in limitation' given to humans under the command of God. This freedom to hear the command of God means that humanity must take seriously what it *can* do:

> The command of God is the call to wake up, to recognise ourselves and to take ourselves seriously in the totality of what we can actually do. (CD III,4 p626)

This calls human beings , as those who have discerned the Yes of God in creation, to use their potential as unique creations of God. The real question is not *should* humanity revolt, rebel or resist but what form must this action take. The Yes of God to the transformation of creation has been irrevocably announced in Jesus. Participation in this revolution is not an option but a command for christians. Such theology is bound to be both threatening to the dominators and inspiring to the dominated of society. Villa-Vicencio concludes:

> It is this use made of God's revolution... which makes Barth's theology an inspirational source for sustained human participation in a continuing human quest for something more than any particular society can deliver.[21]

Yet this rebellion, resistance or revolt is not revolution in the strictest sense. The difference between revolution and rebellion

has been posited as follows:

> A *revolution* is a sucessful rebellion; the victory has been won and the new system has been established. A *rebellion* is a continual revolution; the new system is ever in process of being established and the victory or victories are still ahead.[22]

In Barthian terms the notion of revolution as sucessful rebellion is reserved for the act of God alone. God overthrows, humanity resists and rebels in corresponding participation in this divine revolution. Hence, it is not possible for humanity to successfully conclude a rebellion. God alone can transform the continual rebellion of humanity into true revolution. In the light of these definitions Barth's theology can, from a human perspective, best be described as a theology of rebellion. Yet, for Barth, the act of God in Jesus Christ has already established the revolutionary new system. Therefore, in terms of Barth's understanding of God, his theology is truly a theology of revolution. Human praxis is made possible by the victory of Jesus Christ and is meaningless apart from it. Rebellion is impossible apart from the revolution of God within which that rebellion finds its orientation and content.

Camus, the Algerian existentialist, formulated his thinking on rebellion as follows:

> In order to exist, man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limit it discovers in itself - a limit where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist. Rebellious thought, therefore, cannot dispense with memory: it is a perpetual state of tension.[23]

Both Barth and Camus discern in human existence an imperative toward rebellion. However, whereas Camus finds the source of human existence in community itself, Barth locates the origin of

human existence in the original and final revolution of God. Further, Barth replaces Camus' memory of this human community with what Metz has termed the "dangerous memory of Jesus Christ".[24] This forms the link between hope, as described in the previous chapter, and rebellion. Rebellion is the concrete human consequence of hope which is aptly defined by Alves:

> It is the *presentiment* that *imagination is more real* and *reality less real than it looks.* It is the *suspicion* that Reality is much more complex than realism wants us to believe; that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual, and that in a miraculous and unexpected way life is preparing the creative event which will open the way to freedom and resurrection.[25]

In the revolution of God the "frontiers of the possible" are determined by the subversive memory of the Yes of God disclosed in Jesus. The future promised by this dangerous memory gives courage to humanity to hope for something better than an unjust *status quo*, and inspires the quest for greater justice. The recollection of the past event which establishes the revolution of God, gives impetus to the present struggle for a future which exceeds human expectation.

It is only those whose hope is endangered that can recognise the subversive nature of remembering the Yes of God. Only those threatened by despair are sufficiently separated from the cause of oppression to challenge its foundations:

> Only the oppressed can be creative. Why? Because only the oppressed have the will to abolish the power presuppositions which are at the root of their oppression.[26]

Oppression is the ground in which hope emerges and grows into creative analogies to the revolution of God.

Essentially, Barth insists that the revolutionary transformation of human life and creation cannot happen from within alone. The rebellion within corresponds to the dangerous memory of the revolution of God from without. The bearer of this analogous rebellion to the revolution of God is the church of Jesus Christ.

5.3.1 The Church as the Locus of Human Revolution.

As noted in 4.3.4 above the church as the bearer of the revolutionary message of justification replaces the Marxian proletariat as the human locus of revolution. This approach to human revolution has the principle weakness of being a discipleship ethic. As Moltmann has pointed out:

> Christocratic ethics can only be discipleship ethics. It is ethics for christians but not christian ethics for the state. It is political ethics of the christian community but not christian politics of the civil community.[27]

Barth's relocation of the locus of revolution has little significance for oppressed people alienated from the church. He could also be accused of being overly optimistic about the revolutionary potential of the church. Nonetheless, in a context, such as South Africa, where the judeo-christian tradition is a determinative factor in the self-understanding of the vast majority of people, such an ethic provides a powerful social lever. A revolutionary ecclesiology challenges to the church to become the humanising influence it is intended to be. An analysis of the revolutionary function of the church in Barth is, therefore, apposite.

It is the church to which God has given the primary responsibility of proclaiming the Yes which makes true and full

human life possible. To proclaim and live out divine justification has profound social and political consequences for the life of the church and the world it serves. Essentially it is the church which, through proclaiming justification, accepts responsibility for giving definition to what is truly human *and* also the task of ensuring that human action remains human. The church's message is the human analogue to the divine revolution which establishes and makes possible true humanity. It holds the key to the Archimedean point, the true revolution which heralds the establishment of a qualitatively new humanity.

Barth understands the civil or political community from the same christological perspective as the christian community, the church. Both these communities have a common centre in Jesus Christ which makes the true church and the true state possible. The christian community, however, forms the inner circle of the wider human society because it, unlike the state, has an acute awareness of the centre of the existence of both the state and the church in Jesus Christ.[28] This special awareness of the revolution of God, as the hinge on which the entire civil community hangs, places profound political responsibility upon the church. It means that the church will be the community within the wider society which persistently reminds the state of its origins, limitations and possibilities. As this disturbing influence, the church will always be, more or less radically calling the existing order into question in the interests of a new state, which bears closer analogy to the kingdom of God. The decisive word the church will speak is therefore a Yes to the

true state which corresponds to the reality of Jesus. The church is not *against* the state but *for* it as it fulfils this revolutionary task. It acts and speaks for the sake of true government as an instrument which enables true humanity. This is illustrated by Barth's insistence that the Second World War *against* Germany was actually being waged *for* her. This Yes, however, necessarily includes the anarchistic No to the *status quo* always in need of qualitative transformation. The true state can only be eschatologically conceived, and therefore the church is destined to remain this anarchistic influence throughout human history.

In pursuing its task the church actually takes the state more seriously than the state regards itself, and consequently, in order to effectively perform this task the church must remain the church.[29] It must maintain its special existence so that the hope that comes from the revolutionary Yes of God can always be heard by the political community. Barth can thus say:

> The christian community shares in the task of the civil community precisely to the extent that it fulfils its own task.[30]

This special existence of the church never implies 'splendid isolation'. On the contrary, special existence means greater engagement with and responsibility for the civil community. It is the task of the church to remind the state of the revolutionary nature of the divine justification disclosed in Jesus as the foundation of its existence. This is the proper content of the church's submission to the state. Ethically, this means that justice as the human analogy to divine justification is the basis

of the true state. Further, this justice is more fundamental than law and order, which must not be permitted to subvert the interests of justice. Justice, and not order, is the human Yes which corresponds to the divine Yes of justification. The only acceptable order is the one which serves justice.[31] The pursuit of justice is also the basis of human revolution. It is in struggling for justice with the oppressed and poor that human revolution reflects the content of divine revolution. Consequently, the pursuit of justice denies the state the "self justifying legitimacy that ends in the tyranny of order"; and denies the revolution a "self justifying rebellion which ends in the tyranny of anarchy".[32] Because it is God alone who justifies, only a passion for justice can be the proper basis for the state and the revolution. In terms of the current debate, has damning consequences for ideologies of national security which subvert justice in the interest of stability.

The bearer of justice for the poor.

Yet, the understanding of justice requires greater clarification in the light of the analysis of Jesus as the revolution of God. Primarily, in correspondence to Jesus, justice means justice for the poor, marginalised and excluded of the community. It is not merely justice in general that forms the basic criterion for proper government and true revolution. Rather, it is justice for the poor and marginalised in particular that does so. It is here that Barth does not explore the consequences of his own theology. The church can only remind the civil community of the need for justice towards the alienated of history if it *is* the church of

the poor, oppressed and marginalised. What is lacking in Barth is an analysis of the class location of the church which exposes its inability to be the disturbing community required by the revolution of God. If the church consists of, or is dominated by, people whose class position is removed from underclasses, then it will have a propensity toward paternalistic social action, and when challenged will tend to opt for order above justice. Yet, if the church is truly the church of the poor and marginalised then it is relatively free of the bourgeois influences that paralyse its action. Then it can truly witness to the revolution of God revealed in Jesus Christ; it can be the human locus of the divine revolution and enable the subversive hope that generates creative human analogies to that revolution. Ultimately, the church too needs to be reminded of its nature and purpose and it is only the poor and excluded who can adequately fulfil this role. Moltmann is thus correct in pointing out that the "true church" as the locus of the revolution of God does not exist.[33] In order to liberate this ecclesiology from being "theologically illusory" it is necessary to affirm Sobrino's point that "the poor evangelise the church".[34]

The church corresponds to the act of God in Jesus Christ in so far as it makes the poor and marginalised the criterion of its existence. If Jesus is ultimately to be known as "this... partisan of the poor, and finally as this revolutionary",[35] then it is the church that is correspondingly partisan that is capable of bearing witness to the revolution of God. No neutrality can be entertained by the christian community where justice is at stake:

> Precisely because the church knows about justification which we cannot attain by any means for ourselves, she cannot remain indifferent. She cannot remain "neutral" in things great and small where justice is at stake, where the attempt is being made to establish a poor feeble human justice over against overwhelming, flagrant injustice.[36]

Hence, it is impossible for the church to escape involvement in the class struggle that Marx identified as central to the process of human history. The only variable is the class whose interests the church will represent. It is a legitimate extrapolation of Barth to assert that for the church to truly be the church it must take its place, in correspondence with Jesus, amongst the poor and marginalised. In so doing the church by nature rejects the sacralisation of power and chooses permanent conflict with human power. Having chosen solidarity with the powerless it confronts the power of the state with the powerlessness of God in Jesus Christ. This is the perpetual confrontation between the power of the human state and the revolutionary reversal of all definitions of power and humanity by the revolution of God.

Love, community and revolution.

This is related to the discussion above concerning the fundamental form of humanity as co-humanity with the poor and marginalised.[37] This understanding of community enables Barth, in principle, to radically reject capitalism and affirm socialism. It is the great positive possibility of loving one another in human community that forms the foundation for resisting existing inhumanity in the interests of true humanity:

> To love one's neighbour means, for Barth, to move "individual egoism" to "collective egoism" in political structures that are national and global.[38]

The human love which corresponds to the love demonstrated by God

in Jesus Christ characterises the christian community, *and* defines the ideological options it may provisionally adopt or passionately resist. The church as the inner circle of the human community by practice and proclamation represents the kind of economically and politically inclusive community consistent with God's renewing purpose for creation. The very act of including, and adopting the perspective of the discarded members of the civil community will in a revolutionary way, undermine the identity of that civil community. Such an inclusive community will be regarded as subversive by any state founded upon political or economic inequality.

This has wide economic and political consequences. It challenges the presuppositions undergirding the economic exploitation of Africa and Asia by First World powers; it questions the assumptions relating to private property, labour and technology philosophies; and it probes the effectiveness of state control of the means of production -*all in the interests of true humanity established by the revolution of God.*[39]

True humanity, as defined by the praxis of Jesus, can only be realised as the church affirms and manifests the humanity of those dehumanised by the civil community. *Hope* for humanity does not come from those already included, but from the margins of life, from those who are regarded as less than human. The challenge is for the christian community to actively seek total humanity for all human beings, beginning with the dehumanised. It is the practice of this inclusive love-in-community, under the

command of God, that safeguards human revolution from devouring itself.

Choosing between human options?

As indicated, the correspondence of the church to the praxis of Jesus not only represents to the state the need for justice for the poor, but also acts as an eschatological reminder of the provisional and temporal nature of every state and human system. It does not permit the self-deification nor the idolisation of the state, neither does it allow itself to be lured into absolutising any particular political option. On the contrary, the church will always de-absolutise ideologies and systems that are in danger of claiming total loyalty from human persons.

Nonetheless, the church accepts direct and joint responsibility for the state. In the words of Barmen:

> It (the church) draws attention to God's Kingdom (Reich), God's commandment and justice, and with these the responsibility of those who rule and those who are ruled.[40]

This requires the church to be actively engaged in the ongoing formulation of human political alternatives that bear closer analogy to the revolution of God in Jesus Christ:

> On the basis of the judgement which it has formed it will choose and desire whichever seems to be the better political system in any particular situation, and in accordance with this choice and desire it will offer its support here and its resistance.[41]

Despite the revolutionary nature of the church's existence it is not absolved from making specific choices for or against particular human options in every context. This precludes the church from setting itself up as a 'third way' or an 'alternative community'. The church, as the disturbing inner circle of the

political community, must ground its rebellion in terms of particular human programmes:

> The christian community both can and should espouse the cause of this or that branch of social progress or even socialism in the form most helpful in a specific time and place and in a specific situation. (CD III,4 p545)

Nonetheless, the church always lives uncomfortably with its provisionally chosen option, recognising that its final word consists in the proclamation of God's revolution which calls every human activity into question in the interests of true humanness. Barth clarifies the relationship between the faith of the christian community and human world-views:

> Faith is radically dialogical to them. In the last respect it has never taken them seriously, even though it has fiercely opposed them or intimately allied itself to them. It accepts no responsibility for their foundation, structure, validity or propagation. It moves within their territory but cannot be detained at their frontiers. (CD III,2 p9)

Because the church is the inner circle of the civil community it inevitably moves within the territory of human formulations and world-views. It will be influenced by them, radically opposed to them, and even passionately committed to them. But their significance will not be decisive for the church. They will be embraced or rejected in so far as they are perceived to be analogous to the revolution of God. But judgements must be formed and options supported or resisted.

The critical question now is: By what criteria does the church make its decisions regarding the best available human formulations? What is the concrete form that the action of this revolutionary christian community must take in a specific

context? Barth answers this question in *Christian Community and Civil Community* by suggesting twelve ways in which political kingdoms could parabolically reflect the kingdom of God.[42] These analogies broadly point to the form of democratic socialism which in a particular context offers the greatest justice for all. This form of socialism represents, for Barth, "the best present - and hence provisional - parable of the kingdom of God."[43] However, Barth does not make explicit the implicit social-analytical process by which he arrives at these analogies. Therefore, it is possible to assume that these analogies are arbitrary ideological constructions reflecting more of Barth's bias than the gospel itself. Even within the corpus of *Dogmatics*, where Barth tackles the question of the specifics of ethical action, the four criteria given are general and abstract and difficult to apply to a given human context. These criteria are: that ethical activity should: 1. Be open or changable. 2. Be self-validating in the sense of being a search for the best analogy to the absolute in a specific situation. 3. Be communal in that it relates primarily to humanity in community. 4. Be concrete action.[44] Whilst providing a useful starting point, these criteria do not provide clear insight into the social analysis implicit in Barth's theology.

Analyses of Barth's method have revealed that his analogies and other political and economic conclusions have been reached through the application of a form of Marxist socio-analytical method to the context, in conjunction with continuous dialogue with the gospel.[45] To mention two examples: Barth was critical of

capitalism on the basis of a theological and political analysis; and his position on communism and East-West relations reflects a political analysis unusually incisive for his time and context. The difficulty is that due to Barth's over riding concern with theological integrity he failed to explicate the sociological analysis indispensible to his conclusions. Liberation theologians have counteracted this tendency by insisting on the determinative nature of context for human praxis. Hunsinger is thus correct in concluding that the basic difference between Barth and the broad stream of liberation theologians lies in differing ruling passions:

> The controlling passion of Barth's theology can be read as a passion to love God and fear God above all else, whereas that of Gutierrez's theology can be read as a passion to love one's neighbour as oneself.[46]

This neither means that Barth was unconcerned about the liberation of the oppressed, nor that liberation theologians ignore love for God. Rather the difference is one of emphasis resulting from the diverse contexts and class positions of the theologians. For Barth, to love God means to love God as God is in Godself, and as God has revealed Godself in God's act of liberation *for* humanity in Jesus Christ. Thus, it is God who initiates the process of human liberation and this God cannot be loved in isolation from an active participation in the human quest for full freedom. In terms of this thesis this comparison may be restated: Whilst Barth was predominantly concerned with the revolution of God as the Archimedean point for the transformation of reality, the liberation theologians are more urgently engaged in the actual human revolutionary struggles in

the midst of which they do theology. The danger in Barth's approach is that the 'nuts and bolts' of human liberatory struggles suffer at the hands of theoretical integrity, whilst liberation theologies run the risk of collapsing love for God into love for the neighbour, confining hope to human possibilities. Hunsinger suggests that Barth provides a necessary complement to this tendency in liberation theology:

> This dangerous tendency... can only be resisted... by something like Barth's unqualified precedence for God's Word.[47]

In addition, the only way to resist the "dangerous tendency" to neglect the dynamics of human praxis, is by marrying the "unqualified precedence for God's Word" with an unequivocal commitment to the liberation of the poor and oppressed. Both the are fundamental to theological discourse. The divine command is not discerned in a vacuum but in a real human context, an analytical understanding of which is indispensible to hearing that command. What is needed in Barth's theology is the methodological inclusion of his implicit social analysis. Conversely, if the propensity of human rebellion and revolt to merely give new form to the old oppressive reality is to be overcome, then the revolution of God provides a definitive hinge which liberates human praxis to enable a qualitatively new humanity. In short, Barth and liberation theologians need one another. The latter need the former's reminders about the concrete situations and causes of human oppression. The former needs the latter's challenge, on the basis of God's revolution, to ensure that human praxis contributes to being and staying human in history. McAfee Brown, in comparing Barth and Gustavo

Gutierrez concludes as follows:

> If Barth brings an implicit praxis to his examination of Scripture, Gutierrez brings an implicit biblical orientation to his examination of praxis.[48]

Both approaches recognise the constant interaction of human praxis and the divine Word. Differently stated, Barth ensures that praxis remains *human*; liberation theology ensures that humans actually engage in *praxis*. Barth's pre-occupation with theological integrity provides human praxis with its most sound and revolutionary foundation. The revolution of God ultimately provides the christian community with a radical spirituality of liberation.[49]

5.4 VIOLENCE: THE LIMITING CASE.[50]

A vital question regarding the humanisation of human life under the revolution of God concerns the possibility of the use of violent resistance in the processes of human revolution. In the light of the revolution of God the question is not, is violence ever theologically legitimate but, does God's command of the hour ever require the use of violence as a means of perpetuating quest for the establishment of analogies to the revolution of God on earth?

Nevertheless, any analysis of the question of violence must recognise the historical failure of the church to consistently and adequately explore non-violent strategies as alternatives to the violent resolution of conflict. Significantly, Barth does not engage in a thorough discussion of the dynamics of passive resistance. Yet, it is argued below, that he does regard pacifism

as a permanent challenge to the *ultima ratio* of violence.

For Barth, the use of forcible resistance raises an ethical dilemma in which humanity must choose between respect for human life as an absolute principle, and the absolute of the command of God. This dilemma indicates the pertinence of the *Grenzfall* ethic to the revolution of God. The *Grenzfall* is not intended to be an escape route for the frailty of humanity, but a guarantee of the freedom of God. It is not a Kierkegaardian teleological suspension of the ethical but rather a recognition of the relativity of all human ethics and submission to the absolute ethic of God's command. The *Grenzfall* means that there comes a moment that humanity cannot hear the command of God in the way it is normally heard. Deference to the supremacy of the revolution of God is required.

Consequently, respect for human life cannot become an absolute principle lest it become a kind of second God. Human life is a loan from God and human freedom only occurs within the context of the freedom of God:

> Life is no second God, and therefore the respect due to it cannot rival the reverence owed to God. (CD III,4 p336)

There *may*, therefore come a time when obedience to God, as an *ultima ratio*, requires violent resistance in a specific human situation. In this sense Barth differs from the traditional just war position. His concern is not primarily with the *successful* use of violent resistance, but with *faithful* correspondence to the command of God. The question is not will violence effectively resolve conflict, but does faithful participation in the

revolution of God require it? Yoder comments as follows:

> Barth adds what he calls a "distinctively christian note". If a people is called by God to defend its national existence, then this defence must be carried on without regard for its effectiveness or success.[51]

Violent resistance can furthermore be undertaken with good conscience because it constitutes obedience to the Yes of God in that context. That is why Barth could regard the allied participation in the second World War as a "righteous cause".[52] He saw that the only way in which the proclamation of divine justification through Jesus Christ as the permanent revolution of God in Germany (and Europe) could continue, was if Hitler was violently overthrown by the allied forces. Violent resistance to Hitler was intended to make it possible for people to again perceive the Original Revolution which establishes true humanity. However, the interpretation of violence as a 'righteous cause' to be undertaken with 'good conscience' is open to the abuse of becoming a crusade which does not adequately recognise the guilt of humanity implicit in a theology of the cross. Barth's American critics demonstrated a deeper awareness of this dimension, suggesting that war was to be undertaken "without the benefit of conscience" or "with a bad and tortured conscience for the sins that have brought us to this tragic necessity of fighting".[53] Yet, although Barth is not unaware of the guilt implicit in violence, it is Bonhoeffer who deals realistically with the question:

> When a man takes guilt upon himself in responsibility, and no responsible man can avoid this, he imputes this guilt to himself and to no-one else; he answers for it; he accepts responsibility for it. He does not do this in the insolent presumptuousness of his own power, but he does it in the knowledge that his liberty is forced upon him and that in

> this liberty he is dependent upon grace. Before other men the man of free responsibility is justified by necessity; before himself he is acquitted by his conscience; but before God he only hopes for mercy.[54]

In this way the option for violence is a consequence of the human freedom derived from the freedom of God which accepts the responsibility before God that this freedom implies. Human participation in violent revolutionary processes in correspondence to God's revolution does not minimise the responsibility the human bears for his or her actions.

This does not mean that Barth was unaware of the "unequivocal ugliness" of war.[55] Ultimately, war is worse than other kinds of killing which entails "killing without glory, without dignity, without chivalry, without restraint, and without reserve".[56] The roots of violence lie in the struggle for the acquisition of economic power motivated by material selfishness, which is the very "nothingness" that the revolution of God seeks to destroy. Thus, despite the wartime emphasis on the Yes of the resurrection and the victory of Jesus, Barth insists that violence can only be considered by those who have carefully examined and been tempted by the absolute pacifist option. With regard to the use of violence Barth concludes:

> All affirmative answers to the question are wrong if they do not start with the assumption that the inflexible negative of pacifism has almost infinite arguments in its favour and is almost overpoweringly strong. (CD III,4 p455; KD p520)

The question about violence, consequently, relates to the choosing, under the command of God, of the best human analogy to the divine revolution. Violence is always an *opus alienum* and, if used, must more closely correspond to the humanising *telos* of

God's revolution than the pacifist position. It must aim to establish the kind of justice that corresponds to divine justification, and the quality of human community that bears analogy to Trinitarian love.

We can now summarise important conclusions regarding the use of violence in human revolutionary processes under the revolution of God.

Firstly, the use of violent resistance as a human response to the divine revolution cannot, in principle, be ruled out. The refusal of the violence option cannot, therefore, be posited upon absolute pacifism but rather upon a perception that such a refusal is consistent with the supreme revolution of God. The option for violence remains a possibility, and those who have chosen this way as an *ultima ratio* cannot be dismissed as having denied God's revolution. On the contrary, they may be the ones who discern the command of God most clearly.

Secondly, violence can only be advocated as participation in the revolution of God when it is regarded to be consistent with the Yes of God to all humanity. As such violence, cannot be directed primarily against human persons in a spirit of hatred or bitterness, but against the evil that threatens humanity, and thus for the benefit of all - even the enemy. The humanity of the enemy must be respected. Here the law of love is of supreme importance. The passion of forcible resistance is to be transformed by the humanising love of Jesus, which alone is capable of ensuring that revolution continues to be orientated

towards being and staying human in the world. For this reason the cost of violence is to be constantly evaluated in the light of the humanisation of the struggle for justice. Yet the moment may come when the violent resolution of conflict is both the option most consistent with love, and the least costly path to follow:

> The church knows God's anger and judgement, but also it knows that His anger lasts but for a moment, whereas His mercy is for eternity. The political analogy of this truth is that violent solutions of conflicts in the political community... must be approved and supported, and if necessary suggested by the christian community - for how could it possibly contract out in such situations.[57]

Nonetheless, this can only be the case when violence is "for the moment the ultimate and only possibility available";[58] and, following Bonhoeffer, when this option is chosen the implicit human guilt and responsibility are accepted.

A corollary of this, indicated in the last quotation, is that the fear of the violent option cannot be used to avoid political responsibility. In commenting on the Scottish Confession Barth warns:

> Whether the repressing of tyranny will be a matter of forcible resistance or not, is not something which can be decided in advance. But active resistance as such cannot and may not be excluded out of fear of the *ultima ratio* of forcible resistance.[59]

God must be free to command in any given human context and human beings must be equally free to obey. Neither the content of God's command nor the form of human response can be pre-decided. Human action must give analogous historical shape to the revolution of God no matter how ambiguous that action may be. The imperative to choose the best human politics cannot be sidestepped.

This finally brings us back to the social analysis required to hear the command of God in a particular situation. As noted above, Barth fails to provide adequate tools for the task. To recognise the moment when other options have been exhausted, and to assess the human cost implicit in forcible resistance, requires not only theological skill and faith, but socio-analytical insight. Without such insight human participation in armed resistance is bound to be romantic and destructive.

In summation, under the God's Yes and No the transformation of human society is entrusted to human movements of protest. This affirmation of humanity by God gives creative freedom to humans to make and keep their context human. This implies active participation in the human politics that best corresponds to the Yes of God in a particular human situation. For the proper performance of this task appropriate socio-analytical tools are a necessary moment in theological discourse. The development of these tools in constant conversation with the *content* of the revolution of God is the imperative facing theology today. Further to avoid the concrete political consequences and choices (however drastic they may be) implicit in discerning human correspondences to God's revolution is *to fail to be human.*

Nevertheless, no human correspondence can responsibly be discerned apart from the eschatological reservation of the No of God. This No demands permanent vigilance against the ideological captivity that leads human revolutions to "devour their own children".[60] This occurs when only the Yes of God is heard. The

No provides a theological reminder of the provisionality of all human praxis, and keeps the transformation of reality *human*. Yet, to use this No as an excuse for indifference or neutrality is to abuse its intention. This occurs when only the No of God is heard.

The Yes of God which includes the No is does not imply a kind of balance or equilibrium. God's decisive word is Yes, and in this Yes establishes God's revolutionary transformation of humanity and creation. But as long as oppression and injustice born of human *hubris* persists, the hearing of the Yes is made possible by the judgement of the No.

In principle the theology of the revolution of God leads to corresponding revolutionary human praxis. If God's final purpose is to say Yes to full and true humanity then nothing less will suffice.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. See J. M. Lochman, "An Ecumenical Theology of Revolution", in Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (eds), *New Theology No:6*, London, Macmillan, 1969, pp117-8.

2. Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, New York, Vintage, 1956, p249.

3. See Barth's discussion of this in CD III,4 p20f; KD p20f) see also Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, Philadelphia, Westminister, 1947.

4. For the wider debate on the relationship between gospel and law see Klaus Nurnberger, "The Law-Gospel Debate as a Possible Basis for Theological Ethics", in *Theologia Evangelica*, Vol 14, No 2, Pretoria, Unisa, 1981.

5. Karl Barth, "Gospel and Law" in Herberg, *Community, State and Church*, p80.

6. I am indebted to the more comprehensive treatment of the concept of the *Grenzfall* by Ernest Williams, *A Critical Appraisal of the Grenzfall in Karl Barth's Ethics*, unpublished MA thesis, Unisa, 1981.

7. Of particular note here is the work of Juan Luis Segundo in *The Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1975. Segundo argues for a hermeneutical circle which allows for the permanent questioning of ruling theological concepts in the interests of authentic liberative praxis. This hermeneutic begins with a *suspicion* that prevailing ideological and theological formulations serve the interests of the ruling classes.

8. The influence of Marxist thought on Barth's theology is argued by F. W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, see also Marquardt's article "Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth" in Hunsinger, *Radical Politics*, also Robin M. Petersen *An Analysis of the Nature and Basis of Karl Barth's Socialism*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985.

9. See note 36 in chapter four.

10. Karl Marx, *On German Ideology*, New York, International Publishers, 1947; also quoted in *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, James Leatt, Theo Kneifel, and Klaus Nurnberger (eds), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986, p275.

11. ibid. p209.

12. CD IV,4 p225.

13. The question is raised in chapter four under 4.2.3. 'Epistemological vigilance' is defined by Otto Maduro in *Religion and Social Conflicts*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1982, as follows:

> A permanent, critical consciousness of the limits of our capacity to know reality, and of the 'concealing and distorting' tendencies of this same capacity. (p27)

14. see chapter one p10f.

15. G. K. Roberts, *A Dictionary of Political Analysis*, London, Longmans, 1971, pA9; also quoted in Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's Revolution of God...", p9.

16. see chapter one p11.

17. Jaques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976, p397.

18. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (eds), *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, New York, Anchor, 1967, p407.

19. Barth, *Romans (1922)*, p481.

20. CD IV,4 p174, emphasis added.

21. Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's Revolution of God", p10.

22. Rolland F. Smith, "A Theology of Rebellion", in Martin Marty and Dean Peerman, *New Theology No:6*, p141.

23. Camus, *The Rebel*, p22.

24. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, London, Burns and Oates, 1980, pp88-99.

25. Rubem A. Alves, *Tomorrows Child*, London, SCM, 1972, p194.

26. ibid. p199.

27. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, London, SCM, 1984, p95.

28. Barth, "Church and State" in Herberg *Community, Church and State*, p151.

29. ibid. p157.

30. ibid. p158.

31. see Jose Miguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethic*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1983, p86.

32. Lehmann, *Transfiguration*, p39.

33. Jurgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, p92-3.

34. Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*, Maryknoll, Orbis,

1985, p121. See also Alistair Kee, *Domination or Liberation*, London, SCM, 1986, p75f.

35. CD IV,2 p180.

36. Quoted from an appendix in Barth's *Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland* by John De Gruchy in "Racism, Reconciliation and Resistance", in Villa-Vicencio, *On Reading Karl Barth*, p10.

37. see chapter four: 4.2.2.

38. Villa-Vicencio, "Karl Barth's revolution of God", p7.

39. see chapter four note 34.

40. Article 5 of the Barmen declaration in a revised translation by Douglas Bax in *JTSA*, No 47, June 1984, p80.

41. Barth, "Church and State", p162.

42. Barth, "Christian Community and Civil Community", pp168-79.

43. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, p91.

44. CD II,2 pp654ff; and in Bettis, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 27, 1974, p297-299.

45. See note 8 in this chapter.

46. Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and Liberation Theology", p254.

47. ibid. p261.

48. Robert McAfee Brown, "Good News From Karl Barth", in McKim, *How Karl Barth Changed my Mind*, p99.

49. The term 'spirituality of liberation' refers to the theological and spiritual foundations of human struggles for liberation. It was popularised by Gustavo Gutierrez in his book *A Theology of Liberation*, London, SCM, 1973, pp205-8.

50. The argument here is more fully developed in my essay "Theology and Violence" in Villa-Vicencio, *On Reading Karl Barth*.

51. John Howard Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1970, p41.

52. D. B. Stoesz "Karl Barth's Theological Justification of World War II" in *ARC*, vol XII, No 1, Autumn 1985, p29.

53. ibid. p30.

54. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, New York, Macmillan, 1955, p248.

55. CD III,4 p453; KD p518.

56. ibid. p453; KD p518.

57. Barth, "Christian Community and Civil Community", p178.

58. ibid. p179.

59. Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1938, p231.

60. Lehmann, *Transfiguration*, pxiii.

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III,1	1958	(1945)
III,2	1960	(1948)
III,3	1960	(1950)
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ABSTRACT

The paradox at the centre of Barth's theology is that, on the one hand, humanity is incapable of speaking of God, whilst on the other hand, it is imperative for humanity to speak of God. This dilemma is resolved by God's act for humanity in Jesus Christ, giving rise to a human response of faith and obedience. Humanity *can* speak of God only because God has revealed Godself. Hence, all theology and praxis begins doxologically, in praise for God's initiative of grace.

This thesis proposes that Barth's perception of this initiative of God is best expressed in the concept of the **revolution of God**, which provides a paradigm from which to recover the liberative and humanising intention of his theology. In this concept Barth simultaneously speaks of God and humanity, without confusing the deity of God and the humanness of humanity, providing a way beyond both quietism and the legitimation of power, choosing instead permanent confrontation with power in the interest of true humanisation.

Such an approach is suggested by Paul Lehmann in a 1972 article describing Barth as a "theologian of permanent revolution". Also, in the same year, the doctoral thesis of Frederich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Bespiel Karl Barths*, devotes significant attention to Barth's concept of the revolution of God within his analysis of Barth's socialism. This thesis is a more extensive analysis of the revolution of God within the wider framework of Barth's theology.

Methodologically, this thesis develops from praxis to theory and back under the assumption that it is praxis which verifies theory.

The **first chapter** uses the method of 'theology as biography' to theologically analyse specific activities in Barth's life, enquiring whether his praxis justifies deeper examination of the concept of God's revolution. His appreciation of Mozart provides a frame of reference within which three events are considered: Firstly, his response to the 1914 manifesto signed by German liberals legitimating the military policy of the Kaiser; secondly, his refusal to make the oath of allegiance to Hitler; and finally, his understanding of the inclusion of Hungary in the Eastern bloc.

With this foundation, the **second chapter** analyses the development of the concept of the revolution of God in his early theology, from the pastorate at Geneva and Safenwil to professorship at Gottingen and Munster. Barth's quest for a way of simultaneously speaking about God and humanity without separating or uniting the two is prompted by disatisfation with liberal and religious-socialist models, grows into a dialectic approach, and matures in an analogical method based on Anselm of Canterbury.

In **chapter three** analogical thinking is examined as the epistemological basis of God's revolution. In the Anselmian concept of God as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* Barth finds an understanding of God sufficiently radical to be the Archimedean point upon which all reality depends. Here God is

understood as the self-existent One who, by grace, takes the initiative for humanity in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The being and act of this God finds its historical analogy in the Chalcedonian two-natures christology.

Jesus Christ, as the revolution of God, is the exclusive subject of the **fourth chapter**. Here Chalcedonian christology is analysed, and the implications of Barth's understanding of the person of Jesus are explored. It is argued that Jesus embodies the revolution of God which seeks to bring true and full life to humanity. The historical correspondence of Jesus, as the 'royal man', to the being and act of God leads to three conclusions: Firstly, a human community based on radical solidarity with the poor and lowly; secondly, the de-absolutising of all human thinking and action under the No of God; and thirdly, the decisive Yes of God to the human search for the best historical analogies to God's revolution.

Finally, the **fifth chapter** deals with questions about the relationship between God's revolution and human revolution. Here it is concluded that, read from the perspective of the revolution of God, Barth's theology always demands revolutionary human praxis geared to the transformation of reality.

17 DEC 1987