

TOWARD RADICAL NEW TESTAMENT DISCIPLESHIP

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ABSTRACT: Radical New Testament disciples may benefit from placing the 16th century South German Anabaptist theologian Pilgram Marpeck in conversation with the 20th century Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth. Marpeck and Barth will enrich ecumenical Christ-followers within both the Reformed and the Free Church traditions even as they remain confessional. Our particular effort is to construct a soteriology grounded in discipleship through correlating the coinherent work of the Word with the Spirit in revelation, through placing human agency within a divinely granted response to the gracious sovereignty of God, and through providing a holistic doctrine of individual and communal life in union with Christ.

KEY WORDS: Karl Barth, Pilgram Marpeck, discipleship, grace, radical, unity, Word

[This essay originated with the request of John Webster, before whom it was presented at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. John asked me to put my Free Church theological method in conversation with Karl Barth, but the essay remained unpublished until John's recent death brought his original request to mind. I look forward to eternity with that dear brother in Christ, where our theological differences will be overcome in the perfect presence of our one Lord, the incarnate, resurrected, and reigning Jesus Christ.]

Theological Unity between Reformed and Free Churches?

In the high priestly prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus Christ effectively interceded for his disciples. Calling upon the Father to say a graceful 'Yes' to man's sinful 'No', in sanctifying them by the truth (verse 17), the Son noted his own previous 'Yes' to man, for he had sanctified himself 'for them' (verse 19). In Jesus Christ, the vertical had truly become one with the horizontal, the incarnation sovereignly transformed the profanity of the human into holiness. As a result, within the hearts and lives of the disciples of Jesus, the profane 'No' of man was successfully opposed by the sanctifying 'Yes' of God: 'they have believed You sent Me' (verse 8), and 'they have kept Your word' (verse 6).

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If we were to apply to John 17 the stark ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ language utilized in Karl Barth’s discussion of the sixth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, we might come to a much more positive analysis than that offered by the early Barth. Where earlier in his career the Reformed Barth pessimistically concluded, ‘The power of obedience which says ‘Yes’ to God and ‘No’ to sin does not exist in any concrete fashion’ (Barth 1933: 213), both the later Barth and the Free Churchman Pilgram Marpeck concluded obedience must nonetheless be pursued as realizable.

According to Pilgram Marpeck, a leading theologian amongst the South German Anabaptist communities, there is a way for man to realize a concrete ‘Yes’ to God (if we may borrow Barth’s language). And this way is found only in Christ, who makes himself present by the graces of the Spirit to the gathered congregation of Christian disciples. ‘He [Christ] is all in all when the members are knit together under the Head united through His Spirit, which compensates for all failure and deficiency in them’ (Marpeck 1531: 74). In John, it appears that the result of the electing Yes of God may be a responsive human ‘Yes’, but only, we must be careful to add, only insofar as the human is united to Christ, specifically to the humanity of Christ, whose earthly body is the church.

And only, moreover, it should be said, in opposition to the human perfectionism of Marpeck’s spiritualist interlocutors. It is the humanity of Christ that is perfect, not the humanity of the Christian. Marpeck challenged the Spiritualists, the true Pelagians of his day, to ‘show me one who has not had a weakness of the flesh’ since the ascension of Christ. But where the Christian is imperfect, Christ himself ‘possesses all gifts and perfect power’ (Marpeck 1531: 73). It is by being united to the social humanity of Christ that the Christian may lay claim to Christ’s perfection in this day before Christ’s return.

The 20th century Karl Barth, whose apparently thoroughgoing pessimism regarding human holiness has been exposed as only apparent by John Webster, must meet the 16th century Evangelical Anabaptists, whose apparent perfectionism and enthusiasm have begun to be exposed as apparent, too. In an important essay exploring human action in Barth’s early theological ethics, Webster demonstrated how the prevailing tradition had misinterpreted the early Barth. Barth was thought to have ‘abandoned any sense that the human subject is an ethical agent’ (Webster 1998: 11). Examining four documents, stretching from 1919 to 1922, Webster found that Barth stated the priority of transcendent grace strongly so that he could destroy the liberal theological basis of what we may term human autonomy.

The early Barth ‘adopted a rhetorical strategy of stressing the negative so that the false positives could be chased from the field, and the real, that is, theologically grounded, affirmation, could be allowed to emerge’ (Web-

ster 1998: 19). This strategy found an incomplete and late fulfillment in Barth's fragment on the Christian life. Similarly, as we have just noted, some Anabaptists, including that former Evangelical Pilgrim Marpeck have been falsely misrepresented as perfectionists.

Yet, even some misrepresentations have a seed of truth in them. If Barth's program was to correct the divine immanence and human voluntarism of the Liberals through emphasizing divine transcendence and human dependence, then Marpeck's program was to correct the popular fatalism and antinomianism engendered through the speculative theology of the Magisterial Reformers by emphasizing the humanity of Christ and visible Christian discipleship. Marpeck and Barth stressed different aspects of discipleship precisely because their opponents overstated their cases.

The question thus becomes whether a theologian may successfully oppose an error without actually, or even apparently, succumbing to the opposite error. It could be argued that Marpeck did so successfully, while such careful theologians as Hans Urs von Baltasar have argued that a reading of Barth's more significant works would indicate that he did not, especially in his earlier writings. Webster's 'close reading' of mostly Barth's lesser-known texts placed aside for a moment, the tenor of the Swiss theologian's better-known works suggests that he did not always successfully convey a concern for human response to divine initiative. Marpeck, the layman, on the other hand, certainly did not succumb to perfectionism, although he was perhaps less successful at always conveying the impression that sanctification is entirely the work of divine grace. In his efforts to refute what he considered inventive schemes of predestination while constructing a doctrine of Christian life, Marpeck might have been helped by employing a language of election that was non-speculative yet consistent.

The current essay intends to bring Marpeck and Barth into conversation, perhaps enriching the students of both theological giants in their efforts to construct a theological method that correlates the coinherent work of the Word and the Spirit in revelation, that properly places human agency within the gracious sovereignty of God, and that provides a holistic doctrine of individual and communal life as stemming from union with Christ. The hope is that the progress of radical New Testament Christianity will be furthered through such an exercise of ecumenical conversation that still reinforces confessional fidelity. Barth's concern to ground the moments of salvation in the divine Yes of God to man will prove helpful to Marpeck, as we shall see. However, because Marpeck is the lesser-known theologian, it may be helpful to explain how his theological work may be beneficial to students of Karl Barth.

An Anabaptist Advantage

In the construction of a holistic theological ethics Marpeck may actually have an advantage, for where the early Barth found his primary interlocutor in a Protestant Liberalism that turned Christianity into an ethics without an ontology, Marpeck faced multiple opponents and problems that forced him into conversation with a wide diversity of theological systems. From his Roman Catholic upbringing, he gained a fundamental respect for the classical formulations of the Trinity and the incarnation, yet he was compelled to reject the works-righteousness of medieval Roman Catholicism. Grateful to those who had brought him to the realization that justification was a divine gift received in faith, he still came to see the predestinarian speculations of the Evangelical theologians as damaging to the Christian life.

While rejecting the widespread coercion of the human conscience anchored in the practice of infant baptism by the state-churches of both Roman Catholicism and Magisterial Protestantism, Marpeck was yet disappointed with the conflicting responses of violent apocalypticism by the belligerent Anabaptists centered in Münster, on the one hand, and the placing of the magistrate in the realm of Satan by the pacifistic Anabaptists, who later coalesced under the leadership of Menno Simons, on the other hand. Finally, repelled by the ethical rigorism of the Swiss Brethren, who rigidly applied the external letter of the Christian faith, he was nevertheless careful to avoid the inner-only understanding of the Spiritualists.

As a result of his careful responses to these violently competitive forces at a critical point in Christian history, Marpeck developed a truly holistic theology. He grounded Christianity in the objective work of the eternal God while expressing it in the subjective response of the Christian living in and of Christ. Marpeck drew upon the inner reality of the Spirit in order to demand an outer expression of the Word in the individual's responsible life in the Christian church. He developed a covenantal theology from Scripture at the same time he was deconstructing the covenantal inventions of the Reformed. The Word and the Spirit, the inner and the outer, the order of Scripture as opposed to the order of man, conviction without coercion, and so on—the coalescence of orthodoxy and serenity in Marpeck is singularly profound.

Following such balances, the holistic theology of Marpeck may provide a friendly corrective to Barth, for instance, with regard to the latter's doctrine of sanctification. Webster's conclusion about Barth's lifelong strategy implicitly suggests something may be required. 'Barth's concern', Webster concludes, 'is not with the elimination of responsible human action, but with its placing or specification' (Webster 1998: 38). Marpeck went further, for he was not only concerned with the proper theological placement of responsible human action, but with its proper implementation, both in the Christian

life and in the churches. As ‘has long been recognized’, Pilgram Marpeck is, according to Rollin Armour, ‘one of the most attractive of the Anabaptist leaders, for he exemplified an admirable balance of character and mind’ (Armour 1966: 113). If so, Marpeck may prove a worthy conversation partner for Karl Barth and Barth’s Reformed students.

The invitation to a conversation between Free Church and Evangelical theologians brings us back to John 17, and Christ’s high priestly prayer. Verse 21 has long been recognized as a call for Christian unity: ‘May they all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.’ Perhaps this serves as an appropriate Scripture with which to be concerned in an essay on a conversation intended for mutual edification. Our two major subjects in this paper, Karl Barth (Barth 1936) and Pilgram Marpeck (Marpeck 1552: 521-527), were concerned with Christian unity, and devoted at least one monograph each to that theme.

As we shall see, these representative theologians of competing traditions have much upon which they agree in their response to the call to Christian unity as elsewhere. Prior to discussing the responses of Marpeck and Barth, however, we need to look deeper into why we have described their traditions as competitive. In doing so, we may perhaps perceive how Barth and Marpeck provide resources for a significant if incomplete convergence between the Evangelical and the Anabaptist, a convergence that suggests, however, the advancement beyond the Reformation toward a more radical Restitution.

Roman, Reformed, or Radically Reformed?

In what may be a gross understatement, the Christian communion of those free churches known as Baptist—including Southern Baptists, and especially Landmarkists and neo-Landmarkists—is not typically viewed as concerned for Christian unity. Some Southern Baptists have recently been suspected of, at best, neo-Landmarkism, and, at worst, Landmarkism. Landmarkism is that 19th century form of Baptist life developed in the central and western churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, which sought to defend an exclusive claim to be called New Testament churches. Landmarkism appealed to a supposed historical succession of Free Churches that stretches back through the English Baptists, continental Anabaptists, and Lollards and Waldensians, Albigensians and Paulicians, and Donatists and Novationists, to the pre-fallen (i.e. pre-Constantinian) church, and ultimately to the New Testament. As a result of this succession, Landmarkists claimed that modern Baptist churches were the only true churches, Baptist ordinances were the only true ordinances, and non-Baptists may not preach from Baptist pulpits (Tull 2000). All other Christian ‘churches’ were merely

Christian societies, an exclusive claim to *ekklesia* with interesting echoes in the 2000 *Dominus Iesus* declaration of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Ratzinger 2000: 4.17).

With the widespread and justified abandonment of the Landmark successionism theory for Baptist origins in the 20th century, there was a concomitant and unjustified relaxation of concern for Baptist ecclesiology. However, in recent years, there has been a renaissance of Baptist identity that has focused on the ecclesiological sourcing of Baptists within New Testament theology (Yarnell 2007). This renaissance has sometimes been labeled 'Landmarkist' by those with more of an ecumenical, evangelical, or emerging tendency, but the label is inappropriate. Many of those who have participated in this Baptist renaissance are concerned to reclaim neither Baptist exclusivity nor historical successionism, but rather to return their churches to moral conformity with the New Testament. As a result, there has been a growing interest in how earlier English and American Baptists and their theological kin, the Anabaptists, perceived how and under what forms Jesus Christ established the church and what witness the apostles bore to that foundation.

This focus has resulted in a growing interest for what previous historians labeled 'Free Churches' (i.e. churches not established by the state), 'Believers' Churches' (i.e. churches composed only of a regenerate membership), and 'Baptizing Churches' (i.e. churches that maintain regenerate membership through the covenantal baptism only of believers). Historical sources in the various Free Church movements are being increasingly mined by Southern Baptist theologians for the assistance they may render in a recovery of a theology, especially an ecclesiology, formed by New Testament exegesis.

The Formation of Christian Doctrine was an exercise not entirely unrelated to this Baptist and Free Church renaissance (Yarnell 2007). It is at the same time ecumenical in orientation and Free Church in conviction, which is why some rather diverse theologians could endorse it (cf. the Anabaptist Baptist Paige Patterson, the Reformed John Webster, the Roman Catholic Ralph Del Colle, and the Calvinist Baptist Timothy George). The goal in this book was to consider the problems of both theological foundationalism and the development of doctrine through a survey of Christian proposals representative of the major Western theological traditions. For the first three chapters, which focused on theological method as a systematic concern, a dialogue was carried out with the Roman Catholic tradition represented by Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), the Reformed tradition represented by Herman Bavinck, and the Liberal theological tradition represented by Maurice Wiles. The Free Church tradition was represented in the life and

work of Marpeck, a lay theologian active in the continental Radical Reformation.

Utilizing the structure of theological method common to the Roman Catholic and Protestant *Fundamentaltheologie* traditions in the German universities, attention was paid to the foundational aspects of revelation, faith, and church. As the various Western traditions were placed in conversation with one another, it was discovered that the Roman Catholic theological method of Ratzinger was characterized by a view of revelation as Logos Christology, thus subtly elevating philosophy into the Tridentine coordination of Scripture and Tradition; faith as personal trust in the biblical Christ; and the church as an architectonic structure that stands on Petrine succession and sporadically conflates the Trinity with the church.

The Liberal theological method of Wiles was found to be hospitable in its attitude, open towards modernity in its reasonableness, willing not only to engage in historical criticism but doctrinal criticism, and ultimately interested in ‘remaking’ the Christian faith to address modern questions in modern ways. The Reformed theological method of Bavinck exhibited a view of revelation that looked both to Scripture and philosophy, considered the church to be primarily invisible and universal, and demoted faith so as to preserve an elaborate Evangelical predestination scheme.

A critique of these alternative Western theological foundations from the Free Church perspective argued that the first locus of theological method, that of revelation, is better understood as the unrivaled supremacy of Scripture. Tradition and philosophy must both be respectfully regarded as human innovations, although theology necessarily interacts with tradition, reason, and experience. With regard to the second locus of theological method, that of faith, the Believers’ Church perspective argued that faith in Jesus Christ is primary, not secondary, and that such faith must be placed dynamically in the living Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture, not constructed from abstractions.

Concerning the third locus of theological method, that of the church, the Baptizing Church perspective argued that the doctrine of the church must have an explicit basis in Scripture. As a result, both Ratzinger’s dismissal of Matthew 18 as the basis for local communities in favor of a strained reading of Matthew 16 as the basis for the universal church, and Bavinck’s prioritizing of a theological invention, the invisible church, were deemed inadequate for a New Testament theological construction.

Turning from oppositional placement, the final chapter in the first half of the book offered an inductively systematic reading of the works of Marpeck in order to construct a potentially exemplary free church theological method. The foundation of doctrine for Marpeck was existentially displayed in covenantal yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*) to the call that Christ gra-

ciously extends to those who must take up their crosses and follow him (*Nachfolge Christi*). Over against the scholastic Protestant scheme, which typically considered it a sub-doctrine of sanctification, Christian discipleship thus functioned as the foundation for Marpeck's theology as well as his ethics (McClendon 1986-2000). This reorientation is significant, for it enabled Marpeck to replace the foundations of the Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Spiritualist-Rationalist traditions with one he believed eminently more Christological and faithful because more literally and spiritually Biblical.

There were four *Grundprinzipien* within Marpeck's theological foundation: First and foremost was Jesus Christ in his person and work, understood according to the ancient creeds, but with special emphasis upon the mediatorial role of his humanity. The second ground principle was a coinherence of Word and Spirit proceeding from the ontological Trinity to God's revelation of himself to humanity through the continually cooperative work of the Spirit with the Word. Third was the prioritization of the revealed order—in covenantal history, soteriological phenomena, and ecclesiological order—in opposition especially to the predestinarian and persecuting schema of the early Reformed theologians. The fourth ground principle concerned the Believers' Church, which was formed by covenantal baptism, a commemorative Lord's Supper, and redemptive church discipline, and which was characterized by a communal theology, the beauty of divine ornamentation, and the humility of participating in Christ's humanity prior to participating in his glory.

Due to the rise of a scholastic Calvinism within the Southern Baptist Convention that identifies Baptists closely with American Evangelicalism, the book's discussion of both theological method and historical method carefully drew dark lines against the Reformed tradition represented in the work of theologians such as Martin Bucer, John Calvin, Herman Bavinck, Oscar Cullmann, Peter Toon, Alister McGrath, and Donald Carson. Perhaps because Marpeck's theology was dependent upon Martin Luther to some extent, especially with regard to the visibility of Christ's humanity, a necessarily attenuated *ordo salutis*, and the historically-useful dialectic of law and gospel (Blough 1987), the criticisms were somewhat muted towards the great Reformer. 'Evangelicalism', a term that was traced to its 16th century roots in Magisterial Protestantism rather than its 18th century recovery in the Awakenings, was lined out even while accepting positive theological lessons from them. Also periodically isolated were those Free Church theologians who demonstrate a potential, though various and uncertain, heavy dependence upon the Reformed, such as John Gill, D. A. Carson, and my own mentor, James Leo Garrett, Jr.

Placing Baptists amidst the Reformations

Paradoxically, however, it is primarily due to a desire to preserve the legacy of a concern for both Baptist identity and Christian unity in this last-mentioned theologian's life that criticism was directed Garrett's way with regard to whether Baptists should be identified as Evangelicals. Garrett's theological pilgrimage is simultaneously parochial and profound, provincial and pervasive. On the one hand, he came from a family that treasured its Baptist roots by naming their children after great Baptist educators and missionaries. Garrett was born among Texas Baptists, born again among Texas Baptists. He was, moreover, educated by Texas Baptists, and began and is ending his stellar ministry serving among Texas Baptists. On the other hand, Garrett has displayed a broadness of mind and action that belies his provincial roots. In his own lifetime, while some Liberal Baptists wanted to separate Baptists and Evangelicals, Garrett saw the correlations between the two.

While the Pope was still identified by some as Antichrist, Garrett led Southern Baptists into several rounds of official dialogue with Roman Catholics. He likewise turned Baptist attention toward Eastern Orthodoxy, Two-Thirds World Christianity, and the Believers' Churches. But, even while looking outward, Garrett preserved the Baptist tradition inwardly, for instance, most recently by completing the first substantial history of Baptist theology. Garrett has consistently upheld Baptist identity at the same time in which he engaged in the search for Christian unity (Garrett 2005; Garrett 2008). For Garrett, consistent Baptist confessionalism and the careful exploration of Christian unity form two moments in a singular act of obedience to Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, however, too close an identification with modern Evangelicalism may undermine Free Church identity and the delicate consideration of Christian unity. For instance, the greatest resistance to a Baptist Renaissance centered in the President's office and amongst the theologians at Southwestern Seminary has not come from outside the Southern Baptist Convention, but from pastors and missionaries within the Southern Baptist Convention. The heaviest criticism has come from those who identify themselves not only as Southern Baptist, but also as Reformed, Evangelical, and/or Emerging.

Where Garrett was able to balance a concern for Baptist identity concurrently with Christian unity, Reformed Evangelicals in the Baptist fold sometimes consider this Baptist Renaissance ominously. The exact sources of this discomfort with Baptist identity are yet to be delineated. However, the simultaneous movement of high-profile converts from the Believers' Churches through Evangelicalism toward other churches, including Presbyterianism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, has become increasingly no-

ticeable. The most spectacular example of this destabilization among the Free Churches was the conversion of Frances Beckwith, Baylor University professor and President of the Evangelical Theological Society, to Roman Catholicism (Hahn 1977; Howard 2007; Armstrong 2008; Salmon 2008). The greatest challenges may come, however, from movements towards Reformed theology within the Free Churches (Hansen 2008: 69-94).

In response to these challenges, the Baptist Renaissance gathered steam by stoking passions for a Free or Believers' or Baptizing Church outlook, including among some Baptists who identify themselves in soteriological terms as Reformed. This outlook is not desired by most of its proponents for the sake of history, but for the sake of identifying what New Testament Christianity may be and seeking to live it out. This desire to reinstitute New Testament Christianity is not limited to Anabaptists and Baptists, however, for it has parallels among Methodists, Congregationalists, and the more independent-minded Presbyterians. Indeed, each of these Free Church movements manifests significant interaction with yet rejection of classical Calvinism in its history: Many Free Churches move beyond Evangelical Christianity because they do not sense it is radical enough.

The Latin root of the English word 'radical' is *radix*, which means 'root' (Klaassen 2001: 9; Warren 2013: 84-85). To identify something as radical is to imply the irresistible appeal of Christian primitivism, what the Christian Renaissance of the early 16th century termed *ad fontes*, literally a return 'to the sources' of Christianity. The Anabaptists, the early Baptists in England and America, and other Believers' Churches, have displayed such radicalism at critical moments in their history, and always at their temporal origins. These Christian communities were radical in their appeal to Scripture and radical in their implementation of the lessons that they garnered there. However, 'radicalism' is a characteristic not only of the Free Churches, but all Reformation Evangelicals (Ryrie 2017: 29).

The implementation of radical New Testament Christianity without regard for existing forms of Christian culture is what has been identified as *restitutio*. *Restitutio* is distinct from a mere *reformatio* in that it considers the latter to involve incomplete transformation. The Latin term *reformatio* has a long pedigree in Western Christianity, appearing in its first prominence in the 12th century, when the medieval churches set out to recover a form of Christian purity, without however surrendering Christendom's gains in feudal society (Constable 1996). During the Conciliarist movement of the 15th century, there were repeated calls for a *reformatio* of the church 'in head and members', but there were competing ideas of what the ideal historical form of the church should be (Oakley 2003: 21, 66-67; Crowder 1977).

Noticeably, during the 16th century, Martin Luther did not intend to do away with the Roman church, but to re-form it according to the doctrines of *sola scriptura*, the priesthood of all believers, and especially justification by faith. When the Radical Reformers, including the Anabaptists, attempted to further the reforms of Luther and Zwingli, the resistance was severe. It turned out that *sola scriptura* did not always imply a radical *ad fontes*, for there were many things which Luther considered *adiaphora* (i.e. indifferent). The Reformed were more radical and oddly less tolerant than the Lutherans, but only by degrees (Ryrie 2017: 47-52).

As a result of resistance by the Magisterial Reformers as well as the Roman Catholics, the Anabaptists began to speak less about a *reformatio*, a reformation of the existing church to some historically-derived ideal form. Instead, they called for the dissolution of the Constantinian forms of the church, which included infant baptism, the conflation of church and state, and the coercion of human consciences. Rather than the human forms, the Radical Reformers desired what has been called a *restitutio*, a reinstatement of the forms of the church commanded by Christ in the New Testament (Littell 1958: 79).

The most radical of the 16th century Reformers were concerned not only to sweep away the hierarchy and theology that Luther rejected, nor only to remove the icons and practices that the Reformed rejected. The Radical Reformers wanted to sweep away all the existing forms of church and state, religious coercion, and infant baptism that had been introduced subsequent to the first century. The Radically Reformed wanted a renewal, more than a reformation. They earnestly desired a restoration or restitution of the New Testament life of the church.

Three Suggestions for Radically Appropriating Barth and Marpeck

And it is here that some interesting tendencies within the theology of Karl Barth must be brought into the conversation. One major Christian theologian who did not play much of a role in *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* was this Swiss pastor. There are a number of reasons for this lacuna, but perhaps the most important is that the sheer size of Barth's works and the industry that has been devoted to explicating his theology is dauntingly massive. For an historical theologian making the transition to systematic theology, that factor alone was a cause for extreme wariness. Yet, those who desire the radical restitution of New Testament Christianity amongst the churches have a number of reasons to appreciate and to appropriate the weighty theological and ecclesiological legacy of Karl Barth.

There is much within Barth that is attractive for a constructive biblical theological formation. The first reason to consider a careful appropriation of Barth is that, although he may be generally classified as Reformed, he

was not exclusively dependent upon that tradition. After all, his *The Epistle to the Romans* (Barth 1933) and his lectures on Calvin (Barth 1995) indicate a radical appropriation of the Protestant sources of Scripture and the Reformation in order to draw a heavy line against the dominant Liberalism of his own church. The commentary on Romans was not written by a conformist, but by a dialectical theologian, a genius with a radical temperament, especially in his rejection of cultural religion. Moreover, although Barth long appreciated the contributions of the Reformers and found them useful in his controversy with Liberal Protestantism, he did not treat the theological and ethical forms of the Reformation uncritically.

In his *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, Barth is both appreciative and critical of his own denomination's confessions (evincing a similar tendency to what led many of the early radicals out of the Evangelical Churches into the Believers' Churches). The particularity and inward anthropology of the Puritans, for instance, come in for special condemnation (Barth 2002: 121-123, 215-217). In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth freely drew upon the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions, although he still typically held the Radicals at bay. But again, his attitude is not uncritical. Where Calvin, for instance, taught the particularity of election or emphasized mortification, Barth freely disagrees (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 475-477).

Finally, it must be noted that Barth, like Marpeck, is characterized by a Christ-centered outlook, for instance in his doctrine of election (Barth 1956-1975: II/2; Rothkegel 2015: 384). Nevertheless, their Christocentrisms are different. For Barth, Christ is considered foremost as Word, as Son of God, and as Elect One. For Marpeck, Christ is the Incarnate God, and it is the incarnation understood in a Chalcedonian balance that is the key to his Christology and theology as a whole.

However, common attitudes toward Christocentrism and critical reflection, as fundamental as they may be, may not serve alone as the basis for considering Barth as an aid to *restitutio*. There are three further doctrines detailed by Barth that radicals may utilize to help bring about the restoration of New Testament Christianity among their churches. Barth's three important contributions to this conversation are related to the three central doctrines of *Fundamentaltheologie*: revelation, faith, and church. In order to demonstrate how Barth may aid in the restitution of New Testament Christianity, the thoughts of both Barth and Marpeck will be used here to demonstrate convergences and provide suggested means for bridging any gaps discovered in either system. The three discussions below should be taken as encouragements for further conversation between Karl Barth and his Reformed students on the one hand, and Pilgram Marpeck and the Free Churches on the other hand.

1. *The Word of God*

The leading, if somewhat problematic, doctrine that Radicals may appropriate is Barth's doctrine of the Word of God. Barth's doctrine of the Word in its integrative threefoldness as revelation, Scripture, and preaching is intuitively helpful in at least three ways: First, since Barth's formula builds upon the biblical correlations of *logos* and *rhēma*, it effectively ensconces the fundamental place that is accorded to Scripture in theological construction. Second, while the Biblicist direction this particular teaching of Barth allows is important, so is the fact that it occurs through a Christological lens. Third, in many if not most of the Free Churches, preaching is the center of the worship experience, and this formula elevates proclamation as the primary human religious activity.

According to Barth, 'For to the extent that proclamation really rests on recollection of the revelation attested in the Bible and is thus obedient repetition of the biblical witness, it is no less the Word of God than the Bible.' 'Nor should we ever try to understand the three forms of God's Word in isolation' (Barth 1956-1975: I/1, 120-21). In this way, Barth reminds Free Church Biblicists that God speaks through the proclamation of the Word of God and that the Word of God may not be divorced from the necessary instrumentality of Scripture. Marpeck agreed that God reveals Himself through biblical proclamation. Marpeck, like Barth, affirmed that God's Word does not come in isolation of the apostolic witness: 'It is sheer fabrication and deception when some insist that the Holy Spirit moves apart from the apostolic service of the church' (Marpeck 1547: 455).

Barth's teaching regarding the forms of the Word, moreover, is helpful for the Free Churches vis-à-vis the recent movements toward constructing natural theologies from general revelation. Southern Baptist Russell Moore notes a few of the contemporary problems that stem from naïve appeals to general revelation, for instance in Christian missionaries' use of the Quran to witness to Muslims or allowing modern psychology to shape Christian counseling (Moore 2014: 97-98, 99-100; Yarnell 2007; Yarnell 2012). Karl Barth registered a well-known protest against natural theology, a protest that may help Free Church Evangelicals to abstain from enthusiasms regarding the purpose and extent of general revelation.

Barth's view of revelation is shaped by his adamancy that revelation is an act of grace. There is no analogy in nature that would allow humanity, on its own initiative, to know God as Lord or Creator. If human beings are to know God as Lord and Creator, and even more so as Reconciler and Redeemer, then God must encroach upon humanity. According to Barth, part of the problem with the Roman Catholic appeal to general revelation for human knowledge of God as Lord and Creator is that it creates an abstract

God, an idol. The appeals to general revelation, from Roman Catholics and from his own Liberal Protestant professors, were so problematic that Barth opted to reject natural theology *in toto*. '[T]he knowability of God apart from grace and therefore from faith, or which thinks and promises that it is able to give such a guarantee—in other words, a 'natural' theology—is quite impossible within the Church, and indeed, in such a way that it cannot even be discussed' (Barth 1956-1975: II/1, 85).

Barth's objections may be shocking to mission-minded and Liberal Evangelicals, within the Free Churches and without, but they must be brought on board. Barth wisely includes in his doctrine of general revelation those biblical texts that teach of the limits, even the futility, of natural theology. He exegetes such passages as Psalm 14: 2-3, which says nobody seeks God; Psalm 19: 3, which teaches that there is no clarity of speech in nature; and Job 42: 3-6, where Job repented of his own natural theology. Barth's conclusion is that one has to misread Scripture to arrive at a natural theology apart from revealed theology. Natural theology may never be severed from revealed theology. The biggest problem with efforts at natural theology is that they divorce themselves from Jesus Christ. 'Incontestably, because from the very outset a theology of this kind looks in another direction than where God has placed himself [i.e. in Christ], and therefore involves, from the very outset, a violation of the Christian conception of God. Why, then, is all this not so simple and self-evident?' (Barth 1956-1975: II/1, 85). We concur.

However, it must be noted that Barth's strong distinction between revelation and Scripture causes even the most appreciative Free Church supporters to wince. For when Barth and his students identify redemption with revelation, they advocate a position contrary to that held by many Evangelicals, especially among Americans. [For instance, Webster writes, 'In short: revelation is reconciliation' (Webster 2003: 13).] The problem may be even more severe for theologians from the Free Churches, for they are often, even typically, pious and literalist in their reading of the Bible. By teaching that Scripture becomes revelation, it appears to the radical Biblicist that Scripture *per se* is something less than the Word of God.

Perhaps the way forward lies with distinguishing illumination from inspiration as a separate work of the Holy Spirit. This is a distinction that Marpeck made. According to that 16th century lay theologian, the Bible always remains 'the literal Word'. However, 'The Word is dull without the thrust of its edge and the power of the Spirit' (Marpeck 1542: 299). Through guiding the inspiration of the text of Scripture as well as the illumination of the hearer, the Holy Spirit remains sovereign over the entire process of revelation. At the same time, the continual identification of the Bible as the Word of God is also maintained. It is when both Barth and

Marpeck are brought together that a most appealing doctrine of the Word is found. The same can be said with regard to the doctrine of grace.

2. *The Grace of God*

The legacy of Karl Barth includes a stringent and compelling reminder, an ultimately unforgettable memorandum that salvation is entirely by the grace of God. Even those biblical texts that one would normally consider as providing a transition into a more practical discussion of the Christian life are used to emphasize the grace of God. In his 1933 commentary on Romans 6, which concerns the baptismal root of Christian ethics, Barth instead provides a continual reminder of the primacy of divine grace. Just when one thinks that Barth might emphasize Christian moral action, Barth forgoes the opportunity to thunder as a moral prophet and instead reminds us of the deep depravity of humanity and of the necessary priority of divine grace.

Even his short treatment of the psychology of grace, which might serve as a means of some optimism, is really only a call away from man and to God. First, the man is 'the old man, the man of sin'. Second, 'there is no escape from my identity with this old man'. Third, 'I am forced to assent to the sentence of crucifixion pronounced upon the old man.' Fourth, 'a gulf is created' with the old man by grace. Fifth, 'my identification with the invisible new man is established.' What is interesting here is that the old man abides and remains quite visible while the new man creates internal conflict well enough but is entirely invisible (Barth 1933: 198-199).

When Barth transitions from the first part of Romans 6, 'The Power of the Resurrection', to the second part, 'The Power of Obedience', one might expect it is time for the new man to step forward and claim some visible reality. Yet again, however, there is only the 'experience of conflict'. The 'will of God' and the 'will of Libido' are always at war with one another. And will the will of God become ascendant in the Christian life now? By no means, for 'the power of obedience which says 'Yes' to God and 'No' to sin does not exist in any concrete fashion. Indeed, sin abounds rather the more exceedingly'. The power of obedience is not in this life, but in the power of the eschatological Resurrection (Barth 1933: 213). Divine grace, which opposes sin in men, is finally unobservable in this life. Grace against sin must be believed rather than manifested (Barth 1933: 215, 218).

In a little book of 1938, entitled *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, one might expect the Christian life would receive a major discussion. However, the emphasis is overwhelmingly upon the Holy Spirit as the dispenser of divine grace. The three chapters of the book consider the Holy Spirit as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. The two bookend chapters on creation and redemption outline the Spirit's role in

creation and eschatology, so he necessarily limits discussion of the Christian life to the second chapter. And yet, even here, the Christian life is confined to the last of four sections. He does now teach that faith should lead to action and that divine grace creates an opposition against sin. But even though ‘our sanctification is reality’, ‘our obedience is a problem that we cannot solve’. He draws to a close with a reminder from Luther: ‘Therefore, I say that one must be very wary here and take care not to brag so easily and smilingly as some arrogant ‘fanatics’ [*Schwärmergeister*] brag about the Holy Spirit’ (Barth 1938: 37; Verduin 1964). Barth will never let us forget that moral action is rooted in divine priority, and a swipe at the Radical Reformers drives the point home.

In the *Church Dogmatics*, one might again expect that Barth’s discussion of sanctification would finally begin to detail aspects of the Christian life (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 499-613). Yet, even here, the discussion starts ever so slowly and only momentarily transitions from emphasizing the necessary priority of the divine charge, but this momentary transition is significant. The first of the six sections in the essay on sanctification concerns the relation of justification and sanctification: These two moments of the one divine action must be kept distinct (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 499-510). The second section reminds the Christian that Christians are sanctified only as a community and only insofar as they are in Christ. Here, he alludes to the Lutheran doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* to remind the sinner that grace disturbs man’s sin and that the real change in man is a limitation of sin by divine contradiction (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 511-532).

In the important third section, on the call to discipleship, Barth begins by lauding Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Nachfolge*, which Free Church theologians have long appreciated, but quickly turns to the ideas that the capacity of discipleship is a divine grace, that grace comes in the form of a command, and that discipleship is not a program but a person. Only then does Barth finally begin his transition to ethics: Faith, he says, entails obedience and involves leaving oneself behind in denial. However, he is again quick to warn against any type of self-reliance, for emphasizing obedience to the exact form of Christ’s commands might be a sign of legalism. A true concern for the form of obedience to Christ is to have faith. That is, one should trust that Christ himself is the new form and that he brings no new law with him (Barth 2003: 1-49).

In the fourth section, on the awakening to conversion, Barth again returns to a discussion of the priority of divine grace. Conversion, however, does not leave man as a mere automaton. ‘It certainly does not take place without him [man]. It takes place to and in him’ (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 556). Of special interest at this point is Barth’s claim that conversion is not a

mere *reformatio* but a *conversio* or *renovatio*. Although he speaks of personal conversion, the church is not out of the picture:

That God awakens us to this is the problem set for the church, and therefore for us, by Holy Scripture. It cannot be exchanged for the (in themselves) very interesting problems of improvement or reformation or more noble effort in our further progress along the same path. It is not a question of improvement but alteration. It is not a question of a reformed or ennobled life, but a new one (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 560).

Barth does not yet proceed to a discussion of a *conversio* or *restitutio* of the church as opposed to a *reformatio* of the church, but the concept of radical change as divine action is certainly available to him, and will prove important in the future. The conception of conversion as a renewal or transformation gives him an opportunity to explore the dimensions of total renewal: it involves not only the individual but the church; it involves the whole person, both in disposition and action; it involves both the inward and outward aspects of humanity; and, it extends itself over the whole of a convert's life (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 562-566).

Total renewal will continually drive one toward holiness: 'To live a holy life is to be raised and driven with increasing definiteness from the centre of this revealed truth, and therefore to live in conversion with growing sincerity, depth and precision' (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 566). Perhaps realizing he had become too optimistic about moral action, Barth then returned to an explicit consideration of the warfare in man's soul over the presence of 'the flesh of yesterday' alongside the Spirit of 'today' (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 570-571).

The final two sections of his essay on sanctification concern the praise of works and the dignity of the cross. As with *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*, his momentary emphasis upon human action is followed by a sober and extensive reflection upon the priority of divine action and the frailty of human action. In this case, he notes that good works in Scripture are primarily about 'the acts of God and their consequences' (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 587). Man's works are good only in the sense that they declare what God has done (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 590). As for the dignity of the cross, Barth wants to emphasize that the cross of Christ and the crosses of Christians must be directly disconnected from one another. Christ's cross is the source of the Christian's dignity, and the Christian's cross fulfills his sanctification and may indicate persecution (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 598-600, 607-608).

Like Karl Barth, Pilgram Marpeck also affirmed the priority of divine grace in salvation. Although Marpeck does not continually stress the priority of grace as Barth did, he employed the yesterday and today language

similarly to Barth. Except that where Barth identified yesterday as characterized by sin, Marpeck said it was characterized by natural grace. Marpeck offered two paradigms of grace. In the first paradigm, he distinguished the ‘grace of yesterday’ from the ‘grace of today’. The grace of yesterday concerned the faith of the Old Testament saints, which was not effective for regeneration prior to the cross, the descent into hell, the resurrection, and the ascent of Christ, for the Old Testament saints trusted in a promise that was not realized until Christ had atoned for sin. The Old Testament saints hoped in the promise, which the disciples received in Christ. The grace of today, however, is effective for believers to be regenerated now. In the second paradigm of grace, Marpeck distinguished the first grace of the light of conscience from the second grace of regeneration. According to Marpeck, if a person follows the first grace of conscience to recognize his sin, expressing genuine sorrow over sin, he will receive the second grace (Beachy 1963; Whitlock 2013).

The differing emphases yet the presence of apparently opposing positions are perhaps helpful. Both Marpeck and Barth highlight union with Christ as the source of salvation, including sanctification. God in Christ is the active agent of human salvation according to both men. In other words, justification and sanctification are by grace alone and forensic, for as Marpeck says, ‘Therefore, it does not depend on our willing or running, but rather on the mercy of God and on His grace in and with Christ. He gives the will, He can also do and accomplish in His own. We must simply in all of our actions stand idle ourselves, as dead in ourselves, if Christ is to live in us’ (Marpeck 1555: 510).

Yet forensic justification does not exclude a participation in Christ that has ontological overtones, but any ontology, for both men, consists of participation in Christ. Barth, alluding to ‘a real event which takes place with incontestable objectivity’, then follows Calvin and echoes Marpeck in speaking of a *participatio Christi* as the foundation of sanctification.

Jesus Christ is the climax, the superior place, where it is properly and primarily and comprehensively real, where it originally takes place, that God is for man, and man is for God. If the conversion of man is the movement which is initiated and maintained from the point where this is primarily and comprehensively real, this is only to say that it has its basis and origin in this climax, in Jesus Christ (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 581-582).

Webster notes that Barth diverged from Luther by positing a genuine human reality as given by God (Webster 1998: 176). But in another regard, Barth actually seems to have consistently preferred Luther. Departing from Calvin and especially the Calvinist tradition, and sounding more like Luther and Marpeck, Barth prefers to steer away from any idea of a detailed *ordo*

salutis. The point for Barth is not a mechanical process, just as it is for Marpeck not a speculative imposition upon the simplicity of Scripture's witness to salvation. Barth denies that there is a temporal order in salvation, for it concerns 'the one event of grace and salvation', even though he does allow for a limited and dialectical ontological order (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 507-508).

Marpeck likewise refused to speculate with regard to the eternal ordering of salvation. On the one hand, he simply focuses on the necessity of faith in justification. This faith is characterized by trust at the personal level (Yarnell 2007 Formation: 98-99). On the other hand, he develops the historical ordering of salvation, an ordering we noted above with regard to grace, and will note below with regard to the forms of grace.

3. The Forms of Grace, especially Baptism

It will be remembered in the discussion of Barth's doctrine of sanctification that he introduced the concept of 'form' in the section on discipleship. In *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 Barth constantly pulled the reader away from looking for any particular form that would be universal for all Christians to implement. Rather, he noted that the call to discipleship varies with each particular Christian. The forms that he discusses, therefore, may not be applicable to the reader. These personal forms may include obedience with regard to possessions, honor, force, human attachments, and piety. The important point is that the forms of discipleship do not involve any general rule (Barth 2003: 58).

Moreover, in the essay, 'The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community', which immediately follows the essay on sanctification, Barth gives only minimal attention to the forms of the church that aid discipleship. Barth's belief that 'we can never see the true Church' seems to have inhibited any insight into the forms of grace realized in communal discipleship (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 619). When he does discuss the forms of grace in the church, he speaks in terms of the order of the community, specifically under canon law. This legal treatment of worship limits him to the traditional Reformation marks of the Word and the two sacraments, with prayer added as an afterthought (Barth 1956-1975: IV/2, 698-709).

It is with regard to the forms of divine grace that Barth could have benefited from reading in the Anabaptist tradition. Pilgram Marpeck was adamant that the forms of grace must follow the order of Scripture rather than an extra-biblical order. Marpeck, however, was drawing upon a tradition in which Balthasar Hubmaier had already laid down a compelling argumentation. According to both Marpeck and Hubmaier, the order of Christ's command in the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20) must be followed out

of obedience. The proclamation of the Word and personal faith must precede the granting of baptism to a new disciple.

The New Testament's fourfold phenomenological pattern (Word—faith—baptism—teaching) was rendered as a directive and preserved by Marpeck and Hubmaier, among many others. But in its most well known expression, Hubmaier drew together a liturgical trilogy that displayed this Anabaptist reading of Scripture. His trilogy of forms began with baptism, proceeded through the memorial celebration of the Lord's Supper, and ended with fraternal admonition and excommunication (Hubmaier 1527). Departing from the Lutheran and Calvinist ordering of the marks of the church, the Anabaptists identified the Lord's command with regard to fraternal admonition and excommunication as 'the Rule of Christ'. For them, Christ's commands for the forms of church order were not a threat to divine grace, but a means of worship.

It is baptism in particular that will grasp our attention, for baptism is, according to Marpeck, the beginning of the school of Christ (Marpeck 1531: 83). There are three major themes in Marpeck's theology of baptism: the covenantal pledge, the distinction from and priority of the inner to the outer, and identification with the humanity of Christ. On the basis of 1 Peter 3: 21, Marpeck understood baptism to be 'the covenant of a good conscience'. Baptism was not God's pledge in the covenant, but man's responsive pledge in faith. Baptism both identified a person with the Triune God and bound that person to obedience to all of Christ's commands.

This form of water baptism, moreover, was necessarily public, for it bore a public witness to an inward transaction between the believer and God. Marpeck taught that this inner work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, which he identified with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, must precede the outer co-witness (*Mitzeugnis*) of the believer in baptism in water. The outer witness indicated that the believer had been received into the social humanity of Jesus Christ, his earthly body. The humanity of Christ preceded the glory of Christ and indicated the church's commitment to take up the cross and follow Christ. The ordering of following Christ meant proceeding through the descent of Christ prior to the ascent. In other words, passion precedes glory. Baptism committed one to faithful service in and discipline by the gathered congregation, as manifested in the Lord's Supper. Such a commitment could not be forced on another but must be entered freely; therefore, infant baptism is an abomination (Marpeck 1532: 108-113; Marpeck 1547: 431-35, 445; Armour 1986: 118-120).

If Marpeck began his theological concerns with baptism, Barth ended his theological concerns with baptism. Marpeck began with baptism because he considered it foundational to the new life with Christ. Barth ended with baptism because he had come to the conclusion that baptism is the 'founda-

tion of the Christian life' (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], xi). In doing so, Barth did not surrender his commitment to the absolute priority of the 'act of God' in the 'act of man'. Like Marpeck, Barth placed the baptism of the Holy Spirit structurally prior to the baptism with water. Again, like Marpeck, Barth both correlated and held as distinct the divine and human movements in baptism. 'The two elements in the foundation of the Christian life, the objective and the subjective, are to be correlated as well as distinguished' (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 41). They are correlated in that both the act of God in regeneration and the act of man in water baptism are necessary. Water is necessary, but it is dependent for its meaning upon the baptism with the Spirit.

As a result of this subtle correlation of the act of God with the act of man in baptism, Barth defined baptism as a gift contained in a divine command and the obedience of man's faith, who had received that gift. The key discipleship terms that come rolling forth in the first few pages of the last essay in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* eerily echo the sentiments of Marpeck expressed from the very beginning of his Anabaptist ministry: 'foundation', 'new life-act', 'pledge', 'promise', 'obedience', and 'He freely asks to be baptized. Of his own resolve he is baptized'. Like Marpeck, Barth concluded that baptism is an ordinance dispensed by the community. Like Marpeck, Barth did not detect the reserved transmission of baptism through a clerical *potestas*. And like Marpeck, Barth concluded that the order of the Great Commission was significant (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 42-52).

What is also significant for our purposes, however, is that towards the end of his life, Barth began moving toward the Baptizing Churches by making two vital shifts in his doctrine of baptism. First, as the result of his own son, Markus Barth's research into the New Testament meaning of baptism, Karl Barth re-examined whether baptism actually was a sacrament or mystery that served as a means of grace. Barth dragged the power to dispense grace away from baptism and returned it to its rightful source, God himself. He then returned baptism to believers as their own means of response to the act of God in reconciliation.

Baptism takes place in active recognition of the grace of God which justifies, sanctifies and calls. It is not itself, however, the bearer, means, or instrument of grace. Baptism responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is not itself, however, a mystery of the sacrament (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 102).

Again, after surveying the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed views of baptism, he found that their consensus was that baptism contained 'a divine action which is concealed in the administration by men and which makes use of this'. Barth opposed this power grab and concluded that the

water baptism ‘given by the community and desired and received by the candidate is the human action which corresponds to the divine action in the founding of the Christian life’. In other words, there is a symbolic correlation but no sacramental causation.

The second fundamental shift occurred with regard to the Swiss theologian’s dogmatic position on infant baptism. From understanding baptism as both subjective and objective, Barth developed his critique of the practice of baptizing babies. Rehearsing the history of the practice, he proceeded to refute the exegetical arguments brought forward in its favor, and then the theological arguments. Each fell in turn before the logic of Scripture and his own belief that baptism must involve the subject:

In this practice [of infant baptism] the baptized person has his place as an object of the community’s action but there can be no question of any renunciation and pledge as the act of his own free decision. Hence, he has no function, no active part. He is not a subject, and baptism cannot be understood seriously as a common work (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 165).

Over against infant baptism, which he believed was not significantly different than baptizing entire peoples by force, now, at the end of his long and illustrious career as something of a theological radical, Barth gave a full-throated expression to his regard for moral theology. ‘We may thus say that it is in wholly free, conscious, and voluntary decision that there takes place in baptism that renunciation and pledge, that *No* on the basis of the justification of sinful man effected in Jesus Christ, that *Yes* on the basis of the sanctification accomplished in Him’ (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 163).

Finally, we note that bringing discipleship back into the conversation, Barth claimed, ‘[W]hat is to be rendered above all in baptism is obedience—the obedience which alone is possible in the discipleship of Jesus and the school of His Holy Spirit’ (Barth 1956-75, IV/4 [Fragment], 155). Four centuries before this, Pilgram Marpeck could not have stated the central platform of his own *Fundamentaltheologie* with any greater clarity than Karl Barth did in the 20th century.

Toward the Unity and the Purity of the Churches

We return to the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ that his disciples may be one just as the Father and the Son are one, for in such the world may believe that the Father sent the Son (John 17: 21). Both Karl Barth and Pilgram Marpeck, two exemplary and variously radical theologians, also called for the unity of the church, as we noted above. A review of their thoughts on the matter of the unity of the church may be helpful to their respective students, today. We begin with the older theologian.

As might be expected, Marpeck's understanding of unity begins with the Trinity: the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. First, he says that Christ is 'the Head of the Church', and he 'requires the unity of faith and the joining together of the members through the bond of love'. Christ has prayed for the unity of the church by reference to the unity of the Godhead. Second, Marpeck turns to the Father. 'In these united members, God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15: 28). For God the Father is not completely in any one member of Christ's body (which body endures until the end of the world) or in the single member alone.' Thus, Marpeck distinguishes between the individual and the church, and the local churches and the universal church, only the latter of which survives into eternity with the Father.

Third, Marpeck treats the Holy Spirit. The 'bond of love', of course, harks back to Augustine's understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit, and Marpeck says that the Holy Spirit, as love, overcomes the human deficiencies that are resident within the members of the church. Ultimately, the Father 'is all in all when the members are knit together under the Head and united through His Spirit'. Because the pressure builds upon the church as the day of the Lord approaches, it should be careful to maintain its visible unity. The visible ceremonies of the church must not be forsaken (Marpeck 1531: 73-75).

Marpeck refers to the universal church as the 'inner church', a term by which he means that only God knows who is finally a true believer. 'This inner church will only be revealed by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, at which time He will transfigure and reveal the hearts with him.' Marpeck does not speculate or build a great deal upon the idea of the universal church. He is careful not to deny its proleptic existence now, but he is even more careful to note that it does not gather until the end of time.

Rather than speculating about the universal church of tomorrow, Marpeck teaches that the Holy Spirit directs the inner church to manifest itself today through performing 'external works', thereby functioning as 'a light before the world'. It is as the church practices the external works of teaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper that it can 'show love toward all men'. If someone wants to see the Father and the Son, he must see the co-witness of the church to the inner activity of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, such activity includes separation. It is as the church is separated from the world that it is able to bear witness to the world through proclaiming the gospel (Marpeck 1545: 422-423). In other words, the holiness of the church may not be separated from the unity of the church.

This message appears again in Marpeck's treatise, *On the Unity of the Bride of Christ*. The church, Marpeck says, must visibly express its unity through a common sharing of the Eucharist. Such is available only by the Spirit and only to those who 'sacrifice for one another' through 'unity and

reconciliation'. As the church displays its virtues, virtues that begin with the cross and find their peak in love, it reflects to the world the presence of the eternal God. Marpeck says we must be very careful, on the one hand, to treasure and preserve unity, and on the other hand, to 'tolerate nothing unclean among you'. Unity is found as the members of the church gather under Christ and his cross (Marpeck 1552: 521-527).

With regard to unity, in his lecture to the Second World Conference on Faith and Order, held in Edinburgh in 1937, Karl Barth began with three principles: First, he claimed that the mission of the church is hindered by the multiplicity of the various churches. Second, he said the church must submit itself to Christ in its 'life, order, and teaching', and through 'self-criticism, to purify itself'. Third, the church must seek its unity in Christ. He quipped that 'the quest for the one Church' must issue forth from 'the quest for Jesus Christ as the concrete Head and Lord of the Church'. Such a quest will only be fulfilled as the multiplicity of communities find that in Christ unity is revealed 'through His Word and Spirit'. He warned the conference attendees that in their 'homesickness for the *una sancta*', they must wait for the voice of Christ (Barth 1936: 5-16).

Barth's choice to focus on two of the creedal four marks of the church, unity and holiness, was no accident. Barth agreed that a multiplicity of churches was a problem, but he was concerned with examining contradictory confessions or communions of local congregations rather than eliminating a multiplicity of local congregations. Unity, he said, would be found in the 'tokens' and a common confession. And yet, he repeatedly warned against a rush to unity that avoided the hard work of returning to examine the various confessions (Barth 1936: 19-30). He compared the various ideas brought forward for union—mission societies, federations, ecumenical movements—and dismissed them as deficient, for only Christ and not Christians could bring such unity. Obedience to Christ must not be surrendered in the search for unity (Barth 1936: 33-45).

Unity could not be found among individuals, or in conferences, or in a new church, but in each church returning to its confession for a thorough examination. Barth warned against any attempt to 'stage the unity of the Church or play the part of Christ ourselves' (Barth 1936: 52). Rather, only those who are concerned to help their own churches be true in life, order, and doctrine, even those who belong to competing communions, find that they have truly become united in Christ. Paradoxically, unity in Christ was realized, for instance, at the Marburg Colloquy. Unity, in other words, will be found in faithfulness to Christ as we know him, for union will be by grace alone (Barth 1936: 57-59; Ryrie 2017: 63-64).

It is striking that both Karl Barth and Pilgram Marpeck, while emphasizing unity, were careful to retain obedience to Christ. In other words, a rush

toward unity that ignores sanctification will fail, while unity will be achieved as we seek to be obedient in life, order, and doctrine to Christ as we know him only in our churches. That is a message that Free Church theologians should find exhilarating. It is as we examine our progress in seeking to obey Christ in all things by his grace that we have hope that we can recover the radical New Testament Christianity of Christ and the cross, both his and our own. Through examining their unique struggles to realize fidelity to the God who had graced them in Jesus Christ, both of these reformers, Magisterial and Radical, demonstrate there is more common ground than opposing grounds than we might have at first expected.

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