

THE REVEILLE THAT AWAKENED KARL BARTH¹

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The Danish writer, philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard devoted his life to chiding, arguing against and even laughing at the ideas of G. W. F. Hegel and F. Schleiermacher, the two monumental figures who set the philosophical and theological tone of the nineteenth century. But in spite of a voluminous literary effort he was largely ignored in the historical flow of ideas until rediscovered by a Swiss pastor named Karl Barth. Since Barth is the man who established the theological tone of the twentieth century, a look at Kierkegaard's reveille may help clarify the roots of modern theology and suggest questions regarding that original foundation. More specifically, an examination of Kierkegaard's influence on Barth's theology will show that the Dane had much more of a role in the development of Barth's mature work than the latter was willing to admit.

Hegel asserted that there is a fundamental unity between the human and the divine, and that ultimate reality (the divine) is rational. Consequently man can comprehend God through the exercise of his reason. At about the same time Friedrich Schleiermacher, one of Hegel's contemporaries, was proclaiming that religion must be built on the foundation of an immediate awareness of God through an experience of the universe or on man's "feeling of absolute dependence." Both men, therefore, asserted that there is a point of contact between God and man, a point that is permanently accessible to man.

Kierkegaard was the first major thinker to see that the adoption of this "identity principle" in the work of Hegel and Schleiermacher involved a radical break with the theology stemming from the Reformation. He insisted in opposition that a relationship with God cannot be based on a man's immediate awareness of the infinite, either as found through the use of reason or as experienced in the feeling of absolute dependence.

Kierkegaard asserted that the man of faith will acknowledge a dichotomy between the finite and the infinite; he will manifest a permanent awareness of the otherness of God. According to Kierkegaard, the loss of the individual is implicit in any principle that absorbs the finite into the infinite. According to Hegel, this dichotomy is overcome when the philosopher through the use of reason comprehends the underlying identity of man and God. Kierkegaard demurred, and his insistence on the infinite and qualitative difference between God and man is as basic to his thought as the identity principle is to Hegel's.² To deny this differ-

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¹This paper is based on the author's dissertation.

²This theme runs all through his work and is presupposed even when not specifically stated. See S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (tr. D. F. Swenson, completed with Introduction and Notes by W. Lowrie; Princeton: University Press, 1941) 57, 439; *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death* (tr. W. Lowrie; Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1954) 248, 257; *Training in Christianity* (tr. W. Lowrie; Princeton: University Press, 1967) 31, 67.

ence is, in Kierkegaard's opinion, to leave Christianity for pantheism, a charge that he brought against both Hegel and Schleiermacher.³

The fundamental misfortune of Christendom is really Christianity, the fact that the doctrine of the God-Man . . . is taken in vain, the qualitative distinction between God and man is pantheistically abolished—first speculatively with an air of superiority, then vulgarly in the streets and alleys.⁴

This is the charge of the *Philosophical Fragments*, one of Kierkegaard's clearest denunciations of the Hegelian system.

In that work Kierkegaard began by asking, "How far does the Truth admit of being learned?"⁵ The question is the Socratic question discussed in the *Meno*. Kierkegaard characterized it as a

"pugnacious proposition"; one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek for what he does not know. For what a man knows he cannot seek, since he knows it; and what he does not know he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek. Socrates thinks the difficulty through in the doctrine of Recollection, by which all learning and inquiry is interpreted as a kind of remembering.⁶

After examining the Socratic doctrine of recollection briefly, Kierkegaard proposed to conduct a thought experiment in order to examine the logical antithesis to the Socratic solution. The solution when fully developed is quite obviously Christianity, although that fact is not mentioned until the last couple of pages in the book. Looking beneath the literary form one can discern that the real question is whether Christianity is compatible with any system built on the identity principle. Kierkegaard's intent in the *Fragments* was to show that these two approaches are diametrically opposed: Hegelianism and Christianity are absolutely irreconcilable. Whereas in the "system" God reveals himself through the whole of the historical process, in Christianity God, who must be seen as absolutely distinct from the created world, enters time in order to reveal himself. The infinite qualitative distinction between God and man was abolished at one point: The Eternal became a man, an individual.

While the reality of an infinite qualitative difference between God and man was either stated or implied in everything Kierkegaard wrote, the nature of this gulf was not so clearly spelled out. Some have suggested that—intentionally or not—Kierkegaard created a logical gulf that could not be crossed by either thought or language.⁷ Others have categorically denied that interpretation.⁸

³H. C. Wolf, "Kierkegaard and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," *LQ* 16 (1964) 29.

⁴Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 248.

⁵S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments; Or A Fragment of Philosophy* (orig. tr. D. F. Swenson with new Introduction and Commentary by N. Thulstrup, tr. rev. and Commentary tr. by H. V. Hong, 2d ed.; Princeton: University Press, 1962) 11.

⁶Ibid.

⁷M. L. Diamond, "Kierkegaard and Apologetics," *JR* 16 (1964) 122-132.

⁸P. Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence* (London: SCM, 1968) 113.

It would appear to me that Kierkegaard used metaphysical characterizations to emphasize the distance between God and man so that God and man could be related in a meaningful way. Without this distance anything beyond a logical relationship would be precluded, as indeed it was in the Hegelian system. It may be that he was occasionally carried away in his concern to assert the reality of a gulf and did involve himself in logical problems. His intent, however, was not to preclude the possibility of a relationship between God and man by creating a logical gulf but rather to "deny man access to the endless round of intellectual evasions of God's claim."⁹

Kierkegaard clearly believed that there is, or at least should be, a relationship between God and man. This ideal is taught in *The Sickness unto Death*, where one of the forms of despair is the disruption of the natural relationship between God and man. Man was intended to be related to the Power that originally posited him, and the human predicament is precisely the disruption of that communion.

There are therefore two aspects to the gulf. First of all, God is the Creator and man is the creature; "the qualitative difference between God and man is this, that only God is the Lord."¹⁰ This aspect of the gulf will remain for all time, although God and man may resume communication across the gulf. Furthermore the fact that "only God is the Lord" precludes the possibility of man finding God by searching. Socratic thought, paganism, Hegelianism and all other immanent modes of thought are doomed to defeat. God must take the initiative if there is to be a renewed relationship. The second aspect of the gulf is the abnormal distance between a holy God and the individual who is a sinner, turned away from God. Revelation is intended to destroy this distance, this element of separation. God has acted in order to renew the relationship with man, and precisely this is the significance of the God-Man.

Although reared in a conservative theological environment, Karl Barth chose to attend schools known for their liberal theology and upon graduation he was apparently quite happy to think of himself as a liberal theologian. His understanding of the nature of revelation was in the Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Herrmann tradition. Hence he would have taken it for granted that

God has indeed revealed himself to man and that the relationship established in his self-revelation is a given, indissoluble state or condition, a sort of *nexus* of divine-human contact. On the one hand one must not endeavor to go beyond this *nexus* for knowledge of God; on the other hand one may rely altogether and unquestioningly upon it as the point of departure, objective and enduring through time, for all Christian life and for the inquiries of theology.¹¹

He understood theology as an effort to give conceptual formulation to this continuing experience of God's self-revelation—in spite of the fact that this experience is not conceptual by nature. He was therefore a partisan of what Frei called "rela-

⁹Ibid., 104.

¹⁰Ibid., 103 n.

¹¹H. W. Frei, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth, 1909-1922: The Nature of Barth's Break with Liberalism" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1956) 27.

tional theology"—that is, a theology based on what I have here called the identity principle.

Between the time of his graduation from university and his call to be professor of Reformed theology in Göttingen in 1921, Barth served a parish in the Swiss town of Safenwil. During the second half of his tenure in that position he read and was deeply influenced by the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. Only a few short years later the ideas of Kierkegaard came to the attention of the theological public in Europe through the publication of the second edition of Barth's commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans*, the work that was to inaugurate twentieth-century theology. The preface to this volume states clearly the about-face Barth had taken from his earlier stance.

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 negative as well as positive significance: "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth." The relation between such a man and such a God is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy.¹²

In 1912 Barth had claimed that there was a theological succession that began with the prophets and apostles and ran through the Reformers. He had also claimed that this theological succession had been broken after the death of the Reformers but had been renewed by Schleiermacher.¹³ In 1922, ten years after that statement and a year after the appearance of the second edition of his *Romans*, his opinion was radically different. He claimed that his theological ancestry ran "through Kierkegaard to Luther and Calvin, and so to Paul and Jeremiah."¹⁴ It did not, he asserted in the same place, include Martensen, Erasmus or Schleiermacher.

There are those to whom Schleiermacher's peculiar excellence lies in his having discovered a conception of religion by which he overcame Luther's so-called dualism and connected earth and heaven by a much needed bridge, upon which we may reverently cross. Those who hold this view will finally turn their back, if they have not done so already, upon the considerations I have presented. I ask only that they do not appeal *both* to Schleiermacher *and* the Reformers, *both* to Schleiermacher *and* the New Testament, *both* to Schleiermacher *and* to the Old Testament prophets, but that from Schleiermacher back they look for another ancestral line.¹⁵

Thus by his rejection of relational theology and, at a more fundamental level, by his rejection of the identity principle Barth placed himself in radical discontinuity with the tradition in which he had been educated.

The implications of this decision can be seen in Barth's statement concerning his debt to Kierkegaard. Negatively, it meant that "God is in heaven, and thou

¹²K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (tr. E. C. Hoskyns from 6th German ed.; New York: Oxford, 1968) 10.

¹³J. D. Smart, *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology: Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, 1908-1933* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967) 49.

¹⁴Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (tr. with new Foreword by D. Horton; New York: Harper, 1957) 195.

¹⁵Barth, *Word*, 196.

art on earth." There is a gulf between God and man that must be considered whenever one takes up the theological task. Positively, the nature of this gulf conditions the relationship between God and man, the existence of which is the theme of the Bible and philosophy.

But Barth's understanding of the "infinite qualitative distinction" contains a basic ambiguity. It is clear in Barth's *Romans* that sin separates man from God, but it is not always clear what the word "sin" meant for Barth. Some writers have concluded that he associated sin with temporality,¹⁶ others that he held sin to be finitude.¹⁷ There are also passages in the *Romans* which seem to define sin as pride, the rebellion of man against his creaturely status.¹⁸ Recall, however, that Barth had been reading the works of Kierkegaard while he was rewriting his commentary for its second edition. It would not be unreasonable to suspect the presence of an ambiguity in his understanding of the distance between God and man similar to the ambiguity found in the writings of Kierkegaard. A study of the *Romans* seems to bear out this suspicion.

There is abundant evidence in the *Romans* that Barth was thinking of the classic distinction between the Creator and the created.¹⁹ In fact, this aspect of Barth's thought was so clearly heard during the 1920s that Lowrie could say that Barth's

protest against the prevailing doctrine of God's immanence in the world and every sort of disguised pantheism was so downright that it seemed as if he would separate this world altogether from God.²⁰

Such, however, was clearly not Barth's intention. He argued against all "improper notions of immanence," not against the concept of immanence.²¹

In the words of Brunner: when the theologians of crisis speak of the transcendent God, they are "treating of an epistemological but not a cosmological transcendence." They revive the old slogan of the Reformed Church, *Finitum non capax infiniti*, which means that, from the viewpoint of man, God is always the unknown, the remote.²²

Barth saw, however—just as Kierkegaard had seen—that there is another aspect of this gulf. He saw and acknowledged the distance between God's holiness and man's sin. And this form of the gulf between God and man appears exactly when man denies the reality of the distinction between God and himself.

¹⁶E. Lewis, "Where is Barth Wrong?," *Christian Century* 50 (March 22, 1933) 385; J. McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931) 84; Frei, "Doctrine," 49; cf. Barth, *Romans*, 10-11, 44.

¹⁷A. C. Knudson, "Theology of Crisis," *Methodist Review* 111 (1928) 555; W. Pauck, "Barth's Religious Criticism of Religion," *JR* 8 (1928) 465.

¹⁸Barth, *Romans*, 177, 181.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 28, 84, 244; cf. Barth, *Word*, 205.

²⁰W. Lowrie, *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis* (Boston: Meador, 1932) 92-93.

²¹Barth, *Romans*, 107-108.

²²W. Pauck, *Karl Barth, Prophet of a New Christianity?* (New York: Oxford, 1931) 108.

Before sin appeared there was a distinction between God and man, but the relationship that existed between God and man hid that distinction.²³ The fall occurred when man first perceived the distinction between God and himself and chose to set up an alternative God. "Sin is, essentially, robbing God of what is His: and because it is robbing OF GOD, sin is essentially the appearance in the world of a power—like God."²⁴ In sum, Barth accepted Kierkegaard's understanding of the distance between God and man in both of its aspects.

It is not surprising, then, to find that Barth developed a theological position that has clear parallels to Kierkegaard's. First, he recognized that there is no way for man to get to God on his own.²⁵ The knowledge of God that is available to man without revelation is clearly circumscribed in the *Romans*. The philosopher can see that there is behind the visible universe an invisible universe which is the "Origin" of all concrete things.²⁶ He also sees that all things are under judgment but he cannot see the God who places everything under judgment. Man in sin thinks that he can gain a relationship with God without the miracle of revelation.²⁷ He thus obscures the distance between God and man and manages to find a God in this world—he finds himself.²⁸ Once he had recognized the epistemological distance between God and man, Barth found philosophy and natural theology hopelessly inadequate to establish positive knowledge of God. Natural man without the intervention of revelation can know only that God is the Unknown.²⁹

A second consequence of Barth's rejection of the identity principle was his radical departure from the nineteenth-century understanding of religion. "To suppose that a direct road leads from art, or morals, or science, or even from religion, to God is sentimental, liberal self-deception."³⁰ Religion is always one thing among others. It is a human possibility—even the highest human possibility—but it is a limited possibility. Whatever else one may choose to say about it, it is neither divine nor a road to the divine.³¹ In fact, Barth pointed out that man has a desire for religion just as he has other natural desires. Speaking of the natural man Barth said:

His vigour is the vigour of lusts of his mortal body (VI.12). If we undertake to catalogue these lusts, we have to own that the higher, as, for example, the excitement of

²³Barth, *Romans*, 247-249.

²⁴Ibid., 177; cf. 181, 247, 49, 167-168.

²⁵Ibid., 87; *Word*, 177.

²⁶Barth, *Romans*, 46.

²⁷Ibid., 50.

²⁸Ibid., 44.

²⁹Ibid., 250-251.

³⁰Ibid., 337.

³¹Ibid., 185, 229-231.

religion, are distinguished from the lower, as for example, the desire for sleep, only in degree.³²

But religion is quite capable of drugging a man to his real needs.³³ The significance of the prophets of Israel was precisely their proclamation that religion *too* is under the *krisis*.³⁴ Religion as it usually appears is a man-made monument in which the truth has been mummified.³⁵

Religion offers, nonetheless, the possibility of coming to see that man's whole concrete and observable existence is sinful. Religion is that human possibility through which man comes to recognize that sin dominates him.³⁶ But religion not only points out the problem. It also points to the Answer.

Moving within the sphere of human activity, religion is without doubt *holy*, because it points from humanity to divinity; it is without doubt *righteous*, because it is correlated with the will of God and parallel to it, being indeed the parallel of it; and it is without doubt *good*, for it is that concrete, observable, mediated experience which bears witness to the immediacy which has been lost. Should we remove ourselves consciously or unconsciously from the dangerous ambiguity of religion, either we must take refuge in some other less exalted human possibility—in some possibility that is ethical or logical or aesthetic or even lower; or we must side-step into some ancient or modern variety of religion; and, if we are not fully aware of the ambiguity of all religion, to do so will mean inevitably that the alternative variety which we have selected will be a bad one. There is no human advance beyond the possibility of religion, for religion is the last step in human progress. Standing as it does within humanity but outside divinity, it bears witness to that which is within divinity but outside humanity.³⁷

So Barth acknowledged that religion has a positive value. The individual belongs within the Church because it is the place where revelation may again strike.³⁸

The third consequence of Barth's rejection of the identity principle is now quite obvious. If man is to know God, then God must reveal himself. Man is totally incapable of coming to know God by his own efforts.³⁹

In 1927 Barth published the first volume of his *Christian Dogmatics*. As the reviews of this work began to appear, he became aware that he was being profoundly misunderstood because of his association with existentialism and *particularly because of his use of ideas taken from the writings of Kierkegaard*. As a result he found it necessary to rethink the relationship between philosophy and theology, his own relationship to the ideas of Kierkegaard in particular, and thus

³²Ibid., 235.

³³Ibid., 236.

³⁴Ibid., 244.

³⁵Ibid., 129.

³⁶Ibid., 243-253.

³⁷Ibid., 254.

³⁸Ibid., 242, 334.

³⁹Ibid., 38.

ultimately his whole theological methodology. The consequence of this reappraisal was a repudiation of all theology built on a philosophical foundation. Theology, he concluded, must declare its independence from philosophy, and so *his own use of Kierkegaard's ideas in the theological enterprise must be terminated*. The first volume of the *Christian Dogmatics* was subsequently rewritten and issued in 1932 as the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* in order to effect these changes. But in spite of his intentions Barth could not shake off the influence of the melancholy Dane.

Upon entering the world of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* the reader discovers very quickly that while the concept of the "infinite qualitative difference" between God and man seems to lie behind virtually everything written in it there is almost no overt reference to that distinction. After 1931 Barth himself rarely even mentioned Kierkegaard by name and almost never said anything good about him. Yet Barth admitted in the 1960s that

what attracted us particularly to him, what we rejoiced in; and what we learned, was the criticism, so unrelenting in incisiveness, with which he attacked so much: all the speculation which blurred the infinite qualitative difference between God and man. . . . In the second phase of the revolution, in which we then were, he became and was for us one of the cocks whose crowing seemed to proclaim from near and far the dawn of a really new day. . . . I believe that I have remained faithful to Kierkegaard's "reveille," as we heard it then, throughout my theological life, and that I am so today still. To go back to Hegel or even Bishop Mynster has been out of the question ever since.⁴⁰

The nature of the distance between God and man was not clearly spelled out at the beginning of the *Dogmatics*. But the reality of the gulf between God and man was nevertheless assumed and even intensified.

In the *Romans*, for example, Barth has allowed that the philosopher could, totally apart from revelation, come to some understanding of his own condition as separated from God. As a result of the reappraisal of his theological methodology he could no longer accept this position. Thus he argued in the *Dogmatics* that even the fact that God is hidden is known only through revelation.

Revelation itself is needed for knowing that God is hidden and man blind. Revelation and it alone really and finally separates God and man by bringing them together. . . . If that is heard, then and not till then the boundary between God and man becomes visible, of which the most radical sceptic and atheist cannot ever dream, for all his doubts and negations.⁴¹

In revelation God offers himself for fellowship with man. In religion man grasps at truth by himself instead of believing God as he ought.

Because it is a grasping, religion is the contradiction of revelation.⁴²

For what is the purpose of the universal attempt of religions to anticipate God, to foist a human product into the place of His Word, to make our own images of the

⁴⁰K. Barth, "Thank You and a Bow: Kierkegaard's *Reveille*" (tr. H. M. Rumscheidt), *CJT* 11 (1965) 5 [italics mine].

⁴¹K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark) I/2. 29.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 301-303.

One who is known only where He gives Himself to be known, images which are first spiritual, and then religious, and then actually visible?⁴³

True religion is the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the existence of the Church. "The Church and the children of God and therefore the bearers of true religion live by the grace of God. Their knowledge and worship of God . . . are determined by the realization of the free kindness of God. . . . [It] does not leave anything for man to do except to believe and give thanks."⁴⁴ True religion listens to the Word of God. Barth refused to allow that the Church could construct her own bridge across the gulf between God and man.

Furthermore there is no effort in Barth's *Dogmatics*, as there is in Roman Catholic theology and in some Protestant theology, to argue for certain theological propositions on the basis of reason alone. Since God and man are totally distinct, man can come to an understanding of God only by listening, not by reasoning about him. So in volume one Barth argued that the function of dogmatics is to judge the proclamation of the Church by the criterion of the Word of God.⁴⁵ But since the Church does not possess the Word of God it must use the Scriptures, the witness to the Word of God that it does possess, as the norm for this task.⁴⁶ At no time does the Church measure its proclamation by that which is the possession of all men—i.e., by reason—but rather by the Word of God that is heard by the Church through the witness of the Scriptures.

Barth developed several corollaries to this understanding of the place of reason in the context of his discussion of the possibility of dogmatic prolegomena. Here he argued strongly against several suggested justifications for prolegomena. One type of justification sees prolegomena as "a comprehensively explicated self-interpretation of man's existence, such as will, among other things, also help at the right point to the preliminary understanding and criterion of theological knowledge."⁴⁷ But according to Barth, man should not bring to faith an understanding of human existence built on philosophical analysis.⁴⁸ Against Brunner, Barth argued that there is no need for apologetics as a part of prolegomena. "Apologetics and polemics can only be an event, they cannot be a programme."⁴⁹ God can speak to men in a way which other men cannot, if only the Church will fulfill its commission and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In sum, all aspects of natural theology are omitted from the *Dogmatics*. In fact, the decisiveness of Barth's rejection of natural theology is unique in the his-

⁴³Ibid., 308.

⁴⁴Ibid., 344.

⁴⁵Ibid., I/1. 46.

⁴⁶Ibid., 304.

⁴⁷Ibid., 39.

⁴⁸Note that in the excursus that follows the statement just quoted Barth mentions Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Bultmann, showing by example the kind of theological work he had in mind in his criticism.

⁴⁹Ibid., I/1. 33.

tory of the Church. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and according to Barth we have absolutely no authority to look elsewhere. Therefore when man insists on trying to come to an understanding of God through natural theology he is saying, in effect, that the distance is not really great. He is saying that man is competent to bridge the gulf. But not only does this effort on man's part say something about his conception of the gulf between God and man, it also reveals something about that man himself: his lack of awareness of a need for God's activity on his behalf.

The fact that God is revealed to us is then grace. Grace is the majesty, the freedom, the unreservedness, the unexpectedness, the newness, the arbitrariness, in which the relationship to God and therefore the possibility of knowing Him is opened up to man by God himself. . . . Grace is God's good-pleasure. And it is precisely in God's good-pleasure that the reality of our being with God and of His being with us consists. . . . His good-pleasure is the truth by which we know the truth. Hence, God's good-pleasure is His knowability.⁵⁰

Thus when man is willing to accept God's self-revelation he is showing that he recognizes his need for the miracle of grace and his subjective willingness to accept God's grace.⁵¹ The effort to produce a natural theology is therefore

no more and no less than the unavoidable theological expression of the fact that in the reality and possibility of man as such an openness for the grace of God and therefore a readiness for the knowability of God in His revelation is not at all evident.⁵²

Man's insistent striving to know God through natural theology is according to Barth a statement of his own lack of openness to God's self-revelation.

In short, the gulf between God and man is of such a nature that it defies man's best attempts to bridge it. There is no alternative approach to the knowledge of God than that which was provided in God's self-revelation, Jesus Christ.⁵³ Such claim could not be sustained if the distinction between God and man were to be blurred. Even the revelation in Jesus Christ does not break this distinction; the Word comes across the gulf, but man receives no new possibility for God except that which occurs in the revelatory event itself.⁵⁴

Kierkegaard, according to Barth's own admission, was the dominant influence on his *Epistle to the Romans*. But after 1931 Barth consistently claimed to have abandoned his former use of Kierkegaard. On the basis of the data, one is forced to conclude that Kierkegaard was abandoned in name only. Ideas that clearly had their origin in Kierkegaard's writings appear not only in the *Romans* but also in the opening part-volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*. Indeed in some cases ideas that were only partly assimilated in the *Romans* appear fully assimilated into Barth's thinking by the time of this later work. And since the ideas here

⁵⁰Ibid., II/1. 74.

⁵¹Ibid., 130.

⁵²Ibid., 135.

⁵³Ibid., II/1. 163; cf. *ibid.*, IV/2. 120-125.

⁵⁴Ibid., I/1. 239-260; cf. *ibid.*, I/2. 31.

discussed provide the foundation for Barth's doctrine of revelation and thus are part of the prolegomena to Barth's whole dogmatic enterprise, one is justified in concluding that the influence of Kierkegaard constitutes the very foundation of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

Why, then, was Barth so adamant after 1931 in denying any continuing influence from Kierkegaard? This is, of course, a moot point, but Hamer may have been correct when he asserted, "The theologian of Basle prefers to pass over in silence [his] doctrine parent and not risk the accusation of placing philosophy at the basis of his theology."⁵⁵ Strictly speaking, such an accusation would be false since Kierkegaard was much more a Christian theologian than a philosopher. But since Kierkegaard was being used extensively by existential theology and since Barth considered it essential to emphasize the distinction between his own work and existential theology, he may have felt forced to ignore or deny the influence of Kierkegaard on his work.

Whatever Barth's reasons may have been for ignoring the influence of Kierkegaard on his theology, his silence on the subject was not insignificant. It rendered a careful criticism of Kierkegaard's ideas impossible for him. Whether Kierkegaard's understanding of the distance between God and man was formed more by Aristotle and his successors or by the Bible is a real question. By taking Kierkegaard's dualism over into his own theology uncriticized, Barth laid himself open to the criticism of having built on a philosophical base that is foreign to Christianity—in spite of his best intentions. He stands thus as a warning to all who refuse to examine the influences on their own theological perspective.

⁵⁵J. Hamer, *Karl Barth* (tr. D. M. Maruca; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1962) 217.