

Questions posed during the *Reading Barth Together* webinar

Note: These have been neither edited nor organized but have been anonymized.

- Dr. Hauerwas, you have written extensively on the distinct language and grammar of the Christian Church - the linguistic forms that are necessary for the gospel to be proclaimed and lived aright.
What do you make of Barth's contention in ch. 4, "Faith as Confession," that while the Church has a distinctive language - a "language of Canaan" (31) - its confession "must be fundamentally translatable into the speech of Mr. Everyman"? Do you find yourself at least in a creative tension with Barth's dialectic realism on this point?
- What resources can you point me to research the similarities between Barth and Tillich?
 - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040573618785338> You might check out this essay by the great Barthian George Hunsinger.
 - mccormack also has an article somewhere on barth and tillich
- Barth writes of freedom in the early chapters. Would you comment on what you see freedom is for him and perhaps how that compares with freedom proclaimed by America?
- Is a rejection of the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace built into Barth's perspective on faith?
- That was actually a note I made as I read on pg 24: to have faith/knowledge "is brought about simply by God Himself." I saw a similarity there with Prevenient grace. I'd be interested to see what our speakers say.
 - Yes, I concur. I made a note about prevenient grace on pg. 24 too.
- upon re-reading, I was shocked to read, "where the creed is uttered and confessed knowledge should be, is meant to be, created" (p. 23, at the top). I would have expected "revealed", or that a "point of contact" for knowledge is created, but knowledge itself is created?!
- To what extent do you both understand Barth as an heir to premodern/pre-Enlightenment theological interpretation of Scripture, especially in the central notion of "communion with God" as the goal of interpretation and as the goal of Christian dogmatics?
- Please give the title of the book and the author.
 - Eberhard Busch "The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology"
- Modern science seems to hold as fundamental, the doctrine of skepticism. Does Barth's understanding of dogmatics/theology as a science allow for skepticism?

- Question on “The Gospel”
 “What as Christians do we really have to say?”
 “...in our time of need to-day the question is more insistent than ever, what the content of Christian proclamation ought to be.”
 /// Whether it be a 30-seconds in an elevator or 30-minutes in a sermon, what ought we be communicating as “the gospel” according to Barth? In what ways would you affirm this or nuance it?
- How does Barth’s claim that Dogmatics is a science differ from Aquinas’s claim that Sacred Doctrine is a science?
- He says “Christian dogmatics will always be a thinking, an investigation and an exposition which are relative and liable to error.” If this is true, how will dogmatics (on Barth’s account) transcend opinion and be “knowledge.”
- What might Barth suggest is a faithful confession for Christians to embody today, in the context of a global pandemic?
- There has also been a strong tradition of pre-modern apophaticism (Dionysius, Nicholas of Cusa...). What do you make of this?
- Who was the Oxford Philosopher that Stanley referenced?
 - Stephen Mulhall at New College
- Barth says on page 19 that “in faith is involved a ‘may’, not a ‘must’.” Does faith rid us of all demand? Is the freedom and permission of faith really opposed to the demands of the law?
- do we have any evidence that after the war, Barth actually learned or paid attention to the witness of the church, as in input for his reflection, rather than just writing and teaching theology?
- If theology can’t be a system, why is it a science, or “an attempt to see, to hear, and to state definite facts”? Sciences generate systems of knowledge.
- Could you give some examples of what a translation of the Church's Confession would be for the "Everyman" in our American culture today? (pg. 32).
- What would Barth make of the nature of God language debate? As to gender specific language?
- And doesn't Barth shortly thereafter call faith 'activity'?

- I believe so. He also calls faith a 'choice' in ch 4 (p.29) if I'm reading it correctly. For KB, this must be preceded by the work and word of God, of course - but, I'm eager to hear their thoughts on this.
- What is this conversations with Barth work? Reference for further reading? :)
 - I think Stanley was talking about the *Barth in Conversation* series which has a [Vol. 1](#), [Vol. 2](#), and [Vol. 3](#). You might also check out Will's [Conversations with Barth on Preaching](#) book though!
- Hasn't Luther argued for the objectivity of faith? In what way is Barth special or original?
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his *God in Search of Man*, underscores how God reaches out to us, do you see some affinity in Barth's *Dogmatics*? Question 2, as far as you know did the two ever meet?
- I understand Barth to be saying that Christianity is irreducible to what it is within the context of the church – and so in some sense untranslatable to the outside world. And yet he urges his listeners to translate their experience to the larger world and that the German church failed to do this to tragic end. Can you reflect on this seeming incongruity? And what is the content of what is to be translated?
- I would like to hear the distinguished speakers tackle the self-revelation of God in how that is achieved. Is only gained from reading Scripture, is given through the Holy Spirit, through community.
- If there can be no other starting point to talk about God than God's self-revelation, and scripture is merely a witness to that self-revelation, where do we get language to speak about God in and from scripture while simultaneously not making scripture a false foundation of our reflection on God's action in the world?
- How does Karl Barth today help us to navigate a post Covid-19 church and world and all that this means about talking about God and what it is to be human?
- What account would you give of faith as knowledge as it relates to people with severe cognitive disabilities?
- I have always been edified by Barth's theology. Particularly, as a student of pragmatist and ordinary language philosophy, I have always appreciated the insights that seem very compatible with ways of knowing found in pragmatist and ordinary language philosophy. One thing I have always been unsure of, however, is how Barth understands how a Christian should go about revising historic faith commitments in light of new human experiences and cultural developments. The pragmatists and ordinary language

philosophers have a way of doing it in terms of how the normative status of performances are left behind/altered/ revised if they social world they were meant for no longer takes them up. How does Barth think about God's self-revelation and our being born into a set of beliefs but also how our experience sometimes challenge those beliefs?

- I just felt like dropping this question now. I hope it's not too early. Please can you explain what Barth meant by faith having a character indelibilis in a person? Did he believe in the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints?
- Could you define what Barth means by "determines"? Is there a possibility of another "determination"? For example, could God as the God for us determine to be God against us?
- I wonder if we do ourselves a disservice if we approach God as an object, as opposed to a subject. Is God a guarantor of our worldview, or that which disrupts our worldview, opening us up to the possibility of participating in God (as opposed to pure speculation of or about God)?
- I like Barth's understanding of faith as meeting with God and becoming free to hear. What does it mean the Church to participate in that by our works in the world?
- Would Barh designate 'God' or the history of communion between God and human beings as the object of dogmatic science?
- Have we substituted God and our experience of God with God and our language about God?
- Can we talk about God or believe in Him apart from any experience?
 - No. The point I hear Barth making is not to FOCUS on the experinece. Focus on Christ.
- Does Barth ever distinguish between faith and belief? Trust, enthusiasm, absurdity - these things seem to qualify as faith more so than belief.
- Barth is oft quoted in the work of practical theologians who are using qualitative research to think about the experiences of Christians. Yet here we hear that we should not focus on the experience but on Christ. How does this marry together, can a practical theologian be a Barthian?
- Dr. Hauerwas suggested that Barth's aversion to Pietism—and also potentially certain varieties of Wesleyanism—was based in large part on his belief that it often leads to protestant liberalism. I'm curious: what would our distinguished presenters make of the

argument—made in one version or another by thinkers ranging from Cornelius van Til to Gary Dorrien—that Barth never really fully left “liberal modernism” behind?

- Can theology in Barth’s understanding be interdisciplinary?
- Is the story of faith, as Barth understands it, a definite and adequately big “world-image”?
- I’m curious as to how both of you were first introduced to Barth and what your first impressions were.