The Grammar of Barth's Theology of Personal Relations.

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In much contemporary theology, pastoral/practical theol-ogy, and much of the more popular "Christian" literature there is a concern for exploring and discovering various aspects of right relationship. These relationships might be political, marital, familial, sexual, economic, those within the church, or between the church and the greater society. What seems to be lacking in many of these discussions is an adequate theological foundation upon which to carry out the exploration. There are assumptions made about the nature of human relationships which seem to have no connection to theological underpinnings or are only loosely, or thematically related.

It seems that if considerations of the relationships in which we live are not connected to the heart of our Christian faith then 1) they may not be as faithful and helpful as they might be and 2) will fail to address the believing person's motivational core and so tend to come across as optional, artificial or merely legalistic approaches (conservative or liberal) to right relationships

It is in just this connection that I have discovered that there are untapped resources in the works of Karl Barth for filling out a comprehensive and theologically based under-standing of our being in relationship. While certainly such concerns have been widely acknowledged to have been important for Barth, it seems that often discussion of his contribution has "missed the forest for the trees." Much discussion has aimed at analyzing his methodology or terminology without explicating what exactly he has said regarding our being in relations. Also the various passages which deal with relations; Trinitarian, Christological, anthropological and ethical, have not been considered together for a comprehensive grasp of how Barth saw these things.[1] At any rate I would like to present what I

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1 Several things need to be said at the outset to avoid misunderstanding. For Barth, our being in relationship with God and with others is a graciously established given. It is anticipated in the eternal Triune life of Father, Son, and Spirit and accomplished in the incarnate life death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, i.e. in the hypostatic (personal/ontological) union of the Son of God with all

discern to be Barth's theologically grounded conceptualization of the nature of our being in relationship. This is the result of a detailed study of, and an attempt to correlate, his inter-related discussions of personal relations: trinitarian, christological, anthropological and ethical.[2]

To simplify my presentation I will set out a summary of my findings in a set of formulae and then attempt to explicate each of them by pointing back to the various discussions in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* in which these characterizations are rooted.

Barth's Grammar of Personal Being in Relationship

A. A Personal Relational Form

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humanity. Barth's term for this givenness of our existence is *die Bestimmung*, translated most often as "determination." Hence, for Barth relationships are ontologically determinative, i.e. *essential* to who God is and who we are.

2 In the first part, entitled "Jesus, Man for God," of Section 44, *Man as the Creature of God*, of *CD* III/2, Barth presents the Christological grounding for understanding our relationality. Here he develops six Christological criteria which fairly correlate with our six formulae. Next, human relationality in general, as determined in its "vertical" relationship to God, is discussed first critically in the second part, "Phenomena of the Human" and in direct correlation with the six Christological criteria (pp. 73-74), and then is discussed constructively in the third part, "Jesus Christ, Real Man." In this third part the six Christological criteria are summarized but the correlating implications are not enumerated in six categories. Rather the form of the relationship is described as being *with* God and *from* God and the material or actional content is described as *being elect* (called and hearing), *being in gratitude*, and *being in responsibility*. In Section 45, *Man in His Determination as the Covenant-Partner of God*, Barth, in the first part, "Jesus, the Man for Other Men," Barth provides the Christological grounding for our being in relationship horizontally with others. In the second part, "The Basic form of Humanity," Barth spells out the implications for humanity in general. While the Christological aspect is developed in six "steps" (pp. 214-221),the anthropological aspect is presented in two parts: first the form in terms of a threefold analysis of the formula for being in encounter, "I am as thou art" (pp. 244-250) and then the content in terms of the four "necessary elements" of being in encounter pp. 250-274. Barth points directly to the triune grounding for relationality in its vertical and horizontal dimensions in each part these two sections, but these presentations are written in summary form. A thorough grasp of what Barth means requires a familiarity with his doctrine of the triunity of God in Part 1, *The Triune God*, of Chapter II, *The Revelation of God*, in *CD* I/1, where he spells out the form of the trinitarian relations and in Chapter VI, T*he Reality of God*, beginning with Section 28, *The Being of God as the One Who Loves in Freedom*, *CD* II/1, where he puts forth the actional content of God's triune being in relationship.

1) A Unity (Fellowship or Communion) of one with another.

2) A Distinction or Differentiation between one and another.

3) An Ordered Correspondence (asymmetrical co-operation, partnership) of one with another.

B. A Personal Actional Content

4) Personal and Covenantal Relating

5) Dynamic and Eschatological Becoming through Relating

6) Extensive to the end of being inclusive of others

A final word of introduction. I have called this comprehensive view Barth's "grammar" of personal being in relationship. What Barth has to offer is not merely a new vocabulary, a few modifications of a view of relationality. Barth's most important contribution is an entire grammar of relationship which provides a radically different logic for conceptualizing relationships. To appreciate what Barth has to offer calls for allowing him to critique our usual language (vocabulary and syntax) for dealing with relationality. If one merely attempts to replace old terms with his terms his contribution will make little sense. If one adopts his entire grammar with its concomitant vocabulary the true value of his contribution becomes much more apparent.

Relations characterized as a unity, fellowship, or communion of persons.

Beginning with the revelation in Jesus Christ, Barth explicates the nature of relationship through his relation with God and with humanity. In Jesus Christ we see that who he is is one who has his being by virtue of being in communion with God. Who he essentially is and so what he does is identical with who God is and what God is doing. In Christ there is a co-existence of God and this man. There is a unity, a togetherness, a fellowship of love, a coincidence of the presence of God with the presence of the humanity of Jesus. Barth summarizes this communion of Jesus with God by saying that Jesus is uniquely and comprehensively "from" God. Jesus would not be were he not from

God, i.e. if he did he not have his being and his saving purpose originate in and with God.

The biblical grounding for this "oneness" of Jesus with God is found especially in John 17, and the "I am" declarations of that same Gospel. Throughout all the Gospels who Jesus is and what he does is identified with the saving purposes and acts of God. This is reflected in all the names and titles given to Jesus and the predication of identical acts to both Jesus and God throughout the New Testament. Without this unity of being and act there would be no self-giving or self-revelation of God in the life of Jesus.

This union and communion does not result in a confusion or fusion of God and humanity in Jesus. The distinction is continually maintained. Togetherness implies a differentiation that is maintained. We will leave the further discussion of this second characterization to the next section of our presentation.

The unity of the humanity of Jesus with God is reflective of and grounded in the unity of the Father and Son in the Spirit. Barth explores this communion of Father and Son in his consideration of the unity in differentiation of the Triune relations. The self-giving and love of Father and Son enacted within the Triune life becomes a self-revealing work in God's giving the Son as an act of love for the world.[3] There is but one God by virtue of a unity of Father, Son, and Spirit. The life of God is a dynamic unity maintained by the participation of each mode of being in the other modes of being. Each person "in-exists" in the other. Were the Father, Son and Spirit not united there would be no God nor distinct persons. The Father would not be the Father without the Son and *vice versa.* Each has their own identity by virtue of being in relation at an ontological level with the other. Communion of one with the other constitutes the divine being of the Triune God. The

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3 *C.D.* III/2, p. 66."[The self-giving of Jesus is] the same thing, only in its aspect as self-revealing work, as is elsewhere (3:16) described as God's so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The giving of the Son by the Father indicates a mystery, a hidden movement in the inner life of the Godhead. But in the self-sacrifice of the man Jesus for His friends this intra-divine movement is no longer hidden but revealed. For what the man Jesus does by this action is to lay bare this mystery, to actualize the human and therefore the visible and knowable and apprehensible aspect of this portion of the divine history of this primal moment of the divine volition and execution".

involution and convolution of the inner divine life has in the history of Christian theology been spoken of as a perichoretic communion. Barth utilizes this term to summarize the unique kind of unity (which maintains the distinctions) of Father and Son in the Spirit.

The relationship of Father and Son and Jesus and God are one and the same. The only difference is that in Jesus' relationship to God, that is, the relationship of the man Jesus with his heavenly Father, this inner eternal relationship is revealed external to the inner Triune life.[4]

In Christ, Barth recognizes a triple movement: from God to humanity, from humanity to God and from human to human. Thus the relationship of Jesus to the Father is also one of a unity and fellowship, a togetherness. By virtue of the hypostatic union of the Son of God with our humanity in Jesus Christ, we are given the gift of participating in that relationship. In Jesus it is revealed that all humankind exists in a dependent relationship to God. Every person comes from God, is called into a co-existence with God. Without a continual relationship with God, maintained by God, no human person would continue to exist. Of course the differentiation remains. The relationship is maintained for the sake of humanity's deliverance and perfecting which is in no way intrinsic to it but must come from outside itself, viz. from its gracious God.

In Christ all humankind is called to acknowledge the gracious truth of its being from God and its being maintained graciously by God for its salvation. Furthermore, this salvation, Barth makes clear, is not some kind of detached independent life in a sphere parallel to God's own life. In the life of Jesus we see that the eternal destiny of humanity is life in Christ, is to be taken up with him into the Triune life itself. This is the glorification of humanity provided for in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the

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4 "It is clear that in this matter [of mutual glorification] we have to do with a regular circle. It is the circle of the inner life of the Godhead. For the complete explanation of it we should have to return to the perception of the unity and trinity of God--to the Paraclete, too, there is ascribed His own doxázein of the Son (14:16)--and therefore indeed to the...fine *theologumenon* of the *perichoresis* of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost....according to the Fourth Gospel it is not merely the eternal but the incarnate Logos and therefore the man Jesus who is included in this circle (*Ibid*., p. 65).

ultimate communion for which humanity was created, reconciled and redeemed in and through the Word made flesh.

Finally, this togetherness and fellowship is revealed to be appropriate to persons in relation to one another. We find it archetypally in Jesus' relationships with others, especially his disciples. Despite all the dissimilarity, Jesus is not deterred from comparing the love the Father has for him with the love that the disciples may have (Jn. 17:26) and encourages them to love with the same love with which he has loved them. Even the oneness of Father and Son is comparable to the unity or oneness of Jesus with his disciples and their relationships one to another (Jn. 17:11,22). These comparisons are astounding--open to being mistaken as blasphemous. Nevertheless, from Jesus' perspective, in light of his own person and work, they can be simply and legitimately made. There is no danger of encroachment on God's own prerogative here because the possibility of any similarity of relationship has its source, norm and destiny in Jesus Christ. Our engagement in such relationships is constituted only through a participation by the Spirit in the relationship Jesus has with us and with the Father. Apart from him no such possibility exists at all. It is a gift of his grace to us that our relationships may be actual reflections of the loving relationships established by God in Christ.

Barth's most in-depth treatment of the nature of our human being in relationship with others is found in his section on "The Basic Form of Humanity", §45.2. The connection of one person with another is recognized when one can see that "I am as Thou art." This acknowledges that "...humanity absolutely, the humanity of each and every man, consists in the determination of man's being as a being with others, or rather with the other man. It is not as he is for himself but with others, not in loneliness but in fellowship, that he is genuinely human, that he achieves true humanity, that he corresponds to his determination to be God's covenant-partner, that he is the being for which the man Jesus is, and therefore real man."[5]

For Barth then, there is a structural unity, oneness; a togetherness, fellowship and

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5 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 243.

communion involved in the Triune relations, the Christological relationship (of God with humankind and humankind with God in Jesus Christ) and our relationships with one another. It is because of this actual similarity among these relationships that the relations can be said to be analogous.[6] There is, however, a necessary unidirectional ordering of the comparison from the original to the copy, from archetype to ectype which can never be reversed. This ordering obtains at both the ontological and noetic levels of our experience. Thus the very structure of personal life involves a unity, a togetherness, a communion, a fellowship of one with another. We belong together, not alone, with our God and with other persons. The very contours of our being call for our being with one another in a very strong sense. This being with one another constitutes an imaging of the internal and eternal Triune relations and the revelation of those relations in Jesus Christ. To affirm this is to affirm the grain of the reality in which we have our being.

Relations Characterized by each one being differentiated from the other.

The second aspect of the form of our being in relationship we will explore is the aspect of differentiation of one from another. Again we will take this up Christologically, in the Triune life of God and then in our human relationships.

In the life of Jesus the distinction between Jesus and his heavenly Father is maintained without effecting a separation. When Jesus prays he is not speaking to himself. The communion and communication is with another, albeit One with whom He is in closest intimacy. According to the

6 We must point out that Barth's claim that the relations are analogous is the **conclusion** of his exploration. It is not an *a priori* definition or a methodology by which he does his theological reflection. Discussions concerning Barth's understanding of analogy often overlook this crucial fact. What Barth means by analogy is conditioned and qualified by his understanding of the actual nature of the relations revealed in Jesus Christ and not *vice versa*. Whether or not it is proper to identify the relations as analogous can only be decided after the actual relations themselves are investigated. The logic must fit the reality. If Barth failed to use the term analogy in a traditionally or philosophically appropriate way it is because the reality constrained him to modify it to fit the nature of the relations he was attempting to explore. For Barth the theological task consisted largely of doing this very thing. Human language and concepts must be appropriated and transformed in communicating the truth embodied in Jesus Christ.

biblical witness to Jesus, no one knows the Father except the Son, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and those to whom the Son reveals Him (Lk. 10:22). This mutual knowing denotes a unity and a distinction. Jesus' obedience to the Father also indicates a clear differentiation between them. The mutual revelation, glorification and witness of Father and Son also presume a distinction between them, a freedom and even a kind of independence one from the other. And yet this is a freedom and independence that provides for the closest correspondence of action of one with the other. Jesus, in Barth's words, is the one who in his humanity is totally "for God." Yet in this unity with God Jesus "exists as a creature which cannot be dissolved in its Creator, which cannot itself be or become the Creator."[7]

Barth also puts it this way. There is in Christ no confusion of divinity and humanity even if there is no question of separation or opposition.[8] The differentiation is maintained. Jesus' humanity is his being, in the entirety of his existence and action, for those who share his flesh and blood. His life is a self-giving for their sakes, on their behalf, for their salvation. The divinity of his being a man is his being for God first and foremost. He lives for the sake of His purpose, glory and service. And yet there is no opposition because from the foundations of the world the Triune God is committed to being for creation and the creature. In being absolutely for God, Jesus is necessarily, then, for humanity.

The differentiation is apparent when Jesus serves and loves humanity exclusively in the way God directs him to serve them, even when this constitutes a violation of how persons count being served and loved. Consequently Jesus' love for the world is rejected.

The distinction is maintained in Jesus' indication that of the two great commandments, to love God with one's whole being, and to love the neighbor, the second is comparable (like, similar) but not identical to the first. They are coordinated but not reducible to one command. The love of God directs and gives content to what love of neighbor means. It is the distinction of the divinity

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7 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 64.
8 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 208 ff.

and the humanity of the man Jesus that orders and co-ordinates his relationships.

In considering the differentiation between the man Jesus and God Barth points out the differentiation of Father, Son and Spirit in the Triune Life. The perichoretic mutual indwelling of the Triune persons does not mean their dissolution. The Father remains Father, the Son remains the Son, etc., for the sake of their union and communion. The intra-divine life is a unity in trinity and a trinity in unity. The triune relations are internal to the life of God and not merely externally expressed towards us. As God is in himself, so God is towards us. The fact that the revelation of God is Triune is true to the ontological reality of the inner "experience" of God as Father and Son in the Spirit. There is no aloneness in God, but a togetherness of one with another. There is otherness in God.[9] Thus this God is a loving and personal God within God's own Triune life.

Jesus' being "for" all humankind is not an arbitrary decision, but one that reflects the intra-Triune life of the Father's being for the Son in the Spirit. "...there is a materially necessary and supremely, as the origin of the factual and materially necessary, an inner divine correspondence and similarity between the being of the Man Jesus for God and His being for His fellows. This correspondence and similarity for man repeats and reflects the inner being or essence of God and this confirms His being for God."[10] There is both communion and differentiation, appropriate for each sphere of relationship, between the Triune persons and Jesus and humankind.

In Jesus' relations with other human persons the differentiation is maintained in the midst of the union and communion. There is no confusion of Jesus with others even though there is a call for absolute belonging to him, participation in his own life. This inter-connection yet differentiation can be graphically seen in the apostle Paul's declaration: "I live, yet not I but Christ in me." The New Testament language of our being "in Christ", having union with Christ, being the body

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9 *C.D.*, II/1, p. 317 ff.
10 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 219.

of Christ, partaking of Christ's body and blood and Spirit, participating in his sufferings, all point in the same direction. There is no fusion of persons, no collapse of personal boundaries, yet there is a togetherness, a unity of mind, will, and heart, a sympathy, co-operation, co-ordination and solidarity of humanity with Jesus. This togetherness even exceeds that which exists between all humanity and Adam in sin. Barth indicates the aspect of the unity with humanity by saying that Jesus is "from" humanity.

He indicates the differentiation by pointing out that Jesus was sent "to" all humanity.[11] In God's own movement to humankind in Jesus we see His Lordship over all humanity. A Word of God is addressed to humanity which cannot arise intrinsically from it or be conditioned by it. This Word is Jesus Christ, the Word of Grace, the Election of all humanity in Jesus Christ. God comes to humankind as its Saviour, as One who acts for their benefit and serves them in a way they cannot serve themselves. This is the blessed differentiation.

This relational differentiation is also to characterize human relations without detracting from its togetherness. Barth's exploration of this aspect of human relationship is found in his discussion of "I am as I am in relationship."[12] Differentiation acknowledges the otherness of the other, the freedom and independence of that other person from me, even though that other, like myself, is a Thou. There is a distinction as well as a connection between myself and my neighbor. The other by its very existence as another person constitutes a moral spiritual claim on me and I on the other. We relate in and through encounter where the differences between each play a vital part in our being together.[13]

Our being in relationship calls for a recognition of the otherness, the distinctness, of

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11 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 140 f.

12 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 246 f.

13 "My own being and positing takes place in and with the fact that I am claimed by that of the other and occupied with it. That of the other sets limits to my own. It indicates its problems. It poses questions which must be answered. And there are answers for which it asks...I am under the conditions imposed by this encounter....As I myself am, and posit myself, I confront the other no less than he does me with his being and positing. He is my Thou, he is reached and affected by me no less than I am by him." *C.D.*, III/2, p. 246-7.

other persons. There can be no confusion or fusion of persons. This differentiation characterizes, despite any dissimilarities, the Triune relations, which are the origin and norm of our being in relationship, the Christological relation, and our human relations with each other.

Relations Characterized as having an Ordered Correspondence or Imaging.

The third formal characterization indicates that our being in relationship is essentially an historical and asymmetrical affair. According to Barth, in the revelation of Jesus Christ it is evident that we are dealing with the revelation of a history of relationship between God and this man among all other persons. We see and overhear a dialogue between Jesus and his Heavenly Father. We are privy to the ongoing interaction of the Father with the Son throughout the whole life of Jesus even from the womb, and up through the ascension. Jesus' whole life of obedience was one of seeing and listening and responding to the words, the actions, the will of his Father.[14]

This history has a definite direction, however, towards the glory of God. In Barth's view a history is made when there is an encounter between one and another who is transcendent to him which enables him to transcend himself towards the other. The encounter of God with humanity in the person of Jesus is just such a history. This is the history that constitutes our humanity.[15] It is the enactment of the working of God's gracious election and the hearing indicated in the affirmative answer of humankind, in Jesus, to that calling. It is the history of our salvation, our deliverance, for the fulfillment of our humanity in unity yet differentiation from our Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer.

In this history of relationship we have a dynamic movement which is asymmetrical. The call comes transcendently, from the outside, from God to humankind. It is a calling of the human creature to return to its Creator, to its Lord, to give glory to God. The creature is dependent upon its Creator, and not *vice-versa.* In the life of Jesus we

14 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 157 ff.
15 *C.D.*, III/2, p. 158.

see him ordering his life according to the will of his Father, the glory of his Father, the purpose and working of his Father. While this relationship is certainly reciprocal it is not symmetrical. Jesus submits himself, and gives himself to the Father. He wrestles to conform his will to the good will of his Father so that what he does corresponds to the activity of the Father. In this way what the Son does images what the Father does. Jesus' actions bear witness to the workings of the Father in the Spirit. In Jesus our humanity is made to conform to the good and glorious purposes of God, viz. for humanity to be sanctified for an eternal life within the very Triune life of God. Indeed this submission is of no detriment to the humanity of Jesus, but means its perfecting and fulfillment. Nevertheless, the relationship calls for an affirmative response to the Yes of God to humankind in Christ. This Jesus accomplished in his whole life of obedience to God culminating in his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to the Father.

This ordered correspondence of Jesus to his Father is the external manifestation of the internal Triune relations which are also so ordered. In Christ the inner life of the Triune God is revealed to be a history (in Barth's sense) of relationship of Father and Son in the Spirit. This is to say that the relationship of Jesus to the Father in the Spirit is identical to the Son's relationship to the Father in the same Spirit. There is an obedience, and asymmetry, an election and an acceptance of that election in the Triune life itself[16]. In God there is Another, an otherness of Father and Son which is "naturally" expressed in the triune God's creating the world through the other, his Son, the Word.

At the level of our inter-human relations we are to become the image of the Image of God, Jesus Christ. Our lives are to be an appropriate answer to the election of God. They are to be a participation in this history of the encounter and interaction of God with humanity in Jesus Christ. We are to be imitators of Christ so that our lives bear witness to Him, that is, to the faithful relationship of God and humanity manifest in the

16 "And this obedience of Jesus is the clear reflection of the unity of the Father and Son by the bond of the Holy Spirit in the being of the eternal God Himself who is the fullness of freedom Himself" (*CD*, II/2, p. 605). "As we look at Jesus Christ we cannot avoid the astounding conclusion of a divine obedience."*C.D.*, IV/1, p. 203.

history of his life. Christian obedience consists in being an image of the Image. Ultimately this constitutes, in a secondary way, a witness to the reality of the intra-Triune life. Humanity consists in being a history of life with God.

On the horizontal level, of person to person relationships, this works out in terms of our embracing the fact of our being-in-relationships with others, that others are our neighbors. It means that life-giving relations consist in engaging in a history of interactions, of encounters with others in a way which tells the other the truth about themselves as God has determined them to be. It is to love the neighbor as God in Christ has loved them and us. We must not interpret others in our own images but must see them in the light of the image of God. It is only in the truth of this light that we see who our neighbor really is.

In human relationships which bear witness to God's own relationships there is an imaging of one by the other. The one comes to know the other and oneself by mirroring the other and seeing him/herself in the mirror of the other. This turns out to be not only a matter of knowing, but also a matter of being and becoming. Who one becomes is necessarily conditioned by the nature of the imaging that does or does not take place. This is, of course, primarily true in our relationship with God in Jesus Christ, but is essentially true, if secondarily so, in our person to person relationships as well.

The most succinct development of this theme, although it is implicit in many places, occurs in Barth's three part explication of I and Thou and the following discussion of the four essential characteristics of humanity as a history of being-in-encounter: seeing, hearing and speaking, assisting, and relating with gladness. We will not here develop these fully but, for now, will only point out the reflective (and therefore imaging/corresponding) nature of these four characteristics of humanity in relationship.

This mirroring is most clearly seen in his discussion of seeing eye to eye when he says "We give each other something in our duality, and this is that I and Thou are men. We give each other an insight into our being....This moment, this mutual look, is in some sense the root-formation of all

humanity without which the rest is impossible."[17] In terms of mutual expression and hearing and mutual address and hearing we come to recognize that "I am for him the sum of something objective which he needs as a subject but which is in the first instance unattainable, being concealed in me'...."I have something decisive for him to give him."[18] Furthermore, there is danger in refusing to be in encounter: "Do I see what is really at stake? It is really a matter of myself. I cannot be I without accepting this claim of the other, without letting him come to me, and therefore without hearing him....I am affected myself if I do not hear him, and do so in all seriousness."[19]

Thus by being in encounter as I and Thou mutually seeing, speaking, assisting, and rejoicing in the other we serve each other by reflecting one another and so assist each other in knowing and being known and thereby in the process of becoming who we are determined in Jesus Christ to be. We are to be to each other images and witnesses of the truth of who we are in God's sight. And this is a further witness to Jesus Christ who originally shows us the Father, Himself, and ourselves that we might become, through our dynamic relationship with Him, all that we are given to be in Him.

With this characterization we have completed our survey of the form of our being in relationship. Grounded originally in the Triune relations we see them to involve our being in a history of interaction with others in which the relations are to be ordered by corresponding to the will and purpose of God. This is to say that our relations with each other are to bear witness to God's love for us in Christ, and our love for God, in Christ. It is in this way that we will truly love and serve our neighbors as Christ did. In this way our being for God will correspond with our being for others in a way that images Jesus ultimately and originally being so towards us and all humankind.

For Barth the grammar of being in relationship involves a unity, a differentiation, and an ordered correspondence of one with another in an ongoing history of relationship. However, as

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17 *CD*, III/2, p. 251-252.
18 *Ibid.*, pp. 256-157.
19 *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

crucial as these characterizations are, they are nearly empty husks, form without content. Barth's more significant contribution to the understanding of our being-in-relationship is the content with which he fills this form. Form and content are closely correlated. The content is the action which takes place between persons. It is a participation in the form of the relationship. The action should correlate with the structure of our being. Of course this content must be Christologically discerned as well.

What has often been overlooked in Barth's work is the relationship between his various descriptions of the form of the relations and the actional content. Also not much attention has been given to the overlapping nature of Barth's numerous and various descriptions of the content. A much more satisfying and comprehensive understanding of what Barth meant arises when these various aspects are taken together. This is what we will attempt to do in summary form.

Personal and Covenantal Relating

This fourth characterization is an attempt to synthesize the various ways Barth both formulates and subdivides the material content of our being in relationship. There is within the Trinitarian, Christological and inter-human relationships a personal and covenantally loving aspect. Barth stays with a threefold description of the content of the Christological grounding of being-in-relationship, but he subsumes the correlating actional content of humanity in general under two major headings in the part entitled, “Jesus Christ, Real Man” and under four headings in the part, “The Basic Form of Humanity” in the section *Man in his Determination as the Covenant-partner of God.* We will isolate and highlight two other important aspects of our being in personal covenantal relations to which Barth often refers but never distinguishes by enumerating them. Relationship involves a being-in-becoming and also an extension of one’s self for the inclusion of others in covenant fellowship.

Beginning with Barth's Christological observations, we see that he summarizes numerous times the content of Jesus' being in relationship with God as a history of interaction involving 1) the exercise of God's Electing Lordship for our

salvation and our responding and affirming our election to be under his gracious Lordship. 2) a continual correspondence, in a unity of person and action, to God's ongoing working out of his purposes for creation within the history of God's saving action towards us and in the world,. 3) This is comprehensively understood as living exclusively and entirely for the sake of God's glory, for the coming of His kingdom in the freedom and joy of serving God, and not living for any end other than or less than this (for example living for one's self). In this way Jesus truly loves and serves all of creation.[20]

This describes the content of Jesus relationship with God and with others. As such it is an active affirmation and a participation in the given structure of unity, differentiation, and ordered correspondence. It is a total, exclusive and committed love for God and God's purposes and glory which orders and unifies who He is and what He does. It absolutely conditions Jesus' being in action moment by moment. His being is a history of participating in the movement of God towards the fulfilling of God's covenant purposes when his kingdom will be established and his glory will fill the cosmos. In this way every created thing finds its "own" fulfillment in the light of being in God's glory.

In the Christological part of "Jesus Christ, Real Man," Barth says that the actional content which corresponds to the relational form of Jesus being 'from', 'to,' and so 'with' God is his being and so acting 'for' God. Christ's being 'for' God means that he is God's Elect who affirms in his action his election for God's purposes and glory. This election by God means that the form of all humanity's relationship to God is that of being Elect in Christ. Humanity is also 'from', 'to' and so 'with' God, in Christ. This form of relationship is defined by both a calling and a hearing on the part of the elect, according to Barth. In this way humanity in general is *with* God as it is *with* Jesus Christ. Hence, the human story is essentially one of its history, its dealing with God, concerning its election in Christ.[21]

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20 See *CD*, III/2, pp. 68 f., 73-74, 132-134, 140.

21 See *CD*, III/2, pp. 140 ff. In this section the first two points Barth makes describe the *form* of the relationship. The *content* is described in the third and fourth points.

In two more points Barth indicates how humanity is *for* God. In Christ God calls for a response and provides a way of responding for all humanity to affirm that it is *for* God. The actional content of human response to its Election or Summons Barth defines in two more points. First, the Election of God calls for a response of gratitude for God's electing lordship. The gratitude appropriate here is perfectly accomplished by Jesus Christ. It is a unique and exclusive gratitude appropriate to God alone. It constitutes the basic orientation or posture of one's entire being to receive, as an unworthy beneficiary, all the freely given blessings of being called to be with God Himself as Lord. It is to acknowledge the supreme mercy of God's being in himself for humanity, committed to its perfection for eternal union and communion in his Triune presence. This God has determined himself to be our God and for us to be his people. In Jesus' response to God this is evident and takes concrete form. Jesus chooses his election. And in having his entire being conditioned by his gratitude for God and his purposes he finds the total correspondence of his divinity with his humanity. His totally being for God means the fulfillment of his humanity and that of all others. Living for and serving the purposes of God in no way are detrimental to the meaning and purpose of human being in action because its fulfillment is its being in personal (freely affirmed and grateful) loving relationship under the gracious lordship of God. The two great commandments are not in any way at odds with each other even though they are not identical.

In a fourth point Barth fills out in great detail another aspect of faithful response to God's loving election of humanity. This is comprehensively understood as "personal responsibility" to God. This responsibility to God is further delineated as a knowledge of God, which includes a self-knowledge and a knowledge of others, an obedience to God, an invocation of God and culminates in being understood as freedom to lovingly serve God. It is this freedom, which is the gift of God by the Spirit, that makes our responsibility essentially personal. It reflects and has its source and norm in the sovereign freedom, willing, choosing, and acting of the Triune God.

Barth covers the same ground in his

consideration of Jesus as the Man for Others, but this time in six "steps" in stead of the four points he used in his section on the history of election in Jesus as Real Man.[22] The form of relationship is encapsuled in saying that Jesus is from, to, and with other persons Thus, the way in which he describes Jesus being with us corresponds to his description in the previous section of Jesus being from, to and with God. The last three "steps" Barth takes corresponds to the responsive history of gratitude and responsibility for the calling and hearing of God's election. The history of responsive relationship between Jesus and all others is one of covenant love for others which images God's covenant love for him and all humanity. This is evident in the two-fold command of God to love God first and, in a similar comparative way, the neighbor.

This covenant response is also characterized by Barth as an obedience. His love and service of others "is not a matter of His own choice or caprice but the task which he is given by God." The work Jesus is given to do is to effect the love of God that accomplishes the salvation of humankind. Jesus makes himself the covenant partner of humankind. In Jesus "God himself is for man."[23]

The last three steps Barth takes here also culminate in understanding our being with others to be our freedom. Jesus' response of being for God and so for humankind is the enactment of freedom to serve others rather than himself apart from others. God is true to himself when he acts for the salvation of others.[24]

The personal, loving, covenantal and free relationship established in Jesus Christ between God and humanity is an image of the Triune relations of Father and Son in the Spirit. Thus this relationship is not alien to God but "natural" to it.[25]

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22 See *CD*, III/2, pp. 214-219. Here it becomes evident that Barth has never left behind his six-fold Christological characterization of humanity which stands at the beginning of his anthropology.

23 *CD*, III/2, pp. 217.

24 "There is freedom in God, but no caprice. And the fact that from all eternity God pitied and received man, the grounding of the fellow-humanity of Jesus in the eternal covenant executed in time in His being for man, rests on the freedom of God in which there is nothing arbitrary or accidental but in which God is true to Himself." *CD*, III/2, p. 218.

25 "We obviously have to do with the final and decisive basis indicated when we spoke of the ontological character, the reality and the radical nature of the being of Jesus for His fellow-men. It is from this

At this juncture Barth points out most explicitly the inner connection between the Trinitarian relations and the Christological and anthropological. Barth also comes to finally suggest the *analogia relationis*. Humanity is both "for" God and "for" others. The latter corresponds to the former, is ordered by the former. Personal covenantal love characterizes Jesus' being for God and for others because it originally characterizes the relationship of the Father being for the Son in the Spirit. It is the personal, loving, and covenantal content of these relations which constitute the appropriateness of calling them analogous.

Barth finds explicit expression of this in the Gospel of John, especially in chapter 17, which indicates that "the relationship of Jesus to the disciples is not original, but an exact copy of the relationship in which He stands to the Father and the Father to Him."[26] This relationship of Jesus with the Father is the first and original relationship which takes place "not within the creaturely world but outside it, before and above the whole history which is played out in the cosmos, and therefore in God Himself." This involves a mutual glorification, loving, being "in" one another, being one, and being sent into the world. "This is the original, the relationship within the divine being, the inner divine co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity."[27] Jesus is the image of God in that his love for others, which corresponds to his love God, is the outworking of the correspondence of the Son's love for the Father to the Father's love for the Son in the Spirit.

The full content of this covenantal love within the Triune life can be appreciated if we recall Barth's first exploration of the loving of God in *Church Dogmatics* II/1 in the chapter on "The Reality of God" and under the sub-headings of "The being of God as the One who Loves in Freedom", "The Perfections of the Divine Loving" and "The Perfections of the Divine Freedom". We have already considered the structure or form of

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context that these derive their truth and power. The humanity of Jesus is not merely the repetition and reflection of His divinity, or of God's controlling will; it is the repetition and reflection of God Himself, no more and no less. It is the image of God, the *imago Dei*".(*CD*, III/2, p. 219).

26 *CD*, III/2, p. 220.

27 *CD*, III/2, p. 221.

the Triune relations. Barth here goes on to fill out the character of the action appropriate to God. We can only summarize here a huge amount of material worthy of in-depth reflection.

For Barth God *is* in a particular way, the way revealed in Jesus Christ. As an over-all description we could say that Barth understands the action of God, which corresponds with His being, as personal and personifying love. For Barth God is appropriately called personal inasmuch as He personifies himself to us in his Word as a morally free subject who acts, wills, decides and relates in a personal way (that is, as a subject who acts, wills, decides) with others.[28] It is on this basis that through the act of a personal God in relationship with humanity that we are made to become personal. In and through our relationship with God we truly become persons, that is, become like Jesus Christ. For He alone is truly personal.

But God's being and act has a particular content. It is a fellowship creating and maintaining love accomplished through God's own self-giving. "Loving us, God does not give us something, but Himself and giving us Himself, giving us His only Son, He gives us everything."[29] This self-giving and receiving constitutes the inner triune life which is a communion and fellowship of love. The self-giving of God in Jesus Christ for our inclusion in the divine fellowship is this love made external in creation, reconciliation and redemption. We become persons in and through God's love for us. This is a personifying love, a humanizing love. We become I and Thou by virtue of this covenantal relationship established with us in Jesus Christ which draws us into eternal fellowship with God, the true "I am that I am".

In our becoming persons we too, will have our being in loving fellowship first with God and then correspondingly with others. We will love others as God in Christ has loved us. As God is loving in Himself as Father, Son and Spirit in

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28 "The personification of the concept of the Word of God which we cannot avoid when we remember that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, does not signify any lessening of its verbal character. But it signifies ...the knowledge of His personalness as distinguished from all thingness or materiality.... Personalness means being one subject not only in the logical sense, but also in the ethical sense, being a free subject....[we] recognize him as a Person precisely in His Word" (*CD*, I/1, p. 157).

29 *CD*, II/1, p. 276.

personal relations, so we too, will be loving among ourselves. Personal being is being in loving.[30]

One further aspect of God's triune loving which is important to bring out is that this personal and covenantal love is an unconditional communion. God seeks, creates, and maintains fellowship. Barth discusses four characteristics of God's loving which highlights the unconditionality of his fellowship creating actions. In summary: 1) The creation of this fellowship is for its own sake because it is the sole good. 2) The seeking and creation of this communion is done without reference to the worthiness or anticipated reciprocity of love. The reason for its being sought is in itself. God's covenant love is its own ground. 3) God's loving is an end in itself. The creation of the communion of love is not instrumental to some other end. It is its sole aim. 4) Finally, God's communion-seeking and creating love is free and unconstrained because it perfectly coheres in who God is in His own Triune life. His love towards us is the overflow of his own blessedness for our sakes, for the sake of our participation in it. This means that covenant love is unconditional. It is not a contractual agreement between two parties on the basis of mutually agreed terms which if violated annuls the contract. It is a commitment to the benefit of the other by doing whatever is lovingly necessary to include them in fellowship originally active in the Triune life.[31]

Barth's characterization of the content of human being in relationship with others culminates in his section on our being the covenant partners of

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30 "Man is not a person, but he becomes one on the basis that he is loved by God and can love God in return.... He is then (in his own way as a creature) a person wholly and exclusively in the fellowship of Him who (in His way as Creator) is it in Himself" (*CD*, II/1, p. 284).

31 Barth puts together in one comprehensive statement the personal covenantal love with the triune life and its extension to us in Jesus Christ It begins:
"God is He who, without having to do so, seeks and creates fellowship between Himself and us....It implies so to speak an overflow of His essence that He turns to us....God is He who...seeks and creates fellowship with us, and who (because His revelation is also His self-revelation) does this in Himself and in His eternal essence....He wills to be ours, and he wills that we should be His. He wills to belong to us and He wills that we should belong to Him. He does not will to be without us, and He does not will that we should be without Him.... That He is God--the Godhead of God--consists in the fact that He loves, and it is the expression of His loving that He seeks and creates fellowship with us."*CD*, II/1, pp. 273-275.

God. The basic form of our humanity is like Christ's. We are, in a secondary, way "from", "to" and "with" other persons and so are also "for" others. Barth's most in-depth consideration of the form that relationship takes, found in Barth's three part section on I am as thou art, we have already reviewed above . His consideration of the content of that relationship of one encountering another is developed in his four elements of being in encounter. It involves a seeing eye to eye, a hearing and speaking, a giving mutual assistance and finally culminating in a being and doing all this gladly and freely.[32] Again, we cannot go into detail regarding Barth's explication. However this section marks Barth's greatest depth of insight into our humanity and it should bear in-depth reflection. We will attempt a summary.

a. Seeing Eye to Eye

"Being in encounter (*Begegnung*) is (1) a being in which one man looks the other in the eye."[33] When we see eye to eye we are both concerned to see the other for who they are and to let the other see me. There is a reciprocity, a give and take in this relationship. There is a kind of objectivity, an "openness" to the other to know them and be known by them without deception, without idealization, or derogation. There is a moving out of ourselves to see others and to reveal ourselves to them. What ensues in such an eye to eye interchange is a sharing of life together.

b. Mutual Speech and Hearing

Being in encounter means "that there is mutual speech and hearing."[34] This is a complex action of both I and Thou, both speaking to and hearing one another. Whereas the seeing is essentially receptive on each side, in speaking one makes one's own contribution to the other's perception. He participates in the revelation of himself so as to assist the other in drawing up his image of him. In this way one gives oneself to the other actively and in greater depth than merely being seen can offer. This reciprocal speaking is to be for the benefit of the other. It is not just for the sake of expressing one's self but in order to give of one's self to the other. There is to be mutual listening with the intention of receiving from the

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32 *CD*, III/2, pp. 250-274
33 *CD*, III/2, pp. 250-252.
34 *Ibid.*, pp. 252-260.

other not just words and facts, but to receive the impartation of their unique person. This is because what the other has for us is something we do not have at all, and so is indeed something of vital importance to us. It is in this dialogue, where lives are exchanged and so mutually enlarged and enriched, that we speak and hear humanly.

c. Giving Mutual Assistance

Being-in-encounter means giving assistance in the act of being.[35] This means that we are for the other, we support the other in their lives as we can, within its limits. And it means that we call for assistance because we know our own limitations and need the help of others. Assistance is mutual when the response with help corresponds to the call for support. There is no living of another's life or taking another's responsibility or substituting for another. But as a support alongside, with and for each other we both give and receive help. Our assistance is human insofar as we do act to help but only as we know our own need for assistance and as we do indeed call for assistance, admit our need, and so recognize that the other needs assistance as well. This is human fellowship.

d. Freely and With Gladness

Being in encounter means all this is "done on both sides with gladness," that is, "freely and from the heart."[36] There is a depth of relationship here in the discovery of being with the other in such a way that there is recognized an "inward correspondence of the other to me despite all his other-ness. This is not a collapse of one into another, but the recognition that the law of my own being is fulfilled in being so completely with the other. In this correspondence there is the sense of an unimpeachable appropriateness and freedom and so joy." [37] In this relationship one is glad, not being reluctant or neutral in relation to others, because in this relationship one is actualizing his very own humanity.[38]

Here is evident Barth's interrelating his

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35 *Ibid.,* p. 260-264.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 265-285.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

38 "The externality of the different fellow-man who encounters me has this in common with the very different externality of the God distinct from me--that it is also inward to me; inward in the sense that this external thing, the other man, is inward and intrinsic to me even in his otherness." (*CD*, III/2, p. 268-269).

Christological and Trinitarian understanding of the content of personal being in covenant relationship with the true nature of our horizontal relationships of one with another. It is also clear that such a content is congruent with and fills out the form of our being in relationship: in unity, differentiation, and ordered correspondence.

Being in Becoming

Two other aspects of our being in personal covenantal relations remain to be developed. In Barth's work these two aspects never reached explicit or thematic development. Yet the characteristics of relations having a dimension of eschatological becoming and extending to include the other is present in all his discussions of relationships and from time to time is given explicit expression. We want to bring this to special attention since these characteristics are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of relationships.

In Barth's Christology the notion of Christ's becoming is often included in the characterization of His active obedience in correspondence with His being for God and for humanity. In Jesus' obedience he is pursing the fulfillment of the purpose of God to deliver humankind from sin, evil, and the chaotic threat against life itself. Jesus life was a continual overcoming of temptation, a discerning and acting according to the willing and working of his Father. Jesus thus actively confirmed his election as Saviour and maintained his unity with the Father by the Spirit. Jesus anticipated a completion of his earthly mission and a consummation of his relationship with the Father in a mutual glorification of one by the other.

This eschatological perspective on Jesus' relationship with his Father constitutes a unique kind of becoming. His relationship with God of loving obedience was a dynamic history of moving from God to humanity and taking humanity back towards God into the divine Triune life. This dynamic of relationship is a becoming by the incorporation humanity in the divine life through the life of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus was sent as Savior he became our Saviour so that the life of God now has within it, irrevocably, human life. The Son of God became incarnate for our sakes. This God has become the God of humanity in Jesus Christ. There is an eschatological movement in the

dynamic relations of God with humanity in Jesus Christ.

The inner-Triune relations can also be considered to involve a certain becoming. There is a "movement of intra-divine life" which Eberhard Jüngel paraphrases as Barth's indication that in the inner Trinitarian dynamics "each mode of being *becomes* what it is together *with* the two other modes of being...a *being in becoming.*"[39] The unity of the Trinity is a becoming itself. God's being is a fellowship which is "becoming one."[40] The three modes become united and are always becoming one. The Triune fellowship is an activity. This is what the concept of *perichoresis* comes to represent, the "involution and convolution" of God in Himself and in His work, which is indeed His being as love.[41]

As such there is a self-giving, an exchange, a flow of life from one to the other. As the Father gives Himself and glorifies the Son and the Son glorifies and gives Himself to the Father all by the Spirit, without lack the Father gains something from the Son, and the Son gains from the Father. Each gives to the other that which the other does not have while losing nothing essential to itself nor becoming something other than it was. In the eternal begetting of the Son the Father is/becomes Father. In the eternal obedience of the Son, the Son is/becomes the Son. There is a dynamic becoming in the history of the intra-trinitarian relations. "He is God in their concrete relationships, the one to the other, in the history which takes place between them."[42]

The essential place where we see God's being and man's being as dynamic, and a becoming, is exactly where God has revealed Himself to man, Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God became that which He was not previously. Without ceasing to be what God was, He determined Himself ***to be***, in Himself, the God of the creature, for the creature,

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39 Jüngel, Eberhard, *The Doctrine of the Trinity. God's Being is in Becoming.* Translated by Horton Harris. Edinburgh & London: Scottish Academic Press, 1976. German title: *Gottes Sein ist im Werden.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1966., p. 63. Cf. Colin Gunton. *Becoming and Being: the Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 143.

40 *CD*, I/1, pp. 369-370. See Jüngel, p. 32.

41 *CD*, I/1, pp. 370-374, II/1, p. 284, "the One who loves in himself."

42 *CD*, IV/1, p. 203.

with the creature. This is God's own self-determination, and so a determination of His gracious love. But God, in exercising the freedom of His love, is free and loving to become the free and loving God of the creature, creating him to share in His own intra-trinitarian life.[43] For this purpose of eternal fellowship with the creature, He becomes, takes into Himself, humanity in the Son, such that God determined Himself to be God with humanity and humanity with its God, and to be God only in this way. God is sovereignly free to allow his intra-trinitarian love to create that which is not Himself, then overflow, go out and gather in His creatures to Himself, giving them a place of creaturely being-as-becoming in His own being-as-becoming, that is within the Triune life of God.

In terms of humanity, the becoming is perhaps more readily identifiable. In general Barth repeats on a number of occasions that in Christ we become who we are designated by God to be by virtue of of being created, reconciled and redeemed by the Triune God. More specifically we become thankful for our being under the sovereign election of our Lord. We become obedient to our election in order to fulfill the purposes of God. We take responsibility by responding faithfully to who God is and who we are in Christ. We become free by obediently taking hold of the freedom to serve God and love our neighbor, by assisting them towards God and gladly and freely seeing, hearing and speaking with others as those also elected in Jesus Christ.

We may attempt to summarize Barth's perspective on human becoming in four points:

1. Becoming: A Process of Transformation towards its **Telos**

The character of humanity's being is open, not fixed. Humankind is engaged in a process of becoming what what it is designated to be in Christ. It is to grow into a particular character.[44] As such there is a continuing "transformation"[45] towards one's God-given *telos*.[46] The presence of purpose in the life of humanity is given and

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43 *CD*, III/3, p. 109f.

44 "Become what you are," means therefore: "Grow into your character, accept the outline of your particular form of life..." *CD*, III/4, p. 388, cf. p. 387.

45 *CD*, III/3, p. 6.

46 *Ibid.*, III/4, p. 53.

unavoidable because we belong to Jesus Christ. This makes one's life not a static gift but a gift of a certain task to be taken up.[47] Life is a calling and summoning to "what one is becoming."[48]

This becoming occurs originally in one's relationship to God, and essentially in both the horizontal and vertical planes of one's existence. By being loved and loving God and neighbor, we become the persons we are to be.[49]

This becoming in relation to God then unfolds on the horizontal plane. In Christian love or *agape* we come to recognize others as brothers and sisters who are also becoming who God intends them to be by His grace.[50]

Thus our being unfolds in its determination to become as it participates in covenant relationship with God and correspondingly with others. We should not say that we are already covenant partners and then become something over and above this. We are summoned to become, in our relationships, the covenant partners we are with God and with others. This is the *telos* of our human existence. We become in ourselves what we are in Christ. As such the only one who embodies completely what we are to become is Jesus Christ.[51]

2. The Telos *: Becoming, in Christ, the Children of God*

Again, the knowledge of the actual *telos* of human existence and the possibility of its realization for every person are both grounded in the actuality of its being realized in the humanity of Jesus Christ for us. Jesus is the covenant-partner of God existing in the form of our humanity with God in His inner Triune fellowship of love. Because Jesus, the Son of God, has become by the

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47 *Ibid.*, III/2, p. 180.

48 *Ibid.*, III/4, p. 606.

49 "Man is not a person, but he becomes one on the basis that he is loved by God and can love God in return."(*CD*, II/1, p. 284).

50 "[Christian love or *agape*] is the action and attitude of the man who only becomes real and can only be understood in the course of his history with God. Love is the new gratitude of those who have come to know God the Creator as the merciful Deliverer." (*CD*, III/2, p. 275).

51 "We emphasize again that there can be no question of there being simply and directly that which Jesus is alone. They are not simply and directly the covenant-partners of God as His creatures; they are destined to become this. And this means concretely that they are destined to participate in the benefits of the fellow-humanity of that One, to be delivered by Him" (*CD*, III/2, p. 225).

grace of God, our Brother, we are to become the children of God who call God our Father.[52]

This becoming of humanity, the becoming of the children of God, is our becoming by God's grace. Grace means becoming. Not abstractly, but concretely: becoming the children of God. This becoming the children of God is not an original creation with each individual. Our being and becoming the children of God are a participation in Jesus' own Sonship with the Father. "He [Jesus] gives us His Holy Spirit in order that his own relationship to His Father may be repeated in us."[53]

3. Becoming Sanctified, Humanized

As such, our becoming is the sanctification and so the fulfillment of our humanity. We do not become something other than human in the fulfillment of our covenant-relation with God. And we certainly do not become "religious" in some abstract way. As we are sanctified in our relationship with God through and in Jesus Christ, we are humanized, we are personalized, become fully human. We should understand "Christian love as the awakening and fulfillment of humanity, of the distorted and perverted but not forfeited manner of the natural man, i.e. of man as God created him."[54]

Who we are and are to become is indeed not apparent in ourselves. It is realized and apparent only in Jesus Christ. Yet in Him we may see our union with Him and so see our own fulfillment in Him, in that we see our humanity in His humanity and see Him in full personal communion with His divinity, i.e., His complete fellowship with the Father in the Spirit. So in Him we see the fulfillment of our own fellowship with the Father by the Spirit. He

> takes from us what is ours... giving us what belongs to God, all the wisdom and righteousness and holiness of the Son of God, everything, as He is for us and represents us, everything, as we belong

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52 "Men become and are God's children, then, by God's grace, which is His possibility and not theirs, by the goodness of the Father. It is not originally intrinsic to them...Rather it is freely intended for them and addressed and promised to them as this grace and goodness becomes a present event in their life and thought, in action and suffering, so that they acquire thereby the genuine freedom to cry "Father"" (*CD*, IV/4, p. 73).

53 *CD*, II/2, p. 780.

54 *CD*, III/2, p. 284.

to Him and He treats us as His own, His members...[55]

4. Becoming: an Eschatological Hope for Life in the Triune God

Consequently this life of becoming is to be characterized as a life of hope. Who we ultimately are cannot be completely manifested. Our becoming involves a waiting for the completion of what was begun in us and is as yet only completed in Christ. This hope is essentially our union with him.[56]

It is with this final clarification that we must indicate that the 'becoming' must be understood eschatologically. It is not yet apparent, yet it is the future held out and made actual for us by the promise of God in Jesus Christ. This future is our eternal sharing in the triune life of God.[57]

The fact that the completion of our participation in the life of God is future does not mean that it is any less real or actual in the present. It is the truth about ourselves in which we live. We regard ourselves as the new creations we are, as the children of God united with Him. It is this realism or actualism of our ontological relationship with God in Christ by the Spirit that is a hallmark of Barth's theology. It is a key to his ethics. It raises the question as to whether we regard our present experience and perception as "reality" with the future as potential reality or regard the truth concerning ourselves as revealed in Jesus Christ as the present reality and actuality for us with the future as the unfolding and manifestation of it.[58]

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55 *CD*, II/2, p. 607. We could recall the witness of the New Testament here: "Beloved we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hope in him purifies himself as he is pure" (I Jn. 3: 2-4). Cf.,Rom. 8:19, 24; Col. 3:3,4.

56 "It is life in expectation, in a strained looking forward and upward, with this person, Jesus Christ, as the object....This life is a "waiting" and hoping because the glory of the unity of Jesus Christ with us, and of our unity with Him, is hidden and not manifest, present and certain to faith but withdrawn from sight, as long as we live here and now..." (*CD*, II/2, p. 607).

57 "Salvation is the perfect being which is not proper to created being but is still future....To that extent salvation is its *eschaton*...being which has a *share* in the being of *God*...not a divinized being, but an *eternal* being which is hidden in God" (*CD*, IV/1, p. 8; cf. II/1, p. 181 concerning our participation). The theme of becoming throughout the *Dogmatics* is one significant way Barth presents the eschatological truth of the Gospel.

58 It is also the stumbling block of so many of his interpreters. Ingolf Dalferth has brought this out more clearly than perhaps anyone.

We may thus say that, as persons exist in relationship to God and other human creatures, they are becoming. Persons exist in hope of the realization of God's loving and free intentions for them as realized in Jesus Christ and so promised to them as the fulfillment of their own humanity. This hope is the realization of God's personal-relational or filial purposes of our becoming the children of God by our sharing in the Son's own fellowship with the Father in the Spirit, indeed in the communion within the Triune life of God.

Extension for Inclusion of the Other

Finally we may consider the characterization of the action of personal covenantal love to involve an extension of one's self for the inclusion of others in a life of covenant fellowship. This dynamic is evident for Barth in the Triune and Christological relations, and so is to be true in our human relationships as well. We will take this characterization up in this order.

A. The Extension-for-Inclusion of the Triune God in Christ.

1. God's Election of Humankind: A Movement of Double Transcendence

Each created person is summoned and called by God to enter actively into the relationship with Him provided in Jesus Christ. Barth defines this calling: "To be summoned is to be called out of oneself and beyond oneself."[59] Humanity is necessarily called beyond itself because originally the One who calls it into relationship with Himself is beyond it, is other than it is. In this relationship

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He argues that Barth is "an unashamed realist" (p. 14). He further clarifies this by saying it is an "eschatological realism" of the risen and present Christ and the new life into which we are drawn by the Spirit" (p. 21). This is the personal presence of the risen Christ. It is this "reality which determines what is to be counted as real and what isn't" (p. 22) Dalferth's analysis of Barth's contribution is that it "constitutes a massive and conscious contradiction to everything thought epistemologically acceptable in the light of post-Enlightenment restriction of meaningful truth claims to the formal truth of logic and mathematics and the empirical truths of science and history" (p. 22). He sums up Barth's position: "...our world is permanently in the process of becoming real (or unreal for that matter) by its eschatological *assumptio in Deum.* What we experience is a preliminary, penultimate, abstract reality which as such is in a permanent danger of relapsing into non-existence" (p. 29). This points up both the radical claim that Barth is making and the inimical context into which his teaching comes. See his "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism" in ed. S.W. Sykes, *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

59 *CD*, III/2, p. 166.

of unity and communion God remains distinct, other. Yet God gives of Himself to humankind in His Word.[60]

In communion with humankind, God remains "not man", "not creature" even though he is with him and for him in his creatureliness. God remains distinct. Meeting him always requires going out of one's way to meet him.[61]

However, the "otherness" of God is not bound up with some supra-human or supra-cosmic dimension of being unrelated to humanity. The "otherness" of God is actual and real and made known in Jesus Christ. He alone is humanity's true other, true counter-part. In Jesus we encounter "the wholly and true Other as the genuine counter-part who satisfies and justifies him and in relation to whom he is called out of and beyond himself, and may thus discover and actualize his own freedom."[62] In Christ it becomes clear that there is now no divinity apart from humanity. Even though God is not a creature, He is not without the creature. He is with and for the creature as its Counter-part. Thus the revelation in Jesus Christ is not the information about or an example of this, but it is the event in which God is with and for all creatures in actuality. We see, in Jesus, the Creator coming to be with the creature forever affecting the life of God. That which is truly divine is that God has gone out of Himself to be with and for the creature. God is love.

Given the otherness of God and man, the establishment of the relationship calls for a double movement of transcendence, both instigated by God. God transcends himself to give himself to be known and enables us, by His Spirit, to transcend

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60 "If God gives Himself to man to be known in the revelation of His Word through the Holy Spirit, it means that He enters into the relationship of object to man the subject....Man knows God in that he stands before God.. But this always means: in that God becomes, is and remains to him Another, One who is distinct from himself, One who meets him....Man cannot and must not know himself apart from God, but together with God as his 'opposite'" (*CD*, II/1, pp. 9-10).

61 "That the knowledge of God in its fulfillment by the revelation of the Word of God is bound to its one, determined and uniquely distinct object, and that it is knowledge of this object and not another--knowledge of the God who gives Himself to be known in His Word. ...God becomes, is and remains to him Another, One who is distinct from himself, One who meets him" (*CD*, II/1, p. 9 and p. 274: "There is no lack of contrariety in this conduct. It establishes and embraces the antithesis between the Creator and His creatures.")

62 *CD*, III/4, p. 480.

ourselves and receive a knowledge of God.[63] God in Jesus Christ initiates and establishes a history of interaction which is a double movement which constitutes the being of humankind.[64]

2. The All-Inclusive Humanity of Jesus Christ

God in Jesus Christ has established a unique history of relationship not only with some persons but with all humanity. Everyone has in Him "a human Neighbour, Companion, and Brother...He is definitively our Neighbour."[65] Jesus is from the very outset of Creation and originally the "Counter-part of every man."[66] This means that "every man as such is the fellow man of Jesus."[67]

This relationship of God through Jesus Christ is not a series of events with isolated individuals. It means the formation of a universal humanity in communion, represented by the Church and signifying the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus is the "quintessence of all possible relationship and fellowship."[68] Jesus includes within himself all others. "The love of God in Jesus Christ brings together Himself with all men and all men with Himself" and this means a bringing together of all humankind with one another.[69] His work of reconciliation is on behalf of all

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63 [So humanity] is not enclosed within the circle of its intrinsic possibilities, but opened towards that other and new reality of God its Creator which has broken through to it in His Word, and in that Word as His promise has come to dwell within it....He is, as, called by this Word, he is ready, and already in the act of transcending himself. *CD*, III/2, pp. 165-166.

64 Speaking of Jesus Christ: "But the fact of this one man is prior to the existence of all other men. It is thus through their relationship to Him that they are what they are....The new and other which God is directly for the man Jesus, Jesus Himself is for all other men, and therefore He is the basis which makes their being history, a being which is transcended in his limitation from without and transcends its limitation outwards. Man is what he is as a creature, as the man Jesus, and in Him God Himself, moves towards him, and as he moves towards the man Jesus and therefore towards God. Man is as he is engaged in this movement in this "to him" from without and "from him" outwards...*CD*, III/2, pp. 161-162. "[In the history of Jesus Christ we have] both the transcendence and transcending of such a sphere--its transcendence by a new and different factor and its transcending in response and relation to this factor. It is the identity of the Creator and the creature. And the Creator is for the creature the utterly new and other." (*CD*, III/2, p. 159).

65 *CD*, III/2, p. 133.

66 *Ibid*., p. 134.

67 *Ibid*.

68 *CD*, II/1, p. 317.

69 IV/1, pp. 105.

humanity.[70] Along with Christ's known people He has "a much larger unknown people which He is not ashamed to call His brethren."[71]

This reconciliation has taken place *de jure* although not yet *de facto*.[72] Because Jesus Christ and His community are so related, Barth says that "the calling of sinful man to faith in Jesus Christ is identical with his calling to the community of Jesus Christ....his encounter with this object of his faith will therefore be in some form his encounter with the Christian community."[73]

Thus the movement of God to humanity and humanity to God is one of extension out to the other for the sake of the inclusion of all humanity in the Son's communion with the Father by the Spirit. This mission comprehends the person and work of Jesus Christ. Humanity in turn is given the privilege of participating in this mission.

B. The Intra-trinitarian Extension and Inclusion.

However, the very being of God, by grace, contains within it the movement of going out to the other and including it. This movement is not alien or arbitrary, or merely extrinsic to God. What God does in Jesus Christ arises out of Who this God is. What He is towards the creature He is in Himself. This movement of mission *ad extra* is evident in the Father-Son relationship itself. The Father and Son are eternally other to each other. The Father eternally elects the Son and the Son eternally affirms his being the Word, the Son, the image of the Father in the Spirit. The otherness of the world and creatures is a "natural" overflow of this out of the life of God.[74]

Thus, we see again, this time in terms of an extension and inclusion, that the Father-Son relationship is the original relationship which is repeated *ad extra* in God's relationship to the world and its creatures.

Furthermore, this extra-divine movement has the character of a free covenantal relation as does its internal expression. The reason for this outgoing of God is not because of any necessity, but arises out of the very freedom of relationship between

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70 IV/1, p. 106.
71 IV/2, p. 511.
72 *Ibid.*
73 IV/1, p. 759.
74 *CD*, II/1, p. 317.

Father and Son in the Spirit. Barth describes creation as the "overflow" of God.[75]

The fellowship within God of loving covenantal communion gives rise to a creation which is to correspond to and so participate in this divine intra-trinitarian fellowship between Father and Son in the Spirit. As the Father goes out to His other, to His counter-part, the Son, to have fellowship, so Father and Son create creatures as a further counterpart to themselves with the intention to include them within their own fellowship.

C. Humanity: Extension and Inclusion of the Other in Fellowship.

Within the human and divine relationship actualized in Jesus Christ we see the original and its own reflection and see both of these in the creaturely sphere. However, there is also a horizontal reflection of this dynamic as well from the person of Jesus to other human creatures and in turn in His sending out his disciples to yet others.

1. Humanity: Directed to other persons.

Thus Barth directs us to John's Gospel. In the Father's sending of the Son into the world (Chapter 17) and the Son's sending of the disciples "we are obviously reminded even in this context of the bursting of the inner circle of the community outwards in favour of all men of the whole world."[76]

Jesus directs us in his own person to other persons. As Jesus exists by His extension for the sake of communion so does all humanity. Humanity cannot realize its true form through isolated individuals.

Persons are created to be in relation with others who are not extensions of one's self, but distinct, other, who stand over against oneself. Consequently, there is to be no preoccupation with the self. Barth picks up on Luther's terminology and says that humanity is no *homo incurvatus in se*.[77] This self-concentration and self-centeredness

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75 "He has that which he seeks and creates between Himself and us. We must certainly regard this overflow as itself matching His essence, belonging to His essence." *CD*, II/1, p. 273, cf. p. 274. Cf.. "If God comes to man in His divine Word He does not do so because He needs man. God does not flee to man for refuge. He is not obligated to be the Creator, nor be gracious to man. He is glorious in Himself. He could be content with that inner glory. The fact that He is the Creator of man and is gracious to man is a free overflowing of His glory" (*CD*, III/2, p. 187).

76 *CD*, III/2, p. 221.

77 *CD*, III/4, p. 473.

represents the sinfulness and lostness of humanity. We become our true selves only in right, that is covenantal, relations one to another.[78]

A refusal to extend one's self to others constitutes a sinful existence. This self-enslavement is itself a refusal to live by God's grace, a refusal to acknowledge that God is with us and for us so that we exist in a blessed fellowship with Him. Since God is for us this excludes our being merely for ourselves. We are relieved of this burden.[79]

The relationship with God through Christ sets persons free and constitutes the reality of humanity existing in fellowship. Jesus alone is uniquely related to all human persons. We recall that "every man as such is the fellow-man of Jesus."[80] Consequently, this means that relationship with Jesus necessarily points us to relationship with others and relationship with others points us to relationship with Jesus. So Barth says that the "neighbour's humanity reminds me of the humanity of the Son of God."[81] There is a unity of humanity in Jesus Christ so that He shows me my neighbor and my neighbor shows me Jesus. Consequently Jesus directs and sends his disciples to their neighbors to represent Him and also indicates that their treatment of others and others' treatment of them are both related to humanity's treatment of Him.[82]

Since Jesus is a man for others, having His whole being directed for their benefit and on their behalf, he consequently directs his disciples to others with the twofold command which correlates His love for them and their love for others: "Love one another as I have loved you." The disciples are directed away from themselves out to others.[83]

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78 *Ibid*., p. 478.

79 "It is the fact that God is for him which binds and commits man himself, and that unconditionally. It is this which completely excludes, therefore, everything which would in any way mean that he for his part wanted to be for himself. Since God is for him, he is relieved from the post of being for himself by the One who alone can be actually and effectively for him. He is relieved of all the care and all the fear of being for himself" (*CD*, II/2, p. 597).

80 *Ibid*., p. 134.

81 *CD*, I/2, p. 425.

82 See Mark 9:37-41, Matt. 25.

83 In Barth's section on "The Active Life" he writes: "Human life participates in the freedom of all God's creatures to the extent that it does not have its aim in itself and cannot therefore be lived in self-concentration and self-centeredness, but only in a relationship which

This is the meaning and purpose of creation, to find its being in fellowship with another. Again we see the ontological basis beginning with the Trinity and moving through the Incarnation of Christ and then expressed within creation itself in terms of what we might call ethics, the right conduct of humanity in his world.

2. Humanity: Directed Ultimately to Its True Other

However, Barth is compelled to indicate that the fulfillment of creation cannot be accomplished within itself, but must come from beyond itself, beyond human relationship. There is an ordering of the copy to the original even in this going out to include the other. The humanity of mankind will find its true being only in relationship with its one true Counter-part.[84]

Ultimate preoccupation with human relationship can never be an end in itself. This will result in a suffocating dependency and constitute a demand that the other be what only God in Christ can be. This is the evil of existing in slavery one to another.

Rather, the obligation created by God's entering into a gracious relationship with humanity is humanity's own freedom. As we have noted in a previous section in this chapter, as God goes out to humankind and humankind to God there is communion, fellowship, even union, but not fusion and confusion. So also, in a corresponding way there is no fusion or confusion in the communion

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moves outwards and upwards to another." (*CD*, III/4, pp. 477-478).

84 The mystery of creaturely existence is revealed in man "in the fact that he is summoned by the command of God to the active life and therefore beyond himself. When he is called to action and therefore to service, it is not merely the closed circle of his individual being in the creaturely world which is burst wide open. What breaks forth and is revealed when man is summoned to the active life by the command of God is the true need of every creature for another and the profound ultimate dissatisfaction with every relationship between creature and creature, as also with the relationship between the individual creature and the creaturely cosmos as a whole. The true outside and beyond is now declared in relation to which all the relationships between creature and creature are constantly moving antithetically in ever widening circles and finally within in a supreme circle. The true "wholly other" in distinction from every partial and relative other now comes upon the scene--the other which has the power to satisfy the creature as a partner, the authority to justify him as a judge, the reality, majesty and dignity to give him meaning and purpose and to satisfy his needs. In what happens to man there is disclosed the other with which the whole world is confronted" (*CD*, III/4, pp. 478-479).

and fellowship of creature with creature.

Ultimately then, the neighbor must lead me to Christ. The secondary counter-part leads to the original counter-part. The humanity of humankind is meant to go outside even beyond itself for a fellowship with its true Counter-part: God in Jesus Christ. Its life is to be a participation of obedience and service to Jesus Christ worked out within the creaturely sphere. The action and service which is a participation in communion and fellowship with his Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer is to go out to yet others that they may have fellowship not merely on the horizontal plane, but that this human fellowship would be fulfilled by being caught up in fellowship with its Creator, be a participation in divine fellowship of Father and Son in the Spirit.

3. Extension for inclusion: In the church, in work, in parenting, to the distant neighbor.

When Barth goes on to explicate the doctrines of the Church and marriage and the parent-child relationship or any dimension of the Christian life he always says something related to this extension-for-inclusion theme. Human relationships have their meaning by being real living signs and genuine participations in God's own relationship extended to us in Jesus Christ.

Barth develops this specifically in three areas: The church and its mission, the service of work, the ministry of marriage, the ministry of parenting and serving the neighbor. In each sphere of relationship there must be an attempt to extend the sphere of relationship to others. Thus the church has an evangelistic task.[85] In our vocations there must be the criterion of serving others to evaluate its faithfulness.[86] Marriage must not be self-centered to its own detriment. It must exist for the sake of others, children and/or others in and beyond the church.[87] The neighbor cannot be neglected, even the distant ones who live geographically or culturally removed. Ultimately even the inclusion of the enemy must be hoped for in the light of God's own extension of himself to us in Christ "while we were yet sinners" to include us eternally in the triune life of God.[88]

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85 *CD*, III/4, pp. 490-505.
86 *CD*, III/4, p. 521
87 *CD*, III/4, p. 224.
88 *CD*, III/4, § 54.3, pp. 285-323, "Near and Distant Neighbours"

Conclusion

This sixfold grammar of our being in relationship is significant for several reasons: it constitutes a unique approach in the history of theology, it is ultimately grounded in the Triune life, it is concretely discerned in the life of Jesus Christ, and it depicts the essential/ontological contours of our being and becoming, of who we are and are intended to become. Barth offers us a theologically grounded (i.e. trinitarian and christological) relational (non-substantival) ontology of personal being. It intrinsically relates theology and ethics (being and doing) because persons are understood to be personally united to Christ by the Spirit and who were created and reconciled to bear witness to and be images of that Image. Relationships are given a theological grounding and a unique dynamic ontological status in his anthropology. The reality of our being is conceived in terms of an onto-logic of personal relations reflecting the very contours of the pattern of the Triune relations.

But Barth has not spoken vacuously. He provides concrete criteria by which to interpret and evaluate our relations with God in Christ and with each other. Barth has clearly spelled out the contours of right relationship. He has linked and distinguished the two great commandments in his theological anthropology.

As a kind of by-product, his personal relational grammar holds together aspects of the Christian life which are often presented in antinomy. Barth's interpretation is able to hold together evangelism and a concern for justice, piety and obedience. It maintains the primary reality and freedom of God in Christ and also the contingent reality and freedom of persons in covenant relations. It holds together creation and eschatology with Christ in the center as the living sovereignly gracious Lord.

In short Barth has provided a thoroughly theological and concrete anthropology.

While I am not attempting to claim that it is beyond criticism a consideration of this concern is not central because Barth's contribution of a unique grammar must be thoroughly grasped before a critique can be mounted. We also have not considered examples of the fruitfulness of Barth's

contribution for ethics or for the evaluation of other approaches to anthropology. However, Barth's own extensive ethical considerations have this theological anthropology underneath them. For Barth this grammar proved very fruitful in shedding light on our human predicament. Certainly Barth did not complete the ethical task. But there is reason enough in Barth's own works to recognize the potential of his grammar to provide a rich source for ethical reflection.

What seems incumbent upon us is to experiment with Barth's alternative grammar of our being in relationship in two directions. Theologically this means delving much deeper into the nature of the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit beginning with the concrete revelation of them in the life of Jesus. Ethically this means taking up the variety of moral issues facing us and working them out in terms of our being in relationship in these specific ways. Elsewhere, I have begun to do this in the realm of parent and child or family relationships. There seems to be great promise in utilizing Barth's grammar to inform our ethical reflections.

Finally, what Barth has offered is an anthropology concrete enough and sufficiently theologically grounded to inform the Church in its interaction with and evaluation of the contributions offered by the social sciences regarding the nature of our being in relations as individuals, families, societies, as humanity, as a whole, and as the Church.

While many are eager to claim they have gotten beyond Barth, it seems that few have really seen what Barth had to offer or have begun to make use of the grammar of our being in personal relationship which Barth has laid out.[89]

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89 For recent works exploring the relational nature of human being from a theological perspective similar to or even based on Barth see Ray S. Anderson and Dennis Guernsey.*On Being Family* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.,1982); Stuart McLean, *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark Ltd., 1981); John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St. Vladamir's Seminary Press, 1985); John Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 28 (1975), pp. 401-448. For a contrasting approach see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, English Translation by Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985). German title: *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive.*

From a Roman Catholic perspective see Heribert Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person.* (Munster: 1963).