

EMOTIONS, MORAL FORMATION,  
AND CHRISTIAN POLITICS:  
REREADING KARL BARTH

by

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Abstract of

**Emotions, Moral Formation, and Christian Politics: Rereading Karl Barth**

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This subject of this dissertation is moral formation, that is, the process by which people become more just in their interactions with others. Moral growth, then, refers to how the moral capacities of individuals are developed to facilitate right decisions and good actions. Additionally, moral formation here refers to the shaping of society in ways that bring about more just social arrangements. A key claim is that emotion is vital for both the moral shaping of individuals and society. Emotions fitting to the struggle for justice are developed through relationships and participation in communities of growth.

This project is undertaken in dialogue with Karl Barth. I begin in chapter 1 by considering Barth's theological anthropology grounded in God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ which contends that true humanity consists in living in covenant partnership with God and solidarity with fellow humanity. To more closely correspond to this determination is the goal of moral formation. Building on his relational conception of the self, I argue that Barth provides an account of moral formation in his treatment of the growth of the community. Moral progress is rooted in participation in the body of Christ that is growing as a hearing community and increasing in the practice of holy things such as worship and service.

Chapter 2 and 3 argue that moral growth does not occur through rational capacities alone, but depends on the development of emotions. These interdisciplinary

chapters turn to recent studies of emotions in the natural and social sciences and philosophy. After a survey of various debates, I argue for a relational and cognitive conception of emotions and highlight their critical role in regulating group and social relations. Emotions are fundamental to interpersonal interactions, to group relations, and for the reinforcement and disruption of social structures.

While these disciplines provide insight into the nature and development of emotions, I return in chapter 4 to Barth for the project of constructing a normative account. While we must not attempt to supplant the command of God which decides the good, I contend that we ought to evaluate emotions by whether they engender communion with God, solidarity with fellow humans, and care for creation. This account of emotion is further developed in chapter 5 by turning to Barth's apocalyptic account of the kingdom of God and the lordless powers. While we wait on God to bring about the consummation of the kingdom, Christians are yet to actively struggle for justice in anticipation of that day. This entails unmasking and resisting the powers. Barth's account of unmasking the lordless powers draws attention to the ways they shape human emotions. He also underscores the importance of emotions, such as hope, in the human struggle for justice. Drawing on Barth's earlier account of growth, I highlight the role of the church in forming these emotions. This account of moral formation and emotion is illustrated through the example of climate change. A community shaped by love for God, solidarity with other creatures, and a concern for all of creation leads to an awareness of hegemonic forces and fosters emotions shaped by the kingdom that enables the struggle for climate justice.

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## INTRODUCTION

At an America Academy of Religion meeting, I met for the first time the eminent Barth scholar, George Hunsinger. In the course of our conversation, I related my plans to write a dissertation on Barth and emotions. With a good-natured smile, he declared, “Well, that will be short dissertation!” My readers will see that before them is, in fact, a rather lengthy dissertation, but Hunsinger’s jest betrays a skepticism likely on many readers’ minds: does Barth really have anything substantive to contribute to theological discourse on emotions and the moral life? The aim of this dissertation is to show that Barth’s ethic does offer constructive contributions to the study of moral emotions. More precisely, this is a dissertation on moral formation with a conviction that emotion is central to thinking about moral progress. I attend to both the formation of individual moral agents and of society. In other words, I examine how we become people who act rightly *and* how society can be shaped into more just arrangements. For both of these, emotions play a vital role.

The title of this dissertation is “Emotions, Moral Formation, and Christian Politics,” and each of these three points make up an important aspect of the argument herein. This dissertation explores the nature of *emotions* and their importance for ethics. This is done through an extensive overview of key debates in a variety of disciplines to understand emotions and their role in the moral life. I conclude that emotions are construals of objects, namely, of external events and internal physiological states, which are perceived as relevant to a person’s values. They are important for reasoning and behavior, and thus ethics must account for them. This dissertation is also on *moral formation*, and the key argument is that formation occurs through our relationships and

participation in groups and patterned behavior. Emotions illustrate this claim for they are shaped in relationships and society. Finally, this dissertation is on *Christian politics*, or, in other words, it is about social transformation. Politics has to do with the creation of a common life including its shapes and structures which are essential for human flourishing. It includes, but goes beyond, what is popularly identified as politics (i.e., statecraft) to the multitude of ways we arrange our society and relate to one another and our world.<sup>1</sup> A Christian politics, then, is engagement with others in society for mutual flourishing, guided by God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This dissertation aims to show that emotions are an important element in performing such a politic.

I anticipate this dissertation to prove pertinent both to students of Barth's moral theology as well as to ethicists with a general interest in the intersection of emotion and moral agency. For Barth scholars, this dissertation describes Barth's implicit account of emotion and shows that emotions are significant to his theological ethics. Additionally, and for some readers possibly even more surprising than a Barthian account of emotion, I develop from the *Church Dogmatics* an account of moral formation and growth. For Christian ethicists more generally, Barth offers significant contributions to theorizing about the relational-social nature of emotion and its relevance to moral agency and social ethics. Emotions are critical for effecting social change.

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<sup>1</sup> Bretherton argues that politics is a good that has three dimensions. First, it applies to the forms and structures that enable a shared common life among a people. Second, politics can refer to "statecraft," and concerns the way a society orders itself through laws and government systems. Third, politics "refers to the relational practices through which a common world of meaning and action is created and cultivated." This latter sense of political goes beyond formal institutions and governance and includes the myriad informal ways that groups shape a common life. Politics in this dissertation is meant to encompass all three of these dimensions. Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2019), 32ff.

We begin with matters particularly relevant to Barth's theology and ethics. A core contribution of this dissertation is the development of how moral growth fits into Barth's ethics. For much of the twentieth century, Barth's command of God ethic was much maligned, accused of leaving no room for human agency, nor space for continuity in the moral life. Barth was faulted for describing God in ways that make God appear capricious and humans thus unable to anticipate what God might command in a given situation. The last few decades have seen extensive scholarship convincingly make the case that Barth's description of God is not as an impulsive commander, but one who is faithful and constant and makes ethical deliberation possible. Furthermore, the command of God does not remove agency, but calls for a response which establishes genuine human agency.

Despite this progress, a significant critique of Barth's ethic persists: beyond a few passing comments acknowledging that moral progress is possible, his moral theology is largely silent on how growth might occur. Indeed, moral growth seems incompatible with his views of sanctification and human dependence on God's grace. His aversion to bourgeois protestant theology, thomistic virtue ethics, and his opposition to accounts of habitual grace have made Barth wary of identifying marks of Christian progress which may lead to a confidence in our own moral growth and in turn make us less dependent on God's gracious commanding. Hunsinger notes,

Barth clearly devotes little attention to the possibility of growth and progress in the Christian life. Barth does not eliminate this possibility entirely. 'To live a holy life,' he wrote, 'is to be raised and driven with increasing definiteness from the center of this revealed truth, and therefore to live in conversion with growing sincerity, depth and precision' (IV/2, 566). What is striking, however, is how seldom such statements appear in his dogmatics, and how underdeveloped they remain. Barth left a large logical space at this point that remains to be more

adequately filled.<sup>2</sup>

Gerald McKenny agrees. In a time when virtue ethics is growing in prevalence, he warns against the temptation to cast Barth as a similar ethicist of moral growth. He writes, while Barth,

does leave room for an ethic of virtue or a process of regeneration... [Barth's position] has little of substance to contribute, even on the most favorable reading, to accounts of virtue or spiritual growth. And since there is no shortage of more robust accounts of the latter, it is unclear why the comparatively little that Barth might contribute would command the attention of anyone who considers such accounts to be central to the world of Christian ethics.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, such an approach “risks forfeiting whatever unique contributions his position may make,” namely, a theory of genuine human agency that remains dependent on gratuitous, pneumatological, divine agency which is the *sine qua non* of right, moral action.<sup>4</sup> Barth's ethic is a helpful corrective to the perennial temptation to bourgeois ethics, but for an account of moral progress, we do best to look elsewhere.

However, if moral progress is truly missing or, worse, incompatible with Barth's ethic, this seems highly problematic. As moral agents who have to make decisions, it is essential to have some idea of whether one is becoming a person who more consistently corresponds to God's gracious action. An account of human freedom that does not incorporate formation is inadequate. It is not necessary to present Barth as a virtue ethicist who made moral progress central to his project (he surely was not), but if his

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<sup>2</sup> George Hunsinger, “A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification and Sanctification in Luther, Calvin, and Barth,” in *Evangelical, Catholic, and Reformed: Essays on Barth and Other Themes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015), 215.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald P. McKenny, “Freed by God for God: Divine and Human Action in Karl Barth's Evangelical Theology and Other Late Works,” in *Karl Barth and the Making of Evangelical Theology: A Fifty-Year Perspective*, ed. Clifford B. Anderson and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 121.

<sup>4</sup> McKenny, 121.

moral theology is to have enduring value, it must be possible to offer an account of growth consistent with his theological ethics.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately, scholars are beginning to make a case for moral growth in Barth's theology. Kirk Nolan has attempted to show that virtue ethics and Barth's theology are not incompatible. While dependence on God is essential for the Christian life, this "does not require that our relationship with God remain immature."<sup>6</sup> Internalization of God's commands that goes beyond rote obedience is necessary for a growing relationship with God. A Barthian virtue ethic is based on "participation in Christ," which "has a relational dimension that perdures through time."<sup>7</sup> In contrast to some virtue ethics based on an ontological change in one's capacities, for Barth, progress is captured by "a deepening in our relation to Christ" and particularly, by raising "our awareness of God's involvement in our lives and the demands such involvement places on us."<sup>8</sup> Through participation in Christ and a process of repetition and renewal, growth is possible.

Derek Taylor argues that reading Barth in his historical context gives a new lens to consider his understanding of moral growth. Drawing on Barth's occasional lectures in the years leading up to World War 2, Taylor argues Barth had a performative goal of forming his listeners to resist the rising political forces.<sup>9</sup> However, Taylor clarifies, formation for Barth is different from typical virtue ethics approaches. He writes,

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, his ethic is only of value as it is biblical. It seems clear that Scripture is concerned with the formation of Christians, so if Barth's view cannot incorporate this, it is deficient and needs to be set aside.

<sup>6</sup> Kirk J. Nolan, *Reformed Virtue after Barth: Developing Moral Virtue Ethics in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 79.

<sup>7</sup> Nolan, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Nolan, 77, 81.

<sup>9</sup> Hancock presents a similar argument in her study of Barth's Homiletics lectures in 1932-33. Barth's hope was that his students would not be driven by the pathos of politics (particularly Nazism), but by the pathos proper to the way of Jesus Christ. Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic, 1932-1933: A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B.

Barth offers a conception of growth in the Christian life that, though real, is not easily quantifiable and thus not on open empirical display. Being non-quantifiable, this growth takes the form of *dependence*... Thus, as opposed to many traditional virtue theories, Barth's sees little constructive value in claiming that the fruits of growth inhere within the ethical subject or that they can be known through introspective practices. On the contrary, a Barthian account of formation prevents one from looking inward and instead requires the Christian to direct his or her gaze elsewhere. Christian formation is realized not as a static possession but as an event of encounter with Christ and with others.<sup>10</sup>

Taylor offers an account of growth that is at its core relational – a theme that will be picked up in this dissertation.

The most substantial attempt at making a case for moral growth in Barth is a dissertation by Cambria Kaltwasser.<sup>11</sup> She describes Barth's covenantal account of responsibility in which God's taking responsibility for us in turn makes us responsible to God. The human willing and self-determination entailed in responding to God's grace implies the possibility of growth. She writes, "our awakening to recognition of the covenant of grace, entails already our ability to recognize what constitutes more or less faithful fulfillment of its requirements."<sup>12</sup> However, Kaltwasser points to Barth's suspicion of our ability to recognize moral growth as a major obstacle for an account of growth.<sup>13</sup> She illustrates this claim in her analysis of the categorical and gradual frameworks offered by Barth in his doctrine of sanctification.<sup>14</sup> The categorical framework describes the Christian's sanctification as an awakening from death to life,

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Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), 124, cf. 133. At a time of rising fascism, Barth attempted to undermine this ideology by addressing its theological roots, and thus to form his students. Hancock, 263.

<sup>10</sup> Derek W. Taylor, "New Directions in Barthian Ethics," *Theology* 118, no. 5 (2015): 328–29.

<sup>11</sup> Cambria Janae Kaltwasser, "Responding To Grace: The Covenantal Shape of Human Agency in the Theology of Karl Barth" (Dissertation, Princeton, N.J., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Kaltwasser, 235.

<sup>13</sup> She cites Barth's worry that 1) we might make growth some sort of technical achievement of humanity, and 2) that the visible sign will be falsified by sin. For Barth, it is better we just focus on the objective sanctification available through Jesus Christ in faith. Kaltwasser, 236–37.

<sup>14</sup> Kaltwasser, 194ff.



and from the old Adam to a new creation. This is not a gradual process; the old and new each simultaneously categorize us in our entirety. We have a dual determination as totally sinful and totally holy (*totus-totus*). Sanctification does not come in stages nor is it visible. It properly applies to Christ, and then only to the Christian as she participates in Christ.

The second framework, on the other hand, is a *partim-partim* depiction of sanctification, described as a process of reorientation along an axis. Here, conversion is seen as a continual process of development through the Holy Spirit. Barth holds these two frameworks in dialectical tension, but his skepticism toward visible signs of holiness resulted in his emphasis of the categorical nature of sanctification: we are *simul* sinner and sanctified, with no gradation in between. Kaltwasser's project attempts to show how Barth's theological anthropology and account of responsibility make his worry about the visibility of Christian growth leading inevitably to loss of dependence on God or being falsified by sin as unwarranted.<sup>15</sup> Kaltwasser admits that Barth's explicit writings on moral progress are meager at best, but that resources for a robust account of growth are provided by his core theological convictions related to the covenant of grace, responsibility, and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Nolan, Taylor, and Kaltwasser have each found resources within Barth to envision an account of progress that is consistent with Barth's core theological claims about God and humanity. This dissertation aims to complement those accounts by attending to Barth's only extended discussion of "growth" which is located in his

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<sup>15</sup> Kaltwasser, 237f.

doctrine of sanctification found in volume IV/2 of his *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>16</sup> I am unaware of any extended analysis of this section and how it relates to moral growth. I believe this is largely because Barth's subject is the growth of the *community* and scholars are looking for an account of moral growth of the *individual*. However, throughout the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth emphasizes that the community and the individual are fundamentally related. As relational beings, the individual must be considered in her relationship to others. Thus, for Barth, an account of development must begin with a discussion of the growth of the Christian community. It is within the context of the growing community that an individual can be expected to make moral progress (albeit, in a way that continues to be dependent on God's grace).

The second major contribution of this dissertation for Barth scholars is expounding on his account of emotions and its role in the moral life. Looking to Barth for his contribution on the topic of emotion and ethics initially appears surprising if not downright foolish. This is particularly so because of Barth's criticisms of the Protestant liberal movement and the Pietists.<sup>17</sup> In Barth's opinion, Protestant Liberalism made human experience to be the ultimate judge in ethics, reducing religion to subjective

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2010), 641–60. Hereafter in this dissertation, the *Church Dogmatics* texts will be cited like this: *CD* IV/2, 641–60.

<sup>17</sup> Barth's critique of these movements goes back to his first editions of *Romans*. For a thorough review of Barth's interaction with the Pietists in the early years, see Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth & the Pietists: The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Pietism and Its Response*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2004). In the first edition, his critique of both liberal Protestantism and Pietism was their religious individualism grounded on "the cheerful arbitrariness of his conscious thoughts and his unconscious feelings." (Busch, 49–50.) However, by the second edition, his primary critique of Pietism was no longer individualism and reliance on feelings but their "pharisaic" tendencies. (Busch, 81, 103.) In later years, while retaining central elements of his critique of the Pietists, he also expressed his appreciation for them. In *CD* IV/2, x, he placed the Pietists as implicit conversation partners in his account of sanctification and in his retirement years he entered into numerous conversations with pietists where he declares himself their "friend." See Karl Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Volume 1, 1959-1962*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 22, cf. 8ff; Karl Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Volume 2, 1963*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 28f., 176f.

experiences. In response, Barth spoke of the “infinite qualitative difference” between God and humans – it is God alone who is judge and determines the good. The human task is to hear and obey the Command of God which establishes the good (not to rely on emotions or anything else). Furthermore, it is surprising to consider Barth as a conversation partner as he gave no sustained attention to a theoretical account of emotions. While this is true, the argument will be made that Barth has an implicit understanding of emotions that is vital for the human response to God’s gracious acts. Barth assiduously avoids rooting theology or ethics in feelings. Nevertheless, emotions are vital to his account of the moral life.<sup>18</sup> Ethics cannot be addressed purely as a rational, disinterested endeavor. Barth provides extended reflection on a number of emotions that are fundamental for our relations to God and others. Through looking at three of these emotions (reverence, joy, and zeal), this dissertation will draw out Barth’s implicit account of emotion. This chapter will attempt to show that Barth’s understanding of emotion resonates with recent understandings of the emotions, namely that emotions have to do with perceptions of objects that are related to things we are concerned with and they play a vital role in the moral life. For those wishing to respond faithfully to God’s command, it is proper to attend to the emotions.

This dissertation offers a particularly Barthian understanding of the emotions and its role in the Christian’s life. His social-relational account describes emotions as a capacity vital for fulfilling our determination or telos before God. Our determination

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<sup>18</sup> While Barth was critical of Schleiermacher and his reliance on feeling, Mangina astutely notes, “most of Barth’s interest in his predecessor was at the level of prolegomena – the question as to how one grounds theological knowledge. That is, his interests lay more in the noetic *status* of Schleiermacher’s account of the ‘Christian religious affections’ than its actual content.” (Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2001), 127.)

revealed in Jesus Christ allows for the ability to evaluate and shape emotions. The earlier relational description of growth is confirmed in Barth's account of emotions. Barth's description of the development of emotions emphasizes our relations to God, fellow-humanity, and even the "powers and principalities" of our world.

In addition to Barth scholars, this dissertation will be of interest to scholars of Christian ethics for its social-relational account of emotion and its significance for social ethics. Recent decades have seen two trends in the field of Christian ethics. The first is an emphasis on the significance of emotions in the moral life. The so-called "turn to emotions" in the humanities has uncovered many insights into the nature of emotion and their often hidden role in human behavior. Christian ethicists have incorporated many of these findings and have also retrieved rich insights from the Christian tradition to expound on the importance of emotions for accounts of ethics and agency.<sup>19</sup> Another trend is attention to the ways social structures shape human existence and enable and constrain moral agency. Social system enable society to function, but they can also work in ways that bring harm to certain members within it. Christian ethics have applied notions of structural evil and social sin to describe how sin extends beyond individual

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010); Edward Collins Vacek, "Orthodoxy Requires Orthopathy: Emotions in Theology," *Horizons* 40, no. 2 (December 2013): 218–41; Ki Joo Choi, "The Priority of the Affections over the Emotions: Gustafson, Aquinas, and an Edwardsean Critique," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 38, no. 1 (2018): 113–29; Robin Gill, *Moral Passion and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Joshua Hordern, *Political Affections: Civic Participation and Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Samuel L. Powell, *The Impassioned Life: Reason and Emotion in the Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); Samuel Wells, *Be Not Afraid: Facing Fear with Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2011); Scott Bader-Saye, *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2007); Michael P. Jaycox, "The Civic Virtues of Social Anger: A Critically Reconstructed Normative Ethic for Public Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36, no. 1 (June 17, 2016): 123–43.

decisions and actions to emerging patterns within society.<sup>20</sup> Liberation from oppression must come from addressing these structural evils. The aim of this work is to bring these two developments together in a way that shows the social nature of emotions as well as the role of emotions in mediating between individuals, groups, and social structures. Emotion provides a bi-directional link between agents and social structures. Humans are formed by the groups they identify with and structures they participate in. On the flip side, structures are shaped by emotions. Usually emotions function to sustain existing structures. However, emotions are also vital for disrupting systems and bringing about social change. These disruptive emotions arise from imaginative communities that offer an alternative way from the dominant habits of seeing the world and our place in it. Barth adopts the biblical imagery of the “lordless powers” to expose the spiritual sources of harmful social structures. Through participation in Christ in the context of the Christian community which is growing in the practice of holy things, Christians can gain the resources to unmask (with an emphasis on awareness of the emotional influences these powers exert on humans) and to resist these powers (through the emotions developed within this community).

In chapter four and five, this social account of emotion will be illustrated by attending to the example of climate change. Climate change is a systemic threat that confounds individual attempts and requires structural changes. The role of emotion in the individual response will be explored in chapter four – emotions motivate, provoke

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see Daniel K. Finn, ed., *Moral Agency within Social Structures and Culture: A Primer on Critical Realism for Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2020); Daniel K. Finn, “What Is a Sinful Social Structure?,” *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 136–64; Daniel J. Daly, *The Structures of Virtue and Vice* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2021); Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological -Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013); Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

constructive behavior, sustain when things seem hopeless. Chapter five will attend to ways emotions are shaped in western society that contribute to practices that have led to climate change (with a focus on consumerism and individualism as particularly influential powers) and how emotions are essential to rebelling against these powers. The church that is shaped by the kingdom and sees or imagines the world in new ways forms its members in critical ways for the work of justice.

### ***Dissertation Outline***

#### Chapter 1

The first chapter lays the theological foundations for moral growth. I draw on Barth's doctrines of election, theological anthropology, and sanctification to outline his understanding of what it means to be a human person and how moral agents are formed. Humans are fundamentally relational, intersubjective creatures who are made for covenant partnership with God and solidarity with and service to fellow-humanity, especially the most vulnerable. It follows from this intersubjectivity that moral progress will be grounded in relationships. Here, I explore Barth's account of growth grounded in the community and the practice of the *sancta*.

This chapter is deliberately positioned before the following two chapters on the cognitive sciences and philosophy. Barth argues that disciplines such as these can only understand the "phenomena" of the human, whereas theology (which has a subject matter of God revealed in Jesus Christ) can give insight into the "determination" or telos of true humanity. However, once this theological basis is established, the other disciplines prove critical for understanding human existence. Namely, they are necessary for understanding

human capacities that we use in fulfilling our determination. One such important capacity is emotion, which leads to the interdisciplinary section of the dissertation.

### Chapters 2 & 3

The second and third chapters focus on contemporary studies of emotion. These chapters survey philosophy, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and sociology to examine various ongoing questions and theories of emotion. I argue that emotion is integral to moral reasoning and thus is critical for accounts of moral formation. In these chapters, three principal matters are addressed. The first is, “what is an emotion?” While, at first, this may seem obvious, scholars have wrestled with definitions and arrived at conflicting views. Two debates that cross disciplines are particularly significant. The first is the relation of emotions to physical sensations and cognition and the second concerns whether emotions are biologically innate versus socially constructed. After surveying several disciplines and perspectives, I argue that emotions are not directly identifiable with physiological reactions or sensations, but are rather to be conceived as cognitive construals of objects (both physiological and external) that impinge on one’s values and arise from one’s history and experiences.

The second subject matter of these chapters is the formation of emotions. Emotions arise from previous social interactions and learning where language is used to categorize events. Thus, emotions are socially and relationally developed. Interpersonal relations (i.e., interactions with family, friends, etc.) as well as the groups we identify with and the social structures we participate in are crucial to the formation of emotion. The latter two are the subject of chapter three. Our self-identify with particular groups affects how we see the world and events affecting the group gives rise to emotions. The

more closely one identifies with a group, the more salient and stronger an emotional effect the group has on a person. Social structures also shape emotions in significant ways. The patterns of behavior in which we are embedded shape our outlook of the world and give rise to emotions. This is a primary reason for shared emotions amongst a population. The corollary to groups and structures shaping the emotions of their participants is that emotions are also central to their maintenance and resistance. Relationships and counter-cultural groups can be means for social change through the emotions.

The third matter of these chapters addresses the necessity of attending to emotion for an account of moral formation. Considerable research has demonstrated that emotions are important for moral reasoning. Emotions are not opposed to reason, but rather integral to it. Thus, the ethics of decision-making must attend to emotional features of the moral life. Furthermore, emotions are important for moral agency. Emotions can constrain, facilitate, and sustain moral action. They affect the capacity to deliberate and act on one's moral beliefs. Finally, building on the earlier account of social structures, emotions are critical for sustaining and disrupting social structures. While they usually support existing social structures, emotions are also vital for transforming those structures.

#### Chapter 4

Chapter four returns to the theology of Karl Barth. This chapter aims to sketch out Barth's understanding of emotions lifted largely from accounts of particular emotions discussed in his ethical writings. His portrayals of reverence, joy, and zeal are explored to show that Barth has a theological account of emotions that proves significant for ethical issues of our day. He views emotions as Christocentric and relational capacities that



enable humans to fulfill our determination to be in relation with God and solidarity with humans, particularly the vulnerable. This Christological starting point provides criteria with which to evaluate our subjective experiences. The significance of Barth's approach is shown through an analysis of climate change and emotion, where a further Christological criterion is described that shows our interdependence with creation and responsibility toward non-human creatures.

## Chapter 5

As chapter two's focus on the interpersonal nature of emotions was developed with a social and structural perspective in chapter three, chapter five will shift to dynamics beyond the individual. Barth surveys biblical accounts of the "lordless powers" to discuss forces at work beyond individual agencies. He uses apocalyptic motifs to describe these powers and the decisive act of Jesus Christ in defeating those powers which enable our struggle. In times of crisis and feelings of powerlessness, such an apocalyptic approach is particularly important. Barth's apocalyptic account emphasizes that only God can bring about the kingdom, but Christians yet have a responsibility to act in ways that are shaped by the reign of God and in the service to the world. Resistance begins with the unmasking of the lordless powers. In Barth's depiction of the powers, he highlights their effect on emotions and, conversely, the importance of emotions in the struggle against them. To form emotions needed for rebelling, it is necessary to participate in alternate communities. Through the Christian community, which is shaped by the revelation of Jesus Christ and subsists in dependence on the Spirit, new imaginations are possible through theology, communal worship, and shared life that gives rise to new emotions and moral growth.

As with chapter four, the argument is illustrated through a consideration of our current environmental crisis. Climate change is a structural evil that goes beyond individual forces and solutions. Climate change is shown to arise from certain ideologies that have hegemonic influence in our society, namely consumerism and individualism. These ideologies exert an affective influence on our perception and being in society, shaping the patterns by which we live. While individuals alone will not make a meaningful difference, individuals remain essential for sustaining those powers and thus are necessary for dismantling them. The Christian community, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is a site of emotion formation which is a necessary element in the struggle for systemic change.

## CHAPTER 1 - KARL BARTH AND MORAL FORMATION: ANTHROPOLOGY, SANCTIFICATION, AND PROGRESS

### *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to establish a theological account of moral growth. This is accomplished through examining Barth's view of persons, their capacities, and their relation to communities. The suggestion that Barth has something to add to the subject of moral growth is not immediately obvious. In recent decades, Barth scholars have convincingly argued that Barth's emphasis on God's agency does not exclude genuine human agency. On the contrary, his account of divine agency serves the purpose of creating space for authentic human action. However, today a new deficiency in Barth's ethic has come into focus: Barth's ethic is missing a foundational aspect of ethics based in common human experience and Scripture, namely, language describing moral progress. I will argue that while Barth does deemphasize moral growth (for contextual reasons<sup>1</sup>), he has a richer account than he is generally given credit for. Cambria Kaltwasser argues that for Barth, human "agency is irreducibly relational."<sup>2</sup> The case will be made here that, in a similar vein, moral growth is irreducibly relational. Progress happens foremost through our encounter with God and also critically through our relations with others. Individual Christian growth occurs through participation in the *sancta* performed by the community, and those holy things are evidence of growth. The

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, the German theologians' errors in coupling theological ethics to the imperialism and nationalism of the governments leading up to and during the two world wars. This prompted Barth's emphasis on God's otherness and freedom and threw doubt on any human attempt to boldly associate our visible moral life with what God commands and our holiness.

<sup>2</sup> Kaltwasser, "Responding to Grace," iii, cf. 11.

foundation for Barth's account of moral growth will be laid here and then expanded and developed in chapters 4 and 5 as it relates to emotion. For this initial step, two main questions are broached: 1) what does it mean to be human person, and 2) how are moral agents formed?

This chapter begins with Barth's conception of the being of humanity. His view is rooted in his doctrine of election: God determined to be for and with humanity. God's decision implies, first, that humanity is created for covenant partnership with God and, second, that since God is for us, we ought to correspond to God's decision and live in solidarity with fellow humanity. Thus, essential to the being of humanity is relationality and service to God and the world. A person is not a self alone but always in relation to another. To truly be human is to live as God's partner in solidarity with fellow humans, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized of society.

The second half of the chapter considers how moral formation into God's partner occurs. Three dimensions are explored. First, God's initiating role in shaping a people is examined through the lens of the doctrine of sanctification. Barth's approach was a radicalization of the Protestant notion of *sola gratia*. Sanctification is fully a work of God apart from us that Christ performed in our place. But rather than taking away human freedom, God's act of grace frees us for genuine human action. The second dimension is the role of communities in moral formation. Building on Barth's relational anthropology and doctrine of grace, this section argues that moral progress cannot be thought of primarily in terms of the individual, but must begin with groups (here, namely the Christian community) and the individual's place in that group. Finally, the relation of human nature and grace are explored. It is argued that God's work is not bestowing on

humans a new nature, but the ability to use one's created capacities in ways that correspond to God's action. As such, various disciplines are invaluable in understanding our capacities (as individuals and groups) and how we prepare for the life-altering encounter with God. In sum, the goal of God's sanctifying work is a people who live as God's partner in solidarity with other creatures. God is the initiator who offers human freedom which affects a real alteration to our creaturely capacities in ways that conform to humanity's determination as God's companions.

### ***Part 1. The Determination of Humanity: Election and the Command of God***

We begin this chapter with Barth's interpretation of the goal of human life. Barth identifies the human *telos* given to humanity by God as our *Bestimmung*, often translated as "determination." God had determined humanity for a specific role, not in a mechanistic way,<sup>3</sup> but as free creatures conferred with capacities suitable to God's intent for our lives. The human *Bestimmung* is our destiny,<sup>4</sup> or better yet, it is the "defining" of who we are. God has created us and defined who we are as humans and has called us with a certain purpose, namely, covenant fellowship with God and responsibility to fellow-humanity and all of creation.

Barth's construal of human determination arises from the doctrine of election which is "the sum of the Gospel" (CD II/2, 3). It is the election *of grace* which means it is a decision that God freely chooses and flows from God's love (CD II/2, 11). As a product of the Reformed tradition, election is a prominent aspect of Barth's theology, but he

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<sup>3</sup> "Sanctification, then, is the determination of human conduct by grace. Determination (*Bestimmung*) does not, of course, imply a causal force or fate. We are determined by God's *Word*, not by some cosmic or metaphysical force; what is involved is a divine decision and judgment on our free acts designating us to respond with faith and obedience." Gerald P. McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace: Karl Barth's Moral Theology* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 56.

<sup>4</sup> *Vorherbestimmung* = predestination.

innovatively locates the doctrine of election as a subpart of the doctrine of God. God cannot be known outside God's eternal election to be gracious to humanity (*CD II/2*, 76ff). Election tells us first and foremost who God is (rather than primarily about an elect people). It is rooted in God's election of God's own self for covenant relation with us and then derivatively the election of humanity for God. Both sides of this election are realized in Jesus Christ. Barth submits the doctrine to a radical revision by identifying election as primarily the election of Jesus Christ (and only after that the election of a community and individuals). For Barth, Jesus Christ is both the Subject and Object of election; the electing God and the elect One. Christ is the *subject* of election, the electing God who determines to be for sinful humanity. But as a human, Christ is also the *object* of election; he is properly the Elect One who is rejected and subsequently glorified by God. Barth contends, "the election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God in His free grace determines Himself for sinful man and sinful man for Himself. He therefore takes upon Himself the rejection of man with all its consequences, and elects man to participation in His own glory" (*CD II/2*, 94). While humanity is in continual rebellion toward its Creator, there was one human, Jesus Christ, who obediently fulfilled his determination through a life of obedience to God for us. He was, in Barth's oft-used term, the faithful *covenant partner* of God who fulfilled the election of humanity. Nonetheless, while Jesus Christ is the primary object of election, God desires that the name of this elect one be known, glorified, and attested by all of humanity. Therefore, the election of Jesus Christ also includes the election "of the many" (*CD II/2*, 195).

While Christ's election as head of humanity implies that all of humanity is elected,<sup>5</sup> Barth argues election pertains in a distinctive way to the Church and consequently to individual Christians.<sup>6</sup> Scripture reveals that God elects a particular people which hear God and responds in faith to God's grace. The community fulfills its determination as God's covenant partner through conscious awareness of God's presence in the world and through its responsive, obedient existence. The Christian community is elected not as an end in itself, but to witness and summons the world to faith in Jesus Christ (*CD II/2*, 196). In other words, it exists to serve the world. While the election of the community must be spoken of first, this in no way negates the election of the individual (*CD II/2*, 309). God is not concerned with Israel, the church and humanity just in general, but with the election of individual persons as members of the community. Individuals are justified, forgiven and chosen as covenant partners in Jesus Christ (*CD II/2*, 315). They are elected to be loved by God and to respond to that love in gratitude (*CD II/2*, 410ff.). Each human is called personally to freely believe in and attest to God's grace as members of the sanctified community. They are called in Christ to be "friends of God" (*CD II/1*, 158). In sum, included in Christ's election is the election of the community and individuals as those called to covenant partnership and witness to God's

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<sup>5</sup> *CD II/2*, 123f., 309f., 353; *IV/2*, 630. Though, Barth rejects classifying his view as universalism (*CD II/2*, 417f.).

<sup>6</sup> Before arguing that election applies to the church, Barth contends that God's eternal election first has to do with Israel (*CD II/2*, §34 "The Election of the Community"). The election of the church has not superseded Israel but is alongside Israel, together making up the one people of God. Barth insists, "a Church that becomes antisemitic or even only a-semitic sooner or later suffers the loss of its faith by losing the object of it. In the same measure in which it tries to tell itself that it must believe, and what it must believe, it has nothing more to say to the world. In the measure in which it becomes autonomous and self-willed, it ceases to be the Church. The Church has every reason to see that Israel's special service in the community is not interrupted but faithfully continued" (*CD II/2*, 234). For more on the question of supersessionism and Barth's legacy in relation to the Jews, see George Hunsinger, ed., *Karl Barth: Post-Holocaust Theologian?* (New York: T&T Clark, 2019).

grace.<sup>7</sup> As such, election grounds human identity and being. Fundamentally, humans are determined for covenant partnership with God.

The meaning of covenant partnership begins to be fleshed out in the second half of *Church Dogmatics* volume II/2 under the heading “The Command of God.”<sup>8</sup> A covenant has two sides. Accordingly, the flip side of God’s electing is the corresponding human response. Barth writes, “as election is ultimately the determination of man, the question arises as to the human self-determination which corresponds to this determination” (*CD* II/2, 510). Correspondence (*Entsprechung*) to God’s work is the way in which humans glorify God (*CD* II/1, 674). It is the good human action which is analogous to God’s gracious action.<sup>9</sup> Correspondence to God’s grace is found in obedience to the *command of God* which is “the form of His electing grace and it is thus the starting-point of every ethical question and answer” (*CD* II/2, 519). For Barth, the command of God is God’s Word encountering the human in a concrete situation and demanding the right action which God has determined: “as God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, His command is the claim which, when it is made, has power over us, demanding that in all we do we admit that what God does is right, and requiring that we give our free obedience to this demand” (*CD* II/2, 552).

The command is not merely a general principle or law giving guidance, but provides “specific content of what is always a special event between God and man in its historical reality.”<sup>10</sup> It is a dynamic encounter, or event, where God must be heard afresh

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<sup>7</sup> As Nider aptly summarizes, “the telos of God’s reconciliation of humanity in Jesus Christ is the creation of a covenant partner.” Adam Nider, *Participation in Christ : An Entry into Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 50.

<sup>8</sup> The first half of II/2 developed the Doctrine of Election.

<sup>9</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 66. Cf. *CD* III/3, 102.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Barth, *The Christian Life : Church Dogmatics IV, 4 : Lecture Fragments* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans PubCo, 1981), 4. Is it possible to know with any certainty what God commands? In Scripture,



in each concrete moment.<sup>11</sup> The command determines the goodness of a human action; it is both “the source and norm of theological ethics.”<sup>12</sup> By accentuating the absolute decision in the command, Barth endeavors to guard against any attempt to place the human in God’s position as judge or arbiter of the right.<sup>13</sup> This emphasis goes back to his time as a pastor in a small Switzerland town. Educated in the liberal protestant tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Barth grew disillusioned with this inheritance in the wake of discovering that many of his previous professors joined other German intellectuals endorsing the war policies of Kaiser Wilhelm II.<sup>14</sup> Barth concluded that his teachers had too closely aligned human reason and culture with God’s being and will, and were thus able to mold and control God for their ends. Barth reacted against this position and constructed a theology emphasizing God’s freedom and otherness. Humans are called to

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some clearly know for sure what God is commanding of them (e.g., Samuel, David, Paul). But this is an exception even in the Bible, including for those individuals’ lives). It is not usual in human experience. Barth denies that we can have direct access to the command of God (e.g. by “quiet times” or spiritual exercises). CD III/4, 15. McKenny persuasively argues that for Barth, Christian knowledge of the command is an eschatological event. While the command is concrete and clear to God, it remains opaque to us. However, this does not mean we cannot have any idea of what God commands. He writes, “our confidence in our judgement of what God will command in a particular case is directly proportional to our scripturally based knowledge of the ‘spheres’ (or ‘domains’) in which God commands.” Gerald P. McKenny, “Response to Paul Nimmo,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 1 (February 2015): 101. Cf. McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 281, 284f. There is always the risk of errors in hearing the Word of God, but we have to act; this is our responsibility. “Whether God then takes his side is not in his power to determine.” Karl Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Volume 3: 1964-1968*, ed. Eberhard Busch et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 169.

<sup>11</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 33. Cf. CD II/2, 546. Throughout Scripture there is an intimate connection between hearing and obeying. Both שמע and ὑπακούω include the meaning to obey or to hear. “The frequent use of ὑπακούειν for שמע in the LXX shows how strongly the idea of hearing is still present for the translator in the Gk. ὑπακούειν. Hence ὑπακούειν and ὑπακοή as terms for religious activity are always to be thought of within the sphere of a religion which receives the divine Word by hearing and then translates it into action.” Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, “Υπακούω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> According to this line of thinking, original sin is identified by Barth as the “establishment of ethics,” since Adam and Eve’s wrongdoing consisted essentially in assuming God’s place in determining what is good. Cf. CD IV/1, 448.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Gottingen, Winter Semester of 1923-24* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1982), 264.

endorse the command of God in our role as covenant partners.<sup>15</sup> At times Barth has been charged with occasionalism, that is, that God's commands are not connected to a moral order or to previous decisions and thus cannot be anticipated through human rational capacities.<sup>16</sup> However, this allegation is now widely rejected, for since God is faithful, God's commands are not arbitrary; indeed, there is but one command - God's eternal, electing command to be for God's creatures in Jesus Christ (*CD II/2*, 634).<sup>17</sup> Thus, Barth argues, "there is freedom in God, but no caprice" (*CD III/2*, 218). It is therefore possible to anticipate (though always provisionally<sup>18</sup>) what God's command will be in a particular situation. The ways of anticipating God's command include reflection on Scripture,<sup>19</sup> dialogue within the Christian community<sup>20</sup> and the world,<sup>21</sup> and development of human

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<sup>15</sup> Christians are uniquely aware that God is commanding in correspondence to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and witness to it in their actions. Two actions that appear the same by two people, but if one does so in commitment to God's Word, and the other does not, they are not the same, but opposite. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 179. However, Barth goes on, since God is lord of the whole world, we must not assume that God will not reach out to people beyond the church and thus God may find them living the "good moral life." Barth, 180. In fact, Barth admits, Christians too often have trailed behind the world concerning the "good moral life," for example, in the abolition of slavery, the labor movement, the peace movement, and (possibly a self-critique?) the women's movement - "how curious that the church is to such a great extent the mighty fortress of maleness." Barth, 181.

<sup>16</sup> This is not a reference to the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosophical theory of divine omnicausality, but of the ad hoc or unanticipatory nature of God's commanding. Gustafson explains, occasionalism is "a view of moral action which emphasizes the uniqueness of each moment of serious moral choice in contrast to a view that emphasizes the persistent, perduring order of moral life and the continuities of human experience." James M. Gustafson, *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 71 cf. 73-74. See also, James M. Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975), 160; Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2001), 188.

<sup>17</sup> William Werpehowski, "Command and History in the Ethics of Karl Barth," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 2 (1981): 298-320; Nolan, *Reformed Virtue after Barth*; John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 51; McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 246-48.

<sup>18</sup> *CD II/2*, 646.

<sup>19</sup> *CD II/2*, 655, 671-708. However, the commands in the Bible must be understood in their historical context as given in a concrete situation, rather than as "universally valid rules."

<sup>20</sup> Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, John Knox Press, 1960), 88. *CD III/4*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> *CD II/2*, 569. Central to the church is the awareness that God is active and sovereign in its midst and the world. Knowing that God is active gives freedom to listen in on the world (the "lesser lights" or "parables of the kingdom" in Barth's terminology) and to consider what the world is saying in light of Scripture (Jesus Christ always remaining the hermeneutical key). Cf. *CD IV/3.1*, 114-117. Differences will surely

capacities.<sup>22</sup> A prayerful, practical casuistry is possible as persons anticipate God's command with one another in light of God's past work and future promises.<sup>23</sup> Ethics as instruction and deliberation is thus possible in preparation for the event of encounter with God.<sup>24</sup>

## ***Part 2. The Being of Humanity: Relationality, History, and Service***

The next step in this moral formation chapter is to consider in more depth the human that is formed. This leads us into the subject of anthropology, a fundamental topic of theological discourse. All theology is talk about God (*theo-logos*), but since God elected his being to covenant partnership with creatures, we cannot talk of God without also speaking of humanity. Revealed knowledge of God and ourselves is intimately connected.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Barth considers it impossible to reflect about God without also considering humanity.<sup>26</sup> This is not due to something inherently special about humans other than the fact that they are the objects whom with God has determined to be covenant partners. Since God determined to be with and for humanity, we cannot speak

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arise between the world and the church which responds in remembrance of Jesus, but there can yet be an openness on the part of the church to "eavesdropping" on the world to hear how God may be speaking to them.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1992), 91–92. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 212.

<sup>23</sup> CD III/4, 9. Cf. Barth's discussion of a "formed reference." Ibid., 18. This "practical casuistry" differs from the casuistry he observed in the Liberal Protestants and neoscholastic Catholicism of his youth where general truths. These forms of casuistry are unacceptable because, 1) it sets oneself on God's throne as judge, the casuist thinks he or she possesses the mystery. Rather, for Barth, we can't discern between good and evil apart from God. 2) it assumes the universal command of God is a universal rule, an empty form. For Barth, the command of God is always concrete, and 3) it destroys freedom of obedience substituting it with the false freedom of choice (CD III/4, 10ff.).

<sup>24</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 229. We ask "what we ought to do" in light of "our approaching encounter with this supreme divine decision" (CD II/2, 636).

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007), I/1.1, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Despite Barth's theocentrism, anthropology was central to his project for based on election, he did not think that one could talk about God without also talking about humans. John Webster argued that the *Church Dogmatics* is an anthropology. Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 79ff. Cf. John B. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

of God except in this relation, which means above all in the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Christ. As such, anthropology is not an optional add-on to theology, but a crucial element of theology.<sup>27</sup>

Barth formulates his account of ontology in opposition to classical approaches to metaphysics. He famously rejected the concept of *analogia entis* or “analogy of being”<sup>28</sup> which he understood as a method of attaining knowledge of God from analogy to created being found outside the revelation of Jesus Christ. Rather, what is needed is an *analogia fidei*, where God is known in Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> As the God-human, Jesus Christ is likewise the basis for understanding the being of humanity. We must not begin with “abstract”

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<sup>27</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 117. Barth wondered if “theoanthropology” might be a more proper term to the disciple than simply “theology.” Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 12. Cf. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. CD I/1, xiii: “I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the Antichrist.” He later was less hostile to accounts of the *analogia entis*, but this was due to perceiving certain Catholic authors (e.g. Balthasar and Söhngen) as subordinating this doctrine to the *analogia fidei* and being persuaded by these authors that his account did contain an *analogia entis*. However, Barth still understood key differences between his account and Catholic versions of *analogia* rooted in differing doctrines of justification. On his interpretation of catholic accounts, the analogy of being is indeed rooted in grace but in such a way that they become *intrinsic* to created human nature, where for Barth justification remains alien. Thus, grace provides an *extrinsic* analogy that never becomes our possession; but is our human nature *in Christ* known through revelation. In other words, we must look to Jesus Christ rather than created nature as such to understand the analogy of being. Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 182–88. As such, Barth saw his earlier critique of the *analogia entis* still standing. He claimed in his retirement years, “if *analogia entis* is interpreted as *analogia relationis* or analogy of faith, well, then I will no longer say nasty things about *analogia entis*. But I understand it in *this way*. So I have not changed my mind.” Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 201.

<sup>29</sup> An intense debate has persisted among Barth scholars in the Anglophone world over the last two decades on the nature of Barth’s attempt to go beyond metaphysics. The debate focuses on the being of God. Was Barth trying to eliminate all metaphysics or a particular conception of metaphysics, i.e., deriving attributes of God (and also humanity) from abstract concepts that come prior to God’s work *ad extra*. Rather than an analogy of being, Barth argued for an analogy of grace/faith. Particular disagreement is on whether God constituted God’s being in the act of election or if it is proper to say that logically the Trinitarian God is prior to election. While this debate goes beyond the topic of this dissertation, an area of agreement can be highlighted: God’s attributes cannot be known outside God’s acts. Michael T. Dempsey, ed., *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2011); Paul Molnar, *Faith, Freedom and the Spirit: The Economic Trinity in Barth, Torrance and Contemporary Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015); George Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015); Matthias Gockel, “How to Read Karl Barth with Charity: A Critical Reply to George Hunsinger: How to Read Barth with Charity,” *Modern Theology* 32, no. 2 (April 2016): 259–67.

notions of the human, by which Barth means humanity apart from grace.<sup>30</sup> This does not imply that the particularity of persons known through various disciplines and human experience in general are insignificant. Quite the opposite, we will see that while Barth believes that while revelation is the starting point for anthropology, other disciplines are indispensable for understanding human existence in light of revelation.

Non-theological disciplines such as the natural sciences, psychology, sociology and history have enabled us to learn more about humans than ever before. We have greater insight into how medically the body works, evolutionarily and historically how humans developed, psychologically and sociologically how we relate to one another. Despite this, Barth is critical of anthropologies that begin with the natural or social sciences, deeming these fields as able to identify merely the “phenomena” of the human (*CD* III/2, 71ff.). He did not think these fields could get at “real man,” or what is most central to our being as humans. Rather than starting with an investigation of humans by looking at ourselves, Barth argues we can only know true humanity by looking at the human nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>31</sup> Sin makes it impossible to understand human nature in itself and we are thus in need of revelation which is found in the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ that “human nature is not concealed but revealed in its original and basic form” (*CD* II/2, 52). As Neder summarizes, for Barth, “Jesus Christ never

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<sup>30</sup> “To charge that a theological proposal is ‘abstract’ is one of the chief lines of criticism in the Church Dogmatics. A proposal is abstract not merely if it mistakes the part for the whole or the quality for the object, but more precisely if it is formulated without reference to the nexus of active relations in which God and humanity have their respective modes of being. Conversely, a proposal is ‘concrete’ only if it is formulated with careful attention to the patterns of God’s sovereign activity. No proposal can be concrete, according to Barth’s theology, if it does not somehow articulate the fundamental events of grace.” George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 32.

<sup>31</sup> Just as to investigate all of creation we don’t have the ability to get at the essence of creation without revelation. Thus, Barth says, the covenant of grace is the internal basis of creation (and creation is the external

contradicts himself with sin, and therefore he is the only one about whom it may be said that he is always truly human.”<sup>32</sup> We must begin with the concrete reality of Christ who revealed sinless humanity, “thus, contrary to the usual procedure, we must first enquire concerning this one man, and then on this basis concerning man in general” (*CD* II/1, 165). In other words, anthropology must begin with Christology.<sup>33</sup>

What do we make of Barth’s claim that he is not starting with other disciplines, but Christ? Does Barth really do this? As we will see, Barth freely makes use of philosophical concepts prominent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the influence of Kant, Hegel and others on his theology is well documented.<sup>34</sup> Is he thus disingenuous in his Christological approach? It all depends on how one understands Christ as the “starting point.” In the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth laid out his view of Christ as the Word of God. Christ is God’s revelation and truth. Scripture and the church in its proclamation bear witness to this Word. Later Barth emphasizes that this Word can and should be expected to be heard outside the doors of the church as God is sovereign over all creation (*IV*/3.1, 114-5).<sup>35</sup> The truth that is revealed, however, is not geometry or astrophysics. The Word of God reveals who God is and who humans and all of creation are in relation to God. Philosophy and the sciences can tell us much about humans and our world and can highlight important truths that have been undeveloped in theology. Theology thus does well to listen to what other disciplines are saying to potentially reveal blind spots as well as to think about how to live out biblical concepts. As such, Barth is

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<sup>32</sup> Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> *CD* II/1, 165; III/2, 44. Though, “Christology is not anthropology. We cannot expect, therefore, to find directly in others the humanity of Jesus” (*CD* III/2, 222).

<sup>34</sup> In particular, we will see in this section that Barth makes prominent use of Martin Buber’s “I and Thou,” and the philosophical concept of “actualism.”

<sup>35</sup> Though always tested against the primary witness of Scripture. *CD* IV/3.1, 114f.

not afraid to appropriate philosophical terms and concepts, but is not uncritical of them.<sup>36</sup>

Barth welcomes any concept that he finds useful to assist in expounding revelation. So, when Barth says that Christ is the “starting point,” this does not preclude learning from other disciplines, but that Christ is the hermeneutical key. His method is to critically test them against the witness of Scripture, and having thus done so to use these tools insofar as they elucidate the Word of God.<sup>37</sup>

While Jesus Christ is the starting point of anthropology, we cannot simply equate Christ’s humanity with our lived reality. Jesus Christ was different than all other humans. First, he is God; not only a creature, but also the Creator. As God and human, he is the elect One who offers forgiveness for sin as Savior (*CD III/2*, 222). Second, Christ lived

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<sup>36</sup> Barth tended to employ them in an “eclectic, unsystematic and ad hoc” manner to suit his dogmatic purposes, namely, finding ways to adequately express the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity*, 3. He was thus not uncritical of these approaches but assessed them in light of the command of God. Cf. McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 153–64; Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 61–63. A helpful example of this approach is seen in a letter from Barth to Bultmann in 1928 in response to Bultmann’s accusation that Barth did not delve in deep enough nor consistently enough with Heidegger’s philosophy: “It might also be that what you want of me in relation to philosophy is not for me. I will not defend in principle what you call my ignoring of philosophical work. It is possible that someone else can do better in achieving a sober terminology than I can. But the fact is that no philosophy influences me in the way that Heidegger’s obviously does you, so that I am compelled to measure my thinking by your standard and to give to it the appropriate soberness. It is also a fact that I have come to abhor profoundly the spectacle of theology constantly trying above all to adjust to the philosophy of its age, thereby neglecting its own theme... In *Romans* and now in the *Dogmatics* my path has in fact been that, with reference to the matters that I saw to be at issue in the Bible and the history of dogma, I have reached out on the right hand and the left for terms or concepts that I found to be the most appropriate without considering the problem of a preestablished harmony between the matter itself and these particular concepts, because my hands were already full in trying to say something very specific. And if, as I admit, there is something gypsylike about this procedure—so that I have never made a principle of it or recommended it for imitation—the anxious question is whether I can be successfully domesticated or whether it would be worthwhile for me to spend the rest of my life acquiring an unambiguous terminology from the phenomenologists. What of importance would I really be gaining thereby?... My own concern is to hear at any rate the voice of the church and the Bible, and to let this voice be heard, even if in so doing, for want of anything better, I have to think somewhat in Aristotelian terms. Too academic a terminology would stand in my way...” Karl Barth, *Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann: Letters 1922-1966*, ed. Bernd Jaspert, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 41–42.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Barth adopted Albert Schweitzer’s philosophical axiom “Respect for Life,” as a principle which guided his analysis of ethical issues around life (e.g. medical practices, treatment of non-human animals, war, etc.) because he found it consistent with what he observed in Scripture’s testimony (*CD III/4*, 324ff.).

uniquely in a faithful relationship with the Father as humanity's representative empowered by the Holy Spirit. He lived in obedience to the Father unlike us. "In Him," Barth writes, "is human nature without human sin. For as He the Son of God becomes man, and therefore our nature becomes His, the rent is healed, the impure becomes pure and the enslaved is freed. For although He becomes what we are, He does not do what we do, and so He is not what we are" (*CD II/2*, 48). However, despite these important differences, we yet share the same nature. His nature has a, "different status but not a different constitution" (*CD III/2*, 53). Thus, we must look to Jesus Christ for the revelation of true humanity as God intended it.

Barth identified six distinctive characteristics of human nature revealed in Christ.<sup>38</sup> The focus of this section will be on the first, second and sixth characteristics, namely that to be human is to be a self-in-relation, to exist as a history, and to live a life in service to God in correspondence to Christ's manifestation of the kingdom of God.<sup>39</sup> All three of these have important implications for moral formation.

First, Jesus Christ demonstrates that to be human is to be *in relation*. Above all, this means to be the counterpart of God in covenantal partnership. "Basically and comprehensively," Barth contends, "to be a man is to be with God" (*CD III/2*, 135, cf.

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<sup>38</sup> *CD III/2*, 68-71, 73f.

<sup>39</sup> The six characteristics of humanity disclosed in Christ include, first, Jesus Christ demonstrates that to be human is to be *in relation*. Second, this relationship takes place in a history in which God is revealed as the savior of humanity. The third characteristic of true humanity is that the telos of humanity is God's glory and honor. Fourth, just as Jesus Christ existed within the lordship of God, to be human is to stand under God's lordship. Fifth, as Christ acted in free obedience, humanity's purpose is to act in freedom and correspondence to the grace addressed her. Finally, the incarnate Christ allowed God to work in him and manifested the kingdom of God in his presence. In correspondence, his fellows are to likewise live a life of service to God. In sum, a theological anthropology that begins with Christ will conclude that the meaning of human existence consists in a person's "belonging to God, namely his participation in the history opened between God and him, in which the honor, the lordship, the purpose, [and] the service to God" are on display (*KD III/2*, 158-159, revised translation, cf. *CD III/2*, 133.).



139).<sup>40</sup> Barth grounds this anthropological perspective in election: Christ is the elect one in whom the goal of election has reached its fulfillment in the unity of God and human in Christ which reveals the purpose of all humanity (*CD* III/2, 142f.). Humanity find its *telos* in encounter with God.<sup>41</sup> We are “determined by God for life with God. This is the distinctive feature of [our] being in the cosmos” (*CD* III/2, 203).

Additionally, God’s self-revelation in Christ discloses that humans are not only created for and with God, but also for and with fellow humanity. Barth contends, “if the divinity of the man Jesus is to be described comprehensively in the statement that He is man for God, His humanity can and must be described no less succinctly in the proposition that He is man for man, for other men, His fellows... In the light of the man Jesus, man is the cosmic being which exists absolutely for its fellows” (*CD* III/2, 208). If this is true for Jesus Christ, this means it is true for humanity in general (*CD* III/2, 243). A person’s “determination to be in covenant relation with God has its correspondence in that his humanity, the special mode of his being, is by nature and essence a being in fellow-humanity.”<sup>42</sup> This is not merely a normative claim (we ought to live a life in solidarity with others), but a descriptive claim (our being is constituted in relationships). The self is not to be understood in a post-cartesian way as an atomized being, but a creature that finds its being in intersubjective relations with God and fellow humanity. “A

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<sup>40</sup> *CD* III/2, 122ff. Barth leaves it as an open question what status non-human animals might have before God. One cannot say other creatures are not with God, Barth denies this. But he does not think we can know what it means for them because Jesus did not become a non-human animal. E.g see *CD* III/2, 137; III/4, 350f. Others, such as David Clough want to adopt Barth’s general theological approach but to contend that God’s incarnation as a creature sheds more light on reconciliation’s relationship to non-human creatures. David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume I: Systematic Theology* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> This is not to say this encounter with God is something inherent to human nature. The possibility remains rooted in grace and God’s freedom rather than given in nature. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 40f.

<sup>42</sup> *CD* III/4, 116, modified translation. Cf. *KD* III/4, 127.

pure, absolute and self-sufficient I is an illusion,” Barth writes (*CD* III/2, 245). Rather, “I am as I am in a relation” (*CD* III/2, 246). Barth expands, “the minimal definition of our humanity, of humanity generally, must be that it is the being of man in encounter, and in this sense the determination of man as a being with the other man” (*CD* III/2, 247).<sup>43</sup> A human creature is a “being in encounter” (*Sein in der Begegnung*) of an “I” with a “Thou.” To say “I” is to differentiate oneself from another person, a “Thou” (our unique individuality ought not be dissolved into an abstract collectivism<sup>44</sup>), but it also indicates that essential to one’s being is the encounter with another. This intersubjective encounter is not a nice add-on to other more basic characteristics, but is constitutive of our being. In fact, any account of humanity that does not account for this relational nature is deficient.

Things which might be said about man without his fellow, qualities and characteristics of that empty subject, are out of place here, because they have no “categorical” significance in the description of humanity, i.e., they tell us nothing about being in encounter and therefore about that which is properly and essentially human. Thus the fact that I am born and die; that I eat and drink and sleep; that I develop and maintain myself; that beyond this I assert myself in face of others, and even physically propagate my species; that I enjoy and work and play and fashion and possess; that I acquire and have and exercise powers; that I take part in all the works of the race either accomplished or in process of accomplishment; that in all this I satisfy religious needs and can realise religious possibilities; and that in it all I fulfil my aptitudes as an understanding and thinking, willing and feeling being—all this as such is not my humanity. In it I can be either human or inhuman... There is no reason why in the realisation of my vital, natural and intellectual aptitudes and potentialities, in my life-act as such, and my participation in scholarship and art, politics and economics, civilisation and culture, I should not actualise and reveal that “I am as Thou art.” But it may well be that in and with all this I deny it.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. “Human being is being with others. Without this relationship there can be no human being.” Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-52* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954), 188.

<sup>44</sup> George Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 191.

<sup>45</sup> *CD* III/2, 250. Cf. *CD* III/2, 246, 268f.

This reference to an “I and Thou” is indebted to Martin Buber’s work,<sup>46</sup> but Barth finds the validity of the concept not in Buber’s work but in God’s Trinitarian being (*CD III/2*, 277f.). God’s threefold being “is the original and source of every I and Thou” (*CD III/2*, 218). Jesus Christ repeated and reflected in his relations with humanity the inner divine essence as the image of God (*CD III/2*, 218f.). Humanity corresponds to Christ in our relations as superficial meetings are replaced with genuine encounter. Barth identifies four characteristics of such an encounter: 1) it is an openness to our neighbor, 2) that involves reciprocal dialogue and listening, 3) which leads to tangible forms of mutual assistance, 4) all done in gladness, rather than under compulsion (*CD III/2*, 250-272). Such an encounter is the form of genuine humanity.

Relationships, thus, develop and constrain agency. It is in relationship with God that humans find genuine agency, i.e. the possibility and freedom of living according to our determination. But agency is likewise formed by relationships with one’s neighbor. The scope of inherited possibilities is formed in our associations with others. How one interprets the world and the perceived implications of one’s action is socially shaped. “Part of what it means to be a person,” Oliver O’Donovan argues, is “a subject of action constituted not by a nature but by a place within a community of persons.”<sup>47</sup> If one’s being is found in the encounter with another, then he or she must come before God not as a solitary person but as one who finds being and agency intertwined in one’s relations with fellow humanity. Moral formation must take into account the intersubjectivity of humanity.

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<sup>46</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Second Edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958).

<sup>47</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology I: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013), 44.

The second key human characteristic as revealed in Christ is that this relationship takes place in a history in which God is revealed as the savior of humanity. Two points are to be observed here. First, the relationship to God is not one of neutrality or indifference, but one in which humans are creatures which God has determined to be in relationship with as their savior. Second, the ontology of humanity is as history (*CD III/2*, 157). Barth tends not to think in terms of states or substances but in relations and events. Being is not to be thought of as a state (which may be dynamic, but is focused on that which is internal to the being). Rather, to say the being of humanity is a history means the being of humanity is found in the encounter with an other (*CD III/2*, 158, 175).

History is closely linked with Barth's understanding of "actualism." The latter is one of the six motifs that Hunsinger identifies as an aid to understanding Barth.

Actualism,

is the most distinctive and perhaps the most difficult of the motifs. It is present whenever Barth speaks, as he constantly does, in the language of occurrence, happening, event, history, decisions, and act. At the most general level it means that he thinks primarily in terms of events and relationships rather than monadic or self-contained substances. So pervasive is the motif that Barth's whole theology might well be described as a theology of active relations. God and humanity are both defined in fundamentally actualistic terms.<sup>48</sup>

Barth prefers this way of thinking as a necessary safeguard to ensure humans do not attempt to take the place of God.<sup>49</sup> Both God and humanity are not knowable except in their acts.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 30.

<sup>49</sup> A temptation which he deems at the root of the liberal theologians he looked up to before the start of World War I, the "German Christian" leading into World War 2, and which is a general temptation for all Christians (especially theologians) in all walks of life.

<sup>50</sup> Barth writes about God's being in act (*CD II/1*, 257-272). "God is who He is in His works," Barth insists (*CD II/1*, 260). We are not able to say who God is and the attributes or perfections of God are by beginning with abstract notions of love, freedom, or any other of the common attributes given to God. To say that "God is love," one should not begin with some abstract idea of what love is. Rather, begins with the God as one who seeks and creates fellowship with humans and through this we can know what is love (*CD II/1*,

Humanity is observed as a being in act. As we have mentioned, the being of humanity is found in relation to the being of God. More specifically, Barth writes, “the being, life and act of man is always quite simply his *history* in relation to the being, life and act of his Creator.”<sup>51</sup> A human being is a history, namely a history in relation to God. As always, Barth grounds this claim in Jesus Christ (*CD* III/2, 159-160). In him, “the hypostatic union is itself the history of the dynamic relationship between God and humanity in one person, a relationship that defines humanity itself.”<sup>52</sup> Barth contrasts the notion of a history with that of a state. A state does not imply something is static or motionless, a state can be very dynamic. Barth’s concern with a state is it involves, “the idea of something completely insulated within the state in question, the idea of a limitation of its possibilities and therefore of its possible changes and modes of behaviour” (*CD* III/2, 158). In other words, it is something that is not dependent on its interaction with something outside itself. A history, on the other hand, occurs,

when something takes place upon and to the being as it is. The history of a being begins, continues and is completed when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response and in relation to this new factor. The history of a being occurs when it is caught up in this movement, change and relation, when its circular movement is broken from without by a movement towards it and the corresponding movement from it, when it is transcended from without so that it must and can transcend itself outwards.<sup>53</sup>

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276). This is not only noetic, for God’s acts cannot be separated from God’s “essence.” “God is who He is in the act of His revelation” (*CD* II/1, 262). Barth continues, “we are in fact interpreting the being of God when we describe it as God’s reality, as “God’s being in act,” namely, in the act of His revelation, in which the being of God declares His reality: not only His reality for us—certainly that—but at the same time His own, inner, proper reality, behind which and above which there is no other” (*CD* II/1, 262). God cannot be separated from God’s acts, God’s being is one that is in relation *in se* and in God’s freedom interacts with creation *ad extra* in a history.

<sup>51</sup> *CD* IV/1, 8, emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 35.

<sup>53</sup> *CD* III/2, 158

History is the concept of a being interacting with something outside itself whereby she becomes something other than she would be in herself. Our being is dependent on happenings that occur between a person and another agent and cannot be captured under the concept of substances or states. Barth writes, “to say man is to say history, and this is to speak of the encounter between I and Thou. Thus the formula: ‘I am as Thou art,’ tells us that the encounter between I and Thou is not arbitrary or accidental, that it is not incidentally but essentially proper to the concept of man” (*CD III/2*, 248). Our actions are always made “in its integral connection with past and future choices” (*CD II/2*, 634). It is this history which shapes us and in which we prepare for encountering the command of God. It allows for continuity in the moral life.<sup>54</sup> Moral formation occurs in the encounter with another.

The sixth characteristic claims that since humans are created for God (i.e., for reconciliation with God and for God’s glory), humans find their essence in being for God (i.e., in service to God). Jesus became human “in order that the work of God may take place in Him, the kingdom of God come, and the Word of God be spoken... the purpose of His own existence is to serve the purpose of the presence and revelation of God actualized in Him” (*CD III/2*, 71). Correspondingly, the being of humans in general is in “an active participation in what God does and means for him, is an event in which he renders God service, in which he for his part is for God” (*CD III/2*, 74).

This, of course, is very abstract. What does service to God look like in practice? For Barth, it depends on the situation and God’s command. However, since God is faithful, it is possible to sketch a basic outline of what service entails, though various

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<sup>54</sup> McKenny, “Freed by God for God,” 122; McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 27–28.

particular ethical issues would demand ethical reflection on what corresponds to God's gracious work in a certain context. Barth suggested that Jesus Christ's service to God was based in his being as the presence of God's kingdom. This is a theme that occurs regularly in the *Church Dogmatics*: The kingdom of God is identical to the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>55</sup> The kingdom of God is God's action in the world bringing about God's reign in Jesus Christ.<sup>56</sup> Thus, society or the state ought never be equated with the kingdom of God. At its best, it is an analog to the kingdom of God.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the church is not the kingdom of God.<sup>58</sup> The church serves the kingdom as it reflects and corresponds to the kingdom of God, i.e., as it is "kingdom-tempered."<sup>59</sup> The role of the church is not to be the kingdom, but to witness to the kingdom and to pray "thy kingdom come."<sup>60</sup> For Barth, prayer is not an idle, despondent action, but rather to be true prayer must include human action that corresponds to our invocation of God.<sup>61</sup> That God is the one who will bring about the kingdom frees humans to what is possible in their sphere.<sup>62</sup> We are to wait on God to bring about the kingdom, but to wait is to hasten toward the day when God makes all right.<sup>63</sup> It is a very active conception of prayer.<sup>64</sup> Since the kingdom

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<sup>55</sup> CD II/2, 688; IV/2, 655f.

<sup>56</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 3, 68; Barth, *The Christian Life*, 212.

<sup>57</sup> Barth, *Against the Stream*, 20, 33ff; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 34, 66.

<sup>58</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 68f.

<sup>59</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 266f. The notion of "kingdom-tempered" will be explored further in chapter 5.

<sup>60</sup> Barth, 212; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 34, 41.

<sup>61</sup> Calling on God "would not be an act of obedience – they would obviously be praying it without knowing what they were praying for, or believing that their prayer would be answered – if they did not turn toward the day for whose coming they pray with some movement of their own, if their thoughts and words and works were not drawn into this forward movement toward the day, if their lives were unaffected by the petition, if they were not directed toward its content and goal, if they were not shaped and stamped by looking to this coming day, to Jesus Christ in his future." Barth, *The Christian Life*, 168–69. Cf. Barth, 212, 262ff.; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 97. George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 62.

<sup>62</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 265.

<sup>63</sup> Barth, 263.

<sup>64</sup> The active side of prayer is emphasized so greatly that the contemplative side is almost completely lacking. He is very skeptical of (his caricatured understanding of) mysticism, seen as a method in which to bring about union with God and results in a person being drawn into the self and away from others. He

of God has to do with reconciliation and God being for humanity, to witness to and pray for the kingdom means Christians must be “humanists,” and when considering a cause will ask how it will “serve or hurt the cause of man and his right and worth.”<sup>65</sup> We are to be for humanity, not merely as a soul to be saved, but in solidarity with our neighbors.<sup>66</sup> Christians must make political decisions and act in ways that correspond to their ethical reflection on the kingdom of God.<sup>67</sup> This applies particularly to the vulnerable. Christ is the companion of the poor: “Christ was born in poverty in the stable at Bethlehem, and He died in extreme poverty, nailed naked to the Cross. He is, then, the companion, not of the rich men of this world, but of the poor of this world. For that reason He called the poor blessed, and not the rich. For that reason He is here and now always to be found in the company of the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the sick, the prisoners. For that reason those who are rich must cleave to them, if they would be close to Him.”<sup>68</sup> Earlier, Barth wrote,

"The human righteousness required by God and established in obedience-the righteousness which according to Amos 5:24 should pour down as a mighty stream-has necessarily the character of a vindication of right in favour of the threatened innocent, the oppressed poor, widows, orphans and aliens. For this reason, in the relations and events in the life of His people, God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and deprived of it... It does in

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considered it as “an overemphasis on inner experience and an underemphasis on ethical action.” Ashley Cocksworth, *Karl Barth on Prayer* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 37. But when mysticism is thought of as ‘Christ-mysticism,’ it is considered an ‘indispensable part of the Christian faith.’ (CD IV/3, 540; III/4, 59) Cocksworth, 29. Cf. Barth on a “genuine mysticism” in Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 97. Cocksworth explores the possibility of a “Barthian form of contemplative prayer.” Cocksworth, *Karl Barth on Prayer*, 25–59.

<sup>65</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 267. While with Barth we should affirm that we should have a special regard for humans in our decision making, we would also want to insist that we should take up causes that serve the rest of creation as an end in itself.

<sup>66</sup> Barth, 266–71.

<sup>67</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Barth, *Against the Stream*, 245–46. Matthew 25 “is the *Magna Carta* of Christian humanitarianism and Christian politics, established not only as a promise but as a warning in view of the approaching end” (CD III/2, 508).



fact have this character and we cannot hear it and believe it without feeling a sense of responsibility in the direction indicated.”<sup>69</sup>

This attitude and action of God on the side of the oppressed presents a model for those in positions of power: just as God’s cause is on the side of the poor, Christians are to have a “corresponding allegiance.”<sup>70</sup> Moral formation is growth into a specific shape, namely correspondence to Christ in solidarity with one’s neighbor.

Using these Christological norms, Barth proceeds to examine four alternative approaches to anthropology he deemed prominent at his time of writing: naturalism, idealism, existentialism and theistic anthropology.<sup>71</sup> Unsurprisingly, he concludes these disciplines cannot provide a basis for anthropology for they fail to give an adequate definition of “real humanity” (*wirklichen Menschen*). Rather, “the ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus. So long as we select any other starting point for our study, we shall reach only the *phenomena* of the human” (*CD* III/2, 132, emphasis added). However, the phenomena are not unimportant. In fact, Barth considers them and the disciplines which explore them as indispensable for the moral life. We will return to this line of thought at the end of the chapter as we consider the role of human capacities in moral progress.

To summarize this section on theological anthropology, we observe core characteristics of humanity that must be considered in moral formation. Barth argues that humans are relational creatures that find their being not in any substance or cognitive capacity but in relation to God and consequently with other creatures. Our self arises

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<sup>69</sup> *CD* II/1, 386.

<sup>70</sup> Barth, *Against the Stream*, 244–45.

<sup>71</sup> *CD* III/2, 79–132. By theistic anthropology, Barth means Brunner’s anthropology which Barth understands as making the knowledge of God something possible through some attribute innate to the nature of humanity which humans not fully dependent on God’s revelation.

from our interactions and history with others. Those relationships are crucial to how we think, feel, and act; out of these our self-identity and self-conception arise. Above all, for Barth, it is our history with God that is key to our humanity. Humans are most truly human as they live a life of service to God in solidarity with one another in correspondence to Jesus Christ, the only sinless human.

### ***Interlude. The Corruption of Humanity: Sin***

While sinful humanity cannot be the basis for true humanity, the concrete reality is humanity outside of Jesus can only be observed in its sinful state. Before turning to an account of moral progress, we will treat briefly Barth's view of sin. Even here, Barth argues it is proper to begin with Jesus Christ, for there is no abstract notion of sin possible.<sup>72</sup> Often, traditional accounts of salvation begin with an account of sin, which sets up the need for a savior, and then bring in the work of Jesus as an answer to our predicament. Barth reverses this order, contending that only by starting with grace and the life and work of Jesus can we know what is sin: "only when we know Jesus Christ do we really know that man is the man of sin, and what sin is, and what it means for man."<sup>73</sup> Jesus Christ lived the only perfect human life. As we have said, by looking to Jesus, we see what it means to be truly human, namely, creatures in relation to God who are called to obedience to God and to solidarity with fellow-humans. Through participation in his life, humans enter into the covenant partnership with God that we were created for. Sin,

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<sup>72</sup> Karl Barth, *Learning Jesus Christ Through the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 130.

<sup>73</sup> CD IV/1, 399. Cf. "That God the Creator is gracious to man His creature is the principle to which it must always return and the presupposition at which it must always start... sin is man's self-alienation from the grace of God from which and in which he has his being. Sin consists in the fact that he neglects the grace of God and therefore his own true interests... Thus the grace of God itself is the presupposition of man's sin. Not that it is grace which leads or compels him to sin. Sin resists grace; it affronts it and betrays it. It has no basis in grace..." (CD III/2, 35).

then, is understood in relational terms as a contradiction of God's grace, a denial of our dependence on God (described as unfaithfulness and ingratitude), and a lack of solidarity with and service to fellow-humanity.<sup>74</sup> According to theological anthropology based in Christology, to be human means to be with God. Thus, to act contrary to this determination of our being is the absurd choice to be what we are not and is impossible.<sup>75</sup> In Christ, sin "has already been accused, condemned and abolished in Jesus Christ: its existence is that of a defeated reality."<sup>76</sup> And yet, sin obviously exists. It is thus the "impossible possibility."<sup>77</sup> To be human is to be with God and to correspond to God's covenantal grace. Therefore, sin means acting against the essence of what it means to be human.

Sin occurs on both the individual and corporate level. Sin exists as personal decisions that contradict God's gracious command. Humans act in ways that are prideful, slothful and false. But sin goes beyond the personal to a structural dimension. Barth highlights this in his discussion of the solidarity all humanity has as sinful creatures. Humans are in this situation together. One ought not to think of themselves as basically better than another. All humans find themselves in sin and thus we are to see ourselves in solidarity with all humanity, even those who are "the worst."<sup>78</sup> Sin is that which is

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<sup>74</sup> Sin manifests in pride (*CD IV/1*, 358ff.), sloth (*CD IV/2*, 378ff.) and falsehood (*CD IV/3*, 368ff.) both in individuals and social structures. Barth, *The Christian Life*, 213ff.

<sup>75</sup> *CD III/2*, 136. "Godlessness is not, therefore, a possibility, but an ontological impossibility for man. Man is not without, but with God. This is not to say, of course, that godless men do not exist. Sin is undoubtedly committed and exists. Yet sin itself is not a possibility but an ontological impossibility for man. We are actually with Jesus, i.e., with God. This means that our being does not include but excludes sin. To be in sin, in godlessness, is a mode of being contrary to our humanity. For the man who is with Jesus-and this is man's ontological determination-is with God. If he denies God, he denies himself. He is then something which he cannot be in the Counterpart in which he is. He chooses his own impossibility."

<sup>76</sup> Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology*, 67.

<sup>77</sup> "Sin is when the creature avails itself of this impossible possibility in opposition to God and to the meaning of its own existence" (*CD II/1*, 503).

<sup>78</sup> *CD IV/1*, 405 cf. *CD IV/2*, 391.

universal, which is captured in the doctrine of original sin (*CD* IV/1, 500ff.). Toward the end of the *Dogmatics*, Barth went further in identifying what he called the “lordless forces.”<sup>79</sup> These are powers that oppose humanity as God determined it. For Barth, “human wickedness is bound up with supra-personal realities that both pre-exist and are unleashed by sinful acts with renewed energy.”<sup>80</sup> Barth identifies four in particular: political absolutism (leviathan – the desire for power), mammon and material goods, various ideologies (when ideals become idols) and chthonic forces (technology, sport, pleasure, etc). These are powers that works on the structural level and thus sin must be considered beyond an individual’s action or inaction. Whatever form sin takes, whether personal or structural, it remains a reality that contradicts what God has determined humanity to be, namely creatures created for fellowship and partnership with God. Sin, while an ontological impossibility, is at the same time a fact in which we can never escape.<sup>81</sup> It is the opposition to God which makes us in need of reconciliation. This leads us into the doctrine of reconciliation and the matter of sanctification.

### ***Part 3. The Basis of Moral Formation: Sanctification by Grace Alone***

Thus far in this chapter, the being of humanity and the goal of moral transformation were explored. Barth holds that we can only know humanity’s true essence by looking at Jesus Christ who embodied sinless humanity. To be human, thus, is to be a self-in-relation: in relation to God and in solidarity with one’s cohumanity [*Mitmenschen*]. This section will address how we grow morally to have our lives

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<sup>79</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 213–33. These will be explored in more depth in chapter 4.

<sup>80</sup> Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology*, 75.

<sup>81</sup> Thus, while we have a determination [*Bestimmung*] for fellowship with God, it is not wrong to also say that sin is our determination. We are in need of a new determination [*Neubestimmung*], which comes by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (*CD* IV/4, 30; IV/2, 511/*KD* IV/2, 578).

constitute such relationships. We begin with the doctrine of sanctification, which has traditionally been the church's starting point for such questions. Barth's doctrine of sanctification is found in the second part of Volume 4 of the *Church Dogmatics* (CD IV/2).<sup>82</sup> He sought to address sanctification in a way that did not contradict what he had previously said on grace in his discussion of justification in CD IV/1, namely that reconciliation is a work of grace alone. His approach doctrine offers one of the most innovative aspects of the *Church Dogmatics*. According to George Hunsinger, "if Barth's doctrine of justification is distinctive, his doctrine of sanctification is ground-breaking. Relative to familiar received traditions, whether Protestant or otherwise, there is nothing quite like it."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Volume 4 comprises Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation in four parts – justification, sanctification, vocation and a final, unfinished section on the ethics of reconciliation. According to Barth, justification, sanctification and vocation do not make up three parts of reconciliation but rather each capture reconciliation as a whole but as seen from a different perspective. Justification encompasses how the covenant relationship between God and humanity can be restored in light of human sin and opposition toward God. The doctrine describes how humans are put in right standing before God. Humans cannot accomplish this feat, rather it is achieved through the "self-humiliation of God" that took place in Jesus Christ. Before talking about the justification of humanity in general, Barth says they properly belong to Jesus Christ, the God-human, alone (CD IV/1, 550). It concerns Jesus Christ, i.e., God who became flesh and travelled into the "far country" (CD IV/1, 157ff). But, Christ's justification took place *pro nobis*, for us. This "for us," applies in four ways. "He took our place as Judge. He took our place as the judged. He was judged in our place. And He acted justly in our place" (CD IV/1, 273, summing up pp. 231-273). Thus, following Luther, Barth contends our justification always remains alien (CD IV/1, 549, 631). As such, the Christian is always *simul peccator et iustus*, simultaneously sinner and justified – not as part sinner and part righteous, but *totus*, totally sinner and totally righteous (CD IV/1, 596, 602). As justification is properly that of Jesus Christ, the rest of humanity only finds its righteousness in Christ, through faith. Our proper response to God's justifying work is faith; this is how we come to share in Christ's righteousness. To use the Reformers language, we are justified by faith alone. After sanctification, the third part of volume 4 is on the doctrine of vocation. Not only can Jesus Christ be considered as the Son of God (CD IV/1) and the Son of Man (CD IV/2), but also in his God-human unity (CD IV/3). In this unity, Jesus Christ is "the true Witness of His true deity and humanity, as the authentic Witness of the saving grace of God which has appeared in Him justifying and sanctifying man" (CD IV/3, 371, cf. pp. 378ff.). Humans also have a vocation, namely fellowship with Christ and service to God and the world through corresponding witness to Christ's witness (CD IV/3, 482). Just as Jesus Christ is the True Witness who witnesses to God's work, we are to be witnesses that in our deed and action correspond and thus witness to God (CD IV/3, 554ff.). This calling thus manifests in service to God through serving the world (CD IV/3, 576).

<sup>83</sup> George Hunsinger, "Barth on Justification and Sanctification," in *Evangelical, Catholic, and Reformed: Essays on Barth and Other Themes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015), 224. Unlike sanctification, Barth did not see his position on justification as straying from the reformers. Bromiley points out that he closes his section on the "justification of man" with citations of the Heidelberg Catechism with hardly any commentary, indicating Barth considered their views as basically equivalent with his. Geoffrey W.

As is typical with accounts of sanctification, Barth addresses the human alteration that occurs due to God's sanctifying grace. The word "sanctification" in both the Hebrew [biblical Hebrew word group קדש (qdsh)] and Greek [ἁγιασμός] means to be made holy, set apart, or consecrated.<sup>84</sup> For Barth, the biblical meaning was not primarily a setting apart from (the world) in some superior way but a setting apart to (fellowship with Christ and service to the world).<sup>85</sup> Barth wrote, sanctifying,

is, in the language of the Bible, very generally an action in which someone or something is lifted out of the secularity of the surrounding world and his or its own previous existence, dedicated to the service of God (often cultically), and made worthy and suitable for this purpose. Sanctification means the separation, claiming, commandeering, and preparation of a person, place, or object with a view to this higher purpose destined for them.<sup>86</sup>

In respect to humanity, sanctification is the setting apart of a people for a life of faithful covenant obedience to God's command, responding in gratitude to the grace bestowed to us. The aim of sanctification is the person "who does not break but keeps the covenant which God has made with him from all eternity" (*CD IV/2*, 514).

Barth affirms sanctification has to do with a real alteration in the person. Barth variously claims that sanctification involves a new form of existence (*CD IV/2*, 513-14), a real modification of the Christian's situation and constitution (*CD IV/2*, 501, 585), and a real alteration of their existence (*Dasein*, *CD IV/2*, 529 *KD IV/2*, 598), specifically, into conforming to the being of the Lord (*CD IV/2*, 529). In the words of the New Testament,

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Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 190. Cf. *CD IV/1*, 637-642.

<sup>84</sup> "The Language of Holiness in the Bible" in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> e.g., *CD IV/2*, 511; cf. McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 5; Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015), 243.

<sup>86</sup> Barth, *The Christian Life*, 157. Cf. "Holy means set apart, marked off, and therefore differentiated, singled out, taken (and set) on one side as a being which has its own origin and nature and meaning and direction—and all this with a final definitiveness, decisively, inviolably and unalterably, because it is God who does it." *CD IV/1*, 685.

the Christian is a new being, a new creation (*CD IV/2*, 530-31).<sup>87</sup> But for Barth, this alteration is understood in relational rather than substantial terms. As Webster argues, “the holiness of the triune God is a holiness which directs itself to God’s creatures as fellowship-creating holiness. God the thrice Holy One is the Holy One in our midst; and so holiness is a *relational* concept, a way of confessing that we encounter the Holy One in his works as Father, Son and Spirit or not at all.”<sup>88</sup> Victor Paul Furnish concurs with Webster and Barth, “sanctification consists not in a particular moral quality which has been attained, but in a particular relationship to God which has been given.”<sup>89</sup> Barth uses a number of motifs that capture the relational character of sanctification. The invitation to follow Jesus is first and foremost a call to fellowship with Jesus Christ (*CD IV/2*, 537, 553).<sup>90</sup> God’s sanctifying grace includes Christ’s relational command to “follow me,” i.e., to discipleship.<sup>91</sup> The task of a disciple is most basically to “look unto Jesus.”<sup>92</sup> The Christian’s being is found in union with Christ. Through our participation in Christ, we attest to our sanctity achieved in Christ (*CD IV/2*, 518). As Calvin earlier professed,

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<sup>87</sup> Gal 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17.

<sup>88</sup> John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003), 9.

<sup>89</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 155. Cited in M. Eugene Boring, *I and II Thessalonians: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 142.

<sup>90</sup> For Barth, this does not mean primarily imitation or replication of other saints, but hearing ever anew the concrete command that meets us in our fellowship with God (*CD IV/2*, 540). This is not to say there is not a proper and praiseworthy place for imitation in the life of the church. See his discussion of moral exemplars in *CD IV/3.2*, 887-9. Furthermore, as we will see later, discernment of God’s command is rightly accomplished in community.

<sup>91</sup> *CD IV/2*, 534. Barth draws heavily on Bonhoeffer for this section. “Easily the best that has been written on this subject is to be found in *The Cost of Discipleship*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer... In these the matter is handled with such depth and precision that I am almost tempted simply to reproduce them in an extended quotation. For I cannot hope to say anything better on the subject than what is said here by a man who, having written on discipleship, was ready to achieve it in his own life, and did in his own way achieve it even to the point of death. In following my own course, I am happy that on this occasion I can lean as heavily as I do upon another” (*CD IV/2*, 533-4).

<sup>92</sup> “This looking is their sanctification *de facto*.” Christians do not become saints because of the consistency or seriousness of our looking to Christ, but rather are saints only in virtue of sanctity of Christ who calls them (*CD IV/2*, 527f.).

“there is no sanctification without union with Christ.”<sup>93</sup> It is through this history of encounter with God in the context of the Christian community that we experience transformation and become a people that witness to God’s grace.

The key innovative feature of Barth’s account of sanctification is found in his attempt to take the implications of the Reformers thought on salvation through grace alone to its logical end. While most accounts understand sanctification as a progressive work by grace *and* human effort, Barth claims that sanctification is wholly a work of God, by grace alone. Not only does justification remain alien to humanity, but so does sanctification. To better understand Barth’s position, we can compare it to more conventional understandings, particularly in the Protestant tradition. In one word, sanctification is most commonly associated with “progress.”<sup>94</sup> It is growth in holiness. Wayne Grudem declares, “sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”<sup>95</sup> John Wright similarly asserts in *The Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, “ultimately centered in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, sanctification names the process and the result of how the triune God moves the saints to their eschatological end.”<sup>96</sup> Another theological dictionary goes so far as declaring that sanctification “becomes a technical name for the process of development.”<sup>97</sup> It follows from the concept of sanctification as a process that a person

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<sup>93</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.14.4.

<sup>94</sup> Many of the examples below do acknowledge Scripture speaks of sanctification as already complete, but then go on to emphasize almost exclusively its progressive nature.

<sup>95</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 746.

<sup>96</sup> John W. Wright, “Sanctification,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 702.

<sup>97</sup> R.E.O. White, “Sanctification,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), 970. My childhood denomination, the Bible Fellowship Church’s *Articles of Faith* states, “sanctification is a progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the believer that purifies the life and conforms the whole man to the image of Christ as the Word of God is believed and obeyed. It begins at



can have degrees of sanctification. “There is a quantitative distinction [between justification and sanctification],” Millard Erickson insists, “one is either justified or not, whereas one may be more or less sanctified. That is, there are degrees of sanctification but not of justification. Justification is a forensic or declarative matter, as we have seen earlier, while sanctification is an actual transformation of the character and condition of the person.”<sup>98</sup> The implication of this concept of sanctification as progressive and coming in degrees is that it is connected with the visible Christian life. As Wright makes clear, sanctification, “characterizes the subsequent *visible* witness of the body of Christ in its moral and political difference from the nations, for the sake of the nations.”<sup>99</sup> One’s sanctification can be ascertained by his or her actions and virtue and thus human agency retains its significance in the human life *vis a vis* grace. Thus, Protestants have tended to view justification as that which happens fully by grace alone, whereas sanctification is a process in which humans cooperate with God’s grace to become more like Christ. *Sola gratia* is fundamental to justification but does not apply to sanctification.<sup>100</sup> It is amidst

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regeneration, continues throughout the believer’s life on earth, and reaches its completion at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Bible Fellowship Church, “Article 16 - Sanctification,” Articles of Faith, accessed June 21, 2019, <https://www.bfc.org/who-we-are/articles-of-faith/>.

<sup>98</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 1998), 982. We can become “further sanctified,” according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, where “the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness... the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness.” Christian Classics Ethereal Library, “Chapter XV – Of Sanctification,” Westminster Confession of Faith, accessed June 21, 2019, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/westminster3.i.xv.html>. Wright concurs, “just as the tabernacle possessed degrees of holiness, so does the life of believers.” Wright, “Sanctification,” 701. He then oddly proceeds to try and connect this with 1 Cor. 1:30. While Wright’s emphasis is on the progressive nature of sanctification, he also admits that we can say Christians are already sanctified: “All believers are in one sense already “sanctified” as they are baptized “into Christ Jesus” (see Rom. 6:3), so Paul addresses his letters to ‘the saints.’ Yet, believers are to become what they have already been made through their *own* consecration...” Wright, 701, emphasis added.

<sup>99</sup> Wright, “Sanctification,” 702, emphasis added.

<sup>100</sup> The notion that God works apart from human effort was the major insight of the Protestant Reformation. Since the Reformation there has a doctrinal formulation summed up under the formula *sola gratia*: salvation comes by the grace of God alone. Sinful creatures obtain reconciliation with the Creator through grace, not from anything that humans do. This was enthusiastically applied to justification by the Reformers in response to the abuses going on in the church of their day. It is not by works, penance or alms

such understandings of sanctification that Barth sought a fresh account that carries the Protestant insight of salvation by grace alone through to sanctification while not downplaying human agency. This dissertation will follow McKenny's lead that Barth attempted a way to take the insights of the reformation to its full implication. Barth does not do this by downplaying the role of grace, but by radicalizing the notion that Christ took our place.<sup>101</sup> In his account, our work is altogether removed from the process of sanctification.<sup>102</sup> But in doing so, he did not discount human agency, but rather suggested it is God's grace which constitutes humans as agents with true freedom. God gives humans freedom to engage their created capacities as genuine partners with God. Surprisingly, Barth's radicalizing divine agency in sanctification enables humans to understand themselves as genuine human agents.

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that we receive salvation, in fact, there is nothing we can do to merit salvation. While this insight was cogently applied to justification, the Reformers struggled to adequately relate it to the doctrine of sanctification. While justification was an instantaneous event through God's initiative and effective cause, sanctification was largely seen as progressive and while also rooted in grace, was deemed to include human cooperation. The result is that while justification is something wholly due to God's grace, sanctification is something which is at least partly due to human effort. The implication is that reconciliation with God is not wholly by grace, but partially a human work. This tension, according to Gerald McKenny, has given rise to two troublesome options within Protestantism. The Reformed tradition in particular, "has oscillated between two equally problematic positions: one in which the sanctifying work of the Spirit more or less replaces the exercise of human capacities and another in which moral growth is entirely attributable to the natural workings of our created capacities, and grace is reduced to mere acceptance by God." Gerald P. McKenny, "Karl Barth and the Plight of Protestant Ethics," in *The Freedom of a Christian Ethicist: The Future of a Reformation Legacy*, ed. Brian Brock and Michael Mawson (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 19–20. Cf. *CD* IV/4, 19–20. In other words, human agency seems to be sacrificed or the work of grace becomes a token leaving us to become moral through our own devices. It would be fair to add a third alternative: some form of cooperation between human effort and grace in bringing about sanctification. There is a synergistic relationship which brings about our holiness.

<sup>101</sup> McKenny, 21.

<sup>102</sup> "Barth corrects what he perceives as the failure of Luther and Calvin and their heirs to establish the proper relation of ethics to grace. For Barth, it is not only our righteousness before God but also our sanctity or holiness that is alien - and yet in both cases what is ours only in Christ also summons and empowers us to active participation in it... For him, sanctification is no less the work of grace and the holiness it effects is no less in Christ than are justification and the righteousness it effects - or, indeed, is election itself." McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 28.

Barth considered the relationship of justification and sanctification as best conceived materially as one act that can be distinguished in two moments.<sup>103</sup> While distinct, sanctification has a direct analogy to justification in its form. Justification is not God's work while sanctification is the human response to justification. Rather, sanctification is also God's act which takes place in Jesus Christ.<sup>104</sup> Taking a step back, Barth maintains that the one who is properly holy and faithful is God and God alone.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The relationship of justification and sanctification has often been described in the Protestant tradition through the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation. Attempts were made to lay out in sequential order the works of the Holy Spirit in salvation, often including calling, regeneration, justification, conversion, sanctification, and glorification. Most often this order was given a temporal sequence where one occurred prior to the next event. This implies that one is first justified by God in Christ (thought of often as a legal determination) which is then followed by the process of sanctification, or being made holy. Barth argues that it is wrong to think of this relationship in sequential terms, rather, following Calvin, they occur *simul*, simultaneously. Cf. Hunsinger, "Tale of Two Simultaneities," 190ff. They make up, "one act of salvation whose Subject is the one God by the one Christ through the one Spirit" (CD IV/2, 503). However, this does not mean that justification and sanctification cannot be distinguished. They are to be thought of as one act of God with two moments. Barth finds this analogical to the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures of Christ. Justification and sanctification are not to be separated, they are indissolubly one work of God that cannot be divided. And yet, the two must not be confused, they must be distinguished CD IV/2, 503-5. Barth thinks that confusing the two has often been the downfall of theologians. For Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants the tendency is to have sanctification engulf justification while Luther and Zinzendorf (or at least some of their interpreters) have tended toward justification swallowing up sanctification (CD IV/2, 504). Justification and sanctification can be examined on their own right as works of the double grace of God (*duplex gratia* - CD IV/2, 503, 505-7). Barth builds here on Calvin who contended, "The whole may be thus summed up: Christ given to us by the kindness of God is apprehended and possessed by faith, by means of which we obtain in particular a twofold benefit [*duplex gratia*]; first, being reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes, instead of a judge, an indulgent Father; and, secondly, being sanctified by his Spirit, we aspire to integrity and purity of life." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.11.1. This double grace ought not to imply two parts of God's grace, justification and sanctification are not two parts of a whole. They are each the whole of God's one grace. When probing sanctification, "we have not to consider a second thing, but the first one [justification] differently. There is not another doctrine of reconciliation, but a second problem of the doctrine (as there will later be a third [vocation])" (CD IV/2, 5). While there is no temporal order to justification and sanctification, Barth reasons one can yet talk of an *ordo salutis*. He does not suggest an *ordo* of temporal sequence, but an order of substance (or, we might say, an order of logic). Depending how one considers the relationship, both can be understood as prior and subsequent. Justification can be considered prior as it is only due to a right relationship with God that we become holy. On the other hand, sanctification is prior to justification in terms of *telos*. Sanctification is what we are determined for, and what justification makes possible (CD IV/2, 507-8).

<sup>104</sup> "How much false teaching, and how many practical mistakes, would have been avoided in this matter of sanctification if in direct analogy to the doctrine of justification by faith alone we had been bold or modest enough basically and totally and definitively to give precedence and all the glory to the Holy One and not to the saints; to the only One who is God, but God in Jesus Christ; and therefore to the royal man Jesus, as the only One who is holy, but in whom the sanctification of all the saints is reality!" (CD IV/2, 515).

<sup>105</sup> There are other words in Scripture that communicate much the same idea as sanctification, such as regeneration, renewal, conversion, repentance, and discipleship. Barth decides on sanctification as the focus of reconciliation in IV/2 because sanctification (*Heiligung*) has within it verbally the Saint or Holy One

The human charge to be holy comes issues from God's holiness: "you shall be holy, for I am holy."<sup>106</sup> The lone human to faithfully respond to this summons is Jesus Christ. He is the only one who lived a perfect life of obedience and love. Just as with justification, Jesus Christ took our place and lived the sanctified life *pro nobis*, for us.<sup>107</sup> Christ was not only the Judge judged for us, he was also the One sanctified in our place. He is not only the justifying God and justified human, Christ "is also the sanctifying God and sanctified man in One. In His person God has acted rightly towards us. And in the same person man has also acted rightly for us" (*CD II/2*, 539). The sanctification of the rest of the human race took place in Jesus Christ (*CD II/2*, 517). Our sanctification, therefore, is found in our participation in Jesus Christ.<sup>108</sup> Just as Luther spoke of an alien justification, Barth insists we must also affirm an alien sanctification (*CD IV/2*, 518).<sup>109</sup> Barth draws on 1 Cor. 1:30: Jesus Christ, "became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness [justification] and *sanctification* and redemption."<sup>110</sup> Christ is both our justification *and* our sanctification. Our sanctification is found in Christ Jesus, and thus our task is not to seek to accomplish what has already been done in Christ (being made holy), but to

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(*Heiligen*) which reminds us that at the center of the doctrine we are talking about God's being and action, the One who is "originally and properly holy" (*CD IV/2*, 500, cf. p. 513).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8; 1 Pet. 1:16.

<sup>107</sup> Here we see that like justification, sanctification finds its grounding in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ: "Whatever we may have to say later about the sloth and sanctification of man, and the edification of the Church, and love, is wholly included and enclosed already in the being and action of the Son of Man, and at bottom it can be understood and represented only as a development and explanation of it" *CD IV/2*, 265, cf. *CD II/2*, 777f.

<sup>108</sup> As Hunsinger argues, "sanctification is not so much about obtaining a new nature as it is about obtaining a new relationship, even though that relationship involves a total renovation of the whole person." Hunsinger, "Justification and Sanctification," 224.

<sup>109</sup> Barth earlier quoted Luther that our sanctification is passive just as our justification: "*christiana sanctitas non est activa, sed passiva sanctitas*," *CD IV/1*, 693.

<sup>110</sup> E.g., *CD IV/2*, 19, 268, 273. This verse was also very important to Calvin. "Calvin made use of this verse that can scarcely be exaggerated in importance... he employed it as a kind of biblical short-hand for his *unio Christi-duplex gratia* soteriology." Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2008), 219. Cf. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015), 125.

acknowledge that Christ lived the sanctified life in our place and to witness to that event through our correspondence to Christ. We are sanctified, but it only through our participation in Christ that this is so.

For Barth, sanctification is not something that we do.<sup>111</sup> Thus, sanctification “is wholly a work of God. There is no way that human beings sanctify themselves.”<sup>112</sup> We cannot possess holiness, nor is it proper to us.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, one’s sanctification is not observable in a person’s action.<sup>114</sup> Barth contends, “we have to investigate the sanctification that God effects in this Subject, Jesus Christ, and the self-sanctification of man which is accomplished by this Subject, Jesus Christ, not a sanctity of our own which we have to practice and demonstrate to others” (*CD II/2*, 540). This sanctification is achieved in Christ as the elected head of humanity and is therefore valid for all persons in Christ (*CD IV/2*, 155). Barth calls this *de jure* sanctification (*CD IV/2*, 511). While many

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<sup>111</sup> Barth had already laid out this claim in some detail in his discussion of the Nicene Creed and “The Being of the Community” as holy in *CD IV/1*, 685-701. He writes, “the community as the body of Jesus Christ is holy because and in the fact that He, the Head, is holy.” (687)

<sup>112</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 126.

<sup>113</sup> Barth describes not only sanctification [*Heiligung* - the act of being made holy] but also holiness [*Heiligkeit* - sanctity] as first of all proper to Christ: “Their holiness [*Heiligkeit*] is originally and properly His and not theirs.” *CD IV/2*, 514, modified translation. To be sanctified is to have been made holy or being made holy. They are obviously connected (in the English translation, *Heiligkeit* was even translated as sanctification). For Barth, both are properly in Christ and to the extent we are holy or sanctified it is through our participation in Christ. “In the participation of the saints in the sanctity [*Heiligkeit*] of Jesus Christ there is attested the sanctity [*Heiligung*] of man as it is already achieved in this One who alone is holy.” Early in Barth’s career (1923) while still in Göttingen while lecturing on the Reformed Confessions he made a sharper distinction between the two, but this did not carry over to his mature work on the subject. Commenting on the Westminster Catechism, he argued, “but is not sanctification [*Heiligung*] here confused with holiness [*Heiligkeit*]?” It is clear that there is growth in ‘holiness’ [sanctitas], but is there in ‘sanctification’ [sanctification] through the Holy Spirit?” Karl Barth, *Theology of the Reformed Confessions* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 141. Cf. Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Der Reformierten Bekenntnisschriften 1923 (GA II.30)*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1998), 222.

<sup>114</sup> *CD IV/1*, 699. McKenny explains that, for Barth, “it is only as I am in Christ, and not as I am in myself, that I am the new creature for whom genuine freedom for obedience is possible-and this makes it clear that my sanctification is not identifiable with the visible course of my conduct.” McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 61.

are not aware of this sanctification made possible in Christ's representative work, his work of atonement has made possible the reconciliation of the world.

But *de jure* sanctification is not the totality of the matter. Sanctification can be actualized in human lives in the present. Barth calls this *de facto* sanctification (*CD* IV/2, 511). *De facto* sanctification has not come to all of humanity, but only to a people who are awakened to God's presence and work in Christ, i.e. the church.<sup>115</sup> *De facto* sanctification, like *de jure* sanctification, is not something which is proper to us, but remains alien. Barth associates *de facto* sanctification with the external command of God that comes to us and the freedom with which to obey it: "ethics as the doctrine of God's command," is therefore "the doctrine of the sanctification given to man by God" (*CD* II/2, 777-8). The first task of ethics, then, "is to understand and present the Word of God in its character as the command which sanctifies man" (*CD* II/2, 546).<sup>116</sup> What God decides is good or holy (according to God's eternal command to be for and with humanity) is that which God commands. The command specifies what action is set apart from all others based on its correspondence to God's electing grace. God's decision about the good is what makes our action holy or not (*CD* III/4, 4). The sanctifying command includes the Holy Spirit's imparting of the capability and freedom to obey. The Christian has the ability to make use of his or her freedom and live a life in correspondence to God's grace – though, whether one actually does is another question (*CD* IV/2, 531).

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. *CD* IV/1, 685ff. Sanctification is ecclesial in nature for Barth. The church is made up of "those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). The uniqueness of the church is not the absence of sinners, rather it is "that they are sanctified in and by the Holy One; that they are called to His discipleship; that they are awakened to conversion by His Holy Spirit; and that they are engaged in conversion" (*CD* IV/2, 593). As John Webster contends, it is an alien sanctification: "the Church is holy, but it is holy, not by virtue of some ontological participation in the divine holiness, but by virtue of its calling by God, its reception of the divine benefits, and its obedience of faith." Webster, *Holiness*, 57. They are a people who grasp and acknowledge God's grace in Jesus Christ (*CD* IV/2, 511).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *CD* II/2, 645.

When one acts in obedience to the command, the action is holy. Our act does not make us holy, but God's decision on the action. Thus, sanctification remains fully a divine work.<sup>117</sup> God's command is thus a gracious, sanctifying command. In short, "the command of God, is itself sanctification."<sup>118</sup>

While sanctification remains alien, this does not mean that the command of God has no effect on a moral agent. As Barth argued earlier, the command of God transforms the inner person. It does not leave a person "unmoved and unchanged in his innermost self," but rather "in some way becomes a different man from what he would be without it." (*CD II/2*, 631) This transformation starts with conversion, or to use Barth's preferred use of the biblical term, it is an "awakening." It is a person's recognition of the reality of our reconciliation with God.<sup>119</sup> This is not something we can accomplish ourselves, rather we must be roused by God (*CD IV/2*, 554). Conversion is not a one-time event, but must happen continually. We are in constant need of reawakening.<sup>120</sup> While initiated by God, the awakening is not something that occurs on some spiritual plane without us, rather, it denotes the engagement of our whole being. Barth insists, "it involves the total and most intensive conscription and co-operation of all his inner and outer forces, of his whole heart and soul and mind, which in the biblical sense in which these terms are used includes his whole physical being" (*CD IV/2*, 556). He draws out four implications of the whole person's involvement in one's awakening. First, reaching back to his previous writings on the relational nature of humanity, sanctification of our

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<sup>117</sup> While this section draws primarily from volume *CD IV/2*, this argument was already laid out under the doctrine of the church and its holiness in *CD IV/1*, 685-701.

<sup>118</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 5, cf. 29.

<sup>119</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 98.

<sup>120</sup> *CD IV/2*, 555. Barth points out that in the NT, the call to awaken is not to unbelievers but always to the Christian community.

whole selves includes our selves as social beings. This obviously includes one's relationship to God, but awakening also extends to social relationships with other humans (CD IV/2, 563).<sup>121</sup> Second, the awakening of our whole selves has to do with our "heart" (emotion, will, disposition, etc.) *and* our actions.<sup>122</sup> The biblical understanding of *μετάνοια* [metanoia, repentance] implies the turning of the whole self: awakening must not be limited to some private inner realm, but neither are good works without love enough (CD IV/2, 564 cf. 1 Cor. 13:3). Third, awakening of the whole self is not to be equated with a shallow understanding of an individualistic, self-help program, but an awakening for service to God in the world (CD IV/2, 565f.). Finally, not only is the awakening of the whole person not merely a one-time event but it ought also not be reduced to certain discrete moments in the person's life. Awakening has to do with every moment of the whole life; it is "to live in conversion with growing sincerity, depth and precision" (CD IV/2, 566).<sup>123</sup>

To say that Christ's sanctification is accomplished *in our place* raises the question of divine and human agency. The question we face is what does Jesus' history have to do with us? If it was a work outside us (*extra nos*), how does it become something that works in us (*in nobis*)? Two solutions are unacceptable: 1) The christomonist position - humans are merely passive participants; Christ is the only one fundamentally at work; human action is rendered irrelevant. 2) The anthropomonist position - Jesus' work is simply an example (even if an indispensable one); transformation arises from the human

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<sup>121</sup> And, we must add, our relationship to the rest of creation.

<sup>122</sup> "We cannot try to see and realize the conversion of man in a new movement and activity as purely inward or purely outward." CD IV/2, 564 – modified translation.

<sup>123</sup> We will discuss further below about possibility of moral progress and growth below. As a glimpse of what is to come, we can already see that growth is structured not around developing skills or habits but around a continual conversion of the whole self to God and, relatedly, other creatures in service.



initiative.<sup>124</sup> In Barth's doctrine of sanctification, we observed that awakening and holiness arise from the work of the Holy Spirit. However, Barth denies this act of the Spirit takes away human agency, decision, and volition (*CD IV/2*, 578). Rather, participation in Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit (*CD IV/2*, 581f, 566), and it is this participation which enables genuine agency. God's sanctifying command imparts a freedom that enables a person to act in obedience (*CD IV/2*, 532).<sup>125</sup> The result is that a sanctified act is similar to all other human acts in that it is wholly a human action. But it is different from all other acts because it originates with the command of God. Barth declares,

the lifting up of man effected by his sanctification is his own act, and it is similar to all his other acts. Yet it is different from all his other acts to the extent that the initiative on which he does it, the spontaneity with which he expresses himself in it, does not arise from his own heart or emotions or understanding or conscience, but has its origin in the power of the direction which has come to him in these spheres" (*CD IV/2*, 528).

God's agency does not remove human agency, but rather establishes it.<sup>126</sup> God's sanctifying command makes humans answerable and thus constitutes them as "being

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<sup>124</sup> While rarely do theologians fall cleanly into one camp, it is common for theologians' accounts to emphasize one pole or the other. *CD IV/4*, 19-20.

<sup>125</sup> That both *de jure* and *de facto* sanctification are alien and therefore passive does not imply that sanctification has nothing to do with particular human actions. The proper response to God's sanctifying grace is gratitude, praise, obedience and love manifesting in human acts (*CD IV/2*, 511, cf. *CD IV/1*, 700f.). However, these obedient actions are not themselves what make a person sanctified. It is because one is sanctified she responds in a fitting way (*CD IV/2*, 516-7). Barth separates the sanctifying word of grace associated with God's gracious command with the human response to grace: sanctification has to do with the former, not the latter. There is a "praise of works" understood in a twofold way. Good works are those that God praises and are also works that praise God. Good works are those that God affirms, acknowledges and approves and that affirm, acknowledge and approve God (*CD IV/2*, 584). Following Luther, Calvin and the Protestant tradition more generally, Barth argues that works are not meritorious, but follow as a result of God's reconciling grace (*CD IV/2*, 586-7). While not meritorious, they are yet obligatory for the Christian (*CD IV/2*, 584). The Christian's works are the fitting response to the fact that God is at work, corresponding and witnessing to God's work (*CD IV/2*, 591f.). Our works are our way of "declaring" what God has done and accomplished, that is, they are our participation "in announcing the history of the covenant" (*IV/2*, 590f.). In sum, good works are those done in obedience to God's sanctifying command as we play our role as God's covenant partner.

<sup>126</sup> "Sanctification, as the summons that establishes God's covenant partner as a moral subject who is answerable to her determination or vocation to correspond in her being and conduct to God's gracious

responsible” with genuine agency.<sup>127</sup> This determination for partnership with God does not remove human freedom, but rather establishes moral agency.

Moral agency is a frequent subject of theology and ethics today. Moral agency is the ability to act in ways that one perceives to make the world a more just and good place.<sup>128</sup> It is the capacity to live according to what one discerns is right actions.<sup>129</sup> Barth does not use the term “moral agency,” but writes extensively on “freedom” (a concept more common in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to discuss a similar concept. Freedom, for Barth, is not the freedom of choice, but the ability to act in ways that are good, that is, in accordance with the command of God.<sup>130</sup> The ability to hear and obey God constitutes freedom and moral agency for Barth. Moral agency is thus grounded in the work of the Holy Spirit in awakening Christians. In short, God’s gracious, dynamic command summons humans to obedient correspondence to God’s electing love in Christ Jesus, establishing genuine

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election of humanity, is thus the fundamental concept of Barth’s ethics.” McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 4.

<sup>127</sup> CD II/2, 12. Cf. CD II/2, 641ff.; McKenny, “Plight of Protestant Ethics,” 22.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 232.

<sup>129</sup> Emphasis in contemporary discourse is often placed on external circumstances and contingency which constrain actors from acting in ways they determine as good. For example, a person may be convinced that climate change is an existential threat that places a moral imperative on humanity, but embeddedness in systems and structures that are based on fossil fuels and finance-dominated forms of capitalism frustrate attempts to act in ways that do not contribute to climate change in meaningful ways. Such realities “overwhelm agency” and make actors morally incompetent to act justly. Cf. Willis Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence: Challenges to Doing Social Ethics from Below,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 1 (August 7, 2014): 65–82. Barth’s emphasis in discussions of freedom is primarily on the need of the Holy Spirit to give the capability to obey, though he acknowledges situations that external circumstances can make it difficult to know and do the good especially in his discussions of the *Grenzfall*.

<sup>130</sup> Following the Augustinian tradition, this is not freedom of a neutral sort, it is not simply a freedom among choices (a *libertas arbitrii*), rather it is the capability to make the *right* choice. It is a freedom from bondage of sin (Jn. 8:34-36). According to Barth, “freedom cannot be equated with neutrality but is capable of only the one positive meaning that it is freedom which is exercised in the fulfilment of responsibility before God. Hence it is not merely not inactive. It cannot be active in any sort of way. It is certainly freedom of choice. But as freedom given by God, as freedom in action, it is the freedom of a right choice. The choice is right when it corresponds to the free choice of God... Hence the freedom of man is never freedom to repudiate his responsibility before God. It is never freedom to sin. When man sins, he has renounced his freedom” (CD III/2, 196-7).

agency by constituting humans as responsible creatures. Barth illustrates this point in his discussion of a person's "awakening," or conversion. This event is daily necessary and must include the "whole physical being," it includes the total person with her unique capacities in the midst of our particular social location. Thus, the awakening is "wholly and utterly creaturely by nature," but as it has its origin and goal in God, it is a miracle. Therefore, we can say, "this awakening is both wholly creaturely and wholly divine," yet this cooperation is initiated and dependent on God's act (*CD IV/2*, 556-557).<sup>131</sup> We now turn to the creaturely side of this interaction.

#### ***Part 4. Moral Progress: The Community, the Individual, and Participation with Christ***

We have established what it means for Barth to be a human, and what is the goal, purpose or determination of human life. We are relational creatures that exist in partnership with God and fellowship with fellow-humanity. The basis of the formation into this creature is the sanctification by God through our participation in Christ. This

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<sup>131</sup> That a Christian is sanctified by God, does not suggest it is possible to cease being a sinner. In fact, Barth goes so far as saying there is no human action that can escape the marks of sloth and the displeasure of God (*CD IV/2*, 528). Barth argues that Christians exist with a twofold determination [*zweifachen Bestimmung*]. They are determined, 1) by grace, i.e., the summons to a new way of being as God's faithful covenant partner and 2) by sin as still wholly the old person with the same past. These two determinations are mutually exclusive determinations in extreme contradiction (*CD IV/2*, 570-1). To grasp this idea better, Barth contends we need to apply Luther's *simul* to sanctification. Barth extends Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* by incorporating Calvin's *simul* of justification and sanctification mentioned earlier in this section (Cf. Hunsinger, "Tale of Two Simultaneities," 201.). Not only are we *simul (totus) iustus et (totus) peccator* [simultaneously wholly justified and wholly a sinner], but also *simul (totus) sanctus et (totus) peccator* [simultaneously wholly sanctified and wholly a sinner] (*CD IV/2*, 572). The *totus* is important: we are wholly sanctified and wholly sinner. We are not *partim-partim*, part holy and part sinner where we progressively become less of a sinner and more of a saint. Nor are they two properties to be somehow fit together. Yet there is an order and movement between the two. Our *telos* is not a balance of the two determinations but of holiness alone. Thus, we constantly need a movement of turning from our old self to the new. This turning is our conversion (*CD IV/2*, 572-3). Barth finds this movement best captured by the German word "*Auseinandersetzung*," a word he judges to be without parallel in English or French (*CD IV/2*, 570). *Auseinandersetzung* captures the idea of a conflict or confrontation between two parties. Conversion is the movement of *Auseinandersetzung* as we have a falling out with our old self and turn to our new determination in Christ (*CD IV/2*, 573f.). In this movement, Christians remain sinners, but now they are "disturbed sinners" (*CD IV/2*, 524). They have been awakened. It is this disturbance and turning to our determination in Christ that is the hallmark of the Christian life.

sanctification demands a response which is the source of human agency. It is here in this human response that we come to Barth's conception of moral growth.<sup>132</sup> The nature of moral growth has been described in various ways over the centuries. Moral progress is growing in habits or virtues, that is, developing the skills necessary for living a flourishing life (e.g. Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas). Sometimes it is seen as development of reason, knowing the right principle to apply and how to apply it (e.g. Mill). For others, moral growth is the shaping of the will, to desire the right things (e.g. Augustine, Hegel). Still others see moral progress as developing right feelings (e.g. Schleiermacher). Barth, for his part, is often accused of lacking any developed account of growth at all. Moral progress is not necessarily inconsistent with his concept of ethic, interpreters hold, but other than passing mentions, Barth does not develop an account in any meaningful way.<sup>133</sup> I want to suggest that while Barth does not provide an account of moral progress as developed as many moral theologians, he yet provides a richer account of growth than he is often given credit for. However, while most accounts of growth center on the individual, Barth's account is focused on the community and its relation to persons. These social relations are not just the context or means by which I develop myself, but are constitutive of progress itself.

For Barth, moral growth is grounded in the history of interactions with others, and it is this history which enables continuity and the possibility of progress in our moral

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<sup>132</sup> The most thorough account of moral growth and Barth's ethic is by Kaltwasser. While she focused on the individual and the necessity of moral growth within Barth's framework of covenantal responsibility, human willing, and our self-determination (at times going beyond Barth's self-conscious development of the theme), this section will focus on moral growth in the context of community rooted in the person as a relational being. The work here is seen as complementary to her groundbreaking project. See, Kaltwasser, "Responding to Grace."

<sup>133</sup> E.g. Hunsinger, "Tale of Two Simultaneities," 215.

lives.<sup>134</sup> Particularly, moral progress is understood as a process of repeated encounters with God. He writes, “the principle of necessary repetition and renewal, and not a law of stability, is the law of the spiritual growth and continuity of our life” (CD II/2, 647).<sup>135</sup> It is the relations we are in (foremost with God, but also other creatures) which create a continuous cord in our moral life. Who I am and how I act is always based on my history and in response to others, whether of God, humans or both.<sup>136</sup> As such, our agency is intertwined in our relationship with others. For the Christian, it is in this relationship of union with God where we are also united with fellow humanity that we are constituted and formed into moral agents.<sup>137</sup>

Barth’s primary discussion of growth is found in a section entitled, “The Growth of the Community.”<sup>138</sup> Barth proposes that growth can be thought of as horizontal or vertical. Horizontal growth denotes the numerical growth of the community as new

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<sup>134</sup> Werpehowski, “Command and History in the Ethics of Karl Barth.”

<sup>135</sup> [Growth] “is not to be understood merely as the progress which corresponds to the beginning. In all its actions the work of the Holy Spirit is always and everywhere a wholly new thing. At each moment of its occurrence it is itself another change, a conversion, which calls for even more radical conversion. As the change to the Christian life was radical in its inception, so it must and will always be in its continuation.” CD IV/4, 38-39.

<sup>136</sup> Cf H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>137</sup> Susan Eastman argues that, according to Paul, “if the body is porous, participatory, and entangled in its social and physical matrix, then the self is vulnerable to toxic environments. How, then, to deal with this situation? The solution cannot be simply a change in self-relation or self-understanding. Insofar as the ‘system’ that is the self is bigger than the individual, then no merely individual solutions will do. The system itself needs transformation... If the self is structured in other-relationship, then its liberation and health require a radically new relational matrix.” Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul’s Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017), 125. For Paul, it is the body of Christ which offers such a new relational matrix.

<sup>138</sup> CD IV/2, 641-60. Barth increasingly used the word *Gemeinde* (community/congregation) rather than *Kirche* (church). “The word ‘community,’ rather than ‘Church,’ is used advisedly, for from a theological point of view it is best to avoid the word ‘Church’ as much as possible, if not altogether. At all events, this overshadowed and overburdened word should be immediately and consistently interpreted by the word ‘community.’” Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 37. Barth’s use of *Gemeinde* served his purpose of focusing on concrete congregations rather than the church as an institution related often too closely to the state. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1949), 142f. Cf. Tracey Mark Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism: Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology in Light of His Understanding of Baptism* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2010), 99f.; Kimlyn J. Bender, *Confessing Christ for Church and World: Studies in Modern Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 88.

individuals are united with the community through baptism (*CD IV/2*, 645). By such, Barth does not refer to growth in human relationships in contrast to our relationship with God, but to the addition of new Christians to the community. However, according to Barth, the New Testament most often refers to growth as qualitative, what Barth refers to as vertical growth – the community’s growing into deeper fellowship with Christ and the practices of holy things (*CD IV/2*, 648). The horizontal dimension is not to be disregarded, but the vertical is the primary connotation in Scripture. Barth demonstrates this through the exegesis of a long list of passages that refer to growth as intensive, spiritual growth (*CD IV/2*, 650). Of course, this is a dissertation in moral theology, and therefore it might be acknowledged that Barth does indeed have an account of spiritual growth, but still not of moral growth. But this is to disconnect two things that Barth deems inseparable. What Barth refers to as spiritual has ethical content. Growth in our relationship with God necessarily has implications for our relationship with other creatures (other humans, other animals and all of creation). Just as ethics without theology is deficient and theology without ethics is even worse, spiritual growth that does not affect our ethical lives is no growth at all. In this section we present Barth’s general account of spiritual growth with attention to its consequences for moral growth.

The initial thing we notice in Barth’s account of growth is that progress applies first and foremost to the Christian community and only secondarily (though, still vitally) to individuals. This scheme is not unique to this doctrine in the *Church Dogmatics*. The placement of the community before the individual is also found in his doctrine of election, justification, and vocation. Barth’s doctrine of election is grounded in an account of Jesus Christ as the proper subject of election, which is followed by a

discussion of the election of the one community of God made up of Israel and the church.<sup>139</sup> He contrasts this approach with common Reformed accounts of election,

starting from the election of Jesus Christ it does not immediately envisage the election of the individual believer... but in the first place a mediate and mediating election. The Subject of this is indeed God in Jesus Christ, and its particular object is indeed men. But it is not men as private persons in the singular or plural. It is these men as a fellowship elected by God in Jesus Christ and determined from all eternity for a peculiar service, to be made capable of this service and to discharge it. According to Holy Scripture its life and function is the primary object of this “other” election which is included in the election of Jesus Christ. Only from the standpoint of this fellowship and with it in view is it possible to speak properly of the election of the individual believer. (*CD II/2*, 195-6)

The election of the community precedes the individual because it is the community that mediates the election (*CD II/2*, 196f.).<sup>140</sup> Similarly, the community precedes the individual in Barth’s doctrine of justification. He ends the part volume with an account of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of Christians in bringing about the “subjective realization of the atonement” (*CD IV/1*, 643). The Holy Spirit’s gathering of the Christian community is expounded first before moving on to the Holy Spirit and the faith of the individual.<sup>141</sup> The Christian community that is awakened and gathered is the body of Christ.<sup>142</sup> The calling of the individual is thus not to Christ alone but also to this earthly-historical body of Christ. He states, “the calling of sinful man to faith in Jesus Christ is identical with his calling to the community of Jesus Christ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the community which is His body, the earthly-historical form of His existence.” (*CD IV/1*, 759) In the doctrine of vocation, Barth once

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<sup>139</sup> *CD II/2*, § 34 “The Election of the Community,” 195-305.

<sup>140</sup> *CD II/2*, § 35 “The Election of the Individual,” 306-506.

<sup>141</sup> *CD IV/1*, § 62 “The Holy Spirit and the Gathering of the Christian Community,” 643-739; *CD IV/1*, § 63 “The Holy Spirit and Christian Faith,” 740-79.

<sup>142</sup> “The Christian community which is His body is the gathering of those men whom already before all others He has made willing and ready for life under the divine verdict executed in His death and revealed in His resurrection from the dead.” (*IV/1*, 661)

again starts with the community before moving on to the individual.<sup>143</sup> Vocation is first a calling to be united to Christ and thus to other members of the body of Christ and only then to the particular callings of the individual. “Jesus Christ did not envisage individual followers, disciples and witnesses but a plurality of such united by Him both with Himself and with one another” (*CD IV/3*, 682). It is as members of this sent community that individual callings and endowments are given to accomplish the task of witness set before the people of God (*CD IV/3*, 855). In sum, there is first the election, gathering, building, and sending of the community, which precedes the election, faith, love, and hope of the individual. It is not that the individual is unimportant, quite the opposite. But it is as members of the body of Christ that individuals become persons of faith, love, and hope. It is through the community that individuals are formed.

*CD IV/2* follows this pattern and logic, and is extended with two additional reasons that the community is rightly seen to precede the individual in regards to growth. First, Scriptural passages on growth or upbuilding never refer to the solitary individual as such, but to the community (*CD IV/2*, 627). The congregation is always the object of growth and building up by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, “in its New Testament form Christian ethics is never concerned only with the requirement of an abstract private morality but always with instructions for the building up of the community.”<sup>144</sup> Faithfulness to Scripture demands an account of growth that begins with the community.

Second, Barth’s account of growth is based on his theological understanding of humanity’s relational nature. A person always has his or her being grounded in

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<sup>143</sup> *CD IV/3*, § 72 “The Holy Spirit and the Sending of the Christian Community,” 681-901; *CD IV/3*, § 73 “The Holy Spirit and Christian Hope,” 902-42.

<sup>144</sup> *CD IV/2*, 637, slightly modified translation.



intersubjective relations. Thus, just as in election where the election of the community must be discussed first as the mediator of the individual's election (i.e., there is always a historical context involving the church in which one becomes a Christian), growth of the community must be first considered as the site in which an individual's spiritual and moral growth occurs. It is not possible to think of an individual's growth outside his or her interpersonal relationships with other humans and the work of God in the broader community. Barth writes,

If it is true that Christian love is that which (with Christian faith and Christian hope) makes an individual man a Christian, we have to remember that the individual man does not become a Christian, and live as such, in a vacuum, but in a definite historical context, i.e., in and with the upbuilding of the Christian community... because we cannot see and understand the individual Christian except at the place where he is the one he is, and because this place is the community, we have first to consider the community, although remembering at every point that in it we have to do with the many individual Christians assembled in it (*CD IV/2*, 614f.).

God does not merely sanctify humans as individuals but acts particularly to sanctify the church community. God gathers, builds up and sends forth a people that fundamentally exist to bear witness to God and to serve the world.<sup>145</sup> Spiritual growth has to do with the actualization of such a people in particular time and places. As Hunsinger observes, for Barth, “while ‘we must not cease to stress the individual’ (*CD IV/1*, p. 150), we must not fail to see that the being of the Christian... is a being in relation (*CD IV/1*, p. 153). It is primarily in the *koinonia* of the community, therefore, not in the individual as such, that the work of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled.”<sup>146</sup> Indeed, inasmuch as the community is made up of individuals, growth in an individual's interpersonal life is necessary for the growth

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<sup>145</sup> *CD IV/1*, 149-53, 620. The major temptation of the church is to represent itself rather than the sanctification that has taken place in Christ (*CD IV/2*, 622-3).

<sup>146</sup> Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion,” 187.

of the community. The community and person are interconnected and cannot be thought of in isolation.<sup>147</sup> An account of moral growth must attend to the relational nature of humans and the interplay of group and intersubjective dynamics.

The growth of the Christian community, Barth contends, consists of the “increase in the reception and exercise of the holy things entrusted to them; in which as *sancti* [saints] they increase in relation to the *sancta* [holy things]” (*CD IV/2*, 648). By holy things, he offers a representative (not exhaustive) list: knowledge of faith, thanksgiving, penitence, joy, prayer, solidarity with the world, service to Christians and the world, prophetic hope for God’s good future, proclamation of the Word which gathers and maintains the community, service to God and above all, worship which is the adoration and praise of God (*CD IV/2*, 643).<sup>148</sup> Growth is located in the increase of these public acts and expressions of affection of the community. This is one of the closest moments that Barth gets to identifying visible marks of growth, albeit, not in the individual but in the community.<sup>149</sup> While the holiness of a person, community, or action

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<sup>147</sup> “Both are ends and both are means” (*CD IV/2*, 615).

<sup>148</sup> It is important to note that simply performing the *sancta* does not itself produce sanctification or holiness of the community. Sanctification remains God’s work. Barth wrote earlier, “the Church does exist in activity, and indeed in a specific and special activity, the human activity directed in accordance with its own law. But it is not the Church which makes its special activity holy... in its preaching, in its worship, in its constitution, in its ordinances, in its theology, in its attitude in questions and decisions which affect the world... [Jesus Christ] is always the Subject, the Lord, the Giver of the holiness of its action.” *CD IV/1*, 693f.

<sup>149</sup> Another place the community plays a key role in growth is found in his section, “The Praise of Works.” The matter of “good works” is “a special form of the question of the sanctification of man,” (*CD IV/2*, 587), and thus, while it is we humans who do a work, it is God which sanctifies the action and makes it “good.” Barth describes a good work as that which God praises and affirms and which praises God (*CD IV/2*, 586). We thus cannot know for certain if an action is indeed good. God decides the goodness of act based on whether it is done as a response to God’s summons. However, there is one place that Barth does talk about the perception of good works, but is not by looking at individuals *qua* individuals. Rather, a good work is “recognized” in one’s membership of the community of saints. Barth writes, “by this integration [in the community] it may be recognized, and by integration in the doing of a particular work he himself may be assured, that all is well with his obedience and service and therefore his freedom” (*CD IV/2*, 596). Evidence of a good work and thus of sanctification is one’s integration in the community which includes listening to and serving with others in the community. This reiterates the spiritual growth is relational and begins with the growth of the community.

can never be known with certainty, the performance of these holy things is one of the surest signs of growth: “The progress of the Church... denotes in the New Testament primarily and predominantly, although not exclusively, spiritual progress; the progress of the *sancti* in their relationship to the *sancta*” (CD IV/2, 651). The *sancta* provides criteria in which to evaluate if a community is growing.

Barth continues, “the *communio sanctorum* is the event in which the *sancti* participate in these *sancta*” (CD IV/2, 643). As Christians come together in fellowship and exercise together activities and ways of being that increasingly correspond to Jesus Christ’s life, growth of the community occurs. In this growth, the community “gains consistency, it acquires order and form, it becomes capable of action” (CD IV/1, 151). However, the growth of the community and the individual are linked: “the *sancti* are those to whom these *sancta* are entrusted. They are not entrusted to any of us as private individuals. They are entrusted to us all only in conjunction with others. In this way, but only in this way, they are entrusted to each of us personally” (CD IV/2, 643). It is in the context of community that we are called to worship, service, prophetic action, joy and all the other *sancta*. It is in the context of the community that persons are shaped and join with others to become that which God has determined for us.<sup>150</sup> We cannot think

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<sup>150</sup> This hedges against the individualistic overtones of a command ethics. I do not come before God as a solitary individual, but as one in a community. For ethics, “the question must actually be: What ought *we* to do? and not, what ought *I* to do? The former does not exclude the latter. Indeed, it can seriously be put only if it really includes the latter. But, again, everything depends on whether the second is really understood as included in the first. I am myself the subject of responsibility to the command of God, and therefore the subject of which the question of ethical reflection speaks. But I am this only as included in the ‘we.’ I am myself the covenant-partner of God, but my God is our God. I may and must hear His command, but His command applies to us all... I cannot overlook or forget the fact that I am never alone, and never will be. And I must remember it—not merely as a kind of prologue or epilogue, but as a constituent element from the very outset—when I make the prior decision from which I move to the divine decision” (CD II/2, 655). Of course, the individual is the one responsible for acting and the church is by no means always faithful to God’s commands, but the person ought to proceed with caution when their understanding of the command veers away from the interpretation of faithful Christians. This runs against what a majority of Protestants believe according to a recent research. The survey revealed that 65% of Protestant churchgoers say they can

of individuals abstractly from the community, rather persons and society are interconnected. Since humans are constituted in their relationships, growth and change will be closely connected to those relationships.

While it is true in general that humans are shaped by the groups and interpersonal relationships they participate in, the church is not just any group. Certainly the church has a creaturely existence and so the same forces and sociological characteristics can be observed as in other groups. Individual and group relations, internal politics, influence from outside groups, etc., all shape a congregation. However, this is not all there is to say, for the church is the earthly-historical body of Christ in the world today. It is an event which finds its being in the hearing of the Word of God.<sup>151</sup> The church participates in Jesus Christ, and as it hears the Word, this relational event is the source of its spiritual and moral growth. The power of the community's growth is the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the church.

Barth highlights this in his claim that Jesus Christ *is* the community (CD IV/2, 655). This does not mean the church is directly identifiable with Jesus Christ (even a superficial glance at the church would see this as problematic).<sup>152</sup> The Christian community is always the *communio peccatorum* [community of sinners].<sup>153</sup> Rather, Barth

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walk with God without other believers, with 36% agreeing strongly. Aaron Earls, "Churchgoers Hold Conflicting Views on the Need for Other Christians," LifeWay Research, August 5, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/08/05/churchgoers-hold-conflicting-views-on-the-need-for-other-christians/>.

<sup>151</sup> CD I/2, 797ff.; John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44–47.

<sup>152</sup> This helps explain why the church can appear to not be growing, but even digressing (CD IV/2, 649). The lordship of Christ coupled with acknowledgment that the church is a community of sinners, should reduce anxiety at the prospect of dissent within a community. The church must always evaluate dissenting claims against the revelation of Christ, but ought to be open to how God may be speaking today. Nicholas M. Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57, no. 3 (August 2004): 299.

<sup>153</sup> CD IV/2, 642.

affirms Jesus Christ is present on earth in this community. In the New Testament language, the church is Christ's body in which Christ is the head (*CD IV/2*, 655). Barth contends the church is, "the earthly-historical form of His existence."<sup>154</sup> So, while the church is comprised of sinners, it is sanctified in Christ as his body. It is, "holy only because it is the body of Jesus Christ. Only the presence of the Holy Spirit makes the church holy."<sup>155</sup> As the body of Christ, to say that the community must grow means equivalently that Jesus Christ must increase (*CD IV/2*, 656-7).

Barth also contends that Jesus Christ *is* the kingdom of God (*CD IV/2*, 656). Christ's proclamation of the kingdom of God, that is, of the rule of God, is the proclamation of the reign that has come in his person (*Lk.* 17:21). Jesus Christ is God's revelation of his determination to be with and for humanity. Since the church is the body of Christ, it is therefore not incorrect to say that the kingdom of God is the Christian community. However, Barth again warns against directly equating the community with the kingdom of God. Too often it manifests the opposite. Nevertheless, while the kingdom of God is not limited to the church, the community is the central location where God's reign is witnessed to on earth. The church is "kingdom-tempered" as it witnesses to God and enters into solidarity with fellow-creatures, especially the most vulnerable.<sup>156</sup>

Putting these two together (Jesus Christ is the community and the kingdom of God), we see that as Jesus Christ increases in the community, the kingdom of God increases (i.e., the acknowledgement of God's lordship in the community). This

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<sup>154</sup> *CD IV/2*, 659; cf. *CD IV/1*, 661.

<sup>155</sup> Stout, *A Fellowship of Baptism*, 155.

<sup>156</sup> *CL*, 266. This point will be expanded in chapter five.

participation with Christ comes about through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>157</sup> As the Christian community is united more and more with Jesus Christ, the Christian community experiences spiritual (and moral) growth and joins in service to God.<sup>158</sup> The community will increasingly exercise the *sancta* in glory and service to God and thus also in solidarity with fellow-humanity. Spirit led growth, Barth writes, “will continually exalt the lowly, enrich the poor, give joy to the sad and make heroes of the feeble” (*CD IV/2*, 650). Thus, in short, growth in the church is rooted in the increase of Christ in its midst through the Holy Spirit, or in other words, a growing participation into Christ of the community in witness to his reign and in service to God.

In summary, a person is who he or she is through relationships to various groups and interpersonal relationships. Thus, transformation of a person and a group are interrelated.<sup>159</sup> Persons in our society have multiple group identities which shape him or her, and for the Christian, the church ought to be a significant dynamic in that development. When a Christian is involved with a church that is growing (i.e., a hearing community with an increase in the exercise of holy things such as worship, service, etc.),

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<sup>157</sup> “The saving activity of the Holy Spirit, as understood by Barth, is therefore communal in content. The Spirit is the presence and power of *koinonia* joining believers to Christ and through him to God and one another.” Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion,” 191. The growth of community is the power of Jesus Christ, but it is so in the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which makes possible fellowship with Christ and therefore growth. Growth in the Christian life, “depends on the action of the Holy Spirit without which our action, however much we have grown in virtue, will not be free to be genuine Christian action.” McKenny, “Freed by God for God,” 132. Since, for Barth, the Holy Spirit is the self-attestation of Jesus Christ, it is permissible to say either Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit is the power of growth (*CD IV/2*, 651).

<sup>158</sup> This claim at first may seem at odds with Barth’s claim elsewhere. There is no growth in our relationship with Christ, it is all or nothing! God, “is not a lord alongside other lords, but the Lord of all lords, the only Lord. We can live by His grace and compassion, in covenant with Him, only completely or not at all” (*CD II/2*, 620). But Barth is not suggesting we become more united with Christ (though, there is the possibility of growth in our subjective awareness of this truth). Cf. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 18. Barth is rather suggesting that based in the once for all work of Christ, the presence and power of Christ increases in the community, and it is in this relationship that growth occurs.

<sup>159</sup> Two Pauline scholars have recently made similar arguments based on Paul’s letters. Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 125, 181f.; Douglas A. Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics: The Triumph of God’s Love* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2020), 224ff.

spiritual and moral<sup>160</sup> growth will result. In the absence of such a local community, growth is not impossible, but much more precarious. Spiritual and moral formation are yet possible through the work of the Holy Spirit in relationships with the wider church (past and present), as well as interactions with those outside the church through whom the Word of God may be heard.<sup>161</sup> But while not impossible, life in a church that is experiencing growth as a community makes the flourishing of individual growth more likely.

### ***Part 5. Moral Progress: Human Capacities, Phenomena, and Empowerment by Grace***

If moral growth is captured in our relational encounters as we meet God and increase in the exercise of those holy things God calls us to, what does this mean for our creaturely capacities such as reason, virtues, and emotion? The role and significance of

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<sup>160</sup> Barth's very basic understanding of ethics has to do with the human encounter with God – a relational concept. To do the good is to obey God's summons to live faithfully as covenant partner. Ethics does not begin with set of principles or habits, but with relationship, a call to Jesus Christ. When Barth began work on the unfinished ethics of his doctrine of reconciliation, he searched for a word or concept to describe the moral dimensions of the Christian life. After considering various options (Christian life, freedom, repentance, decision, faith, thanksgiving/ gratitude and faithfulness), he settled on invocation. Above all, this was because it conveyed the active role humans play in the covenant relationship, it expressed "the fact that some human *action* is at issue in the obedience which the gracious God commands of man." Barth, *The Christian Life*, 42. Embedded in this notion of invocation is the relational nature of calling and response. He explains, invocation aptly expresses the idea of an action that is "distinctive to man as the partner of God in the covenant of grace established by him... derive[s] and proceed[s] from the fulfilment of this covenant in Jesus Christ... also grow[s] out of man's awareness of fellowship with him and receive[s] its form from this." Barth, 42. It is the proper human response to the "dynamic reality" of the living God. Barth, 33. It is a genuine relation because not only do humans respond, but God hears the invocation and "lets himself be touched and moved by it" Barth, 106. Barth describes this relationship as one of intimacy and dynamism. God, "calls upon them and commands them to call upon him. He wills that their whole life become invocation of this kind. To be obedient to this command, to call upon him as Father, is to rise up as the prodigal son did, to take the way to the Father as his child, to speak intimately to him, to claim a hearing from him. Invocation, then, aims at the renewal, or rather, the dynamic actualization, of what has become a static, stagnant, and frozen relationship with him." Barth, 85. He goes on, "invoking God the Father is the enterprise that follows his word and summons to come back out of an atmosphere of unnatural cold and aloofness to one of natural warmth and intimacy. It is the attempt in relation to him who acts to meet him actively, not just to keep on waiting slackly for whatever develops." Barth, 86. In sum, invocation is the basic "Christian ethos." Barth, 89. This is the central concept that Barth thinks captures the ethical life.

<sup>161</sup> As discussed in an earlier footnote, God is not confined to the church but is sovereign over all creation and thus God's word may be obeyed outside the walls of the church. *CD IV/3.1*, 114-117.

our capacities vis-à-vis God's sanctifying grace in the context of community is the subject of this chapter's final section. The case has been made that for Barth, anthropology must begin with Jesus Christ as the one who reveals that which is central to human existence, namely our determination to be in fellowship with God and solidarity with fellow humans. However, we will see that Barth believes other disciplines such as the natural sciences, philosophy, psychology, history and others can effectively investigate human capacities which are vital for understanding the Christian Life. In particular, we will explore how our capacities relate to our determination as covenant partners to God, their relation to the Command of God, and the relation of theology and other disciplines in our understanding of them.<sup>162</sup>

It was mentioned earlier that the Protestant emphasis of grace alone has been troublesome for considering sanctification. There has been a fluctuation between emphasizing God's grace (in a way that seems to marginalize human agency) or of stressing human ability (that makes grace appear superfluous). Rather than diminishing the role of grace, Barth's approach is noteworthy in his radicalization of the Protestant doctrine of grace alone, as we have seen in the doctrine of sanctification. Counterintuitively, Barth sees this move as allowing for the establishment of human agency.<sup>163</sup> We are not given a new nature, but God's sanctifying grace gives the ability to use our intact created capacities to fulfill God's commands. As McKenny summarizes,

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<sup>162</sup> I am deeply indebted in this section to Gerald McKenny's work on this subject.

<sup>163</sup> McKenny, "Plight of Protestant Ethics," 23. Barth did allow for a cooperation that acted in correspondence with grace. "Barth does not deny that human freedom 'cooperates' with divine grace. He denies that this cooperation in anyway effects salvation. Although grace makes human freedom possible as a mode of acting (*modus agendi*), that freedom is always a gift." Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion," 185. Barth writes, humans, "on their side have no power to co-operate with God. It can only turn out that they do so in fact to the extent that God takes the initiative towards them, He Himself co-operating with them and giving them on their side the opportunity—beyond any capacity of their own—to co-operate with Him." *CD III/3*, 110.



“The miracle for [Barth] is that God’s gift bestows a *capability* that we utterly lack apart from the miracle of grace, by which we may perform characteristically Christian actions by the exercise of our unaltered creaturely *capacities*.”<sup>164</sup>

In the earlier discussion of anthropology, we observed that, for Barth, theology provides insight into what is most central to human existence, namely covenant partnership with God in solidarity with other creatures, while non-theological disciplines are insufficient to get at our true humanity, and rather only arrive at the “phenomena.” However, as we will see, Barth yet found these disciplines crucial for the Christian life for they excel at exploring various human capacities.

According to Barth, the phenomena are the subject matter of the natural and social sciences which study the physical world observed through our senses as well as features discoverable through philosophy, history, and the social sciences.<sup>165</sup> They are, “all those aspects of the being of man which are recognizable and knowable elsewhere than in God's Word and revelation” (*CD* III/2, 198). A phenomenon in itself is indefinite about God and distinct from the insights of theological anthropology. Barth writes, “these phenomena as such are neutral, relative and ambiguous. They may point in various directions. They may or may not be symptoms of real man. They are so only for those who know him already and can therefore interpret them correctly. In themselves they

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<sup>164</sup> McKenny, “Freed by God for God,” 126. McKenny’s uses the helpful vocabulary of capacity and capability to distinguish two things. By capacity, McKenny means our creaturely abilities inherent to our nature as humans. Capabilities refers to the ability to use those capacities in freedom, i.e. obedience to God. Terms that can be translated into English as capacity, capability or ability include *Fähigkeit*, *Befähigung*, *Vermögen*, *Können* and *tüchtig*. While carrying some nuance, Barth basically uses these terms interchangeably. So while Barth does not include two terms for capacity and capability, McKenny’s differentiation accurately reflects Barth’s position.

<sup>165</sup> The term has its roots with Kant who distinguished in the *Critique of Pure Reason* between the phenomena and noumena. The phenomena are the appearances of things as they appear to our sense, where the noumena are things as they really are in themselves (*Ding an sich*).

convey no knowledge of real man” (*CD* III/2, 76). Phenomena does not convey a person’s relation to God nor the call to service, i.e. what we were created for as partners with God according to theological anthropology. In fact, they can be interpreted in ways that point in the opposite direction. For example, evolutionary history in itself is neutral. It can be understood in a way that points away from our reality as God’s covenant partners, and understood solely as products of an indifferent, uncaring universe. But conversely, the phenomena can be viewed in light of God’s revelation. Humans are creatures who developed through evolutionary processes such that they are products of God’s love and purpose to have free creatures with the capacity to enter into willing partnership with God. When viewed this way, Barth says we are no longer dealing with phenomena but *symptoms* of the real human. The difference lies with the underlying meaning of human existence through which one comprehends the findings of these disciplines. Barth writes, “a phenomenon becomes a symptom when it is understood in light of history of God’s stance toward humanity” (*CD* III/2, 77). Two different people can look at the same scientific result but see it fitting into the larger story of human existence in different ways (*CD* III/2, 78). When human capacities are understood in light of our reality before God, they are seen as symptoms of our being. As such, once we start with the presupposition of theological anthropology, Barth deems these other disciplines as very useful, even necessary for understanding human existence. While they cannot give initial instruction into the definition of humanity, the phenomena are relevant, interesting, important and legitimate.

Thus, after identifying the insights that arise from theological anthropology, Barth contends for a “radical reconsideration” of the phenomena which he earlier criticized (*CD*

III/2, 198). Non-theological, but genuine knowledge of humans can proceed on the basis of knowledge of real humanity revealed in Jesus Christ. One may understand the phenomena of the human as *symptoms* of our true being, and when done so, “theological anthropology is prepared to welcome all such general knowledge of man” (CD III/2, 202). In fact, non-theological knowledge of humans is “not only possible, but basically justified and necessary” (CD III/2, 202). Barth proceeds to revisit the four anthropological disciplines he earlier critiqued as insufficient explaining how these disciplines provide invaluable perspectives on the distinctive characteristics of humans in light of revelation (CD III/2, 200f.). These disciplines rightfully investigate various creaturely capacities [*Fähigkeiten*] that enable us to fulfill our calling as real humans. The *natural sciences* give insights into the capacity to be a creature in the physical world that exists in interconnection with other beings and materials.<sup>166</sup> *Idealistic ethics* (idealism) rightly sees humans as possessing a freedom that goes beyond our biological selves. This ethic explores the human capacity to be the active subject of one’s history. *Existential philosophy* goes further in seeing humans as having their being in relationship to others. This capacity for relationship is the object of existentialism. Finally, *theistic anthropology* proceeds one more step in seeing humans as having a capacity to be in

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<sup>166</sup> Barth finds theology closer to the inductive, natural sciences in methodology than to other disciplines such as philosophy, for the natural sciences are “based on observation and inference” (CD III/2, 12). The primary differences with theology are the object of study and the source of knowledge. The object of investigation for theology is the Word of God. Cf. Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980). The work of the natural sciences is welcomed so long as it focuses on the appropriate subject matter: “To the extent that it remains within its limits, and does not attempt to be more or less than exact science, it is a good work; as good as man himself as God created him. Hence our differentiation from it need not imply opposition. Opposition is required only if it becomes axiomatic, dogmatic and speculative” (CD III/4, 25). Cf. Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 112ff. The volume in his *Church Dogmatics* on the ethics of the doctrine of Creation (CD III/4) was dedicated to American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston which made him their Foreign Honorary Member on his 64th birthday. [“der American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston (Massachusetts) als Zeichen des Dankes”] Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 376.

relationship with a transcendent Other. The human with the capacity for history and decision and ability to be a partner to God is the object of this anthropology. All these ambiguous capacities may be discerned as symptoms of human's real essence in light of the revelation of Christ.

In sum, we know the true meaning and calling of humanity only through the Word of God. In light of this revelation, non-theological sources are quite valuable. While theology should be supremely non-committal to scientific theories (theology must be free: *CD* III/2, 8), it rightly welcomes their insights. These disciplines help us better understand our human capacities which shed light on how we relate to God and others. The capacities investigated can indeed prove to be symptoms of our real humanity. The remainder of this chapter will focus on human capacities and their involvement in moral formation.

We begin by noting that, for Barth, there is no inherent capacity for fellowship with God, i.e., the capacity to hear God's gracious Word and freely and lovingly obey God in correspondence.<sup>167</sup> Our capacities are insufficient for fulfilling our covenant determination, namely fellowship with God. In his famous debate with Emil Brunner, Barth made that case that there is no inherent "point of contact" [*Anknüpfungspunkt*] by which humans can naturally fellowship with God.<sup>168</sup> What is needed is a miracle, the gift of grace by which we are awakened to a new life with God. Barth elsewhere makes clear,

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<sup>167</sup> "Fellowship" is understood by Barth as the human encounter with God where God in freedom bestowed love on us by graciously revealing God's self and where we in freedom obey and love God in return (rendered above all in our invocation of God). It is the active covenant partnership that comes through participation in Christ (cf. *CD* II/1, 10; III/1, 256f.; III/4, 74; IV/2, 553; Barth, *The Christian Life*, 30).

<sup>168</sup> Karl Barth, "No!" in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" By Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1946), 88–90.

“we ourselves have no capacity [*Fähigkeit*] for fellowship with God” (CD II/1, 182).<sup>169</sup> It is only through the divine act of revelation, where God is revealed in God’s hiddenness, that fellowship is made possible.

This miracle is God’s self-giving and does not entail a bestowal of a new capacity. When God indwells in us, this “does not involve a magical transformation of man, or a supernatural enlargement of his capacity [*Vermögens*], so that now he can do what before he could not do. He cannot do it afterwards any more than he could do before.”<sup>170</sup> Grace does not grant us the possession of a capacity for fellowship with God, rather at every moment we remain dependent on God making us capable for this communion despite our inability.<sup>171</sup> Rather, Barth maintains, “by the grace of God we may view and conceive God and speak of God in our incapacity [*Unvermögen*]” (CD II/1, 213). Grace is a gift, not something we can ever possess (there is no habitual grace<sup>172</sup>). The gift is not a capacity, but God’s giving of God’s self (CD II/1, 353-4).

While the miracle is not a new capacity, the employment of our existing natural faculties is the means by which we fulfill our covenant partnership with God. “It is not the fact that he has ear and reason and the character of logos which makes him this specific creature. The case is rather that he has these qualities only because he is this

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<sup>169</sup> Likewise, Barth later writes, “there can be no question of any presuppositions on the part of those who are called: of any capacity [*Befähigung*] or equipment for the performance of what is commanded; of any latent faith; of any inward or outward preparation” (CD IV/2, 535).

<sup>170</sup> CD II/1, 212 cf. CD IV/4, 4-5. Cf. “Its practice [the event of faith where a person hears God’s Word] does not presuppose any special endowment whether natural or supernatural. The believer is the same ungifted and idle or gifted and busy man he was as an unbeliever and may become again. He believes as the man he is, with the inventory corresponding to his condition. There is no question of an exalting or abasing of his existence; what is at issue is the grace or judgment of God on his existence” (CD I/1, 237).

<sup>171</sup> As Hunsinger argues, “When Barth states that human freedom is entirely dependent on grace, he means without the subvention of infused habits, virtues or principles in the soul.” Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion,” 193, footnote 7.

<sup>172</sup> “The older Reformed dogmatists... spoke of a *gratia habitualis*, or many such, imparted to the human nature of Jesus Christ by infusion. *Habitus* comes from *habere*, and therefore denotes possession. But grace is divine giving and human receiving. It can be ‘had’ only in the course of this history” CD IV/2, 89-90.

creature” (*CD III/2*, 164). To be human is not to have certain faculties, but to exist in our relations with God and other creatures. But in light of this reality, our capacities can be appreciated for their role in this existence. Because we are determined for this fellowship with God, we can understand these abilities as symptoms of our election. Our natures, furthermore, are not such that they are in opposition or inherently opposed to God – the humanity of Jesus shows this. If they were, Barth writes, “a second creation would have been needed to make this partnership possible and actual” (*CD III/2*, 224). Rather, since the Creator determined humans for covenant partnership, this means human “creaturely essence cannot be alien or opposed to this grace of God, but must confront it with a certain familiarity... human creatureliness is not regarded as unsuitable or unserviceable, but as adapted to be employed to this end” (*CD III/2*, 224).<sup>173</sup> We do not have the capability to enter into covenant partnership with God but a new nature is not the remedy.

Instead, what humans need is the *capability* to use our created capacities in ways that correspond to our determination. We are incapable in ourselves of doing the good. We are dependent on God determining the good in accordance with God’s loving election, revealing that good to us, and equipping us with the freedom to obey.<sup>174</sup> The miracle is the God-given capability to use our creaturely capacities as faithful covenant partners which is unachievable on our own. Barth writes, “he certainly remains a man and

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<sup>173</sup> “We do not forget that man has not forfeited his good nature and its dispositions and capacities by reason of his corruption and under the judgment of God which has come upon him” (*CD IV/1*, 506).

<sup>174</sup> Barth argues we can set aside three views when we talk about how we become those who act morally: 1) not infusion of supernatural powers (roman Catholics), 2) not spurring on to use natural moral and religious impulses (Palagian, neo-protestants, some strands of roman Catholics, and theological existentialism in general) and 3) we are not changed (Lutheran/Melanchthon). While all have some truth to them, these are all insufficient as none account for the divine possibility of this event (*CD IV/4*, 5). “The answer which Holy Scripture gives to this question ignores all these views and refers us to the decisive point, to the change which comes on man himself in the freedom of the gracious God, the change in which he himself is free to become what he was not and could not be before, and consequently to do what he did not and could not do before, i.e., be faithful to God” (*CD IV/4*, 5).

within the sphere of his human capacity [*Vermögens*] and yet, in this very sphere of his human capacity, witnesses to what transcends all his possibilities.”<sup>175</sup> With the gift of true freedom, God makes possible the capability to respond in obedience to God’s gracious command.<sup>176</sup> But this gracious freedom to choose the good does not negate human agency; humans still have to employ that capability through the use of creaturely capacities to fulfill our role as God’s partners. As God gives this freedom, we are capable to choose God and what God command.<sup>177</sup> And, writes McKenny, “as we put this freedom into effect, we exercise our created *capacity* to choose in its properly creaturely manner, namely, as a capacity God created not so that we may be able to choose anything whatever, whether good or evil, but precisely so that we may choose God.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, “human beings, by the exercise of a creaturely capacity (created precisely for this purpose), activate a capability as it is bestowed by God. It is we who activate it, and it is as genuine agents that we activate it; our capacities are not mere instruments or channels of God’s action.”<sup>179</sup> We are given a freedom that we otherwise do not enjoy which gives us the possibility to use our capacities for what they were created.<sup>180</sup> While visiting the

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<sup>175</sup> *CD* II/1, 219; cf. *CD* IV/4, 4-5.

<sup>176</sup> “The basic and decisive thing is not that there is here also a comprehensive fulfilment of man’s physical and psychical, of his moral, intellectual and even religious potentialities. He certainly has to respond to the change which God has effected for him with his own life and work as such. But these can only be a response. That he can and must and actually does respond with his own life and work, that he makes his own free decision corresponding to the divine change, is something which he cannot do by his own wisdom and power or in his own freedom. He can do it only in a freedom which is given him. His decision can correspond to the divine change and follow it only in so far as the latter makes it possible and demands it” (*CD* IV/4, Fragment, 27).

<sup>177</sup> For Barth, freedom always remains a gift, never becoming a habit, a capacity, or something to be possessed. We constantly remain dependent on God for this gift.

<sup>178</sup> McKenny, “Freed by God for God,” 128–29.

<sup>179</sup> McKenny, 129.

<sup>180</sup> Barth elsewhere uses the term “awakening,” to describe our need for God to act to give us the capability to be faithful covenant partners. This is the minute-by-minute need for conversion from our sinful self to our determination before God. The awakening includes our “whole physical being,” with the employment of our unique capacities which arises in the midst of our particular social location. God’s awakening is a mystery but is creaturely in that it never occurs “outside of earth in time” but to a person in her capacities and often arises through the use of other humans and social situations (*CD* IV/2, 556-7).

United States in 1962, Barth described this concept of capacity and capability with an imperfect analogy of a person who has broken legs. Such a person has the capacities to walk, his legs are there, but they are incapable of being used according to their *telos*. In a similar manner, we retain our capacities but are unable to use them according to what we were created for. Thus, the Holy Spirit is needed to bring healing and make the person able to use their natural capacity for the purpose it was created for.<sup>181</sup> But once that ability is there, we are still in need of exercising the capacity.

While grace does not provide a new capacity for fellowship with God and obeying God's command, the result of God's sanctifying grace, as we said earlier, is transformation. Moral change comes through the relation encounter with God (as well as others). Barth provides the example of love. It's a natural human capacity [*Vermögens*]. But we are incapable to love as God commands on our own, and in need of the Holy Spirit to overcome our incapacity. We must not try,

to explain the origin of love in man as a supernatural extension of natural human capacity. If we ask how it is possible for man to love, according to Holy Scripture, we have first to go back to faith, and then from faith to its object, Jesus Christ. It is in spite of and within the limitation of his natural capacities that man is met by Jesus Christ in faith in the promise. He is still a creature, afterwards as well as before. He is still a sinful creature. *But he is met by Jesus Christ* and sees and knows Him as very God and very Man, and therefore as the Reconciler. And that is the miracle of the Holy Spirit and therefore the founding of love in man (CD I/2, 374-5, emphasis added).

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<sup>181</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 174. The analogy is imperfect because once the person's legs heal he has the inherent capacity to use them where the Holy Spirit's freeing us is needed ever anew at each moment. As a side note, Barth did understand health as a capacity. "Health means capability [*Fähigkeit*], vigour and freedom. It is strength for human life" (CD III/4, 356). Health can remain at the phenomena level where it is "a particular physical or psychical something" that can be observed, but it becomes a symptom when it "is the power to be human" (CD III/4, 357, modified translation, *Gesundheit ist Kraft zum Menschsein*, KD, III/4, 406) God's command is that we will to be healthy, that is that we will to use what every physical capacities we have (this includes people who are sick) to live as under our determination for "relation to God and with fellow-humanity." Ibid., modified translation.



The Christian is not given a new capacity, but in the relational encounter with God experiences transformation (*CD* II/1, 411).

We can now look at the relationship of the command of God and our human capacities. The command summons a person “to obedience with the abilities and gifts [*Fähigkeit und Begabung*] with which he has been endowed” (*CD* III/4, 628; cf. pp. 625f.). God’s command, which makes us capable, is thus consistent with a person’s aptitude [*Tüchtigkeit*] and particular talent and inclination [*Begabung und Neigung*] (*CD* III/4, 623). Barth contends, “the fact is that what God demands of man is definitely adapted to his real capacity [*wirklichen Vermögen*]. God wants no more, no less and no other than that for which He finds him able and adapted” (*CD* III/4, 629). As Nigel Biggar explains, for Barth, “what God command – the content of obedience – will always be in accordance with creaturely limitations.”<sup>182</sup> However, Barth cautions, God knows what we are capable of better than ourselves, so we must be open to God’s commanding beyond the limits we think we have. God knows our “real ability and capacity [*Können und Vermögen*],” and this might be in “very different ways from those which might have seemed possible and necessary on the basis of man’s own ideas of his ability and capacity [*Können und Vermögen*]” (*CD* III/4, 628f.). Once again, God initiates through the command, but humans are not puppets, but active participants in the partnership. God’s initiating work establishes humans with agency. As McKenny writes, “What God does in our place establishes us as subjects who are summoned and empowered to do not what God has already done but what we were created to do. What we are called and enabled to

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<sup>182</sup> Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits : Karl Barth’s Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press ; New York, 1993), 88.

do is a fully human action, one that is entirely consonant with our creaturely nature but which reflects in a creaturely form God's being and doing for us."<sup>183</sup>

We respond to God's command through human functions, but we also use our capacities to discern the command of God. The way in which a Christian obtains knowledge of God and God's command is not "as a kind of insight or perception which has been miraculously implanted in or imparted to the Christian," nor as a "supernatural quality," but rather "as a capacity [*Vermögen*] which is actual only as it is used, which is not in any sense magical, but absolutely free and natural in its exercise" (CD III/3, 244). The gift of God's freedom is certainly supernatural and the way we understand reality is affected by one's encounter with Jesus Christ, but the way in which we come to understand God's command and understand that encounter is through creaturely means. Barth emphasizes the capacity of reason in the theological pursuit of knowledge. While the theologian remains dependent on God, reason, which is "the capacity [*Vermögen*] for perception, judgment, and language" common to all people is the presupposition.<sup>184</sup> In 1952 in the wake of World War 2 and questions surrounding German remilitarization, Barth wrestled through how it looks for a Christian to come to a political position. In many ways, he concluded, it will look similar to someone who is not a Christian through the use of reason and weighing of arguments. However, the Christian will explore these issues "before God," that is, with an awareness that God is present and commanding and paying "heed to the [good and evil] spirits that speak" in the various arguments.<sup>185</sup> He writes,

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<sup>183</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, ix.

<sup>184</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 7.

<sup>185</sup> Karl Barth, "Political Decisions in the Unity of Faith," in *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-52* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954), 153.

The way a Christian comes to adopt a political position, pro or contra, is by bearing in mind, conscientiously, soberly and as fully as possible, all the arguments and counterarguments that have to be considered in the matter under discussion (in relation to which he is in just the same position as all his fellow-citizens), balancing them one against the other, giving both sides of the case their full weight – exactly as he would in making any other decisions in his life, including purely ‘private’ decisions. He will try to ‘assess’ the respective weight and value of the arguments. But – and this is where he will differ from his fellow-citizens – he will do so not in a space apart from his Christian faith, but before God – and not before any god, but before the God who speaks to the world, to the Christian community and therefore to the individual Christian, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He will look for a decision which is not arbitrary or just clever in a human sense, but which is made in the freedom of obedience to God’s command.<sup>186</sup>

While Barth’s emphasis is often on reason in seeking to discern the command of God, this is not the only capacity that is employed. A Christian will use a “free and eclectic use of human capacities” in order to render obedience to God’s command.<sup>187</sup> At a visit to Princeton Seminary, Barth claimed “human reasons, resolutions, [and] feelings become involved in” the human response to God’s address.<sup>188</sup> We use our creaturely capacities to discern God’s command, but we remain dependent on God’s revelation.<sup>189</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter we have looked at the matters of human telos, ethics, anthropology, and moral transformation. We have made the case that humans are created for relationship (with God and humanity) which is concretely determined by the command of God which corresponds to God’s gracious deeds toward humanity. Moreover, the very

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<sup>186</sup> Barth, 152. Decisions also require “political sobriety and theological insight” (p. 159), “courage and humility” (p. 160), and joyfulness which comes from liberation from slavery to ideologies and to freedom before God (p. 161).

<sup>187</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 91–92. He continued to focus on reason here, though, “the theologian cannot possess, maintain, and demonstrate enough reason.” Barth, 92.

<sup>188</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 212.

<sup>189</sup> And thus prayer is the proper posture for a Christian. Barth, *The Christian Life*, 43; Karl Barth, *Prayer*, 50th Anniversary Edition (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 31f; Cocksworth, *Karl Barth on Prayer*, 63.

being of humanity is relational. We are constituted in our intersubjectivity – who we are, how we act, think, and feel are rooted in our history with others. Thus, we ought to first of all imagine moral formation in terms of groups. For Christians, this means the church which is constituted in its hearing of the Word of God and responds by practices of holiness ought to be the locus of moral growth. It is here that visible growth is evident in the *sancta* performed by the community and where individuals, empowered by the Spirit, progress in their moral and spiritual lives. While the Holy Spirit grants the freedom in which to obey, our action remains fully a human one. God has created humans with a nature suitable for partnership with God, and thus disciplines which explore these capacities are essential for thinking about how we prepare our whole selves for an encounter with God.

In the next chapter we turn to the topic of emotion which, it will be argued, is crucial for an account of moral formation. We do not become people who act justly by focusing solely on rational arguments and employing the best ethical or theological methodology. We will attend to recent scholarship emphasizing emotion as essential for our relations with others: emotion creates bonds, it is a means of communication, and it encourages and sustains moral action. Emotions take shape in a history of interaction with others. As a creaturely capacity, non-theological sources on emotion will prove significant for the theological task of living out our true humanity.

## CH. 2 - WHAT IS AN EMOTION?: COGNITION, THE BODY, AND SOCIETY

### *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to begin making the case that emotion is a fundamental capacity of moral agents. Emotions are crucial for making moral decision making and conduct. In the previous chapter we set forth Barth's understanding of the human person, natural capacities, and moral formation. Barth understood the exploration of our capacities as rightly belonging to the domain of the natural sciences, social sciences, and the liberal arts. While these fields cannot properly give us the determination or telos of the human, they can give valuable insight into the capacities we have and use to fulfill that determination. This means that while theology can tell us that we are created for relation with God and others, and even that those relationships are key to moral formation, it is proper to look to these other disciplines to understand how we fulfill our calling through our creaturely capacities.

Before exploring recent studies of emotion, it is worth expanding the question of the relation between the sciences and theology in light of the emerging "crisis" in the social sciences due to difficulties in generalization, of dubious statistics, and of reproducibility.<sup>1</sup> Scientists are questioning many of the results coming out of the social sciences as labs have had difficulty in reproducing other labs' results, evidence of cherry picking results for statistical manipulation, and because of questions that the primary group of volunteers (American undergraduates) are not easily generalized to all

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<sup>1</sup> In raising this issue, I am indebted to the work of Neil Arner presented at the 2021 Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting. Neil Arner, "Categories of 'The Human' in Scientific and Theological Discourse," Conference Presentation (2021 Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, Virtual, 2021).

humanity.<sup>2</sup> While, according to a Barthian perspective and a majority of theological ethicists, work from the sciences is relevant to understanding the human, is tying one's moral theology closely to a scientific school of thought – which may shift in a few years – a wise approach?

Two measures can be taken by theologians to mitigate the risk of drawing on the social sciences. First, theologians ought to avoid making an argument dependent on one theory, particularly a newly emerging one. Having a greater historical perspective on understandings of the human can safeguard one's work. Second, by not relying on a single methodological approach in the sciences, theologians can lessen the probability that their work will become based on an erroneous theory in the near future. Social scientists are increasingly recommending a process of “triangulation” whereby a question is addressed by a diverse group of scientists using different methodologies.<sup>3</sup> When such an approach converges on a similar conclusion, this increases the trustworthiness of the results. This dissertation seeks to diminish the hazard of using the social sciences by

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<sup>2</sup> On reproducibility issues, see Scott O. Lilienfeld and Irwin D. Waldman, eds., *Psychological Science Under Scrutiny: Recent Challenges and Proposed Solutions* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017); Colin F. Camerer et al., “Evaluating the Replicability of Social Science Experiments in Nature and Science between 2010 and 2015,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 2, no. 9 (September 2018): 637–44; Open Science Collaboration, “Estimating the Reproducibility of Psychological Science,” *Science* 349, no. 6251 (August 28, 2015); Monya Baker, “1,500 Scientists Lift the Lid on Reproducibility,” *Nature News* 533, no. 7604 (May 26, 2016): 452; Benjamin O. Turner et al., “Small Sample Sizes Reduce the Replicability of Task-Based fMRI Studies,” *Communications Biology* 1 (2018): 62. On issues relating to statistics and veracity, see Marcus R. Munafò et al., “A Manifesto for Reproducible Science,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 1, no. 1 (January 10, 2017): 1–9; Jeffrey S. Mogil and Malcolm R. Macleod, “No Publication without Confirmation,” *Nature News* 542, no. 7642 (February 23, 2017): 409; Valentin Amrhein, Fränzi Korner-Nievergelt, and Tobias Roth, “The Earth Is Flat ( $p > 0.05$ ): Significance Thresholds and the Crisis of Unreplicable Research,” *PeerJ* 5 (July 7, 2017): 1380. On the problem of generalization, see Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, “The Weirdest People in the World?,” *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, no. 2–3 (June 2010): 61–83; discussion 83–135; Vonetta M. Dotson and Audrey Duarte, “The Importance of Diversity in Cognitive Neuroscience,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1464, no. 1 (2020): 181–91.

<sup>3</sup> Marcus R. Munafò and George Davey Smith, “Robust Research Needs Many Lines of Evidence,” *Nature* 553, no. 7689 (January 2018): 399–401.

drawing on a theological account that is not rooted in the most recent developments (i.e., Barth, but also the larger Christian and biblical traditions), as well as by using not one social scientist or one school of thought, but a diversity of disciplines, scientists, and methodologies which are converging on a similar line of thought.

This chapter begins the first of two chapters on human emotional capacities. The aim of these chapters is to understand current thinking on emotion from a variety of disciplines to gain insights on a) what an emotion is, b) how an emotion is formed, and c) the importance of attending to emotions for ethics and moral formation. This chapter will focus primarily on understanding the essential features of an emotion and beginning the discussion on the development of emotion. The next chapter will continue the analysis of emotion formation and conclude with a section on the importance of emotion for ethics. This first chapter has two main parts. First, the relation of emotion and reason will be covered, because their relation is important for understanding emotions role in the moral life. The chapter will look at historical perspectives as well as contemporary understandings. While emotion and reason has often been placed in opposition to one another, recent research is pointing toward a closer integration. The implication for this dissertation is that attending to emotions, rather than simply rational arguments, is essential for moral formation. The second part of the chapter will address the question, “what is an emotion?” The nature of an emotion may appear obvious, but we will see that it is a widely disputed matter. To delve into this question, two key debates that cross disciplines will be studied. First, is an emotion to be identified with bodily states and the physiological sensations we experience, or is it more properly associated with cognition and perception? Second, do emotions arise from inherited biological traits or do they

stem from socially constructed factors? This chapter will conclude by describing the psychological construction theory of emotion which offers an approach that incorporates strengths from each of side of these two debates while avoiding many of their pitfalls. This theory contends that emotions are the constructed understandings of our experiences as we categorize internal sensory inputs and external circumstances based on prior experiences and learning. Understanding the nature of emotion provides the necessary elements for the following chapter's task of laying out the implications of emotion for ethics and for considering the moral formation of emotion.

### Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, 'emotion' will be the term primarily used to explore what has traditionally been identified as passions, affections, feelings, sentiment, and related concepts. This decision is not without some controversy and therefore a note of explanation follows. Some scholars find 'emotion' to offer more problems than advantages. First, there is no agreement on a definition of an emotion. As we will see in this chapter, there are considerable disagreements concerning the nature of emotion. Historian of emotion, Jan Plamper, cites that "even in such a limited field as English-language experimental psychology, ninety-two different definitions of emotion have been counted between 1872 and 1980."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, emotion is a fairly new word in the English lexicon. The first author to make extensive use of the term was David Hume in his 1740 *Treatise Concerning Human Nature* (although, 'passion' was still his preferred term).<sup>5</sup> Thomas Dixon argues that the term arose with the rise of secular psychology in

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<sup>4</sup> Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 104.



opposition to vocabulary more commonly associated with religious discourse.<sup>6</sup> In this development, ‘emotion’ was often closely related to mere physiological feelings with no cognitive component. Furthermore, Dixon critiques ‘emotion’ as lacking the nuance that previous terms entailed (e.g., passion was distinguished from affection; the latter more closely related to reason and the will).<sup>7</sup> Some scholars thus propose distinguishing between passion and affections in contemporary discussions.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these valid concerns, this dissertation will utilize the term ‘emotion’ for a number of reasons. First, a distinction between passion and affection, while holding some subjective appeal to experience, fails to capture a genuine difference in phenomena. What has been termed passion and affection collectively fall under the same mental processes, namely a cognitive judgment or evaluation based on bodily experiences and contextual situations. Second, both passion and affection insinuate passive experience. A key contention of this dissertation is that while emotional responses are constrained by a number of factors (biology and experience), they are not simply something that happen to a person but an event that he or she is actively involved in generating. Thus while Dixon may be correct that the term originally was associated with irrationality, ‘emotion’ provides a more neutral association with cognition.<sup>9</sup> In my view, ‘emotion’ successfully offers a catch-all phrase that captures passion, affection, sentiment and other like terms employed throughout history. However, in the end, my employment of ‘emotion’ is very

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<sup>6</sup> Dixon, 1–2.

<sup>7</sup> Dixon, 245.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Cates argues that Thomas Aquinas’ description of passions is best described today as ‘emotion,’ but these should be distinguished from Thomas’ account of affections which are closely related to the will. Choi follows Cates’ interpretation of Aquinas in reading Jonathan Edwards in a way that also distinguishes between the two; though I find this Thomistic reading of Edwards ultimately unconvincing. Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 8, 93–94; Choi, “The Priority of the Affections over the Emotions.”

<sup>9</sup> Powell, *The Impassioned Life*, 305–6.

much a pragmatic one. Emotion is the prevailing term among various disciplines today, and its use facilitates discourse across fields. Ultimately, the term employed to capture this experience is not what is most important. While Joshua Hordern chose ‘affection’ as his preferred term, we are in agreement that we should “avoid quarrelling unnecessarily about words. What is at stake is not any particular word but the meaning which the word bears.”<sup>10</sup>

### ***Part 1: Emotion and Reason***

A central claim of this dissertation is that emotions are indispensable for the moral life. This runs contrary to a popular view where attending to emotion is important only inasmuch as the goal is avoiding emotional influence in decision making. In this perspective, the aim of ethics is to act rationally when making moral choices. Emotions are sharply dichotomized with rational thinking and understood as the epitome of irrationality (a notion with roots in the ancient world but radicalized in modernity). A moral actor does best to eschew emotions in one’s pursuit of right living. In contrast, the case will be made in this section that emotions and reason are highly integrated, thus it is neither desirable nor possible to avoid emotion. Reasoning has an affective quality and emotions have a cognitive dimension. Moreover, while it is true that emotions can degrade our moral decision making, they can also enhance it. The section will begin with a historical overview of the predominant, oppositional relation of reason and emotion. It will then turn to contemporary considerations within philosophy, neuroscience and psychology that have increasingly understood the two functions as part of an integrated system. I argue the growing consensus on the integrated nature of reason and emotion

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<sup>10</sup> Hordern, *Political Affections*, 13.

leads to the conclusion that a moral agent's goal should not be avoidance of emotion (which is impossible), but to the deliberate consideration of how to shape emotions in preparation for moral action.

The defining characteristics of an emotion will begin to be explored in this section and further developed in chapter 3. Before beginning the historical overview on the relation of emotion and reason, we begin with a brief word on what is meant by reason, rationality and cognition. Reason will refer to the cognitive *capacity* for thought or judgment according to some logical process. To be rational will refer to either a) the possession of reason or b) an evaluative term meaning to conform to some logic or be consistent with achieving certain goals. Finally, cognition will refer more generally to any mental process that entails information processing.

### Historical Overview

Almost unanimously, premodern thinkers made a strong distinction between emotion (or passion) and reason. Plato and Aristotle saw them existing as two (often opposing) forces within the soul.<sup>11</sup> For both philosophers, humans share the capacity for passion with other animals, but uniquely are capable to exercise reason.<sup>12</sup> Plato propounded a tripartite human soul consisting of reason, spirit, and the appetitive element.<sup>13</sup> The latter two include what we today would consider emotion – the nondeliberative drives, desires and instincts of human life. Plato argued that a person is virtuous or just when reason rules over the other two parts just as a city works most

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<sup>11</sup> Though, as Powell argues, for Plato reason was itself a form of desire, so the dualism was mitigated. Powell, *The Impassioned Life*, 47, 299.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co, 2004), IV.441b.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Plato, 439d–41; 580d.

ideally when persons act appropriate to their class.<sup>14</sup> This was most famously illustrated in Plato's analogy in *The Phaedrus* where reason is portrayed as the charioteer guiding two winged horses: the spirited which is willing to obey and the appetitive which desires to rebel against reason. Human distinctiveness consists in this charioteer that can bring the spirit and appetite under its control.

Plato's student, Aristotle, likewise identified reason as the unique element in humans. As 'rational animals,'<sup>15</sup> the proper exercise of reason is central to human flourishing. Eudaimonia, or happiness, is the aim of all life, and it is realized as an organism achieves its natural end. For humans, happiness involves activity of the soul accompanied by reason in accordance with virtue. Thus, Aristotle identifies the final end of human happiness as contemplation.<sup>16</sup> Reason is the part of the soul that is the finest element. The appetitive part of the soul (which includes emotion) can oppose and go against reason, but it can also participate in reason.<sup>17</sup>

While the Stoics found a greater cognitive component to passions, they similarly taught the passions ought to come under control of reason. The aim of human life is to pursue eudaimonia through living a virtuous life as established by reason. The Stoics were concerned with possessing control over one's happiness and rejected the idea that contingencies or luck could hinder flourishing. They believed only one thing could be totally controlled: one's virtue. Happiness, then, consists only in being virtuous.

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<sup>14</sup> Plato, 441e3.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle and Christopher Rowe, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Sarah Broadie (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1098a5.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle and Rowe, 1177a20. Though there is some debate over the place for practical doing and politics for Aristotle. cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 1325b19.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle and Rowe, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102b26.

Therefore, they advocated “indifference” to everything other than virtue.<sup>18</sup> Against a common conception of emotions as arational forces, the Stoics held emotions as cognitive acts of moral judgment. They are judgments of the perception of value of a person or thing.<sup>19</sup> As emotional responses are judgments of the perception of value, they reveal the erroneous belief that something is of great value when in fact only virtue is of value. The implication for the Stoics is that one should not try to simply moderate emotions (as the Peripatetics argued), but one should totally eradicate them, for they are excessive by definition.<sup>20</sup>

Fast-forward to the Christian era, and emotions and reason continued to be often seen as two opposing forces in the soul. However, when properly ordered, the emotions should be seen as good and laudable. Augustine followed Plato in dividing the soul into the higher (reason and will) and lower parts (appetites and passions). The passions are a result of our fallen nature and often portrayed by Augustine as involuntary, unruly forces.<sup>21</sup> In theory the passions can be good, for Jesus experienced emotions.<sup>22</sup> However, Augustine rarely refers to a passion in a positive way (possibly based on his own personal experiences recorded in his *Confessions*).<sup>23</sup> Most often he spoke of the need to develop virtue in order to resist the passions.<sup>24</sup> Dixon summarizes,

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169.

<sup>19</sup> John M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999), 452.

<sup>20</sup> Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 62. However, this is not to say that the Stoics thought it unacceptable to have any emotional states. It is appropriate to have *eupatheiai*, feelings of joy, caution and wishing that are perfectly in accord with reason. Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pub, 2014), 14.8, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> For example, the virtue of temperance is for restraining and quieting the passions that turn us from God. Saint Augustine, “On the Morals of the Catholic Church,” in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. Whitney J. Oates, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1948), 336.

For Augustine passions and affections, like the flesh, were not evil in themselves, but only when they failed to be controlled - when they failed to take their proper place in the order of things. Specifically, reason was the human principle that was properly in command of the passions. In the well-ordered soul, reason was the guiding principle... It was for the mind (the rational part of the soul comprising will and reason) to ‘master’ these rebels, overcome these tyrants, to muster ‘resistance and protect the sovereignty of virtue and reason.’<sup>25</sup>

Complicating this account, however, are the emotions in the higher soul. Augustine tended to describe these as affections (*constantiae* rather than *perturbations*); they are associated with the will rather than passive movements of the lower appetites.<sup>26</sup> Here the goodness of the affection is dependent on the rightly ordered will.<sup>27</sup> In summary, Augustine sees the Fall as the cause of disordered desires and thus the passions of the soul are regularly in conflict with reason. However, a will brought under the movement of grace brings about praiseworthy emotions.

Thomas Aquinas’s understanding of the passions stands in continuity with Augustine.<sup>28</sup> For Aquinas, the passions are deemed essentially good and complement rather than compete with reason.<sup>29</sup> In the pre-fallen human state, the passions and reason existed in harmony. With sin, the fallen will led to the disordering of both passions and

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<sup>25</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Dixon, 53–54.

<sup>27</sup> “But the character of the human will is of moment; because, if it is wrong, these motions of the soul will be wrong, but if it is right, they will be not merely blameless, but even praiseworthy. For the will is in them all; yes, none of them is anything else than will.” *The City of God*, 14.6. The obstacle, then, is not only reason’s capacity to control passions, but the “divided will.” Wetzel argues that Augustine held that emotions have two aspects. The first the involuntary impression that an object is aversive or attractive, and second, a judgment of the will where we agree or disagree with the involuntary impression. James Wetzel, “Augustine,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 350. Augustine adopted this basically Stoic view via Cicero, but emphatically disputed the Stoic appeal to *apatheia* and the desire or possibility to live free of emotions. *The City of God*, 14.8, 9. The will, for Augustine, was not simply an organ of consent, but a site of internal conflict in need of grace. Wetzel, “Augustine,” 351.

<sup>28</sup> There are feelings that arise in the will but they are not best classified as passions, but as affections. See Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 93–94; Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 45–48. Though, this is open to some debate, see Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*.

<sup>29</sup> Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, 106–7, 185–86, 214. My thanks to Steve Pope for directing me to this source.

reason. Thus, grace is needed to properly order the will, as well as passions and reason. While disordered passions often act as negative forces, when they accord with practical reason and the will they become morally advantageous. Unlike the Stoics who took the passions to be unequivocally base, Thomas recognized them as holding the possibility for good or ill depending on the passion's relation to reason.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, this integral understanding of passions and reason was not to last into the modern period.

While emotion and reason were sharply separated by most schools of thought in the premodern period, there was yet the possibility of emotions participating in rationality. However, in the modern period this contrast was radicalized and emotions were often presented as wholly irrational.<sup>31</sup> Rather than understanding passion as an element of the soul which influences the body, the modern period shifted to seeing passions as the body acting on the soul or mind. This is particularly evident in thinkers such as René Descartes, Charles Darwin, and William James. The implication for ethics was that one should attempt to overcome emotions and solely employ reason. For our purposes here, we can look at elements in Kant as characteristic of this position. In opposition to David Hume and Moral Sense theories, Kant maintained all that matters for ethical decision making is that an agent act out of the right motive according to duty; neither consequences nor an empirical based moral sense are relevant. Moreover, it has not been uncommon to interpret Kant as claiming that not only are feelings a deficient

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<sup>30</sup> *ST*, I-II.24.3.ad1. "Antecedent" to reason, Thomas argued, passions diminish the goodness of an act because it is always better to act on the judgment of reason rather than of a passion. These acts are prone to "inordinate movements" that are not moderated by reason. On the other hand, passions that are "consequent" to reason can be beneficial in two ways. First, "by way of redundancy," when a passion arises from the intensity of the movement of reason. Second, "by way of choice," when a person by reason chooses to be affected by a passion in order to more readily act rightly. In these two ways, a passion can increase the goodness of an act and is thus beneficial for the moral life.

<sup>31</sup> Though not by all thinkers in the modern period, such as Hutcheson, Smith, and Hume, who supported forms of a moral sense theory.

basis for acting morally, but acting *against* one's inclinations is morally superior and even necessary for moral worth.<sup>32</sup> As evidence, Kant's famous example of the philanthropist that gives not only from duty but against inclination is commonly cited. Kant writes, it is not until an action is done "without any inclination, solely from duty; not until then does it have its genuine moral worth."<sup>33</sup> He likewise goes on to describe inclinations as feelings in opposition to the moral law: "the human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty... in his needs and inclinations."<sup>34</sup> Since the inclinations have this detrimental effect on an agent and because they "are so far from having an absolute worth... to be entirely free from them must rather be the universal wish of every rational being."<sup>35</sup> Inclination or emotion was something to be overcome. Kant scholars point out that these assertions are drawn from his *Groundwork* which did not seek to provide a comprehensive account of ethics but only the foundational "supreme principle." In fact, in later writings Kant argues that certain subjective capacities *ought* to be sought after, namely, moral feeling, conscience, love of neighbor and respect for oneself or self-esteem.<sup>36</sup> However, it has often been

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<sup>32</sup> For example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Second Edition*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 149. It should be noted that most Kant scholars today would disagree with MacIntyre's interpretation, but this view of Kant has been influential.

<sup>33</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4:398; 25.

<sup>34</sup> Kant, 4:405; 39.

<sup>35</sup> Kant, 4:428; 85.

<sup>36</sup> This is especially so in his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). For Kant, feelings and inclinations are morally neutral in themselves, though affects and passions are defined as contrary to reason, and thus always morally negative. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7:251; 149; Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:407-8; 166. Kant points to four such capacities that ought to be sought after in the moral life which are related to "the mind's receptivity to concepts of duty and such," namely, moral feeling, conscience, love of neighbor and respect for oneself or self-esteem. These capacities are feelings of the mind which are "*subjective* conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty, not as objective conditions of morality." Kant, 6:399; 159. In other words, these feelings are not the objective basis of morality, but the subjective feelings that result from acting in accordance with the objective duties of the moral law. They emerge as feelings in an awareness of the moral law. Kant considers these basic to



Kant's claim that ethical action has moral worth only when issuing from reasoned duty and is often exemplified by its opposition to inclination and emotion, that has held the most influence.<sup>37</sup>

In sum, influential strains of western thought have considered reason and emotion as opposing forces. However, recent work has begun to question this strong dichotomy and subordination of emotion to reason and suggests an integration of the two. What follows will be an overview of recent contributions from philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology which make this case.

### Contemporary Philosophy

The dominant philosophical theory of emotions in recent years is the cognitive account. On this account, emotions are not primarily physiological feelings, bodily movements, or conscious awareness of physiological change, but rather are chiefly judgments or perceptions of an object. The next section will explore the cognitive account of emotions in more detail (as well as the physiological theories of emotion which identify emotions with awareness of bodily sensations). The present section looks at how three philosophers, Robert Solomon, Martha Nussbaum, and Peter Railton,

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being receptive to the command of duty. As they are innate in every person, there cannot be a duty to acquire these feelings. However, there is a duty to cultivate and strengthen them. For example, moral feeling is "the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty." Kant, 6:399; 160; Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), 46. We do not have an obligation to acquire the capacity for moral feeling (all possess it), but there is an obligation "to cultivate it and to strengthen it through wonder at its inscrutable source." Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399; 160. It is beneficial, for as Kant later contends, "a frame of mind that is both valiant and cheerful in fulfilling its duties" assists the person in overcoming the feelings and inclinations that push against doing one's duties. Kant, 6:484; 227. Kant makes it clear this is not a "moral sense" which is a capacity to know objective right and wrong, rather it is a pleasure in following the law of duty which has been determined by reason and thus it is a susceptibility to be moved by practical reason. While not grounding the worth of an act, moral feeling renders one more disposed to act according to the moral law.

<sup>37</sup> While a dominant stream of the modern period, this was not the only viewpoint. Hume famously argued that "reason is the slave of the passions," in other words, reason is an instrument that justifies what the passions have already decided.

understand the relationship between emotion and reason. With varying approaches, they each emphasize the fundamental role that emotion plays in moral reasoning.

Robert Solomon was a pioneer of the cognitive accounts of emotions. Solomon challenged the mid-twentieth century widespread view that emotions are one's physiological behavior or consciousness of such feeling, instead proposing emotions are best understood as judgments. As such, he refuses to distinguish reason and emotion as sharply as those who hold to emotions as physiological feelings.<sup>38</sup> He labels this dichotomy as the "Myth of the Passions." The heart of this myth is, "the emotions are irrational forces beyond our control, disruptive and stupid, unthinking and counterproductive, against our 'better interests,' and often ridiculous."<sup>39</sup> In other words, the stark opposition of emotion and reason leaves the former characterized as unintelligent and without purpose while the latter is tasked with bringing this opposing force under its control. This view has at times caused the rise of a counter-reaction, the Romantics. But the Romantics often had the same presupposition that reason and emotion are in conflict (Solomon argues their error is holding to the "Myth of Innocence" where emotions are categorically deemed good).<sup>40</sup> In opposition to both these views, Solomon argues there is no sharp division between reason and emotion. Rather, he argues for a "rational Romanticism," where "passions are not to be separated from reason; they are to be welded together into a single unit."<sup>41</sup> Emotions, Solomon claims, are "essential

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<sup>38</sup> He essentially labels all theories of the emotions before his own as guilty of this dichotomy. However, Dixon persuasively argues that while there may be a distinction between reason and passions in many earlier thinkers (e.g. Augustine, Aquinas), it is not so simple as to say there was a dichotomy between reason and emotion. These earlier thinkers maintained a category of affections which was an emotion of the rational faculty. Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 3, 53–54.

<sup>39</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 181.

<sup>40</sup> Solomon, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Solomon, 15.

features of reason itself... emotions are themselves rational (and therefore sometimes irrational too). They are ways of seeing and engaging in the world... Emotions are intelligent, cultivated, conceptually rich engagements with the world, not mere reactions or instincts.”<sup>42</sup>

Rationality is identified by Solomon with advanced conceptual abilities and intelligence which “proceed purposefully in accordance with a sometimes extremely complex set of rules and strategies,” that is, a “logic.”<sup>43</sup> With this understanding, Solomon submits emotions are paradigmatic of rationality in that they require conceptualization and abstraction abilities and they always act for a purpose, namely, the goal of the maximization of self-esteem.<sup>44</sup> Emotions are not simply passive experiences that happen to us, but are something we do related to a larger purpose. They are distinguished, therefore, from mere feelings, such as a headache, which do not follow from a strategy or for a purpose.<sup>45</sup> However, while emotion and rationality are not to be contrasted, Solomon does differentiate emotion (or prereflective intuition) from deliberate reflection.<sup>46</sup> Both are rational in that they presuppose a degree of intelligence and purposiveness. He proceeds to argue against hastily elevating emotion or reflection above the other for both also have the possibility of being rational or irrational in a second sense. This second sense of rationality is an evaluative concept.<sup>47</sup> Emotions and

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<sup>42</sup> Solomon, viii–ix.

<sup>43</sup> Solomon, 182.

<sup>44</sup> Solomon, 184, cf. 129. This approach has some overlap with eudaimonistic frameworks, but tends to be more individualistic in outlook where the eudaimonia can more easily incorporate one’s well-being as tied to society and networks of relationship. Though, see Solomon, 20. and his later Robert C. Solomon, “The Politics of Emotion,” *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (September 1998): 1–20. While Solomon’s account has much to offer, reducing emotion to maximization of self-esteem is far too narrow a motivation.

<sup>45</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 182. As we will see in Ch. 3, Solomon goes too far in downplaying bodily feelings in the emotional experience, a defect he readily admitted in later writings.

<sup>46</sup> Solomon, 182.

<sup>47</sup> Solomon, 188.

reflection can be evaluated for how well they accomplish a purpose (namely, in Solomon's view, maximizing self-esteem). In this sense of rationality, sometimes emotions are foolish and sometimes they are astute and effective.<sup>48</sup> We can objectively reflect on our emotions to judge if these judgments are effective for reaching one's goals.<sup>49</sup> Solomon additionally distinguishes emotions from actions that express an emotion. An emotion of anger can be considered rational in both the first and second sense in the face of injustice at the workplace, but lashing out at one's boss that results in a firing and inability to provide for one's family might be irrational and ineffective in accomplishing one's greater purpose of self-esteem.<sup>50</sup> In sum, emotions (as judgments) can be objects of evaluation and are not to be assumed as simply something that passively happens to us. A person can objectively evaluate the extent to which an emotion furthers one's goal of subjective self-esteem or well-being.

Martha Nussbaum also considers emotions to be cognitive judgments. More specifically, emotions are "an intelligent response to the perception of value."<sup>51</sup> By cognition, Nussbaum refers to any brain process that is "concerned with receiving and processing information," which does not "imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness."<sup>52</sup> To say an emotion is cognitive means the brain is evaluating an object in accord with some beliefs. She contrasts this with the view that emotions are "non-reasoning movements, unthinking energies that simply push the person around, without being hooked up to the ways in which she

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<sup>48</sup> Solomon, 186.

<sup>49</sup> Solomon, 130, 186.

<sup>50</sup> Solomon, 190.

<sup>51</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Nussbaum, 23.

perceives or thinks about the world.”<sup>53</sup> Perspectives that perceive emotions as primarily non-cognitive, physiological responses see emotional conflict as having to do with a struggle between two forces (either reason vs. irrational emotions or two emotions opposed to each other). For Nussbaum, on the other hand, emotional conflict is an internal “debate about what is really the case in the world.”<sup>54</sup> An experience of such psychological conflict reveals beliefs in cognitive dissonance, going through a “rhythm of embrace and denial.”<sup>55</sup> Emotion is not an opposing force to reason, but is rather one type of reasoning. Emotions do not simply play a role in supporting or subverting reason; as judgments they are “part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning,” they are part of “reasoning itself.”<sup>56</sup> Emotions guide our ethical choices and thus comprise an indispensable role in moral philosophy.

A third philosopher refuting the strong distinction between affect and reason is Peter Railton. He pushes back on ‘dual-process theories’ which deem intuitive feelings often misleading and not to be trusted in novel situations, and which urge the employment of reason as an alternative in such situations. Railton describes intuitions as experience-based, spontaneous, nondeliberative assessments which are rooted in the “broad affective system.”<sup>57</sup> “Nondeliberative” does not imply affect is necessarily opposed to reasoning. In fact, they play a key role in ethical decision-making. He argues

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<sup>53</sup> Nussbaum, 24–25.

<sup>54</sup> Nussbaum, 87.

<sup>55</sup> Nussbaum, 87.

<sup>56</sup> Nussbaum, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Railton, “The Affective Dog and Its Rational Tale: Intuition and Attunement,” *Ethics* 124, no. 4 (2014): 813. The affective system is not reduced to discreet emotions, but is “understood broadly to incorporate reward, emotion, mood, affectively charged or valenced memory, as well as other elements of what was once called the ‘limbic’ system and the regions of the brain that mediate connections between affective regions and the higher cortical regions that house explicit, declarative representations and reasoning.” Railton, 827.

for a “tacit-competency-based” model of intuitions where intuitions manifest some underlying competencies and implicit knowledge.<sup>58</sup> A person with well-formed emotions rightfully trusts those emotions as an initial guide in ethics – even in novel situations.<sup>59</sup> While he sees roots of this perspective lying with Aristotle and Kant, he also finds increasing evidence in the neurosciences. In neuroscience’s “affective revolution,”

increasingly, [the affective system] has come to be seen as a flexible, experience-based information-processing system quite capable of tracking statistical dependencies and of guiding behavioral selection via the balancing of costs, benefits, and risks. Indeed, this appears to be its core function - what it was ‘designed’ to do as it evolved over the course of our mammalian and primate past.<sup>60</sup>

Here, “the affective system has come to be viewed, not in contrast to representational, cognitive, evaluative, and decisional capacities, or as disruptive of forward-looking cost-benefit calculation, but as an integral part of them.”<sup>61</sup> Rather than two separate networks in the brain for reason and affect, the two are integrated into a single process. Intuition plays a key role in our deliberate thought and decision making more generally.

For all three philosophers, the sharp dichotomy between emotion and reason is flawed. While emotion does not imply deliberate thought, it is yet intelligent (Solomon and Nussbaum) and integral to deliberate thought (Railton). We now follow Railton in turning to recent work in the scientific disciplines for further support in seeing emotion as integral to moral reasoning.

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<sup>58</sup> Railton, “The Affective Dog and Its Rational Tale,” 816.

<sup>59</sup> Contra Joshua Greene, as we will see.

<sup>60</sup> Railton, “The Affective Dog and Its Rational Tale,” 833–34.

<sup>61</sup> Railton, 835–36.

## Affective Neuroscience and Psychology

### Neuroscientific Perspectives

Neuroscientist Michael Spezio corroborates that the field of affective neuroscience has reached a consensus on emotion as cognition.<sup>62</sup> By cognition Spezio means “any kind of information processing or transformation that had relevance to measurable outcomes.”<sup>63</sup> As emotions have to do with a response to stimuli that prepares a person for action, emotions are rightly understood as cognitive. Further confirmation of the cognitive aspect of emotion is found by Spezio in the failure of researchers to identify any circuitry in the brain for emotion that is distinct from cognition. Another neuroscientist, Richard Davidson, concurs and identifies the assumption that emotion is something other than cognitive as the first of seven “sins” in the study of emotion. It is wrong to suppose that, “affect and cognition are subserved by separate and independent neural circuits.”<sup>64</sup> Rather, Davidson insists, there is an “overlap between circuitry involved in cognitive and affective processing.”<sup>65</sup> Spezio sums up the neuroscientific case:

the long-held divide between cognition and emotion had been breached by a failure to find such clear divisions in the circuitry of the human brain, and by the positive findings relating areas known for emotional salience processing to effective reasoning and decision making in the social domain.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Michael L. Spezio, “The Neuroscience of Emotion and Reasoning in Social Contexts: Implications for Moral Theology,” *Modern Theology* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 345.

<sup>63</sup> Spezio, 346.

<sup>64</sup> Richard J. Davidson, “Seven Sins in the Study of Emotion: Correctives from Affective Neuroscience,” *Brain and Cognition* 52, no. 1 (June 2003): 129.

<sup>65</sup> Davidson, 129.

<sup>66</sup> Spezio, “The Neuroscience of Emotion and Reasoning in Social Contexts,” 346.

In other words, “emotions are constitutive of, and not separate from, the reasoning and decision making that people do about their own values and preferences.”<sup>67</sup>

In the earlier section on philosophy, the distinction was made not between emotion and cognition, but between emotion and deliberate thought. However, Spezio also finds this dichotomy not without problems. He frames the issue as between explicit and implicit information processing, where explicit processing is that seen and guided by awareness (i.e., is deliberative) and implicit processing is that outside of awareness and often viewed as independent of it (i.e., is automatic). Once again, neuroscientists have encountered difficulty in finding clear breakpoints in the neural circuitry that supports such a clear conceptual break between one’s conscious awareness and the numerous processes outside of awareness that nonetheless support that awareness and are likely guided in some way by it.<sup>68</sup> While deliberate, conscious thought can be subjectively distinguished from unconscious processing, it is problematic to assume that deliberate thought operates outside the processes of the unconscious affect.

The next two sections will look at recent work on the emotions in psychology. The first section will look at appraisal and dual-process theories of emotions. These theories have come a long way from seeing emotion as completely irrational and disconnected from cognition. However, there yet remains a tendency to sharply dichotomize reason and emotion. The second section will look at psychologists who are moving toward an integrationist model that conceive emotion and reason as interconnected.

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<sup>67</sup> Spezio, 342.

<sup>68</sup> Spezio, 346–47.



### Psychology – Appraisal & Dual-Process Theories

Psychology has also shifted from the mid-twentieth century view of emotions as irrational (as conveyed by behaviorism) to including a cognitive component. One particularly influential theory today is the appraisal theory of emotion. Here, emotions arise from a cognitive appraisal of how an event bears on one's goals. Emotions are not irrational but are caused by the evaluation of an event according to what one values. Richard Lazarus, an early proponent of this view, argues, "the emotional response is elicited by... a complex cognitive appraisal of the significance of events for one's well-being."<sup>69</sup> However, while cognition became more central to emotion, there is a tendency to not fully integrate emotions and cognition as reflected in the above neuroscientific studies. In appraisal theory, the emotional response is caused by the cognitive act of appraisal rather than being the cognitive act itself.

Another theory in psychology attempting to reconceive the relationship between emotion and reason comes from the opposite direction. Rather than the effect cognition has on emotion, the dual-process theory of emotion emphasizes the role emotion has on our decision making. It concludes that humans are very often much less rational creatures than we care to think. The origins of the theory lie with Richard Shiffrin and Walter Schneider's 1977 investigation of attention, search, and detection. To understand these cognitive processes, they posited the brain as comprising two systems: one for automatic processing and one for controlled processing. They argued,

automatic processing is learned in long-term store, is triggered by appropriate inputs, and then operates independently of the subject's control... Controlled processing is a temporary activation of nodes in a sequence that is not yet learned.

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<sup>69</sup> Richard S. Lazarus, "Thoughts on the Relations between Emotion and Cognition," *American Psychologist* 37, no. 9 (September 1982): 1019.

It is relatively easy to set up, modify, and utilize in new situations. It requires attention, uses up short-term capacity, and is often serial in nature.<sup>70</sup>

Automatic processing occurs in familiar situations and takes little effort with conscious attention unnecessary while controlled processing is optimal for novel situations and demands focus and can require considerable cognitive resources. This dual-processing system theory has been applied to emotion research in recent decades. Emotions are equated with automatic process and reason with controlled process. Three influential affective psychologists working under this model will be surveyed here: Daniel Kahneman, Joshua Greene, and Jonathan Haidt.

Daniel Kahneman and his late collaborator, Amos Tversky, won the Nobel Prize in Economics for their groundbreaking work on decision making. They advanced the dual-process theory that two systems govern our thinking – an automatic and a controlled system. They labeled these as System 1 and System 2: the former is fast or intuitive thought while the latter comprises slow and deliberate thought. System 1 “operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control.”<sup>71</sup> It supplies an “affective heuristic” where “people let their likes and dislikes determine their beliefs about the world.”<sup>72</sup> The system works by “associative memory,” that “continually constructs a coherent interpretation of what is going on in our world at any instant.”<sup>73</sup> While we are often unaware of this system in operation, it unconsciously drives much of how we think and what we do. System 2, on the other hand, “allocates attention to the

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Shiffrin and Walter Schneider, “Controlled and Automatic Human Information Processing: I. Detection, Search, and Attention,” *Psychological Review* 84, no. 1 (1977): 51–52. Cf. Richard Shiffrin and Walter Schneider, “Controlled and Automatic Human Information Processing: II. Perceptual Learning, Automatic Attending and a General Theory,” *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 127–90.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 20.

<sup>72</sup> Kahneman, 103.

<sup>73</sup> Kahneman, 13, cf. 50ff.

effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration.”<sup>74</sup> This system provides the deliberate, slow thinking often associated with reason.

These two systems have developed to allow sophisticated functioning on the part of the human brain. Kahneman contends, the division of labor “is highly efficient: it minimizes effort and optimizes performance.”<sup>75</sup> System 1 is constantly processing information and making predictions outside our consciousness. For the most part it is very good at this task. However, the main theme of *Thinking, Fast and Slow* is people tend to put too much trust in this intuitive system.<sup>76</sup> Intuition has biases and makes generalizations that are efficient, but in complex matters, System 1 often impedes our judgments. In situations in which we are prone to bias and error, we ought to be more doubtful of our intuition and should exercise slow (System 2) thinking.<sup>77</sup>

Two other psychologists have developed related metaphors to illustrate this dual-process model of the brain. Joshua Greene proposes the two complementary modes of a digital SLR camera as an analogy for his “dual-process theory of moral judgments.” The first and most commonly used mode on a camera is the automatic mode. This mode is optimized for most photo situations and offers quick and efficient picture taking. The second mode is the manual mode which takes much more effort but is more flexible for non-typical settings. He suggests that two similar modes are found in the brain:

First, we humans have a variety of automatic settings - reflexes and intuitions that guide our behavior, many of which are emotional. We may be conscious of such

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<sup>74</sup> Kahneman, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Kahneman, 25.

<sup>76</sup> Kahneman, 45.

<sup>77</sup> Kahneman, 417.

emotional responses, but we are generally not conscious of the processes that trigger them. We rely on our automatic settings most of the time, and they generally serve us well. Our brains also have a manual mode. It is a general-purpose reasoning system, specialized for enabling behaviors that serve long(er)-term goals, that is, goals that are not automatically activated by current environmental stimuli or endogenous somatic states. The operations of this system are typically conscious, experienced as voluntary, and often experienced as effortful... In short, manual mode thinking is the kind of thinking that we think of as “thinking.”<sup>78</sup>

We have an automatic, efficient, intuitive system that commonly guides our behavior (closely associated for Greene with emotional responses) and a controlled, flexible, reasoning system. Jonathan Haidt offers the complementary analogy of an elephant and its rider. The mind is divided into two parts: intuitive and reasoning. The intuitive part is like an elephant, it acts automatically and is difficult to guide. The reasoning part is like the rider of the elephant. The rider is a recently evolved capacity which serves the elephant. While the rider is the part with which we generally identify our thinking and agency, it most often acts to justify whatever the elephant has already decided. In other words, Hume was right: reason is the servant of the intuitions.<sup>79</sup> These empirically based dual-process theories highlight the profound influence of emotions on moral judgements and decision-making. While we often consider ourselves basically rational creatures, the studies underlying these theories demonstrate that intuitions often play a significant role in decision-making.

This leads to the matter of the relation between emotion and reason for these thinkers. For starters, Haidt argues against opposing cognition and emotions for emotion

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<sup>78</sup> Joshua D. Greene, “Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality: Why Cognitive (Neuro)Science Matters for Ethics,” *Ethics* 124, no. 4 (July 2014): 696–97.

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 16; Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage, 2012), 53–58.

processing is itself one sort of cognition. Haidt appeals to the recent psychological research that points to the importance of appraisals for emotion. Appraisals are a type of cognition, thus, to posit a contrast between cognition and emotion is senseless.<sup>80</sup> Rather, what should be contrasted is two types of cognition: intuition and reasoning, or in other words, automatic and controlled cognition.<sup>81</sup> This shifts the subject to considering what type of cognition is most appropriate for different situations. As mentioned earlier, Kahneman argues for slow thinking when one realizes oneself is more prone to bias and error (though, he admits these situations are often not easy to recognize<sup>82</sup>). Greene argues similarly that in many circumstances automatic mode is most suitable but at other times manual mode is more appropriate. When it comes to moral reasoning, Greene associates the automatic mode with a deontological manner of thinking and the manual mode with a consequentialist method to morality. He crafts this association into what he terms the Central Tension Principle: “Characteristically deontological judgments are preferentially supported by automatic emotional responses, while characteristically consequentialist judgments are preferentially supported by conscious reasoning and allied processes of cognitive control.”<sup>83</sup> Automatic responses ordinarily are trustworthy when based on experience (either inherited or personal experience).<sup>84</sup> But to expect a person to use this deontological mode to determine a right moral decision is to expect a cognitive miracle. He thus proposes a second principle termed the “No Cognitive Miracle Principle,” which states, “when we are dealing with unfamiliar\* moral problems, we ought to rely less on

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<sup>80</sup> Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Haidt, 53.

<sup>82</sup> Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 417.

<sup>83</sup> Greene, “Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality,” 699.

<sup>84</sup> Greene, 714.

automatic settings (automatic emotional responses) and more on manual mode (conscious, controlled reasoning), lest we bank on cognitive miracles.”<sup>85</sup> He contends this principle leads to the conclusion that we should use consequentialist, manual mode reasoning rather than deontological approaches when facing novel situations and for resolving practical moral disagreements. In a similar manner, Haidt concludes that pursuing utilitarian methodology in moral decision making is the logical inference of the dual-process system.<sup>86</sup> Likely not all dual-process theorists would agree with the association of consequentialist reasoning with controlled thinking, but what is consistently appealed to is the division between reason and emotion.

While the dual-process approach has moved beyond the strong dichotomy between cognition and emotion, it has sharpened the contrast between reason and emotion. Behind these two cognitive systems, two distinct networks are envisioned in the brain.<sup>87</sup> The emotional, automatic network is often associated with limbic system and the controlled network with parts of the more newly evolved neocortex.<sup>88</sup> However, as mentioned in the neuroscientific discussion, this hypothesis of separate neural systems is lacking in empirical evidence. There is no indication of distinct systems in the brain vying for influence. Spezio argues, “almost every manifestation of dual process theory is actually oppositional process theory, in that the two proposed processes are not just theorized as separate, but as forever in opposition to one another, with no possibility of

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<sup>85</sup> Greene, 717ff. “Unfamiliar\*” problems are “ones with which we have inadequate evolutionary, cultural, or personal experience.” Greene, 714.

<sup>86</sup> Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 316. Cf. pp. 348, 349, 356, 358, 359, 390, 394, 396.

<sup>87</sup> It is worth noting that while Kahneman finds the dual-system a helpful explanation of our experience, unlike Greene and Haidt, he is careful to classify these systems as “useful fictions.” There is no part of the brain onto which each system would map. Rather, they are a descriptive metaphor that help explain two modes of thinking. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 29.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, 10f. Though, Haidt is clear that parts of the neocortex are important for emotions.

integration for unified, motivated action.”<sup>89</sup> Rather than conceiving emotion as something that often competes with moral reasoning (as dual-process approaches do), the integrationist approach considers “emotion as constitutive of human reasoning.”<sup>90</sup> We turn now to psychologists who are also moving toward this model.

### *Psychology – Integrationist Model*

Luiz Pessoa is one such proponent of the integrated brain model. Rather than comprising separate systems, he argues, it is better to think of the brain as a network. This is not to say there is not a phenomenological or subjective difference between a methodical thinking process and an intuitive manner. No one would deny this. But it is to say the two can never be divided in practice: even deliberate thinking is influenced by affect and affect always has a cognitive, perceptive component.

A common understanding among psychologists in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that certain regions of the brain, especially those associated with an older evolutionary history (e.g., the “limbic system”), are the source of emotion while other regions, such as the evolutionarily newer neocortex, are associated with cognitive reasoning. Drawing on research from the last two decades, Pessoa argues that while it is true that certain parts of the brain are vital for emotion, they are so as parts of wider, interconnecting networks. Pessoa affirms, “it is undeniable that certain brain regions play an important role in emotion. Yet, it is also apparent that they do not work in isolation and, instead, participate in distributed networks of regions that, collectively, carry out important functions.”<sup>91</sup> The future of the brain sciences is not in distinguishing separate

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<sup>89</sup> Spezio, “The Neuroscience of Emotion and Reasoning in Social Contexts,” 348.

<sup>90</sup> Spezio, 351.

<sup>91</sup> Luiz Pessoa, “Emergent Processes in Cognitive-Emotional Interactions,” *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 12, no. 4 (2010): 433. “Individual brain areas do not work in isolation,” he writes, “but

systems in the brain for emotion and cognition, but in understanding how deliberate thinking and emotional processes are integrated. By cognition, Pessoa refers descriptively to processes that have been thought of primarily as rational and deliberate, or in Haidt's label, to "reason." Cognition is, "what we do when we think, reason, remember, and the like."<sup>92</sup> However, since he does not believe that cognition and emotion can be mapped onto particular domains in the brain, Pessoa does not focus on precise definitions for cognition or emotion, but attends to how different parts of the brain interact in certain behaviors. Pessoa's primary research goal is to make the case that,

given the combinatorial connectivity of the brain, it will be important to go beyond simply describing interactions between emotion and cognition, some of which are suggested to be mutually antagonistic. Instead, future advances will be made by the mechanistic description of how cognition and emotion are effectively integrated in the brain.<sup>93</sup>

The task of the brain sciences lies with understanding the integration of emotion and cognition.

To illustrate this integration, Pessoa focuses on the amygdala, a region of the "limbic system" often prototypically associated with emotion and fast processing. It has been thought that this system largely by-passed the neo-cortex associated with cognitive functions. However, "it is becoming increasingly clear," Pessoa writes, "that their connectivity affords them [subcortical structures such as the hypothalamus and the

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instead are part of networks. Therefore, most neural computations should not be thought of as implemented by an individual area, but rather by the interaction of multiple areas. In addition... specific brain areas belong to several intersecting networks." Luiz Pessoa, "On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 9, no. 2 (February 2008): 154. Cf. Luiz Pessoa, "Understanding Emotion with Brain Networks," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 19 (February 1, 2018): 19–25.

<sup>92</sup> Luiz Pessoa, *The Cognitive-Emotional Brain: From Interactions to Integration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013), 3–4. Cf. Pessoa, "On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition," 148. Hadas Okon-Singer et al., "The Neurobiology of Emotion–Cognition Interactions: Fundamental Questions and Strategies for Future Research," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 9, no. 58 (February 17, 2015): 8.

<sup>93</sup> Pessoa, "Emergent Processes in Cognitive-Emotional Interactions," 444.



amygdala] great potential to interact with many other cortical and subcortical structures that are involved in cognitive functions.”<sup>94</sup> Pessoa traces out the connections between the cortex, multiple subcortical regions, basolateral amygdala, extended amygdala, hypothalamus, and brainstem.<sup>95</sup> He concludes, “together, these architectural features allow the amygdala to be influenced by, and influence, a vast array of cortical and subcortical regions.”<sup>96</sup> The implication is that the “cortex-amygdala” system “does not have a core function such as ‘affect generation’. Instead, its particular functional state determines how it will contribute to multiple mental operations, and these involve not only arousal, vigilance, and novelty but also attention, value determination, and decision-making more broadly.”<sup>97</sup> Particularly notable is the amygdala’s function in attention to relevant stimuli (as will be discussed later in this chapter). The amygdala is indeed important for emotion, but its significance arises from its role as a crucial hub in a wide network which simultaneously serves a role in many “cognitive” functions.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, through integrated networks, processes typically deemed emotional have an impact on those considered cognitive. In other words, affect is essential for cognition, even when we are not aware of its influence. Psychologists Seth Duncan and Lisa Feldman Barrett assert,

affect appears to be necessary for normal conscious experience, language fluency, and memory... cognitive and sensory experiences are necessarily affectively infused to some degree. There is no such thing as a ‘non-affective thought.’

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<sup>94</sup> Pessoa, 437.

<sup>95</sup> Luiz Pessoa, “A Network Model of the Emotional Brain,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 21, no. 5 (May 1, 2017): 362.

<sup>96</sup> Pessoa, 363.

<sup>97</sup> Pessoa, 366.

<sup>98</sup> Pessoa, 369; Pessoa, *The Cognitive-Emotional Brain*, 36, 243; Pessoa, “On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition,” 149.

Affect plays a role in perception and cognition, even when people cannot feel its influence.<sup>99</sup>

Barrett elaborates elsewhere,

the human brain is anatomically structured so that no decision or action can be free of interoception [i.e., the sense of what is going on within one's body] and affect, no matter what fiction people tell themselves about how rational they are. Your bodily feeling right now will project forward to influence what you will feel and do in the future. It is an elegantly orchestrated, self-fulfilling prophecy, embodied within the architecture of your brain.<sup>100</sup>

Feelings and emotion (conscious or otherwise) play a vital role in cognitive, deliberative thought processes. The converse is also true: emotions are influenced by cognitive processes. This will be explored further in the next section, but here it is enough to say that how one perceives events and objects is central to emotion. Pessoa and his colleagues remark on this dual direction of interaction,

there is compelling evidence that brain territories and psychological processes commonly associated with cognition, such as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and working memory, play a central role in emotion. Furthermore, putatively emotional and cognitive regions influence one another via a complex web of connections in ways that jointly contribute to adaptive and maladaptive behavior. This work demonstrates that emotion and cognition are deeply interwoven in the fabric of the brain, suggesting that widely held beliefs about the key constituents of 'the emotional brain' and 'the cognitive brain' are fundamentally flawed.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Seth Duncan and Lisa Feldman Barrett, "Affect Is a Form of Cognition: A Neurobiological Analysis," *Cognition and Emotion* 21, no. 6 (September 1, 2007): 1184–85.

<sup>100</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 82. Cf. "It appears that affect is instantiated by a widely distributed, functional network that includes both subcortical regions (typically called 'affective') and anterior frontal regions (traditionally called 'cognitive'). As a result, parts of the brain that have traditionally been called 'cognitive' participate in instantiating an affective state, not merely regulating that state after it has been established. Furthermore, the parts of the brain that have traditionally been called 'affective' participate in cognitive processes. The so-called 'affective' brain areas (e.g., the amygdala and brainstem) participate in sensory processing and contribute to consciousness in a manner that meets most definitions of 'cognition'." Duncan and Barrett, "Affect Is a Form of Cognition," 1187–88.

<sup>101</sup> Okon-Singer et al., "The Neurobiology of Emotion–Cognition Interactions," 1. Cf. "I will make a case for the notion, based on current knowledge of brain function and connectivity, that parcelling the brain into cognitive and affective regions is inherently problematic, and ultimately untenable for at least three reasons: first, brain regions viewed as 'affective' are also involved in cognition; second, brain regions viewed as 'cognitive' are also involved in emotion; and critically, third, cognition and emotion are integrated in the brain. In the past two decades, several researchers have emphasized that emotion and cognition systems interact in important ways. Here, I will argue that there are no truly separate systems for

The implication is that to radically separate or oppose reason and emotion is problematic. James Russell affirms, “the dichotomy between rational thought and irrational emotion was long ago undermined by research showing, on the one hand, that cognitive processes emphasize economy and speed as much as rationality and, on the other, that cognitive processes are relevant to emotion.”<sup>102</sup> In other words, Russell pithily sums up, “thinking is affectively charged, feeling is a form of thinking.”<sup>103</sup>

To consider thinking in dualistic terms is an oversimplification. Rather than positing a stark dichotomy between reason and emotion, it is better to consider thinking on a continuum between more deliberate and more affective thinking. Both cognitive and affective processes are involved in all thinking and cannot be easily reduced to automatic and controlled processes.<sup>104</sup> Barrett argues that the psychological construction theory of emotion (also explored in the next section) provides a way to move past the dual-process distinction of automatic and controlled processing systems. She writes,

both bottom-up and top-down processes are engaged: bottom-up (sensory) information from the world and the body and top-down (conceptual) associative processing interact and shape one another so that every psychological moment (i.e., an instance of emotion) emerges in a way that can be characterized somewhere along an automatic-controlled continuum, and can be said to have some degree of conditional automaticity.<sup>105</sup>

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emotion and cognition because complex cognitive–emotional behaviour emerges from the rich, dynamic interactions between brain networks. Indeed, I propose that emotion and cognition not only strongly interact in the brain, but that they are often integrated so that they jointly contribute to behaviour.” Pessoa, “On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition,” 148.

<sup>102</sup> James A. Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” *Cognition and Emotion* 23, no. 7 (2009): 1270.

<sup>103</sup> James A. Russell, “My Psychological Constructionist Perspective, with a Focus on Conscious Affective Experience,” in *The Psychological Construction of Emotion*, ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett and James A. Russell (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 187.

<sup>104</sup> Pessoa, *The Cognitive-Emotional Brain*, 250.

<sup>105</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” *Psychological Topics* 20, no. 3 (2011): 373.

As was mentioned, there is often a subjective or phenomenological difference between deliberate reasoning and seemingly spontaneous emotion.<sup>106</sup> But rather than credit separate processes in the brain, it is better to attribute this phenomenon to the attention one gives – whether executive control (in deliberate processing) or attention to one’s affective response. In the end, both of these forms of attention, as integrated processes, have cognitive and emotional aspects.

In summary, some important research in philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology are moving towards an integrated understanding of emotion and cognition/reason. This dissertation will build on these insights. Following neuroscientists and psychologists working with an integrationist model of the brain, this dissertation takes deliberate, rational thinking as intimately interconnected with affective responses. With Solomon, emotions are understood as a type of reasoning that acts according to a logic. We will part ways with him in concluding that logic will always be the maximization of self-esteem, but more properly can act according to the logic of the Gospel as those created for friendship and covenant partnership with God. Finally, with Nussbaum, emotions will be identified as connected to our beliefs and the way we see the world. Emotions respond to perceptions of value and objects of love. The implication is that accounts of moral formation must attend not only to deliberate reasoning but also to the shaping of emotions. Before delving further into the relation of emotion and ethics, two important question needs to be addressed. What exactly is an emotion and how does it develop?

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<sup>106</sup> Duncan and Barrett, “Affect Is a Form of Cognition,” 1201–2. Cf. Lisa Feldman Barrett, Christine D. Wilson-Mendenhall, and Lawrence W. Barsalou, “The Conceptual Act Theory: A Roadmap,” in *The Psychological Construction of Emotion*, ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett and James A. Russell (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 85.

## ***Part 2: What is an Emotion?***

The first part of this chapter made the case that emotion and reasoning make up an integrated process. However, unaddressed was the matter of the nature of an emotion. To consider what the formation of emotion looks like, we need first to look more closely at the features of this human capacity. The question, “what is an emotion?” (famously asked by William James), has produced lively debates across various disciplines employing diverse methods.<sup>107</sup> I approach this subject as an ethicist, so my inquiry into the nature of emotions has the objective of understanding their place in the moral life. Questions of responsibility and formation will form the background to this survey. However, while these are my motivating questions, this does not mean I will eschew other disciplines. Rather, this chapter will draw extensively on the natural sciences, psychology, sociology and philosophy in an attempt to avoid reductionism and a “disciplinary chauvinism.”<sup>108</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of the dissertation to delve into all the debates and representative positions, two issues that have arisen regularly and across disciplines will be examined in some detail. The first debate questions whether emotions are basically cognitive entities or physiological reaction. All agree that strong physical reactions accompany emotions, but what is the relationship of these sensations to emotions? The second debate probes the origins of emotions: are emotions biologically constituted and hard-wired through an evolutionary process or are they better conceived as socially constructed? After surveying major proponents of these two debates, the chapter will

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<sup>107</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>108</sup> Robert C. Roberts, “Emotions Research and Religious Experience,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 502.

present an alternative theory of emotions, namely the psychological construction view. This latter theory supplies the possibility of incorporating the strengths of the four perspectives presented in the two debates while avoiding many of their pitfalls. Emotion is a cognitive act of construing an object in the world. However, bodily states are also interpreted based on past histories and effect how an object is construed and thus are often central to emotional experiences. At the extremes, the second debate becomes reductionist (biological or social causes are determinative). The case will be presented that emotion has both a biological and socially constructed element. Supplementing the psychological construction theory will be an outline of research into the phenomenon of group emotion. It will be argued that one's emotional life cannot be evaluated without attending to group identity. Finally, implications of these theories for the moral formation of emotions will be considered.

#### Debate #1: Emotion, Body, and the Mind

In recent years, the relationship of emotions and the body has been a subject of extended study. To state the question rudimentarily: is an emotion the feeling of physiological changes or is it better understood as a cognitive thought of some sort? In broad strokes, we will identify four conceptions of the relation between emotion and body. Premodern thinkers considered passions as operations of the soul that act on and are integrated with the body. While there was a diversity of perspectives on the emotions, this section will draw particularly on the influential Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective of the passions. In the modern period, theorists swapped the causative direction and the body was understood as the agent acting on the soul or mind to produce an emotion. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction with

scholars fully identifying emotions with the mind rather than the body in the cognitivist theories of emotion. More recently, the psychological construction theory of emotion returned to an integrationist approach that takes into account the valid insights of modern physiologist and cognitivist accounts of the emotions.

In ancient Greek philosophy, the emotions (or passions) reside in the soul. Plato's metaphysical dualism meant humans consist of an immaterial soul and physical matter. The soul is tripartite, consisting of reason, spirit and the appetitive element.<sup>109</sup> While the soul is embodied in this life, the passions are not equated with the physical body, but with the lower parts of the soul (the spirit and appetitive). For Plato, the immaterial soul and the passions, in particular, act on the physical body. Avoiding Plato's metaphysical dualism and materialism, Aristotle proposed a new way to understand the relationship between body and soul.<sup>110</sup> Hylomorphism, as his view came to be known, contends humans (along with animals and plants) are an integration of matter and form, of body and soul. The soul is the principle or form of the body, though not matter itself. However, it cannot exist without the body; body and soul are inseparable.<sup>111</sup> The human soul has three parts: the nutritive part of the soul (shared with plants and animals), the sensitive part of the soul (shared only with animals) and the rational part of the soul (unique to humans).<sup>112</sup> The passions exist in the sensitive part of the soul.<sup>113</sup> They are understood as "feelings attended by pleasure or pain," which are distinguished from virtue and

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<sup>109</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 439c5-441d5, 580d3.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Sorabji, "Body and Soul in Aristotle," *Philosophy* 49, no. 187 (January 1974): 64.

<sup>111</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1991), 414a (43).

<sup>112</sup> Aristotle, 431b (94).

<sup>113</sup> The passions, for Aristotle, are closely related to desire. Desire is understood in three ways *thumos* (spirit or passion) and *epithumia* (appetite) which are non-rational, and *boulêsis* which is rational desire. Aristotle, 414b (44). The first two are associated with *pathe* for Aristotle. The first two are terms used for the two horses in Plato's chariot analogy. For Aristotle, a person (or any animal) is moved to act through desire.

dispositions.<sup>114</sup> In keeping with his integrationist approach, passions also involve the body, though are not reducible to the bodily movements.<sup>115</sup> While passions are operations of the soul, they also involve the body.

Early and Medieval Christianity followed similar paths as these earlier thinkers. We narrow our discussion here to Aquinas and his extensive discussion of the passions. For Aquinas, a passion is a movement of the body-soul unity in the appetitive part (rather than apprehensive part) of the soul which has a concomitant physical effect on the body. Specifically, passions are located in the sensitive appetite rather than the intellectual appetite (i.e. the will).<sup>116</sup> Within the sensitive appetite, a passion can be either in the concupiscible power or the irascible power.<sup>117</sup> The concupiscible and irascible passions are differentiated by their object: passions with objects which are good or evil in themselves belong to the concupiscible faculty, and those that regard an object as arduous, “being difficult to obtain or avoid” belongs to the irascible faculty. However, as an element of the body-soul unity, there is also a necessary bodily element. As Cates sums up, “an emotion occurs, in particular, through the exercise of one’s sensory appetite. As such it has a material element. It is composed, in part, of patterned bodily changes that can be subtle, but are often noticeable in the form of felt bodily

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<sup>114</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), II.5, 1105b23.

<sup>115</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, 403a (12). “The attributes of the soul appear to be all conjoined with body: such attributes, viz., as anger, mildness, fear, pity, courage; also joy, love, and hate; all of which are attended by some particular affection of the body.”

<sup>116</sup> *ST*, I-II.22. There are feelings that arise in the will but they are not best classified as passions, but as affections. See Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 93–94. Though this is open to some debate, see Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*.

<sup>117</sup> *ST*, I-II.23.1.



sensations.”<sup>118</sup> A passion involves apprehension of an object by which then the object acts on the sensitive appetite (a part of the soul) which then elicits movements in the body.<sup>119</sup>

In summary, Aristotle and Aquinas understood the passions as residing in the non-rational part of the soul. Because of the body-soul unity, passions are yet connected with the body though not reducible to the body. In particular, the passions involve the soul acting on the body. They are *passions of the body*; the body is the passive recipient of the appetitive motion of the soul. As Dixon claims,

On the classical Christian theory, passions were most properly to be understood as passions of the body. The bodily movements and agitations associated with fear, lust, anger and so on were brought about by the self-initiated activity of the sense appetite, which was the lower part of the will. So, classically the passions were actions of the sense appetite upon the rational will and upon the body.<sup>120</sup>

Consistent for premoderns was the belief that the soul was the motive force behind the physiological changes of the body. However, theories of passions began to change with the dawn of the modern period. Rather than passions of the body, “passions became actions of the body and passions of the soul.”<sup>121</sup>

The physiological theories of emotion began with René Descartes. By inverting the relationship of the soul and body, Descartes was instrumental in the development of a radical new understanding of the passions. In the preface of *The Passions of the Soul* we are clued in that Descartes will focus on the body as the active agent in emotions. He

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<sup>118</sup> Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 62. Cf. “To say that emotion is a motion of the *soul-body composite* is to say that the main powers or capabilities that are involved in the production of an emotion are exercised directly by means of the body.” Cates, 81.

<sup>119</sup> Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire*, 20.

<sup>120</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 77.

<sup>121</sup> Dixon, 77.

states that his goal is to discuss the passions not as a philosopher, but as a “Physicist.”<sup>122</sup> In this work, the body and the soul are conceived as two subjects.<sup>123</sup> The soul is the fundamental essence of the person while the body is described as a machine.<sup>124</sup> The soul can be both active and passive. The action of the soul is volition while the passion of the soul is knowledge or perceptions.<sup>125</sup> The latter “passions of the soul” are defined as “perceptions or sensations or excitations of the soul which are referred to it in particular and which are caused, maintained, and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.”<sup>126</sup> Perceptions are understood “to mean all the thoughts that are not actions of the soul, or volitions, but not when it is used only to mean cases of plain knowledge.”<sup>127</sup> Passions can also be called sensations as “they are received into the soul in the same manner as the objects of the external senses, and are not known otherwise by it.”<sup>128</sup> Specifically, the soul is acted on by the animal spirits which are the “liveliest and finest parts of the blood.”<sup>129</sup> The soul passively perceives these sensations of the body. No longer is the body the passive recipient of the sense appetite, rather it is the cause of the passions. For the first time, the perception of the physiological change is the essence of the emotion.

Darwin continued this course of identifying emotions with the body. He began with observing his infant first-born who appeared to recognize smiles and grief.<sup>130</sup> How

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<sup>122</sup> René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen H. Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1989), 17.

<sup>123</sup> Descartes, 19, Art. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Descartes, 21, Art. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Descartes, 28, Art. 17.

<sup>126</sup> Descartes, 34, Art. 27.

<sup>127</sup> Descartes, 34, Art. 28.

<sup>128</sup> Descartes, 34, Art. 28.

<sup>129</sup> Descartes, 22, Art. 7; 24, Art. 10. They do so through the “seat of the passions,” i.e. the penial gland. Descartes, 36, Art. 31.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York, NY: St Martin’s Press Inc., 1979), 359.

could an infant with such limited cognitive capacity be able to smile? His conclusion was that emotions were physiological “expressions” based on inheritable habits. To test his hypothesis, Darwin corresponded with numerous acquaintances overseas regarding how people (and animals) express emotions. What he observed was that emotion expression was similar across cultures and even species. He used this data to develop his argument that emotions are adaptive reflexes. They are behaviors that are inherited or become habitual through repeated experiences. Darwin argued that emotional expressions arise from three principles.<sup>131</sup> First was “the principle of serviceable associated habits,” which meant that there are certain actions which ordinarily have positive value in specified circumstances. Over time, the behavior becomes habitual when the circumstances arise. For example, at the sight of a danger, a creature freezes. This has proved beneficial for animals and thus has become habit. Second, Darwin continued, emotional behavior develops from “the principle of antithesis.”<sup>132</sup> If one becomes habituated into a certain behavior, having the opposite state of mind can create the opposite behavior. Darwin gave the example of a dog ready to attack an enemy with the back arched upward compared to the opposite behavior of the slouched body indicating affection at the awareness of her owner.<sup>133</sup> The third principle concerned “actions due to the constitution of the nervous system, independently from the first of the will, and independently to a certain extent of habit.”<sup>134</sup> In other words, a powerful sensory experience can trigger certain behavior. Darwin concluded that since emotion expressions are inheritable and since humans have some common ancestry, it is not surprising to find similar expressions

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<sup>131</sup> Darwin, 27–29.

<sup>132</sup> Darwin, 50ff.

<sup>133</sup> Darwin, 51.

<sup>134</sup> Darwin, 28. Cf. Darwin, 66ff.

across the planet (including sometimes in non-human animals).<sup>135</sup> He did not see emotions as something bestowed by a divine being, but as simply accidents of chance and natural selection. Emotions were essentially non-cognitive bodily expressions.<sup>136</sup>

The most clear and radical equating of emotion with the feelings of the body is found in William James' famous 1884 article "What is an Emotion?"<sup>137</sup> In this article, James builds on Descartes' idea that an emotion is a perception of physiological changes as well as Darwin's position that physiological expression is central to emotions. The theory of emotions presented by James is often known as a feedback theory of emotions.<sup>138</sup> In this theory, "the feeling of autonomic feedback (heart rate, stomach tension) and muscular feedback (posture, facial expressions) itself constitutes emotion."<sup>139</sup> The emotion was itself the feeling of a physiological change. James' thesis was, "bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion."<sup>140</sup> The evolved nervous system reacts deterministically to features of the environment and becomes an emotion as

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<sup>135</sup> Here Darwin sounds more Lamarckian than in *On the Origin of Species*.

<sup>136</sup> Often the expression was a result of a mental state, but the emotion was centrally the bodily expression. For Darwin, "expression becomes the most important dimension of emotion." Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 158.

<sup>137</sup> While this article has been the most influential, James' understanding of emotions is complex and goes far beyond it. "What is an Emotion" comes across fairly reductionist, but James is more nuanced in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and other writings, especially in chapter 25 of *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). In these other works, "religious emotion is not reduced to the body but is grounded in the body and determined by a cognitive-social dimension." Jeremy Carrette, "William James," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 429. However, what follows in this chapter will concentrate on the 1884 article which has proved so influential and enduring. On the complexity of James' thought, see Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 213; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 160–61; James Averill, "William James' Other Theory of Emotions," in *Reinterpreting the Legacy of William James*, ed. Margaret E. Donnelly (Washington, DC: Amer Psychological Assn, 1992), 221–29.

<sup>138</sup> Carl Lange developed a similar theory around the same time, thus the theory is often identified as the James-Lange Theory of Emotions.

<sup>139</sup> Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017), 373.

<sup>140</sup> William James, "What Is an Emotion?," *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884): 189. Emphasis original.

we become conscious of the feeling of the reaction. So, for example, when one sees the bear pass in front of them on the path, it is not that the person experiences the emotion of fear which produces the physiological reaction of freezing or fleeing, but rather, the person becomes conscious of their tense muscles and beating heart and conclude they must be feeling fear. This may at first seem counter-intuitive, but James argues that the body is essential, for if one attempts to think of a strong emotion and tries to abstract out all the consciousness of feelings associated with bodily symptoms, then one is left with nothing.<sup>141</sup> Thus, he concludes, emotions are best thought of as the feeling of those bodily symptoms.

James understands emotions to be largely determined by one's biology. He argues, "the nervous system of every living thing is but a bundle of predispositions to react in particular ways upon the contact of particular features of the environment." In humans, "peculiarly conformed pieces of the world's furniture will fatally call forth most particular mental and bodily reactions, in advance of, and often in direct opposition to, the verdict of our deliberate reason concerning them."<sup>142</sup> When we become conscious of our body's reactions, we have an emotion. He thus offers the counter-intuitive claim,

we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be. Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth. We might then see the bear, and judge it best to run, receive the insult and deem it right to strike, but we could not actually feel afraid or angry.<sup>143</sup>

To feel an emotion is to feel a physical sensation.

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<sup>141</sup> James, 193.

<sup>142</sup> James, 190. From an early age, according to James, children are taught to repress emotions in order that they may feel less and think more. James, 199.

<sup>143</sup> James, "What Is an Emotion?," 190.

In premodern times, the soul acted on the body. Here we have the reverse with the body the cause of emotions. This has important consequences for considering agency, for, as Dixon maintains, “the result amounted to a complete contradiction of active, voluntary and cognitive views about the affections and emotions... Not only was the soul replaced by the brain in James’ theory... but the brain was itself not even active in emotions but was acted upon by the viscera.”<sup>144</sup> This perspective was taken to the extreme a couple decades later in the Wittenberg Symposium of 1928. The Johns Hopkins psychologist and former American Psychological Association president, Knight Dunlap argued,

we should not be satisfied with any object of experience unless it is capable of physical or chemical registration. The ‘emotions’ of which too many psychologists and most physiologists talk are not facts of this kind. Hence, I have no interest whatever in them. The visceral occurrences are demonstrable. Hence, when I use the term emotion, I mean these things.<sup>145</sup>

Emotions here are fully identified as irrational feedback to external stimuli.

Identifying emotions with the perception of physiological change continues today (in less reductionist versions than Dunlap’s), for example, in the philosopher Jesse Prinz’s writings. Prinz defends the idea that “emotions are perceptions (conscious or unconscious) of patterned changes in the body (construed inclusively).”<sup>146</sup> He defends James, arguing his “hypothesis that emotions are perceptions of bodily changes is consistent with a range of observations. Some of these suggest bodily changes are sufficient for emotions, some suggest that bodily changes are necessary, and some merely establish a correlation. Collectively, these observations tend to favor a James-Lange

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<sup>144</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 204.

<sup>145</sup> As cited in Solomon, *The Passions*, 74.

<sup>146</sup> Jesse Prinz, “Embodied Emotions,” in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45.

approach, all else being equal.”<sup>147</sup> However, while Prinz finds James’ view fundamentally correct, he modifies his theory slightly to include the intentionality of emotions. Emotions are about something.<sup>148</sup> Prinz goes on to argue that emotions do indeed have to do with changes of the body, but these changes can also be considered appraisals, though of a non-cognitive nature. He calls these “embodied appraisals.”<sup>149</sup>

In summary, with Descartes, Darwin and James, there is a shift to thinking of emotions as irrational and equated with either physiological changes or our awareness/perception of those physiological changes. Emotions are to be understood primarily as passive events. There is much to be said for this view, for the phenomenological awareness of bodily feeling is almost always (if not always) present during an emotional experience. It is difficult to imagine an emotion that is not accompanied by some sort of sensation. Additionally, this view accounts for the internal battles we experience when emotions are opposed to cognitive appraisals. We believe one thing, and yet feel another way.

While the physiological theories of emotion prevailed through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it began to come under critique in the 60s and 70s and has largely fallen out of favor today. Most of the arguments opposed to the somatic feedback theory were already established by the mid-1890’s. Dixon lists eleven principal arguments against this view.<sup>150</sup> 1) The theory fails to distinguish between emotions and non-emotions (e.g. one can also be conscious of a shiver or a sneeze but this is not considered an emotion). 2)

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<sup>147</sup> Prinz, 47.

<sup>148</sup> “I propose to defend James and Lange, though not completely. They should be criticized for their failure to reckon with what can broadly be regarded as the rationality of emotions. That failure has a remedy that does not depart from the spirit of the James-Lange approach. Emotions are somatic, but they are also fundamentally semantic: meaningful commodities in our mental economies.” Prinz, 45.

<sup>149</sup> Prinz, 57.

<sup>150</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 214ff.

The theory fails to differentiate between different emotions. A bodily reaction alone (e.g. a racing heart or crying) is not enough to distinguish emotions. The bodily response is not enough to inform what emotion is experienced, rather it is the cognitive appraisal which differentiates one emotion from another.<sup>151</sup> 3) Even if all emotions include bodily changes it does not follow necessarily that emotions are nothing but those feelings of bodily change. 4) The account does not allow for the effect of appraisal or evaluation of an object in generating an emotion. It too sharply divides cognition and emotion. 5) The theory makes our expression of the emotion completely involuntary. However, experience shows that we can feel a certain way but can choose not to express it. 6) James' theory is unfalsifiable. If emotions are defined as bodily changes then counter-examples are not allowed. 7) If, as James admits, reflex responses vary indefinitely, this would mean there is an indefinite number of emotions. Dixon maintains that there is a determinate number of different emotions, so James' view must be false. 8) The empirical evidence of cases with partial anesthesia that James presents to argue that those under anesthesia have no emotional life is ambiguous at best. Further evidence for this point is evidence from people with spinal cord injuries or locked-in syndrome indicate that the perception of arousal may not be necessary for emotional experience.<sup>152</sup> 9) James' theory presupposes that bodily and mental aspects must respectively be cause and effect, but there is no reason that this must be their relationship (could be in parallel or association). 10) James argues that bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting object, but it seems more reasonable to argue that some cognitive and volitional

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. James W. Kalat and Michelle N. Shiota, *Emotion*, 2nd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2012), 15.

<sup>152</sup> Fiske and Taylor, *Social Cognition*, 377; Kalat and Shiota, *Emotion*, 20.



factors such as memories, beliefs, or desires must be involved. Finally, 11) “the notion of ‘bodily change’ is too vague to perform such a central role in a theory of emotions.”<sup>153</sup>

In response to these critiques, cognitive accounts of emotion have predominated in recent decades. A pioneer of this view was the philosopher Robert Solomon and his 1976 book *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. He insisted that emotions are not to be identified with physiological experiences or feelings. Solomon labeled the James-Lange and related theories as the “hydraulic view” of emotions where the automatic body reaction to external stimuli produces a feeling over which we have no control.<sup>154</sup> Solomon admits that the body has an impact on our emotions – we are not Cartesian souls and thus an extra couple cups of coffee can cause a person to become angry or irritable.<sup>155</sup> The feelings and sensations are not themselves emotions. In fact, alone, feelings “are of little relevance to discriminating between emotions.”<sup>156</sup> Solomon cites the famous 1962 Schachter and Singer study where research subjects were injected with epinephrine and then put in situations to prompt fear or anger. While the arousal produced by the drug made the emotions more intense, the physiological sensations themselves were not enough to distinguish between emotions.<sup>157</sup> Thus, emotions cannot be identified simply with feelings and sensation.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 216.

<sup>154</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 77–88.

<sup>155</sup> Solomon, 93.

<sup>156</sup> Solomon, 98.

<sup>157</sup> S. Schachter and J. E. Singer, “Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State,” *Psychological Review* 69 (September 1962): 379–99.

<sup>158</sup> While not backtracking on his main argument, more recently Solomon has acknowledged he did not acknowledge the body’s full role. He swung too far. He concedes, “in the pursuit of an alternative to the feeling theory I had veered too far in the other direction. I am now coming to appreciate that accounting for the bodily feelings (not just sensations) in emotion is not a secondary concern and not independent of appreciating the essential role of the body in emotional experience.” Robert C. Solomon, “Emotions, Thoughts, and Feelings: Emotions as Engagements with the World,” in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press,

Earlier in this chapter we set out Solomon's view on the rationality of emotions. Emotions contain a logic of their own and are integral to reason. So, if emotions are not identified with bodily sensations nor to be understood as fully distinct from reason, what is an emotion? Three parts of Solomon's positive account of emotions will be highlighted here: emotions as intentional, as a judgment, and as self-involved. First, emotions are intentional, or in other words, they are about something. "One is never simply angry; he/she is angry *at* someone *for* something."<sup>159</sup> Thus, Solomon writes, "to understand an emotion... it is necessary to understand its 'object.'"<sup>160</sup> It is not enough to consider one's physiological reaction to determine an emotion, the formation of emotions depend on their relation to events and objects in our world. Emotions are not simply physical sensations but are structures which connect us to the world.<sup>161</sup> They are the means for our "subjective engagements in the world."<sup>162</sup>

Second, and at the center of his account, Solomon contends that emotions are judgments. Emotions are intentional toward an object in a specific way: they are an evaluation of that object. He stresses, they are not "*consequent* to judgments" (i.e., the bodily sensations that come from a judgment), but are the judgments themselves.<sup>163</sup> They are not something that simply happens to us hydraulically, but something we do. Our emotional judgments of an object are based on certain opinions and beliefs. If a person becomes angry at someone for shoving them in the back, but then realize they tripped

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2004), 85. He goes on to talk about "judgments of the body" sounding similar to Prinz's "embodied appraisals" in the same volume. See Solomon, 87; Prinz, "Embodied Emotions," 56.

<sup>159</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 111.

<sup>160</sup> Solomon, 112. Solomon identifies a general feeling without an object as a mood. Solomon, 112.

<sup>161</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 119.

<sup>162</sup> Solomon, "Emotions as Engagements," 77.

<sup>163</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 126.

accidentally, usually the anger will subside. As beliefs change, so change the emotions.<sup>164</sup>

Emotions are judgments about our present situations, our past and most importantly, “emotions include intentions for the future, *to act*, to change the world and change our Selves... Emotions are concerned not only with ‘the way the world is’ but with the way the world *ought* to be.”<sup>165</sup> If it is the case that emotions are something we do, not just something that happens to us, why do they feel passive? They feel passive because they are judgments that are often not reflective or deliberate. Usually our judgments have already been made when we come to consciously reflect on them which causes them to feel as if they are ‘not ours.’<sup>166</sup>

Finally, emotions are concerned with objects that have import for the self. They are “self-involved and relatively *intense* evaluative judgments.”<sup>167</sup> They are different than a calm, disinterested analysis. Emotions are a judgment which is “not a detached intellectual act but a way of cognitively *grappling* with the world.”<sup>168</sup> They are related to how we see the world and what we value and how the object is perceived to impact those beliefs and values.<sup>169</sup>

Martha Nussbaum, like Solomon, characterizes emotions as cognitive *judgments*. She contends for a neo-stoic retrieval of emotions as “forms of evaluative judgment that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person’s own control great importance for

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<sup>164</sup> Solomon, 126.

<sup>165</sup> Solomon, 129, 153.

<sup>166</sup> Solomon, 131. Solomon emphasized this point even stronger in later writings. They need not be and often are not deliberative, articulated or fully conscious. Solomon, “Emotions as Engagements,” 77.

<sup>167</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 127.

<sup>168</sup> Solomon, “Emotions as Engagements,” 77. Emphasis original.

<sup>169</sup> Solomon’s phenomenological approach goes so far as seeing the objects as something which is inaccessible in itself. It is through the emotions that structure our experience of the world that we can have access to these object. See Robert C. Solomon, *Not Passion’s Slave: Emotions and Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54, 74.

the person's own flourishing."<sup>170</sup> They are "intelligent responses to the perception of value."<sup>171</sup> Nussbaum identifies three important aspects to her account: emotions are 1) intentional cognitive appraisals or evaluations, 2) are connected to one's own flourishing which is related to one's goals and projects, and 3) have to do with the salience of external objects as elements in one's goals.<sup>172</sup> We will examine each of these in turn.

First, emotions are cognitive appraisals or evaluation. By cognition, Nussbaum means any brain process that is "concerned with receiving and processing information," which does not "imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness."<sup>173</sup> To say an emotion is cognitive does not imply conscious deliberate thought, but simply that the mind is processing information about an object. That it has to do with an object implies that emotions are intentional. Specifically, it has to do with an evaluation of the importance of an object. This evaluation is related to what one values. Nussbaum maintains, "there is something marked in the intentional perceptions and the beliefs characteristic of the emotions: they are all concerned with value, they see their object as invested with value."<sup>174</sup> Nussbaum finds the roots of this perspective in the Stoic idea of judgment as "assent to an appearance."<sup>175</sup> The judgment

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<sup>170</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 22. It is *neo-stoic* in that she makes a number of modifications to the Stoics view, namely allowing for a wider account of cognition so that non-human animal emotions can be accounted for (ch. 2), taking a great account of social effects (ch. 3) and incorporating how infancy and early childhood impacts emotional experiences (ch. 4).

<sup>171</sup> Nussbaum, 1.

<sup>172</sup> Nussbaum, 4.

<sup>173</sup> Nussbaum, 23.

<sup>174</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, "Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance," in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 189. Cf. "Emotions always involve thought of an object combined with thought of the object's salience or importance; in that sense, they always involve appraisal or evaluation." Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 23. Unlike Solomon who sees emotions as creating values, Nussbaum makes no claim about the cause of values. Rather, Nussbaum wants to simply say that there is a value component to judgments which is central to an emotion. Nussbaum, 22 footnote 2.

<sup>175</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 37. However, Nussbaum goes on to critique the Stoic's over-emphasis on the linguistic-propositional character of the judgment. Nussbaum, 90.

follows a two-step process: first an object has a certain appearance to us and then we make an evaluation of that appearance. Nussbaum wants to ensure she is not misunderstood as suggesting a judgment is the cause of an emotion. No, the judgment *itself* is the emotion.<sup>176</sup> However, a judgment is not freestanding. Both the appearance of an object and our judgment of it are affected by our biology, our common experience as humans, our individual upbringing and by our social location.

Second, emotions have to do with an evaluation of an object as it relates to one's own flourishing. In other words, emotions are *eudaimonistic*.<sup>177</sup> We do not experience an emotion over an object that has no connection to one's own objectives. This ought not be understood as egoistic, Nussbaum argues. Objects and events that are removed from the person can yet be identified with one's goals and plans (or, in other words, his or her understanding of human flourishing). She writes, "even when [emotions] are concerned with events that take place at a distance, or events in the past, that is, I think, because the person has managed to invest those events with a certain importance in her own scheme of ends and goals."<sup>178</sup> The perceived importance of an object for one's own goals and projects is correlated with the intensity of an emotion.<sup>179</sup>

Third, emotions relate not just to the intentionality of emotions but also to the importance of external objects in attaining one's goals.<sup>180</sup> In particular, they highlight the

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<sup>176</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 44–45.

<sup>177</sup> Nussbaum, 31.

<sup>178</sup> Nussbaum, 31. She later illustrates how one's eudaimonistic goals can be identified with another using the example of compassion. Nussbaum claims, "in order for compassion to be present, the person must consider the suffering of another as a significant part of his or her own scheme of goals and ends. She must take that person's ill as affecting her own flourishing. In effect, she must make herself vulnerable in the person of another. It is that *eudaimonistic judgment*, not the judgment of similar possibilities, that seems to be a necessary constituent of compassion." Nussbaum, 319.

<sup>179</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 55.

<sup>180</sup> Nussbaum, 4.

vulnerability and neediness of human existence: “most of the time emotions link us to items that we regard as important for our well-being, but do not fully control. The emotion records that sense of vulnerability and imperfect control.”<sup>181</sup> They are often related to objects of loss or the potential for loss. This is one of the reasons that emotions often feel like passive experiences. Nussbaum writes,

The experience of passivity in emotion is well explained by the fact that the objects of emotion are things and people whose activities and well-being we do not ourselves control, and in whom we have invested a good measure of our own well-being. They are our hostages to fortune. In emotion we recognize our own passivity before the ungoverned events of life.<sup>182</sup>

Emotions are connected with external circumstances that we deem important for our good but which we are often powerless to control.

So, if emotions are judgments or thoughts, what do we make of the non-cognitive physiological elements that often accompany emotions? First, Nussbaum does not say emotions have nothing to do with our body: “we should certainly grant that all human experiences are embodied, and thus realized in some kind of material process. In that sense, human emotions are all bodily processes.”<sup>183</sup> Beyond a minimum of saying emotions have to do with the brain processing information, Nussbaum grants emotions are often accompanied by feelings, and feelings can themselves have “rich intentional content.”<sup>184</sup> However, she sees the larger question of correlating certain physiological

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<sup>181</sup> Nussbaum, 43.

<sup>182</sup> Nussbaum, 78.

<sup>183</sup> Nussbaum, 58.

<sup>184</sup> Nussbaum, “Emotions as Judgments,” 195. Cf. “What concessions should we make to the role of feelings? We should grant, I think, that in typical cases emotions are conscious experiences; as with beliefs generally, the nonconscious are atypical cases, and parasitic on the conscious cases. So it feels like something to have an emotion. Much of the time, that feeling might be described as involving something that psychologists typically call “arousal” and that Proust calls “upheaval” - experiences of being shaken up or in ferment. The upheaval is a part of the experience of what it is like to have those thoughts - at least much of the time. But that is not true of all cases: a lot of joy and love won’t feel this way, nor indeed will

responses (facial expressions, autonomic arousal, other bodily states) with specific emotions as misguided (a topic we will explore further in the second debate). Because of the plasticity of human nature, emotions are experienced differently by various people. If a person did not experience the typical physiological response this is not cause to say that the person didn't feel a particular emotion. Thus physiology is not strictly necessary or to be included in the classification of an emotion.

The philosopher Robert Roberts has a distinct, but related, cognitive account of emotion. While Solomon uses a phenomenological methodology and Nussbaum takes a stoic revisionist line, Roberts applies a conceptual analysis approach to theorizing emotion. Roberts' method draws on how people refer to emotions in the ordinary context of their lives.<sup>185</sup> He acknowledges that this is but one legitimate way to go about studying and talking about emotions. In fact, a variety of disciplines are necessary for the study of emotions as none are omniscient: various disciplines address different questions with methods appropriate to their subject matter (e.g., neuroscience uses fMRI to study defense reaction to threats).<sup>186</sup> Philosophers tend to focus on emotions and their implications for ethics. Roberts finds conceptual analysis helpful in exploring the ethical dimension of emotions in ways that are subtle and complex.<sup>187</sup> This is not just phenomenology for Roberts, though, because this method can discern the essence of emotions at a more profound level than other disciplines.<sup>188</sup> Just as physics can describe what is going on with the soundwaves in the air, physics alone will miss the deeper

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grief or fear always feel this way. So this is a loose claim, which helps us to understand something, but that probably should not enter into the definitions of emotions." (Upheavals, 62)

<sup>185</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 4, 37, 56.

<sup>186</sup> Roberts, 36.

<sup>187</sup> Roberts, 37.

<sup>188</sup> Roberts, 59.

elements of music. Roberts argues musicology is an upgrade to physics, just as conceptual analysis is a “technical upgrade” to the natural sciences.<sup>189</sup>

A conceptual analysis leads Roberts to what he calls a “mentalist account” of emotion where emotions are not chiefly about a bodily reaction, but “*the form of a mental state*.”<sup>190</sup> He agrees with other cognitivist accounts that emotions are intentional, they are about an object.<sup>191</sup> He likewise concurs that emotions relate to how we evaluate the world. But rather than deeming emotions to be judgments, he identifies emotions as a type of perception, namely a construal.<sup>192</sup> Emotions are non-sensory, conceptual perceptions (rather than “pure” sensory impressions) that organize sense perceptions according to concepts. They are a way of structuring complex information into conceptualized frameworks.<sup>193</sup> More specifically, emotions are construals that are “concern-based.”<sup>194</sup> Emotions are “construals imbued, flavored, colored, drenched, suffused, laden, informed or permeated with concern.”<sup>195</sup> One can have a conceptualized

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<sup>189</sup> Roberts, 53–54.

<sup>190</sup> Roberts, 38, 45. Italics original. Roberts admits his understanding falls broadly under the umbrella of “cognitivist” accounts, though does not find cognitive to be very helpful descriptor as there is so much disagreement around the term. Roberts, 178.

<sup>191</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 61.

<sup>192</sup> Roberts, 69ff; Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 39ff.

<sup>193</sup> Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, 40–43. In many ways Roberts’ view appears similar to Nussbaum’s usage of “judgment” as an emotion. However, Roberts goes to lengths to differentiate emotions as construals from accounts that identify emotions as judgments. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 83ff. For Nussbaum, as we have said, a judgment is assent to an appearance. Roberts thinks it is simply the appearance and not the assent that encompasses an emotion. While people will usually assent to the appearance (or construal), assent is not necessary. In fact, something can appear a certain way, though we acknowledge it really isn’t so. However, one can imagine Nussbaum replying that there are in fact two competing assents in Roberts’ example. In the end, while there may be technical differences, the two views hold much more in common than what distinguishes them. Especially on a pragmatic level there is commonality, for an important way to alter emotions under both accounts is by changing one’s interpretation or construal of a situation and what one values. Both appeal to Aristotle to make their case. Giles Peterson argues that Aristotle understands both to be true: “both *phantasia* and belief are capable of grasping the cognitive content involved in emotions.” Giles Pearson, “Aristotle and the Cognitive Component of Emotions,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 46 (2014): 165–211.

<sup>194</sup> Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, 46.

<sup>195</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 79.



perception that does not impinge on one's concern or cares, but this detached construal is not, then, an emotion.

Roberts' understanding of bodily sensations is similar to other cognitivist accounts. Roberts admits physiological changes are characteristic of emotions, but does not see them as necessary for an emotion. One can have an emotion without the conscious perception of a physical change (Roberts points to psychotherapy which in part helps patients come to realize unconscious emotions).<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, Roberts argues, we can have feelings that lead us to believe we have emotions that we do not really have. He gives the example of a person with early symptoms of the stomach flu concluding they are experiencing anxiety.<sup>197</sup> These are what he calls a false emotion. Emotions are true or false depending on how the emotion lines up with reality. Emotions can construe a situation correctly or incorrectly.<sup>198</sup>

It is possible to alter one's emotions to bring them in line with reality (to avoid "false emotions"). Just as in the famous rabbit-duck picture where we can choose to construe either a rabbit or a duck once we have both concepts "in our repertoire," when we have various concepts available to us we can voluntarily assign objects different roles and choose to construe the object differently.<sup>199</sup> For example, a person may see an immigrant and identify the person with the role of "an illegal" who is stealing jobs, or the immigrant can be given the role of a child of God who works hard for his or her family and is an asset to one's community (to give just two role options). By choosing to see the

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<sup>196</sup> Roberts, 61, 152.

<sup>197</sup> Roberts, 315. While the distinction between true and false emotions I do not find all that helpful, and despite Roberts' reticence to allow bodily sensations into the definition of an emotion, he points to an important aspect of physiology playing a role in the formation of emotion here. This will be explored further in the below section on psychological construction theory of emotion.

<sup>198</sup> Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, 92.

<sup>199</sup> Roberts, 41.

person performing different roles, our construals of the person and situation change. Of course, emotions often feel involuntary as we find ourselves unable to overcome certain perceptions. This is because the concepts available at a moment depend on our history, context, and physical state.<sup>200</sup> Roberts finds this account attractive in explaining “the mixture of voluntariness and involuntariness in our emotions.”<sup>201</sup>

Solomon, Nussbaum, and Roberts together offer an overview of the primary features of cognitive accounts of emotion in philosophy.<sup>202</sup> While they vary in detail, they all agree that physiological changes are not the defining element of emotions, rather it is the evaluation, judgment, or perception of an object that is the essence of emotions. Their accounts are appealing for emotions do seem to have a strong cognitive component. Our emotional experiences are strongly related to how we conceive the world and what we value. Bodily sensations alone are not enough to distinguish emotions (this point will be explored more deeply in the below section on “basic emotions”). However, though cognitivist accounts acknowledge our embodied nature and that physiological feelings often accompany emotions, they frequently downplay the role of the body in the

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<sup>200</sup> “Whether an emotion is in our repertoire with respect to a given situation will depend on such factors as the character of the situation in its relation to our system of beliefs, our history of practicing emotional self-control, our personality in the sense of the master concerns of our life as well as our more particular cares and desires, some of which are elicited by passing features of the environment and/or our present state of mind of body (especially mood), our habits of attention, our skills at conceptualization and visualization, our understanding of our own emotions and feeling, and who knows what else.” Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 81.

<sup>201</sup> Roberts, 81.

<sup>202</sup> This view is complemented in psychology by the current dominant perspective: the appraisal view of emotions. As one group of psychologists summarize, “physiological changes are usually neither the first stage of an emotional process nor the core components of emotional experience. It is therefore misleading to claim that emotions depend directly on signals from the body. More accurately, emotions are embodied actions and reactions in the first place. Our perceptions of physiological symptoms merely reflect the fact that emotion is associated with high levels of involvement, which in turn tend to be associated with more pronounced internal adjustments.” Brian Parkinson, Agneta H. Fischer, and Antony S. R. Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations: Cultural, Group, and Interpersonal Processes* (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 15–16.

emotional experience. While we can acknowledge that conscious awareness of physiological change need not be present to experience an emotion, it seems that often the physiological response plays a greater role in the very act of perceiving an object as having emotional import than cognitivist accounts recognize.

As we come to the conclusion of this section, we can summarize the three general understandings of emotions overviewed and their relation to the body. Premodern accounts influenced by Aristotle understood passions as an operation of the soul. However, the hylomorphic integrations of body and soul meant the passions are also intimately connected with the bodily movements and never to be understood in isolation from the physical body. In the modern period, the body was no longer passive, but the originator of emotion. Here, emotions are bodily feelings that are perceived by the mind. Finally, we examined the cognitivist accounts which reversed the direction of emotions once again. The body is affected by cognitive judgments or perceptions. The latter two theories can be further generalized. The accounts that construe emotions as physiological sensations conceive emotion as consisting of *perception or interpretation of internal changes*. Conversely, in the cognitivist accounts, emotions are construals or judgments of situations that are often but not necessarily accompanied by physiological changes. Here, *emotions are perceptions or interpretation of external objects*. When we arrive at the section on psychological construction we will attempt to bring both insights together, but first we will turn to a second major debate around emotions.

#### Debate #2: Universalism vs. Social Construction

The second major debate about emotion relates to its basis. Is emotion principally a consequence of our evolutionary background in which basic emotions are hard-wired in

humans? Or, is emotion primarily a result of our social location, constructed from our experiences, childhood, and culture? In other words, are emotions universal or socially constructed? While it is rare that these two options will be presented as such stark reductionist options, theories tend to lay emphasis on one pole or the other.

The universalist perspective, often identified as the “basic emotion” theory, has predominated in recent decades.<sup>203</sup> In this theory, it is not simply that certain emotions are found universally throughout all cultures, but that emotions are seen as having specific bodily markers that identify a particular emotion. Emotions are variously identified with the autonomic nervous system (e.g., heart rate), facial expression, neural firings, or behavior. The roots of this view arguably go back to Charles Darwin and *The Expression of Emotions in Man*.<sup>204</sup> As discussed earlier, Darwin focused on how emotions express themselves across species and cultures. He identified a high degree of commonality in emotional expression and argued that emotions must thus be behavioral responses developed through an evolutionary process. Through many generations of a behavior having adaptive benefits to a situation, the behavior becomes habitual and is possible to pass on to offspring. Emotions are thus understood as primarily innate and shared across the human species.

In the mid-twentieth century, Silvan Tomkins built on Darwin to propose there is an “affect program” with discreet emotions.<sup>205</sup> Evolutionary mechanisms brought about

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<sup>203</sup> Paul Ekman, “What Scientists Who Study Emotion Agree About,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 31–34.

<sup>204</sup> The dominant, classical view is that Darwin was an early emotion universalist. Barrett criticizes Darwin for not being faithful to the *Origin of Species* which was anti-essentialist. She sees *The Expression of Emotions* as a return to essentialism. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 158. However, interpretation of Darwin’s *Expression* has been a point of disagreement between the universalist and cultural relativist perspectives. See Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 164ff.

<sup>205</sup> Tomkins was also the pioneer of “script theory,” which will be explored in chapter 5.

innate programs in the brain that respond to external stimuli. Stimuli trigger reactions in the brain which in turn causes specific behaviors and bodily responses. These behaviors may do relatively little to further the chances of our survival today (e.g., the fear of snakes), but did serve such an end sometime in our ancestral past.<sup>206</sup> In Tomkins words,

affects are sets of muscle and glandular responses located in the face and also widely distributed through the body, which generate sensory feedback which is either inherently 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable.' These organized sets of responses are triggered at subcortical centers where specific 'programs' for each distinct affect are stored. These programs are innately endowed and have been genetically inherited. They are capable when activated of simultaneously capturing such widely distributed organs as the face, the heart, and the endocrines and imposing on them a specific pattern of correlated responses. One does not learn to be afraid, or to cry, or to startle any more than one learns to feel pain or to gasp for air.<sup>207</sup>

Tomkins proposed nine such innate emotions in humans: interest, enjoyment, surprise, fear, anger, distress, shame, contempt, and disgust.<sup>208</sup>

The most influential writer in recent decades on the universality of emotions is Tomkin's student, Paul Ekman. His career has focused on building the case for "basic emotions" which are identifiable by unique physiological reactions and behavior. Ekman most recently identifies seven basic emotions (though he expects there are more): anger, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, contempt, and happiness.<sup>209</sup> Each basic emotion refers not to a single affect, but to a family of related states.<sup>210</sup> For example, anger is a basic emotion, but includes emotions such as annoyance, irritation, indignation, and rage

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<sup>206</sup> Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 151–52.

<sup>207</sup> Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness Volume I: The Positive Affects*, vol. 1 (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1962), 243–44.

<sup>208</sup> Silvan S. Tomkins, "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no. 2 (1981): 325.

<sup>209</sup> Paul Ekman and Daniel Cordaro, "What Is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic," *Emotion Review* 3, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 365. The authors also suspects that sensory pleasure, amusement, relief, excitement, wonder, ecstasy, *naches*, and *fiero* will eventually be determined to be basic. Ekman and Cordaro, 365.

<sup>210</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, "What Is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic," 364.

(Ekman argues the family includes at least sixty different anger expressions).<sup>211</sup> The basic emotions are distinct, innate, and universal affective states shared throughout the human race. They have developed because of “their adaptive value in dealing with fundamental life tasks.”<sup>212</sup> Thus, basic emotions are accurately considered “natural kinds,” as Tomkin’s other most influential student, Carroll Izard, proposed.<sup>213</sup>

As basic emotions are distinct affective responses, it is possible to identify emotions from physiological responses and behavior, including the autonomic nervous system (ANS), facial expressions, and neural circuit firing. Ekman’s most famous experiment was with a tribe from New Guinea with no previous contact with Westerners. Researchers presented subjects with situations and asked the subjects to identify facial expressions that were appropriate to the situation. They reported a high degree of participants identifying the “correct face.”<sup>214</sup> Ekman agrees with Silvan that this commonality is a result of evolved traits:

the basic emotions are discrete physiological responses to fundamental life situations that have been useful in our ancestral environment. These responses are universally shared within our species and some are also found in other primates. The basic emotions are not learned from our culture or environment, but rather they are prewired responses to a set of stimuli that have affected our species for tens of thousands of generations.<sup>215</sup>

He argues elsewhere, “there must be different circuits for the different responses that characterize each emotion. Evolution preset some of the instructions or circuitry in our

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<sup>211</sup> Paul Ekman, “An Argument for Basic Emotions,” *Cognition and Emotion* 6, no. 3/4 (1992): 172.

<sup>212</sup> Paul Ekman, “All Emotions Are Basic,” in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, ed. Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>213</sup> Carroll E. Izard, “Basic Emotions, Natural Kinds, Emotion Schemas, and a New Paradigm,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 2, no. 3 (September 2007): 260–80.

<sup>214</sup> Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, “Constants Across Cultures in the Face and Emotion,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17, no. 2 (1971): 124–29.

<sup>215</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, “What Is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic,” 369.

open affect programs, generating the emotion signals, the emotion impulses to action, and the initial changes in autonomic nervous system activity.”<sup>216</sup> For Ekman, this universalist, evolutionary view is attractive because it helps explain the involuntary nature of the emotions.<sup>217</sup>

To illustrate a basic emotion, we can consider fear. The emotion has neural, facial, and behavioral manifestations that served a function in our evolutionary history and even still today. Fear has a neurological basis with the amygdala playing a key role.<sup>218</sup> When the amygdala is activated, a response mechanism that assists in the avoidance of threats and dangers is initiated. Fear draws one’s attention and focus to a potential danger. Fear also has distinct facial expressions and physiological reaction characteristic to the emotion which assist in avoiding threats. Psychologists James Kalat and Michelle Shiota present a number of the facial indicators which are biologically useful: “opening your eyes wide increases your ability to see possible threats... Gasping gives you more oxygen, preparing you for possible emergency actions... The enlarged appearance of the eyes makes the face resemble that of an infant, and most people are highly sympathetic to infants. If you look like a helpless infant, maybe others will come to your aid.”<sup>219</sup> Additionally, fear exhibits in behavior. The emotion equips a person to act in the face of danger: freeze, fight, or flight. The basic emotion view argues that no matter one’s culture, we can expect that universally humans (and even other species) will have similar emotional reactions.

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<sup>216</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, 367.

<sup>217</sup> Ekman, “All Emotions Are Basic,” 17.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Justin S. Feinstein et al., “The Human Amygdala and the Induction and Experience of Fear,” *Current Biology* 21, no. 1 (January 2011): 34–38; Elizabeth A. Phelps and Joseph E. LeDoux, “Contributions of the Amygdala to Emotion Processing: From Animal Models to Human Behavior,” *Neuron* 48, no. 2 (October 20, 2005): 175–87.

<sup>219</sup> Kalat and Shiota, *Emotion*, 159.

However, Ekman acknowledges that the innate circuits and responses are not the whole story of our emotions. Behavior responses are not simply a result of evolutionary heritage, but also are affected by development and life experiences (in other words, there are phylogenetic and ontogenetic factors to our emotions).<sup>220</sup> Affect is a result of our evolutionary past *and* our personal past. Ekman gives the example of turning the steering wheel instinctively (and what feels involuntarily) at the sight of some danger on the road. This is not a result of our evolutionary past, but becomes part of our behavioral response to fear when driving. Through our experiences,

new emotional behaviors are continuously acquired throughout life, added to the preset emotional behaviors. This feature of our affect programs makes it possible for us to adapt to whatever circumstances within which we live. It is why our emotional responses are linked not just to our evolutionary past, but also to our own personal past and our present.<sup>221</sup>

However, Ekman emphasizes, the core of emotion lies in the innate circuits, not in the novel behaviors:

the evidence on universals in the emotion signals and in some of the changes in the autonomic nervous system activity suggests that although the affect programs are open to new information learned through experience, the programs do not start out as empty shells, devoid of information. Circuits are already there, unfolding over development, influenced but not totally constructed by experience.<sup>222</sup>

While the basic emotion theory has been the majority view in recent decades, it is increasingly coming under critique. One oft-mentioned criticism is that while many psychologists argue for emotions as a natural kind identifiable by physiology and behavior, they have had a tremendously difficult time agreeing on what those emotions are. The number and varieties of basic emotions range widely. Roberts provides a

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<sup>220</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, "What Is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic," 364.

<sup>221</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, 368.

<sup>222</sup> Ekman and Cordaro, 367.



representative selection of lists ranging from the Stoics to twentieth century researchers.<sup>223</sup> He concludes their personal research interests often influence their list as they focus on certain biological indicators (e.g., the face, neural circuitry) with which they subsequently attempt to impose a systematic framework.<sup>224</sup>

Many critiques go further and argue that it not simply that different methodologies result in different basic emotions lists, for even individual methodologies have had difficulties reliably identifying universal expressions. Methods of identifying basic emotions through facial expressions, behavior and brain circuitry have all run into inconsistencies. Psychologist Lisa Feldman-Barrett is one of Ekman's sharpest critics and calls into question the facial recognition experiments Ekman conducted. Her lab attempted in Namibia and Tanzania to repeat some of Ekman's work and found it difficult to replicate without first educating and priming the participants of the experiment to know the concept of a western emotion.<sup>225</sup> Barrett concludes that rather than universal facial expressions for emotions, variation is the norm. Emotions do "not have a single expression but a *diverse population of facial movements* that vary from one situation to the next."<sup>226</sup> Likewise for behavior, variation is the norm. There are a wide range of behavioral responses for each emotion of fear, anger, sadness and happiness. James Russell gives examples of how different behaviors can fall under the rubric of "fear" for "Alice":

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<sup>223</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 186ff.

<sup>224</sup> Roberts, 189–90.

<sup>225</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 45, 52. To see some of the photos used, see "Photographs," <https://www.paulekman.com/product-category/uncategorized/research-products/> accessed 7/12/18. Many from the West also find it hard to always identify the emotions in the researchers photos. For example, Martha Nussbaum confesses, "I have to admit to a brain deficiency here, because I don't always find it easy to recognize the emotions of the subjects in these photographs." Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 158.

<sup>226</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 11.

A wild bear steps into her path. She is startled, utters a quick yell, freezes, and then flees. Is analysis of this prototypical case of fear really informative about all other cases to which the English word fear applies? Is it the same emotion Alice experienced when she first saw the film *Aliens*, even though she knew that she was in no danger, did not flee the theater, enjoyed the experience, and would pay to see it again? How would that sameness be empirically established? In what sense is Alice's reaction to the bear the same emotion as her other fears? When afraid of falling, she freezes; when afraid of what she knows is a harmless spider, she squishes it; when afraid of missing her flight, she speeds toward the airport; when afraid of a decline in stock prices, she buys bonds; and when afraid that her child is ill, she telephones her doctor. What, other than the label fear, do various instances of fear share with each other that they do not share with what is not fear?<sup>227</sup>

Some argue that the search for basic emotions should not focus on facial and behavioral markers, but rather in neural circuitry. However, even here the identification of circuits dedicated to specific emotion has proven difficult. A recent meta-analysis of neuroimaging studies on human emotions surveyed fifteen years of neuroimaging research. The analysis “found little evidence that discrete emotion categories can be consistently and specifically localized to distinct brain regions.”<sup>228</sup> Seemingly intractable difficulties exist for identifying basic emotions through facial expressions, behavior and brain circuitry. As Barrett sums up, “despite tremendous time and investment, research has not revealed a consistent bodily fingerprint for even a single emotion.”<sup>229</sup>

Critics argue these attempts to identify basic emotions are modern day forms of Platonism. In this contemporary manifestation, Roberts contends, “Forms reside in DNA

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<sup>227</sup> James A. Russell, “Core Affect and the Psychological Construction of Emotion,” *Psychological Review* 110, no. 1 (January 2003): 146. Cf. Barrett on Anger: “the following can all be characterized as anger despite wide differences: when another driver cuts off in traffic, and you yell and wave your fist; when a disobedient child breaks a rule, and you calmly re-explain; when you hear the voice of a hated politician, and you turn off the radio; when a colleague insults your opinion, and you sit very still and perhaps even smile; when you tease a friend instead of criticize; or when you stub your toe and kick the kitchen table.” Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 366–67.

<sup>228</sup> Kristen A. Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion: A Meta-Analytic Review,” *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 35, no. 3 (June 2012): 121.

<sup>229</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 15.

molecules rather than in abstract entities beyond the realm of empirical particulars. The error is the supposition that certain English words, like ‘anger’ and ‘fear,’ have a single genuine meaning that is given with human nature.”<sup>230</sup> Rather than fixed essences, diversity is encountered. One primary cause for this variation is attributed to culture.<sup>231</sup> As Parkinson et. al. argue,

the evidence strongly suggests that pronounced cultural variations exist not only in how emotions are represented but also in the ways that people experience, express, and regulate them. Further, many of these differences seem to relate closely to corresponding differences in cultural beliefs and concerns.<sup>232</sup>

This leads us to the opposing theory of emotions: *social construction*. Social construction accounts counter the claim that emotions are discrete, innate natural kinds that can be investigated outside of their social context. Sociologists Jonathan Turner and Jan Stets describe this alternate view:

Emotions are socially constructed in the sense that what people feel is conditioned by socialization into culture and by participation in social structures. Cultural ideologies, beliefs, and norms as they impinge on social structures define what emotions are to be experienced and how these culturally defined emotions are to be expressed.<sup>233</sup>

Not only do societies define how emotions are to be expressed, but culture provides the emotional “prototypes” in which we construct our emotional experiences. Constructivist theories conceive a person observing an environment and when circumstances line up with a given prototype, an emotion is constructed (not just becoming conscious).<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 192. Cf. Barrett, Wilson-Mendenhall, and Barsalou, “Conceptual Act Theory Roadmap,” 83.

<sup>231</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 189–90.

<sup>232</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 84.

<sup>233</sup> Jonathan H. Turner and Jan E. Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>234</sup> James R. Averill, “The Future of Social Constructionism: Introduction to a Special Section of Emotion Review,” *Emotion Review* 4, no. 3 (July 1, 2012): 215.

According to social constructionists, it is futile to study bodily reactions divorced from the wider social context for, “physiological arousal is so diffuse and nonspecific that there can be no emotion until actors label it as a specific feeling, mood, or sentiment.”<sup>235</sup> Emotions cannot be recognized simply from physiological changes, nor can they “be understood as things in themselves which, as such, can be isolated and studied. Feelings and emotions only arise in patterns of relationship, which include the way we look at and perceive the world.”<sup>236</sup> Social factors are not just external influences on some essentially individual feeling, but construct the very essence of an emotion. Thus, as James Averill argues, all constructionist approaches have in common that they reject essentialism and seek to explain “how semi-independent elements become organized into the recognizable wholes we call emotions.”<sup>237</sup>

To be more specific, emotions can be studied on three social levels: the interpersonal, group, and cultural. Parkinson et. al. assert,

at the interpersonal level, things that other people do or experience depress or elate us in different ways depending on our relationship with them. At the group level, outcomes experienced by in-groups and out-groups are of emotional concern. And finally, at the cultural level, pre-existing conventions, norms, values, and rules define what is emotionally significant and provide guidelines about appropriate or proper response.<sup>238</sup>

In this way of thinking, emotions are not simply internal, subjective events, nor mere behavioral expressions. They are communicative and performative; emotions serve an active functional purpose in regulating interpersonal relationships and society. They “exert practical influence over the addressees to whom it is directed. Thus, to say you are

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<sup>235</sup> Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 3.

<sup>236</sup> Ian Burkitt, *Emotions and Social Relations* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014), 6.

<sup>237</sup> Averill, “The Future of Social Constructionism,” 215.

<sup>238</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 11. The group level will be the focus of the last section of this chapter.

feeling anger is to frame the current situation for other people as well as yourself and calls for specific responses from those others.”<sup>239</sup> There is an active role to one’s emotional response. Brian Parkinson argues, “we get emotional in order to notify some audience that they should acknowledge one of our concerns, and behave in accordance with the conveyed evaluative position with respect to this concern.”<sup>240</sup> Averill similarly contends,

I would suggest that emotions are ‘cultural performances.’ The young man who says to his sweetheart, ‘I love you,’ is not simply describing some inner condition (a peculiar feeling or state of physiological arousal), nor are his words simply a substitute for more primitive expressions of sexual excitement, like the caterwauling of a civilized tomcat. Rather, by an avowal of love, the individual is expressing a willingness to enter into a certain kind of social relationship with the other, a relationship that varies from one culture to another and from one historical epoch to another. Similar considerations apply to other emotions (e.g. grief, anger and even fear in its most common manifestations).<sup>241</sup>

This feature of emotions feeds into an oft-used metaphor of emotions as performance with a subject taking on a culturally shared social role.<sup>242</sup>

The cognitive theory of emotions from the first debate complements the social construction theory. Common to these theories, beliefs play a crucial role in emotional formation. As Nussbaum argues,

taking up a cognitive/evaluative view makes it easy to see how society could affect the emotional repertory of its members. If we hold that beliefs about what is important and valuable play a central role in emotions, we can readily see how those beliefs can be powerfully shaped by social norms as well as by an individual

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<sup>239</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, 44.

<sup>240</sup> Brian Parkinson, “Emotions Are Social,” *British Journal of Psychology* 87, no. 4 (November 1996): 676.

<sup>241</sup> James Averill, “Inner Feelings, Works of the Flesh, the Beast within, Diseases of the Mind, Driving Force, and Putting on a Show: Six Metaphors of Emotion and Their Theoretical Extension,” in *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*, ed. David E. Leary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 126.

<sup>242</sup> Fiske and Taylor, *Social Cognition*, 372; James R. Averill, “A Constructivist View of Emotion,” in *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Experience: Vol. 1. Theories of Emotion* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

history; and we can also see how changing social norms can change emotional life.<sup>243</sup>

For both the cognitivist and the social constructionist, interpretation of the social context and the concepts one possesses plays a key part in shaping emotions.

For all the advantage of the social construction account, its most radical form proves problematic in two ways. First, as Turner and Stets contend, “the most extreme advocates argue that all emotions are socially constructed, being defined by culture and practice.”<sup>244</sup> This often (at least functionally) denies our embodied nature with its inextricable biological workings. Nussbaum agrees: at the “extreme, anthropologists sometimes speak as if the emotional repertory of a society were socially constructed through and through, and as if there were few limits imposed on this constructing by either biology or common circumstances of life.”<sup>245</sup> As was discussed in the earlier section on the body and emotions, our physiology and natural capacities that exist across the species do play a role that cannot be disregarded.

The second significant critique of radical social construction is certain emotions *do* seem to be understandable across a wide spread of cultures.<sup>246</sup> As Roberts points out, “it seems indisputable that some broad basic categories of emotion are universal or nearly so.”<sup>247</sup> Social constructionists rightly point out that the basic emotion view has faults and emotions have great variety across individuals and cultures. However, in the strong

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<sup>243</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 142. However, she argues, if one didn’t hold a cognitive but rather “a mechanistic or hydraulic conception of emotion, it would be somewhat difficult to see how societies could mold or shape emotions in different ways, but it would not be impossible.” Nussbaum, 142.

<sup>244</sup> Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 3.

<sup>245</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 143.

<sup>246</sup> This critique particularly applies to theorists in the field of anthropology.

<sup>247</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 185.

emphasis on diversity of emotional expression, the danger emerges of overlooking the commonality and intelligibility across cultures that exists.

### A Way Forward: Psychological Construction

We have considered two major debates surrounding the nature of emotion. The first debate addressed whether emotions are bodily states or cognitive evaluations/judgments. The second considered whether they are hard-wired as basic emotions or are constructed socially. The contrasting emphases of the various perspectives in these debates were described. However, while various theorists emphasize dissimilar elements, the most nuanced thinkers have more in common than might first appear.<sup>248</sup> This has led the respected psychologist James Averill to conclude, “that disagreements among theorists are becoming less partisan and more a matter of emphasis than of a substance.”<sup>249</sup> Regardless of how accurate this statement is, the following section argues there is one theory of emotion in particular that is successful in offering a model which incorporates the strengths from each of the four above views while avoiding many of their pitfalls, namely, the psychological construction theory of emotions. This section looks at how this theory goes beyond the emotions as cognition vs. emotions as physiology debate as well as the basic emotions vs. social construction debate. To develop the argument, I draw primarily from psychology (especially from Lisa Feldman Barrett and James Russell). However, I will also make the case that Robert Roberts and Martha Nussbaum’s cognitive accounts of emotion fit well and complement their account

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<sup>248</sup> For example, in the first debate, Prinz represents the emotion as feedback view and yet includes the intentionality of emotions while Solomon, a proponent of the cognitive accounts, is taking greater account of the body’s role in an emotion. In the second debate, Ekman argues for basic emotions and yet holds that our history and experiences condition our emotions. Meanwhile, many advocates of social construction avoid completely divorcing emotions from our biological nature.

<sup>249</sup> James R. Averill, “What Are Emotions, Really?,” *Cognition & Emotion*, August 31, 2010, 850.

(even as Barrett and Russell tend to identify themselves more closely with the Jamesian camp).

The psychological construction theory of emotion has the strength of moving past the emotions as cognitive versus awareness of physiological sensations debate. As we concluded above, these views both have to do with interpretations or perceptions. The latter feedback theory focuses on the perception of physiological change and the cognitive theory on the perception (or judgment) of an external object. Psychological constructivists argue that it is not either/or, but both the perception of the body and the world.

Psychological construction concurs with Jamesian and cognitivist accounts (especially Roberts) that understand emotions as perceptions.<sup>250</sup> They emphasize the perception of bodily feelings with James, but rather than simply awareness of a feeling (as James advocated in “What is an Emotion?”), the brain is actively involved in creating an emotion through the process of categorization (as with Roberts’ account). “To perceive oneself as afraid,” Russell writes, “is to categorise oneself by means of the concept of fear. It is to establish the meaning of one’s state via the concept of fear.”<sup>251</sup> It is this act of categorization that is meant when proponents argue that emotions are “constructed.” Barrett explains, “categorizing is an on-going, fundamental cognitive activity, and constitutes the brain’s prediction for what sensory information means. To categorize something is to render it meaningful; it is to determine what something is, why it is, and what to do with it.”<sup>252</sup> Emotional categories are real but socially constructed and

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<sup>250</sup> Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” 1269; Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 362.

<sup>251</sup> Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” 1269.

<sup>252</sup> Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 364.



mediated. Categories and the process of categorization are not unique to emotions. We can observe a plant growing in our garden and can distinguish whether it is a flower or a weed. This distinction is rooted not in the biological basis of a plant, but in a yet very real social basis.<sup>253</sup> Emotional categorization is a process of filtering various sensory inputs (internal feelings, visual, etc.) to make certain objects meaningful.<sup>254</sup> Emotions are thus formed from more basic psychological primitives (e.g., core affect, memory and a conceptual system, attention networks, and possibly others).<sup>255</sup> What follows will look at two of those primitives: core affect and the conceptual system. While Jamesian influenced accounts tend to focus on perceiving internal changes and cognitivist accounts focus on interpreting external events, the psychological constructivist sees both as essential in constructing an emotion.

With James, an important component in the psychological construction of an emotion is the sensory input from the body.<sup>256</sup> Barrett and Russell call this our core affect. Core affect does not refer to a judgment, a change in autonomic nervous system, facial and vocal behavior, cognitive processes, reflexes, nor an emotion itself.<sup>257</sup> Rather, core affect “consists of neurobiological states that vary in range from unpleasant to pleasant and in range of degrees of arousal.”<sup>258</sup> The valence and arousal is influenced by

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<sup>253</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, “Emotions Are Real,” *Emotion (Washington, D.C.)* 12, no. 3 (June 2012): 413–29.

<sup>254</sup> Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 124.

<sup>255</sup> Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 363–67; Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 124. Cf. “a constructionist approach to emotion, the ‘conceptual act theory of emotion’ hypothesizes that an emotion such as anger, sadness, fear, disgust or happiness is a population of instances; the instances do not arise from their own, dedicated brain network, but are instead constructed from the combination of activity in domain-general, core brain systems that perform more basic psychological functions such as salience detection, memory, sensory perception, language and so on.” Alexandra Touroutoglou et al., “Intrinsic Connectivity in the Human Brain Does Not Reveal Networks for ‘basic’ Emotions,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 10, no. 9 (September 2015): 1257.

<sup>256</sup> Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 124.

<sup>257</sup> Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” 1264–65.

<sup>258</sup> Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 363; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 72.

a number of factors, including our health, sensory inputs, and what we value.<sup>259</sup> Core affect can be altered by real events, by imaginary and remembered events, by virtual reality (in art, imagination, fantasy, and entertainment),<sup>260</sup> and “especially to the drama taking place in consciousness.”<sup>261</sup> However, we never have direct access to the cause of core affect. Rather, we constantly make “attributions and interpretations” to their cause (sometimes it will be obvious and other times it will not be, particularly so in moods).<sup>262</sup> Core affect is always present, however there are certain times it becomes conscious to us in a meaningful way. As Barrett, et. al. summarizes,

an instance of emotion is constructed when physical changes in the body (or their corresponding affective feelings) are made psychologically meaningful because they are related to or caused by a situation in the world. Physical changes are occurring all the time in your body: Blood pressure is going up and down, breathing rates speed and slow, voluntary muscles contract so that limbs move. Your affective feelings of pleasure and displeasure with some level of arousal, which in part are based on your body’s moment-to-moment homeostatic and energy changes, are ever-present and always changing. However, only sometimes do you perceive these changes as being causally related to surrounding events, and when this happens, an emotion is constructed (this occurs whether or not you are aware that it is happening and whether or not you experience effort or agency, or have an explicit goal to make sense of things).<sup>263</sup>

James, then, was correct. Emotions are the perception (via categorization) of the feelings of the body.<sup>264</sup> But this is only half the story: to construct an emotion requires not only core affect, but also a conceptual system.

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<sup>259</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, “Valence Is a Basic Building Block of Emotional Life,” *Journal of Research in Personality*, Proceedings of the 2005 Meeting of the Association of Research in Personality, 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 39.

<sup>260</sup> Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” 1265.

<sup>261</sup> Russell, “Core Affect and the Psychological Construction of Emotion,” 149.

<sup>262</sup> Russell, 149.

<sup>263</sup> Barrett, Wilson-Mendenhall, and Barsalou, “Conceptual Act Theory Roadmap,” 99.

<sup>264</sup> While consciousness of core affect changes are often central, it is strictly necessary for an emotion. See Russell, 2009, 1265.

Barrett defines a conceptual system as “a storehouse of knowledge sculpted by prior experience... that people use to categorize core effect.”<sup>265</sup> This body of knowledge provides concepts through which we categorize feelings as we interpret them in a particular context. It allows our brain (often unconsciously) to make predictions regarding our core affect by means of incorporating input from a situation. These predictions are the means by which our experiences are categorized.<sup>266</sup> “These concepts,” Barrett writes, “have been learned from language, socialization, and other cultural artifacts within the person’s day-to-day experience.”<sup>267</sup> Particularly important to categorization is the use of language. Emotion words play a key role in how we categorize our experiences (a point that will be explored further below). Russell prefers the term “script” to explain the significance of language. To know an emotion word, “is to know a script in which events unfold in a certain order. The script contains prototypical causes, beliefs, physiological reactions, feelings, facial expressions, actions, and consequences.”<sup>268</sup> He writes elsewhere,

according to the script hypothesis, categories of emotion are defined by features. The features describe not hidden essences but knowable subevents: the causes, beliefs, feelings, physiological changes, desires, overt actions, and vocal and facial expressions. These features are ordered in a causal sequence, in much the same way that actions are ordered in a playwright's script. To know the meaning of a term like happiness, fear, or jealousy is to know a script for that emotion.<sup>269</sup>

Not every element of the script is strictly necessary for the construction of an emotion, but the closer events conform to a prototypical definition, the more likely it will be

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<sup>265</sup> Barrett, “Constructing Emotion,” 364.

<sup>266</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 60.

<sup>267</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, “The Conceptual Act Theory: A Précis,” *Emotion Review* 6, no. 4 (October 2014): 293.

<sup>268</sup> Beverley Fehr and James A. Russell, “Concept of Emotion Viewed From a Prototype Perspective,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 113, no. 3 (September 1984): 482.

<sup>269</sup> J. A. Russell, “Culture and the Categorization of Emotions,” *Psychological Bulletin* 110, no. 3 (November 1991): 442. Cf. Russell, “Emotion, Core Affect, and Psychological Construction,” 1270.

categorized as a particular emotion. This concept of scripts corresponds well to Roberts' *propositions* in his conceptual analysis approach to emotion. His approach attempts to bring precision to how people talk about emotions by offering propositions that he thinks offer an approximation of the established usage. For example, fear is instantiated when, "X presents an aversive possibility of a significant degree of probability; may X or its aversive consequences be avoided."<sup>270</sup> By looking at "the most competent speakers of English,"<sup>271</sup> we can gain granularity and precision of our emotion words. While his analysis does not draw in the physiological element of our mental scripts, his propositions capture well the situational elements of the scripts.

In summary, both physiological feelings and cognitive evaluation are important, though emotions cannot be reduced to either. Rather, emotions are the constructed understandings of our experiences as we categorize internal sensory inputs and external circumstances based on prior experiences and learning.

Psychological construction also offers a course by which to move past the evolutionary versus social construction nature of emotions debate. Psychological constructivists agree with social constructivists that emotions are not natural kinds that can be identified in neural networks or physiological reactions, however, emotions are yet based in evolutionary adaptive capacities. Namely, emotions emerge from the capacity for core affect and the ability to create conceptual systems in which events are categorized. These capacities are biologically preserved even as the specific types that emotions are categorized into, are not.<sup>272</sup> In other words, "emotions are at the same time

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<sup>270</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 195.

<sup>271</sup> Roberts, 192.

<sup>272</sup> Barrett, "Constructing Emotion," 372–73.

socially constructed and biologically evident.”<sup>273</sup> While the emotion concepts are socially constructed, this does not preclude the possibility of the universality of certain emotions. However, if particular emotions are universal (and some seem to be at least nearly so), it is not based on brain circuits, but on a shared human nature which results in shared concepts.<sup>274</sup> Nussbaum concurs, arguing that though “basic emotions” are unlikely to exist, it is not surprising to find certain human emotions universal grounded in a common human nature. She writes, “based, as they are, on vulnerabilities and attachments that human beings can hardly fail to have, given the nature of their bodies and their world, emotions such as fear, love, anger, and grief are likely to be ubiquitous in some form.”<sup>275</sup> There are certain universal human realities (birth, death, love, etc.) that all cultures will experience similarly at some level. Thus, despite very different cultures, we can expect that humans from various parts of the world will not find one another’s emotions entirely foreign. “Both biology and common circumstances,” Nussbaum contends, “make it extremely unlikely that the emotional repertoires of two societies will be entirely opaque to one another.”<sup>276</sup> More cautiously but in a like manner, Russell admits to “tentatively conclude that there is great similarity in emotion categories across different cultures and languages.”<sup>277</sup> Psychological construction successfully accounts for the biological findings and the observed variety and similarity of emotions across cultures. As Barrett summarizes, the theory proposes,

a biologically informed, psychological explanation of who you are as a human being. It takes into account both evolution and culture. You are born with some brain wiring as determined by your genes, but the environment can turn some

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<sup>273</sup> Barrett, “Emotions Are Real,” 413.

<sup>274</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 37.

<sup>275</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 141.

<sup>276</sup> Nussbaum, 169.

<sup>277</sup> Russell, “Culture and the Categorization of Emotions,” 444.

genes on and off, allowing your brain to wire itself to your experiences. Your brain is shaped by the realities of the world that you find yourself in, including the social world made by agreement among people.<sup>278</sup>

Psychological construction cogently integrates both the biological and social nature of emotions.

While arguing that emotions do not have specific brain wiring, this perspective does not deny that brain circuitry affects behavior. In the face of danger, humans without brain lesions (and many other species) universally have neural circuits that initiate a freeze, fight or flight response that reacts quicker than our conscious realization.<sup>279</sup>

However, Barrett suggests, behavior and emotion ought to be distinguished: “some of the behaviors that we call ‘emotional’ have innate, dedicated circuits, but this does not necessarily mean that emotions have innate, dedicated circuits.”<sup>280</sup> Very often in scientific literature and popular thought, the two are not distinguished. It is not uncommon to find neuroscientific studies on mice or other animals that identify the fight or flight response with the emotion of fear. This is not surprising as much of the research carried out on mice has the ultimate goal of linking back the findings to human experience. Joseph LeDoux, author of *The Emotional Brain*, is an influential researcher on “fear” behavior and has played a significant role in the equating of the behavior and emotion in the science world. He labeled the activity of the amygdala network as the “fear system.” In LeDoux’s recent work, however, he has sought to correct this common misconception of conflating the behavior and emotion.<sup>281</sup> In a *Cell* paper entitled

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<sup>278</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 157.

<sup>279</sup> H. Stefan Bracha et al., “Does ‘Fight or Flight’ Need Updating?,” *Psychosomatics* 45, no. 5 (October 2004): 448–49.

<sup>280</sup> Barrett, “Emotions Are Real,” 416.

<sup>281</sup> Joseph LeDoux, *Anxious: Using the Brain to Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety* (New York, New York: Viking, 2015), viii.

“Rethinking the Emotional Brain,” LeDoux argues that it is an error to equate the brain networks and behavior with emotions.<sup>282</sup> He proposes instead to call the circuitry connected with survival a “threat-induced defensive reaction” and the conscious feeling, “fear” proper.<sup>283</sup> It is the latter alone that is properly thought of as an emotion. The emotion may often link to the physiological response, but consciousness must be differentiated from the survival circuit. He sees this refined understanding as aligning with psychological constructionists: while “threats do indeed release innate behavioral and physiological patterns, the feeling of fear is not itself innate, a view consistent with the ideas of psychological construction theories of emotion.”<sup>284</sup> The link between behavior and emotion is explained by the “defensive reaction” altering core affect which is ingredient to the construction of the emotion through the categorizing of the experience as fear.

In this perspective, the amygdala is not part of a “fear circuit.” Rather, it has a more general function of “detecting motivationally salient stimuli.”<sup>285</sup> It is activated when a visual object is novel or its value is unknown for a context. It is thus not surprising that a person with a lesion on the amygdala will report lower experiences of fear. This function of the amygdala also explains why in fMRI studies the amygdala is active in times when an agent is not afraid, but simply presented with some novel stimuli. Furthermore, an individual can report fear even with decreased amygdala activity, for instance, in “threatening contexts devoid of salient visual stimuli (e.g., preparing to give a

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<sup>282</sup> Joseph LeDoux, “Rethinking the Emotional Brain,” *Neuron* 73, no. 4 (February 23, 2012): 653–76.

<sup>283</sup> Joseph LeDoux, “The Slippery Slope of Fear,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17, no. 4 (April 2013): 155. Cf. “Rather than saying that fear stimuli activate a fear system to produce fear responses, we should state that *threat stimuli* elicit *defense responses* via activation of a *defense system*.” LeDoux, *Anxious*, 41.

<sup>284</sup> LeDoux, *Anxious*, 19.

<sup>285</sup> Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 130. Cf. Pessoa, “On the Relationship between Emotion and Cognition,” 149.

speech in front of an audience).”<sup>286</sup> This understanding of the amygdala’s role helps make sense of a famous patient known as “SM” who suffers from Urbach-Wiethe disease which involves the buildup of calcium in the blood vessels of the brain. For this patient, the calcification affected the amygdala. Otherwise cognitively typical, SM reports no feelings of fear (nor are physiological responses observed) when she watches horror movies, comes close to venomous snakes and spiders or finds herself in what are ordinarily considered scary situations.<sup>287</sup> This initially led some researchers to see the amygdala as constituent of the inbuilt “fear circuit.” However, with further investigations, scientists were surprised to find that she was able to detect fear in others and they were even able to elicit fear in her (when she breathed air with elevated carbon dioxide).<sup>288</sup> As a result of additional trials with this patient and others with the condition, “the clear and specific link between fear and the amygdala dissolved.”<sup>289</sup> The amygdala serves a more general function than just for fear, and in fact, the amygdala is not strictly necessary (as demonstrated with SM) for categorizing the emotion of fear. Collectively these studies of the amygdala argue against the basic emotion view (universal emotions identified with certain biological markers) and for the psychological construction theory of emotions.

Whereas specific brain circuits are not determinative of emotion, the capacity to categorize experiences into emotional concepts plays a crucial role. This brings us back to the social construction element of emotions: emotion words or scripts are influenced by our culture, upbringing, and past experiences. Categories are not something we create

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<sup>286</sup> Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 130.

<sup>287</sup> Kalat and Shiota, *Emotion*, 169.

<sup>288</sup> Justin S. Feinstein et al., “Fear and Panic in Humans with Bilateral Amygdala Damage,” *Nature Neuroscience* 16, no. 3 (March 2013): 270–72. This was SM’s first reported experience of fear since childhood. In fact, SM and the other participants with amygdala damage reported significantly greater panic than those in the control group.

<sup>289</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 18.



individually but are agreed on in society as responses to shared human experience. They are created, according to Barrett, by

a group of people who agree that certain instances (e.g., body states or physical actions) serve particular functions (to make sense of the world, to direct subsequent action, to communicate intentions, to control the actions of others)... every single experience of emotion, or perception of emotion, necessarily involves invoking shared meaning, even if there is no one there to explicitly share with in the immediate moment.<sup>290</sup>

This does not infer that group agreement of a particular instance of an emotion is necessary, but rather a common understanding of broader emotional categories need exist. Societies develop general “prototypical scripts”<sup>291</sup> (Russell) or “emotion taxonomies”<sup>292</sup> (Nussbaum) that take shape within cultures.

While categories are formed through shared agreement in the wider culture or groups, concepts are also shaped by one’s individual upbringing and past experiences. Our interpersonal relationships and experiences also shape emotional categories. Thus, categories are not monolithic within a culture but have some variation among individuals. As Russell argues, “different people, even within the same culture, might possess slightly different scripts for the same emotion. There may be more agreement for fear and anger than for disdain and melancholy.”<sup>293</sup> From infancy we begin forming emotional

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<sup>290</sup> Barrett, “Emotions Are Real,” 420.

<sup>291</sup> Russell, “Culture and the Categorization of Emotions,” 443–44. He argues some scripts will be more specific to the culture, others will be closer to pancultural.

<sup>292</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 163–64. The taxonomies, “vary across societies. I have said that all known societies have some variety of the major emotion-types: love, fear, grief, anger, jealousy, envy, compassion, and some others. But even at the level of the big generic categories we do not find a perfect one-to-one correspondence across cultures, since cultures organize in different ways the elements that individuate emotions from one another.”

<sup>293</sup> Russell, “Culture and the Categorization of Emotions,” 443.

categories and they are continually shaped by our experiences. As Nussbaum contends, “emotions, in short, have a history.”<sup>294</sup>

Language is particularly important for the development of emotion categories. Beyond the study of emotion, research in the field of linguistics is exploring how language shapes thought and experience. Many cross-cultural studies have concluded that the structure of languages impacts thinking and interpretation. How a language expresses time and space shapes the experience.<sup>295</sup> Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues studied grammatical gender and its impact on thought. She gathered native Spanish and German speakers and had them label three descriptive English words for “bridge” and “key.” She writes,

the word for “key” is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as *hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated, and useful*, while Spanish speakers said they were *golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny and tiny*. The word for “bridge,” on the other hand, is feminine in German and masculine in Spanish. German speakers described bridges as *beautiful, elegant, fragile, peaceful, pretty and slender*, while Spanish speakers said they were *big, dangerous, long, strong, sturdy and towering*.<sup>296</sup>

Here the affective categorization of objects is influenced by language structure and conceptual understandings of gender.

Barrett’s emotion research leads to similar conclusions. She writes, “emotion words hold the key to understanding how children learn emotion concepts in the absence

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<sup>294</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 175. Cf. “I shall argue... that in a deep sense all human emotions are in part about the past, and bear the traces of a history that is at once commonly human, socially constructed, and idiosyncratic... I shall argue, then, that adult human emotions cannot be understood without understanding their history in infancy and childhood.” Nussbaum, 178.

<sup>295</sup> Lera Boroditsky, “Linguistic Relativity,” in *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, ed. Lynn Nadel (Chichester: Wiley, September 23, 2005); John A. Lucy, “Language Structure, Lexical Meaning, and Cognition: Whorf and Vygotsky Revisited,” in *Words and the Mind: How Words Capture Human Experience*, ed. Barbara Malt and Phillip Wolff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 266–86.

<sup>296</sup> Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt, and Webb Phillips, “Sex, Syntax, and Semantics,” in *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Thought*, ed. Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow (Cambridge, Mass: A Bradford Book, 2003), 70.

of biological fingerprints and in the presence of tremendous variation.”<sup>297</sup> Kristen Lindquist, a former student of Barrett’s, goes so far as to say that emotion words are “essential to our model,” and act as “the glue that holds the category together.”<sup>298</sup> Without these linguistic categories (e.g., with infants and non-human animals), emotions are not strictly possible.<sup>299</sup> Emotion words take what would otherwise be ambiguous states and provide a way of applying meaning. As one learns new emotion words, there is the new possibility of categorizing experiences somewhat differently. Corroboration comes from fMRI studies that demonstrate new emotion words can alter the emotional experience of research participants.<sup>300</sup>

Nussbaum and Roberts agree on the importance of language for emotions. For Nussbaum, emotional “grammar” is an important factor for forming one’s internal emotional life:

In the process of labeling, we are also frequently organizing, bounding some things off from others, sharpening distinctions that may have been experienced in an inchoate way. From then on, we experience our emotions in ways guided by these descriptions. A person who does not know the emotional ‘grammar’ of his or her society cannot be assumed to have the same emotional life as one who does know this ‘grammar.’ To be able to articulate one’s emotions is *eo ipso* to have a different emotional life.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Barrett, “The Conceptual Act Theory,” 102.

<sup>298</sup> Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion,” 125.

<sup>299</sup> Barrett, “Emotions Are Real,” 423; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 252ff.

<sup>300</sup> Jeffrey A. Brooks et al., “The Role of Language in the Experience and Perception of Emotion: A Neuroimaging Meta-Analysis,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 12, no. 2 (February 2017): 169–83.

<sup>301</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 149–50. She goes on, “This does not mean that one cannot fear without being able to name one’s fear, and so forth; I have said that there are many reasons why an emotion, especially a background emotion, might remain unconscious, in a person who could readily recognize and label the emotion in the right circumstances. But a person who never develops fluency with the emotion words at all, and with the criteria for their application, is likely to be different “inside” from the person who does.”

Likewise, for Roberts, an emotional state is determined by the narrative and concepts we have.<sup>302</sup> He argues, “My account suggests that nothing strictly feels *emotions* unless it has an emotion vocabulary, a categorical scheme in terms of which it recognizes emotional states in itself.”<sup>303</sup> However, neither philosopher wants to say language is strictly necessary for emotions (and thus infants and animals can be said to have emotions inasmuch as they can have non-linguistic concepts). Nussbaum writes, language “is not everything in emotion: emotions can be based on other forms of symbolic representation. But the fact of language does change emotion. The fact that we label our emotions alters the emotions we can have.”<sup>304</sup> Roberts also refuses to claim one cannot feel an emotion without an emotional vocabulary, nor that animals and infants do not have emotions. He argues perception need not be of a propositional structure.<sup>305</sup> In as much as we can have construals that are not language based, we can have some sort of emotional experience without particular words. Nevertheless, many emotions are only accessible through language concepts.<sup>306</sup> While not denying the vital importance of language on our emotional experiences, Nussbaum and Roberts add a valuable corrective to Barrett’s account.

In summary, psychological construction offers a compelling account of the nature of emotions. It assimilates research findings and lived experience in a way that incorporates the strengths found in the physiological, the cognitive, the basic emotion and

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<sup>302</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 62.

<sup>303</sup> Roberts, 321.

<sup>304</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 149.

<sup>305</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 107, 115.

<sup>306</sup> “I granted earlier that the dog may notice (if that is not too strong a word) the pounding in its chest when frightened. But the awareness of such items is not what the six-year-old child reports when she says she feels afraid. She is reporting an experience that is culturally shaped, by a concept that brings together the various aspects of fear into a unitary experience that cannot be had by a being that does not have the concept of fear.” Roberts, 322.

the social construction theories of emotion while avoiding many of their pitfalls.

Emotions are biologically based, yet socially constructed. They involve perception and interpretation of events both internal and external.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has begun the process of considering the importance of emotion for moral formation by attending to the relation of emotion and reason and by investigating the salient features of an emotion. Drawing on the psychological construction theory of emotion, we concluded that emotion arises from the historically shaped cognitive construal or categorization of both internal physiological states and external events. A key finding was the integrated nature of emotion and reason which implies the importance of attending to emotion in accounts of moral growth. Emotion is integral to moral reasoning, so attempts at moral progress that focus on rational arguments alone are bound to prove ineffective. This chapter has laid the groundwork for the next which will look more closely at the relevance of emotion for ethics and how to think about the development and formation of emotion. The next chapter will delve further into the historical and social aspect of emotion, looking more closely at how groups and social structures shapes emotions.

## CH. 3 – EMOTION: GROUPS, STRUCTURES, AND ETHICS

### *Introduction*

This chapter continues the project begun in the last chapter, namely, exploring the importance of emotion for accounts of moral formation. The last chapter focused on the features that make an emotion as well as began the discussion of how emotions develop. Emotions are the construal of objects in the world that we care about, influenced by our interpretation of internal physiological sensations. This chapter will continue the discussion of emotion formation. While the last chapter attended to the interpersonal nature of emotion, this chapter will delve more deeply into the social dynamics that give rise to affect. In particular, consideration will be given to groups and to social structures and their relation to emotions (both forming and being formed by emotions). The second half of the chapter will focus on the moral implications of the previous chapter and a half for ethics, noting its role in moral decision-making, and especially as it relates to moral agency. The ethical section will conclude with implications for the moral formation of emotion.

### *Emotions and Society*

#### Group Emotions

In chapter 2, social factors were highlighted as significant for the development of emotions. This social feature of emotions can be further explored, according to Parkinson et. al., on three levels: culture, groups, and interpersonal. In the previous chapter, the focus was primarily on culture and interpersonal factors. One's cultural norms, one's emotional concepts and vocabulary, and one's personal social history impact one's

emotional experiences. This section will focus on the third level of analysis: the relation of groups and emotions, or for short, *group emotions*.

The study of group emotions is a rapidly growing area of research. It is not surprising, then, that the term, “group emotions,” has diverse meanings among researchers. To provide clarity, we will first define what will be meant in this section by “group,” “group-level emotion,” and “collective emotion.” We start by defining what is meant by a group. The necessary feature of a social group is not organized structures, affinity for one another or norms that regulate a group (though these are often present). Rather, it is the psychological or cognitive self-identification with others that makes a people into a group. As John Turner argues, “a social group can be defined as two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or, which is nearly the same thing, perceive themselves to be members of the same social category.”<sup>1</sup> Rupert Brown offers a similar understanding, while including the requirement that those outside the perceived group likewise categorize members as a group. This section will follow Brown in understanding “self-categorization of common group membership, coupled with acknowledgment of this category by another nonmember, is the necessary condition” of a group.<sup>2</sup> A group becomes a group by the self-categorization of its members and the perception of the group as being in relation to some other out-group.

Discussions of group or collective emotion, raise the issue of what sense a group can be said to have an emotion. If we are to follow the various cognitive sciences and

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Turner, “Toward a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group,” in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 15. Cf. Nyla R. Branscombe and Robert A. Baron, *Social Psychology*, 14 edition (Boston: Pearson, 2016), 362. “A group involves people who *perceive themselves to be part of a coherent unit that they perceive as different from another group*.”

<sup>2</sup> As cited in Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 90.

philosophical accounts of emotion surveyed in the last chapter, then we have to say unless there is a mind constructing the emotion, there is no emotion.<sup>3</sup> However, it is yet accurate to identify a group as analogically having an emotion. When a group shares particular values and cognitive ways of understanding the world and an event impinges on those values and stimulates common behavior that align with some emotional script, it is appropriate to describe the group as “having a group emotion.” So, for example, Americans value freedom and security. The attacks on 9/11 were seen as an attack on these concerns. The response was people taking to the streets and waving flags in solidarity and eventually responding with violence toward those perceived to have aided the attack. This fits the script of “anger,” and thus seems appropriate to say “Americans (as a group) were angry following 9/11.” A group expressing normative emotions among its members and responding as a collective agent, is fittingly described as having an emotion.

This leads to a related subject in need of clarification. The terms “group emotions” and “collective emotions” are sometimes used interchangeably.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes, we will differentiate group and collective emotions. “Collective emotions” here will refer to the normative emotions of a group. Groups often have emotions that are widely shared. Groups, through a process known as emotional convergence, develop

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<sup>3</sup> Connors wants to distinguish between collective emotions in a “distributive” sense as we are primarily talking about here, and an “attributive” sense which identifies a collective entity as holding an emotion. He argues only an embodied being is capable of having an emotion and since a group doesn’t have a single body with a subjective consciousness, it is inappropriate to identify a group as having an emotion. Steven Connor, “Collective Emotions: Reasons to Feel Doubtful” (The History of Emotions Annual Lecture, Queen Mary, University of London, October 9, 2013), <http://www.stevenconnor.com/collective/collective.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Diane M. Mackie and Eliot R. Smith, “Intergroup Emotions,” in *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology*, ed. Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, vol. 2, Group Processes, APA Handbooks in Psychology Series (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2015), 264.



often unspoken emotional expectations for members. As the psychologist Angela Sabates argues, “all groups develop norms. Sometimes these norms are formally and explicitly developed. But most of the time, group norms are implicit.”<sup>5</sup> The relationship between individual emotions and group emotions is dynamic. Individuals are affected by the perceived normative emotion of a group they identify with, but they also tend to identify with groups that share their emotions.<sup>6</sup> In summary, as Goldenberg claims, “*collective emotions* describe group-based emotions shared and felt simultaneously by a large number of individuals in a certain society.”<sup>7</sup>

This section will refer to “group emotions” or “group-level emotions,” in reference to an individual’s emotion arising from an appraisal of a group relevant event. The latter “group emotions” will refer to the way an individual’s emotions are evoked and expressed by their membership with a group and their emotional response to their appraisal of an action or event that affects the group. This understanding of group emotions derives from Intergroup Emotion Theory (IET), a theory pioneered by Eliot Smith and Diane Mackie. Some examples of group-level emotions arising from group identity include:

People are elated when their favorite football team upsets a stronger team, saddened and angry when their team loses a game, and disgusted when the winning team’s fans drunkenly riot in the street—all without personally leaving the couch. On a more serious note, wars, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters that affect a country as a whole generate feelings of sadness, anger, and fear among

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<sup>5</sup> Angela M. Sabates, *Social Psychology in Christian Perspective: Exploring the Human Condition* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2013), 212.

<sup>6</sup> Batja Mesquita, Claudia Marinetti, and Ellen Delvaux, “The Social Psychology of Emotion,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Cognition*, ed. Susan T Fiske and C. Neil Macrae (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 22. “Group emotions may themselves affect identification...there seems to be a dynamic interplay between emotion and identification, such that identification affects emotions, and emotions identification.”

<sup>7</sup> Amit Goldenberg, Tamar Saguy, and Eran Halperin, “How Group-Based Emotions Are Shaped by Collective Emotions: Evidence for Emotional Transfer and Emotional Burden,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 107, no. 4 (October 2014): 581.

those who identify with the country even if they themselves or their families and friends are not directly affected.<sup>8</sup>

To understand a person's emotional life, one must consider a person's group membership.

Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET) builds on three theories to conceive group emotions: social identity theory, self-categorization theory and appraisal theory. The first foundational theory is *Social Identity Theory*. Social Identity Theory "postulates that all social entities, including the self, can be seen as members of social groups and that groups are therefore an important source of identity for individuals."<sup>9</sup> In short, "the self is defined largely in terms of group membership."<sup>10</sup> Or, described from another angle, the group is seen as an extended part of the identity of the self.<sup>11</sup> Thus what happens to a group is perceived as having import on one's self. This is relevant for IET as "when an individual identifies with a group, that ingroup becomes part of the self, thus acquiring social and emotional significance."<sup>12</sup>

Second, and closely related, is self-categorization theory. Psychological construction argues that we categorize events as emotions. In self-categorization theory, a person also categorizes various elements of the social world into categories and then categorizes one's very identity into social categories. "Social categorizations," Turner

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<sup>8</sup> Eliot R. Smith, Charles R. Seger, and Diane M. Mackie, "Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level? Evidence Regarding Four Conceptual Criteria," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93, no. 3 (September 2007): 431.

<sup>9</sup> Mackie and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions," 263.

<sup>10</sup> Mackie and Smith, 263.

<sup>11</sup> Eliot R. Smith and Diane M. Mackie, "Dynamics of Group-Based Emotions: Insights From Intergroup Emotions Theory," *Emotion Review* 7, no. 4 (October 1, 2015): 350. Fiske and Taylor argue this extended self-identity has an impact on the traits one develops: "this socially extended self-representation means that people respond more quickly and accurately to traits that match their self-concept *and* their ingroup concept, compared to mismatches; outgroup matches and mismatches with self do not show these effects." Fiske and Taylor, *Social Cognition*, 339.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Seger, and Mackie, "Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?," 431.

contends, “define a person by systematically including them within some, and excluding them from other related categories. They state at the same time what a person is and is not.”<sup>13</sup> This self-categorization shapes one’s social identity. Mackie and Smith apply this theory to groups:

self-categorization causes people to think of themselves as having the characteristics associated with group membership, a process called self-stereotyping, which leads group members to perceive themselves as interchangeable exemplars of the group rather than as unique individuals. In this way, in-group memberships, or social identities, become part of the self. This redefinition of the self in terms of membership in groups with which one identifies imbues in-groups with evaluative significance and empowers them to influence thoughts, feelings, and actions in both intragroup and intergroup contexts.”<sup>14</sup>

Studies have shown when investigators prime research participants to categorize themselves in various groups, emotional feelings were altered. Mackie and Smith report, “for the same individual, merely activating different social categorizations resulted in different emotional experiences.”<sup>15</sup> As a person’s identity is formed by the categorization of one’s self into a group, appraisal of an event as impacting the larger group (even if not directly themselves) affects a person’s emotions.

This alludes to the third supporting theory, namely, *appraisal theory*. IET posits, “when an ingroup acquires such significance, events or objects that impinge on the ingroup are appraised for their emotional relevance, just like events that occur in an individual’s personal life.”<sup>16</sup> Appraisal theory is translated to the group level: one’s belief, perception and evaluation of an object’s bearing on a group concern affects one’s

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<sup>13</sup> Turner, “Toward a Cognitive Redefinition,” 18.

<sup>14</sup> Mackie and Smith, “Intergroup Emotions,” 263.

<sup>15</sup> Mackie and Smith, 265.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, Seger, and Mackie, “Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?,” 431. Cf. Mesquita, Marinetti, and Delvaux, “The Social Psychology of Emotion,” 20.

emotional experience.<sup>17</sup> In summary, IET argues persons categorize themselves according to social groups which become a part of their personal identity. When objects and events are appraised as relevant to a group's concern, this produces an emotional reaction. Translating this into psychological construction terms, an event or object is categorized according to a group-level emotion script.

According to Smith and Mackie, four criteria characterize group-level emotions.<sup>18</sup> First, group-level emotions are distinct from the same person's individual-level emotions. Numerous studies have demonstrated that people report different emotional experiences (in intensity and qualitatively) in reference to a group depending on whether they are primed to categorize themselves as part of a group or as an individual.<sup>19</sup> Smith and Mackie provide the example of a woman passed over for promotion to upper-management in favor of another female colleague. As an individual she may feel envy and disappointment, but as a woman she may feel pride and happiness of breaking through the "glass ceiling."<sup>20</sup> Sometimes an individual and group-level emotion will be the same (particularly for those who are high identifiers with a group), but the common divergence of the two suggests the importance of an account of group emotion. Parkinson et. al. concur, "the degree to which we define ourselves and others as group members, rather than as individuals, will play a major role in determining whether we experience an emotion, and in shaping what sort of emotion it is."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 122.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, Seger, and Mackie, "Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?," 432.

<sup>19</sup> Mackie and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions," 266.

<sup>20</sup> Eliot R. Smith and Diane M. Mackie, "Surprising Emotions," *Science* 323, no. 5911 (January 9, 2009): 215.

<sup>21</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 116.

This leads to the second criterion: group-level emotions depend on a person's level of group identification. The more closely one considers themselves to be a member of a group (a high-identifier), the greater the emotional reaction to an appraisal. A die-hard season ticket holder of a football team will be more strongly aroused by an insult to their team than will someone who follows the team only during playoff time. The intensity of one's emotional experience is often greater with higher identification. This is especially so for positive emotions and some negative emotions such as anger, though more ambiguously with other negative emotions such as guilt.<sup>22</sup> In fact, a high and low-identifier of a group may experience wholly different emotions.<sup>23</sup> The more central a person internalizes a group as an aspect of their self, the greater impact events that affect the group will have on their emotional life.

A related feature is a person's multiple group self-categorizations. A person is not simply a member of a single group; one's identity is often made up of many intersecting memberships. Our self is formed by our self-categorization into overlapping categories, for example, political party, religious affiliation, gender, sexuality, race, sports team, work profession, geographical location, etc. At times, these group values or interests compete. Research has shown that people can be primed to focus on one identity, and by doing so, different emotions emerge.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes, the emotions we can have may be very surprising and not what we expect. This is not necessarily a failure of what social psychologists term "affective forecasting." Rather, Smith and Mackie contend, these

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<sup>22</sup> Mackie and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions," 270; Smith, Seger, and Mackie, "Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?," 432; Mesquita, Marinetti, and Delvaux, "The Social Psychology of Emotion," 21.

<sup>23</sup> "In some cases, high- and lowgroup identifiers have been even shown to experience different emotions with regard to the same event: after their soccer team had lost, high identifiers felt angry and wanted to oppose soccer fans of the other team, whereas low identifiers rather felt sad and wanted to move away from the other team's soccer fans." Mesquita, Marinetti, and Delvaux, "The Social Psychology of Emotion," 22.

<sup>24</sup> Mesquita, Marinetti, and Delvaux, 22.

unexpected emotions are often due to mispredicting “the identity that would be most salient in the actual situation.”<sup>25</sup> Our surprise is due to a failure in identity forecasting or predicting which group will be most salient to one’s identity. Emotions, this implies, reveal elements of our self-identity and values that are driving our reaction in a certain situation (and can highlight aspects of the self that a person may want to rectify).

The third criterion provided by Mackie and Smith is that group-level emotions are socially shared within a group (i.e., collective). The more cohesive a group is, the more likely they are to have conforming emotions. As Parkinson et. al. argue, “to the extent that a group is cohesive, its members are more likely to be influenced by one another and to develop shared representations.”<sup>26</sup> In particular, “when group membership is salient, people’s attributes, attitudes, and behaviors tend to converge toward those that are prototypical of their groups.”<sup>27</sup> Individuals tend to report experiencing emotions and intensity of emotions that correlate with their belief of what is typical for a group they categorize themselves into. This is particularly so for high-identifiers. Mackie and Smith write, “those who reported the group as more important to them also converged more closely on the in-group average for any given emotion... In sum, the more highly members identify with a group, the more they appear to share the group’s emotion.”<sup>28</sup>

While our identification with a group has a great impact on our emotions, the salience of that identity at a moment does not predestine an emotion. This is so in two ways. First, just as individuals can regulate their individual emotions, a person can

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<sup>25</sup> Smith and Mackie, “Surprising Emotions,” 216.

<sup>26</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Mackie and Smith, “Intergroup Emotions,” 267.

<sup>28</sup> Mackie and Smith, 269.

regulate their group-level emotions, for example, by cognitive reappraisal.<sup>29</sup> We are not simply passive victims of our emotions, but active regulators.<sup>30</sup> Second, while groups tend to converge on certain emotions, there are often dissenters from the group's normative perspective on various issues. When group membership is salient but a member of a group perceives the greater group to exhibit improper emotions, the dissenter may decide to de-identify with the group. However, others "may also remain a part of it and strive to change some of the group's values, attitudes, or behaviors."<sup>31</sup> Goldenberg et. al. continue, "therefore, viewing conformity as the only process describing the relationship between group members and their group is an oversimplification of a much more complex social dynamic."<sup>32</sup> This is where the before-mentioned distinction between collective emotions and group-based emotions comes in. Collective emotions are the typical emotions in which a group tends to converge. Group-level emotions, on the other hand, are emotions that result from perception of the group and events impacting it. When a group member perceives other members as converging on an emotion gone awry, their personal emotion may differ, but it is nonetheless a group-level emotion. Emotions can, in fact, intensify when a group in which one identifies is perceived as having an inappropriate collective emotion. In this case of dissent or emotional nonconformity, an "emotional burden" process arises which

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<sup>29</sup> Amit Goldenberg et al., "The Process Model of Group-Based Emotion: Integrating Intergroup Emotion and Emotion Regulation Perspectives," *Personality and Social Psychology Review: An Official Journal of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc* 20, no. 2 (May 2016): 119.

<sup>30</sup> Goldenberg et al., 118.

<sup>31</sup> Goldenberg, Saguy, and Halperin, "How Group-Based Emotions Are Shaped by Collective Emotions," 592.

<sup>32</sup> Goldenberg, Saguy, and Halperin, 592.

functions to challenge the group or as a way of compensating for the group in representation to out-groups.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Mackie and Smith identify a fourth criterion for a group-level emotion related to its function within a group. A group emotion contributes to motivating and regulating intragroup and intergroup attitudes and behavior. Intragroup regulation occurs largely through the convergence of typical emotions which establishes norms for group membership. In so doing, group emotions prepare its members for action: “Just like individual emotions,” Mesquita et. al. explains, “the emotions people experience as group members may be seen as intentions to act. Group emotions are for doing: they prepare for (collective) action.”<sup>34</sup> In particular, group emotions prepare members for action in relation to other groups: “Intergroup emotion is readiness—the impulse, desire, tendency, or intention—for intergroup action.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, group-based emotions also “have pervasive effects on intergroup behavior.”<sup>36</sup> They are central to how groups interact and relate to each other. Group emotions are a form of communication; they alert other groups of intentions to act. As Parkinson et. al. insists, there is a possibility of “emotional dialogue” between groups. They write,

emotions directed toward another group will provoke emotional reactions from that group and so on. If members of group A perceive themselves to be the object of group B’s contempt, for example, this may well reinforce their feelings of resentment toward this out-group. In this way, the perceived emotion of the out-group may bolster its negative image in the eyes of the in-group. Positive dialogues are also conceivable, of course...<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Goldenberg, Saguy, and Halperin, 582.

<sup>34</sup> Mesquita, Marinetti, and Delvaux, “The Social Psychology of Emotion,” 20.

<sup>35</sup> Mackie and Smith, “Intergroup Emotions,” 272.

<sup>36</sup> Mackie and Smith, 264. “Just as individual emotions regulate interactions interpersonally, intergroup emotions regulates relations between groups. This is its function or role.” Mackie and Smith, 271.

<sup>37</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 126–27.



In this way, emotions regulate interactions of the groups for good or ill. Sometimes it is insinuated that to reduce conflict between two groups, all that is needed is for the two to have interaction with one another. However, attention to the emotional dialogue must be given, for without the development of positive emotions, reconciliation is unlikely to occur.<sup>38</sup> Parkinson emphasizes, “simple contact between two conflicting groups won’t necessarily reduce conflict and can exacerbate it. What is required is contact that serves to reduce the negative emotions and to enhance positive emotions that members of each group feel toward members of the out-group.”<sup>39</sup>

In sum, emotions are biologically based, cognitive constructions of our sensations and events. These experiences are categorized through our development of emotional concepts and self-categorization. Both of these elements are strongly influenced by one’s group identification, thus an account of the emotions on the moral life must attend to the effect of groups on emotions.

### Emotions and Social Structures

We have made the case that a person’s emotion is influenced by social relations, including interpersonal relationships and groups. This next section will make two further moves. First, beyond the groups we identify with, the social structures that shape our existence have an effect on our emotion. Second, the direction of influence is not simply from the structure to the person, but also vice versa. Emotion is instrumental to structures change.

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<sup>3838</sup> This is especially true with social media, where “when you repeatedly expose people on social media to viewpoints different than their own, it just makes them dig in their heels and reinforces their own viewpoint, rather than swaying them to the other side.” Christopher Mims, “Why Social Media Is So Good at Polarizing Us,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 19, 2020, sec. Tech, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-social-media-is-so-good-at-polarizing-us-11603105204>.

<sup>39</sup> Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead, *Emotion in Social Relations*, 144.

Social structures are one of the central areas of concern for sociology, but also one of the toughest concepts to pin down. At the most basic level, social structures are patterns of behavior and relationships that create order within a society. They, “are generally viewed as patterns of social relationships among individual and collective actors that persist over time.”<sup>40</sup> While structures are not visible entities, they exist in institutions and networks that are observable. Individuals are socialized into these structures and in turn embody those structures in their ways of being. Culture is a related concept. It is broadly understood as anything passed down or learned in society through human relationships; culture is all that is “socially rather than biologically transmitted.”<sup>41</sup> While culture tends to emphasize commonly shared cognitive ways of seeing the world, structures highlight the patterned behavior.<sup>42</sup> They are closely related notions that illuminate the social forces that shape human understanding and behavior.

A central concern of sociology is the relative power of individual agents vis-à-vis social structures, or in other words, how the micro-level phenomena of agential action is connected with macro-level social structures. Humans clearly have the ability to act out of self-interest and, at times, differently than one would expect from their position in society. On the other hand, collective patterns of behavior are discernible, thus human action is predictable based on a person’s location within a social structure.<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 215. Cf. Christian Smith, *What Is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 322, 326.

<sup>41</sup> John Scott, “Culture,” in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> “‘Culture’ implies a shared cognitive and evaluational structure or pattern, whereas ‘social structure’ implies a structure of relationships in which individuals or groups are variously implicated.” Barbalet goes on, they should not be seen as pertaining to fundamentally “autonomous realms.” J.M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78.

<sup>43</sup> Christian von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures: The Affective Foundations of Social Order* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 136–37.

relationship between agency and structures are often categorized by the relative emphasis on the determinism or indeterminism of individuals in social systems.<sup>44</sup> Accounts leaning toward the latter tend to accentuate human autonomy and indeterminacy while diminishing the role of structures in human action. Conversely, those who emphasize structures prioritize a view of human action where individual and group agency are to a large extent determined by social structures. While it is rare that any sociologist falls into one of the extremes, thinkers tend toward one pole or the other and this has an effect on the theorizing of structures. For those that emphasize human agency, collective action and structures are commonly understood as a result of aggregation. Structures are nothing more than a large number of individuals acting similarly. Thus macro-level phenomena are understood as rooted in micro-level social interactions. As von Scheve explains, on this view, “macro-level phenomena are constituted by the aggregation and repetition of patterns of micro-social events. It is a rigorous interpretation of cognitive sociology and implies that macro-level phenomena can logically be derived from a corresponding analysis of all relevant micro-level elements.”<sup>45</sup> To apprehend larger structural phenomena, one needs to examine micro-level events. While individuals certainly play a role in structures, critics point out that structures effect consequences that go beyond individual planning and purposes. Systems emerge beyond what can be discerned in individual actions. Thus, alternatively, macro-level phenomena can be seen as arising from micro-level actions to something that is irreducible to the individual actions. They are “a consequence of the unintended (and intended) consequences of micro-social

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<sup>44</sup> John Scott, “Agency,” in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 8.

episodes.”<sup>46</sup> This perspective tends to talk about the “emergence” of macro-structures from these micro-actions.<sup>47</sup> The weakness of this perspective is the tendency to present structures as reified entities that exist as forces outside humans and their interactions. A more fruitful approach allows the exploration of social structures as entities that transcend the individual, but that are yet dependent on individual behavior and cooperation.<sup>48</sup>

A complementary issue revolves around attributing agency to social structures. Some sociologists and theologians are resistant to ascribing agency to a structure.<sup>49</sup> First of all, they argue, it seems inappropriate to assign agency to a non-conscious entity.<sup>50</sup> More importantly, they are concerned with the loss of personal responsibility if social structures are apprehended as actors. Like those that emphasized the centrality of micro-level phenomena above, these proponents rightly want to make clear that individuals have agency and responsibility.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, emphasizing that structures arise from

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<sup>46</sup> von Scheve, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Dave Elder-Vass, *The Causal Power of Social Structures: Emergence, Structure and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Von Scheve, building on Knorr-Cetina’s work, suggests a third way of looking at the agent-structure relationship: the “representational hypothesis.” Structures are seen here as the cognitive perception and interpretation of actors in their structured ways of thinking and, von Scheve adds, feeling. von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 8. Patterns of behavior are internalized, habituated, and reproduced in the person but since they are shared, often unconsciously, structures are subject to investigation beyond the realm of micro-social interactions. Thus, while not reducible to micro-actions, structures yet are “located within actors instead of merely viewing them exogenous to individuals.” von Scheve, 9. And yet, the social structures can be explored in their own right outside micro-level phenomena. Smith agrees that mental categories are a key aspect of social structures, but he does not think they can be limited to these. A proper definition of social structures must also include its embodiment in practices and inanimate objects. Smith, *What Is a Person?*, 323–24.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Christian Smith argues, “It is human persons, and not social systems, who are the ultimate actors in this account. Structured social systems are only the emergent products of ongoing personal interaction. Once emergent, those irreducible social structures can and do function to exert their level-specific causal influences on the persons existing simultaneously at the lower, personal level. But structures are not self-generating as social systems. They always depend upon the real interactions of related persons who are the primal agents of social activity.” Smith, *What Is a Person?*, 342–43.

<sup>50</sup> Finn, “What Is a Sinful Social Structure?,” 138, 151, 154.

<sup>51</sup> So Daniel Finn argues, while a structure can be “sinful,” only an individual can sin. Finn, 138.

individual human agency gives motivation and confidence that we have the ability to alter harmful structures through our collective actions. Thus, while structures have an influence on an individual's actions, we should not describe this power as agency. However, there is good reason to assign agency to social structures. By characterizing structures with agency, we emphasize that the action of a collective cannot be reduced to its individual parts.<sup>52</sup> While individuals may not have evil intentions, we participate in systems that are unjust. It is not just that structures influence individuals, but that they have an impact that transcends the individual's best intentions. Social structures are an "emergent" event that is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>53</sup> In actual effect, advocates of both sides of the debate of agency of social structures are not that different. Those that deny social structures have agency yet hold that social structures have causal power. Those that affirm agency of structures grant that the agency depends on the cooperation of individual agents. We will do well if we maintain both of these elements.

To explore this long-standing question about the connection between micro and macro-level phenomena (often labeled the "micro-macro link"), sociologists have begun turning to the sociology of emotion. While the matter of emotion goes back to the origins of the modern discipline of sociology with Emile Durkheim (e.g., collective effervescence), Karl Marx (especially in his discussion of estrangement and alienation<sup>54</sup>),

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<sup>52</sup> As argued in Niebuhr's classic, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960).

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *What Is a Person?*, 328.

<sup>54</sup> L. Frank Weyher, "Re-Reading Sociology via the Emotions: Karl Marx's Theory of Human Nature and Estrangement," *Sociological Perspectives* 55, no. 2 (2012): 341–63, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2012.55.2.341>; Kathryn J. Lively, "The Sociology of Emotion," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology*, ed. Kathleen Odell Korgen, vol. 2 Speciality and Interdisciplinary Studies (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 218–19.

and Max Weber (e.g., charisma<sup>55</sup>), sociology tended to marginalize the study of emotion, following Weber's lead in thinking about social behavior as rationally driven.<sup>56</sup> In the 1970's there was a turn to emotion (as in many of the social sciences) and the sociology of emotion became a distinct subfield. Sociologists such as Arlie Hochschild and Theodore Kemper began to consider the role emotion plays in individuals due to society.<sup>57</sup> The field began to address questions of how one's place in social structures affected emotion and emotion regulation to conform to cultural expectations. Most of the focus, however, remained on the micro- and meso-levels.<sup>58</sup> The relationship of macro-level social phenomena and emotion was not considered.

In the last two decades, sociologists have begun to address this deficiency. Sociologists are studying emotions on the macro-level, specifically, as key to the relationship of agents and structures. Barbalet, a pioneer of the study of emotion and social structures, contends, "emotion is a necessary link between social structure and social actor."<sup>59</sup> While much work has been done emphasizing the role of social structures

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Seyfert, "Beyond Personal Feelings and Collective Emotions: Toward a Theory of Social Affect," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 6 (2012): 27.

<sup>56</sup> Jack Barbalet, "Introduction: Why Emotions Are Critical," in *Emotions and Sociology*, ed. Jack Barbalet (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 1; von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 75f.

<sup>57</sup> Eduardo Bericat, "The Sociology of Emotions: Four Decades of Progress," *Current Sociology* 64, no. 3 (2016): 497; Lively, "The Sociology of Emotion," 219.

<sup>58</sup> Emotion can be thought of in sociology in three levels: macro, meso, and micro. Christian von Scheve and Rolf von Luede, "Emotion and Social Structures: Towards an Interdisciplinary Approach," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 35, no. 3 (2005): 306; Jonathan H. Turner, "Emotions and Social Structure: Toward a General Sociological Theory," in *Social Structure and Emotion*, ed. Jody Clay-Warner and Dawn T. Robinson (Amsterdam: Academic Press, 2008), 319–20. Emotions on the micro-level refer to emotions that exist within an individual and emerge in interpersonal encounters. The meso-level refers to the social environment consisting in groups, organizations, institutions, and the like. Macro-level investigations examine how social structures affect behavior and the connection with the micro-level. Sociology has tended to proceed by looking at these relationships from the perspective of a bottom-up or a top-down influence. It will be argued that there is a mutual influence: the micro-level is constrained by the meso and the macro, but the meso-level and thus macro-level are constructed from the micro-level encounters. Jonathan H. Turner, "The Stratification of Emotions: Some Preliminary Generalizations," *Sociological Inquiry* 80, no. 2 (2010): 170–71.

<sup>59</sup> Barbalet, "Why Emotions Are Critical," 4. Cf. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure*, 4.

on the emotion of social actors, increasingly there is also attention to individuals' roles in maintaining or weakening structures through emotions. Sociologists, "have revealed *the social nature of human emotions*, and *the emotional nature of social phenomena*."<sup>60</sup>

Emotions are the glue that connect social actors to structures and hold them together (or "dynamite that blows them apart").<sup>61</sup> Lively concurs, claiming sociologists have shown that on the one hand, "emotions are shaped by existing social and structural arrangements." On the other hand, they have demonstrated that emotions have the possibility to "contribute to and disrupt the very conditions that gave rise to them initially."<sup>62</sup> This section will draw on several sociologists who are highlighting this dual role of emotion, but will particularly profit from Christian von Scheve's recent book in which he argues, "emotions play a key role in linking individual social action *and* the emergence and reproduction of social order."<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, he maintains, "social structures serve as a basis for explaining the elicitation and experience of emotions. On the other hand... emotions influence social action and ensuing social structural dynamics."<sup>64</sup> He sums up the main argument of the book: "emotions are a bi-directional mediator between social action and social structure."<sup>65</sup> In other words, social structures and emotions have a mutual influence on one another: social structures elicit emotions in actors *and* emotion undergirds social action and social structures.

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<sup>60</sup> Bericat, "The Sociology of Emotions," 491, cf. 495.

<sup>61</sup> Turner, "Toward a General Sociological Theory," 319. Cf. Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Lively, "The Sociology of Emotion," 224.

<sup>63</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 3. Italics added.

<sup>64</sup> von Scheve, 4.

<sup>65</sup> von Scheve, 10.

We begin with the first route, namely, that social structures influence the emotion of social actors. This is due to the fact that context influences an individual's emotion, as was discussed in the previous chapter. As Bericat claims,

what we feel in a social situation will depend on the content and outcome of the interaction, the balance we obtain from the exchange, the type of social relationship that connects us to the other, the relevant norms and values, and a broad set of other social factors. Thus, by analyzing the existing social structures and social factors which condition an emotion, and analyzing the expression, behavior and social consequences stemming from it, we can reach a greater understanding of each emotion.<sup>66</sup>

Barbalet focuses particularly on how class and changes in social structure can affect emotion: "the particular emotions that people experience arise out of the structure of the relations of power and status in which they are implicated."<sup>67</sup> Structures shape how a person appraises the world and since the cognitive appraisal of an event is key to an emotional experience, structures are significant. Von Scheve contends, "the structural and symbolic orders in which agents are embedded are reflected in the elicitation of emotion."<sup>68</sup> Berger and Luckmann argued that society produces knowledge structures that construct how a world is experienced by actors.<sup>69</sup> Von Scheve adds that, "social reality determines not only what we think and do, but also what we sense and feel... society produces not only certain (cognitive) knowledge structures, but also affective structures which may even be the basis for the former."<sup>70</sup> "Thus," von Scheve argues, "during socialization, individuals develop robust and effective 'affective dispositions' or

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<sup>66</sup> Bericat, "The Sociology of Emotions," 496.

<sup>67</sup> Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure*, 4. Cf. Jonathan H. Turner and Jan E. Stets, "Sociological Theories of Human Emotions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 32 (2006): 39.

<sup>68</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 54.

<sup>69</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

<sup>70</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 60.



‘fundamental sentiments’.”<sup>71</sup> Social structures impose ways of interpreting and experiencing the world that necessarily have an affective component.

Since these structures are shared across society and groups, characteristic collective emotions arise with regularity. Social units are thus characterized by “relatively stable emotional ‘cultures’ or ‘climates’.”<sup>72</sup> The result is that, “basic structure and processes of a society create specific emotional climates, emotional cultures, or even societal emotions, which condition the general sentiments of the population.”<sup>73</sup> These emotional climates emerge through the existence of relatively stable social structures, and “this means that within social units characterized by specific systems of social order (for instance, groups, communities, or societies), emotional reactions towards certain classes of events—at least to some degree—tend to converge and to be coherent and in alignment with each other.”<sup>74</sup> This convergence is achieved through the internalization of structures in individuals embedded in social groups through members’ common experiences. Unlike some of the social constructionist views discussed earlier, this implies that collective emotions have a biological component, for “it seems plausible that events and experiences occurring regularly within some social unit may give rise to comparable developments in brain structure across many individuals.”<sup>75</sup> In the earlier discussion on emotion it was argued that one’s history and memories is particularly important for interpreting experiences. Since memories are widely shared across a society due to common experience of structures and events, it is reasonable to assume emotions will

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<sup>71</sup> von Scheve, 62.

<sup>72</sup> von Scheve, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Bericat, “The Sociology of Emotions,” 504.

<sup>74</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 17, cf. 60.

<sup>75</sup> von Scheve, 56.

also be broadly shared.<sup>76</sup> In sum, social structures are the foundation of collective emotions and thus the ground of collective action. Just as emotions are a critical link for action on an individual level, “given that the emotions exerting this influence are elicited in socially structured ways, they constitute a crucial link between structural and symbolic orders and social action.”<sup>77</sup>

However, while social structures bring about collective emotions, emotion climates do not necessitate all members of a social unit undergo the same emotional experience. This is first because individuals have differing statuses and roles within a social unit. Barbalet explains, “as emotional climates are group phenomenon and as different people occupy different positions within groups, perform different roles and have different capacities, it is indeed likely that individuals will differ from each other in their emotional experiences. Yet in their relationships they will each contribute to the feelings of the group qua group, to its emotional formation or climate.”<sup>78</sup> The differentiated distribution of emotion across a segment of society is part of the emotional climate. One’s emotions will reflect the position they hold in a social unit. Barbalet focuses on the emotions that arise among various socio-economic classes of a society. He argues, “it is the structure of class relations themselves which tend to determine the emotions which individual class members feel. While the relationship between class and emotion is not direct or simple, the emotional tone of class members can be explained in terms of the pattern of class relations. This in turn disposes social collectivities to

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<sup>76</sup> “Given that actors are socialized under conditions of more or less stable social orders (both symbolically and structurally), which are characterized by recurring patterns of social interactions, embeddedness into social institutions, and stable sanctions and reward contingencies, then it seems reasonable to assume that large numbers of actors within a social unit share comparable implicit (and explicit) memories and stocks of knowledge with comparable emotional connotations.” von Scheve, 60.

<sup>77</sup> von Scheve, 83.

<sup>78</sup> Barbalet, “Why Emotions Are Critical,” 5.

particular types of action, or the absence of action, which feeds back into the pattern of class relations.”<sup>79</sup> One’s relative power or powerlessness corresponds to variations in emotion among members of a society or group. In particular, positive emotions tend to be distributed among those in positions of privilege and power.<sup>80</sup> Turner avers, “like all valued resources, positive and negative emotions are unequally distributed in a society and constitute an important basis of social stratification.”<sup>81</sup> Emotion becomes one more commodity<sup>82</sup> which is then used to exert control within a society, a point we will return to below. This distribution of emotion among various persons then supports the formation and sustainment of classes within a society, which leads us to the second bearing of the bi-directionality of emotion and social structures.

We have thus far surveyed how sociologists study emotion as an outcome of social processes. The second reason sociologists study emotion is because “emotion is somehow necessary to explain the very fundamentals of social behavior... emotion is itself significant in the constitution of social relationships, institutions, and processes.”<sup>83</sup> Barbalet claims, “this idea, that emotion is a social cause, is more likely to be resisted by sociologists than the idea that it is a social effect,” but is nevertheless central to an

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<sup>79</sup> Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure*, 68.

<sup>80</sup> “Thus, to some degree, the structure of inequality will correspond to the distribution of positive and negative emotions, with higher-ranking individuals more likely to experience positive emotional arousal than lower-ranking persons, with the result that emotions become yet one more resource distributed unequally.” Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 294.

<sup>81</sup> Turner, “The Stratification of Emotions,” 169. Cf. “The distribution of emotion is generated by the same institutional dynamics that distribute unequally other resources such as material wealth, power, and prestige. People’s experiences within institutional domains generate a legacy of emotions, just as they determine how much money, power, prestige, health care, or any other valued resource they come to possess.” Turner, 170.

<sup>82</sup> Reflecting the idea of emotion as a commodity, we need only look to the industry arising around the production, management, and regulation of emotion. Emotion is becoming like a commodification that can be traded on the market; a form of “emotional capital.” von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 130.

<sup>83</sup> Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure*, 9.

understanding of emotion and social structures.<sup>84</sup> The two directions are interrelated: “emotion arises in the pattern of structured relationships, and forms the basis of action, which then consolidates or modifies social structures at some later time.”<sup>85</sup> In what follows, we will look at how sociologists understand the function of emotion in supporting or weakening social structures.

Emotions can support or destabilize social structures, however, they most often contribute to the sustaining of social structures. Structures are patterns of relationships that in turn habituate members into ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Thus, “emotions increase the probability that certain courses of action will be taken more regularly than others and thus contribute to the formation of larger-scale patterns of action and social structure.”<sup>86</sup> Von Scheve gives further explanation of why emotions tend to sustain structures: “given that there is widely shared societal consensus regarding the denotative and affective meanings of behaviors, identities, settings, objects, and other concepts, and because social institutions exist to promote convergence in these meanings (for example, through the legal and educational systems), one may assume that the vast majority of affective reactions are widely shared within society and thus structure-reproducing.”<sup>87</sup> Stable structures mean that affective dispositions are not to be thought of as provoking primarily irrational, capricious behaviors. Rather, “action that is influenced

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<sup>84</sup> Barbalet, 9.

<sup>85</sup> Barbalet, 65. Cf. “System-level emotions affect action tendencies and behaviors, including behaviors that promote system stability versus change.” Nevin Solak et al., “Rage Against the Machine: The Case for System-Level Emotions,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 6, no. 9 (2012): 674.

<sup>86</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 143.

<sup>87</sup> von Scheve, 100. He goes on to argue that positive emotion tends to support maintenance of structures and negative weaken, though not always. A key way that structures are reproduced are through facial recognition. “the social calibration of facial expression, especially in terms of automatic and involuntary expression, is a crucial factor in the reproduction of existing social order, because the closer actors are to one another within the social space, the more smoothly the recognition and interpretation (decoding) of facial expression proceeds.” von Scheve, 108.

by emotion is neither ‘chaotic’ nor ‘unpredictable’ but in fact contributes to everyday ‘orderly behavior.’”<sup>88</sup> According to von Scheve, emotion establishes and maintains social control in two ways that reflect the bi-directionality of emotion and social structures.<sup>89</sup> First, normative emotions created through structures are the means to establishing norms that regulate emotion which in turn regulate behavior. Normative feelings are stipulated for certain events according to one’s place in society according to what is deemed “desirable and/or appropriate,” and are thus a means to social control.<sup>90</sup> Emotion norms are the cause of emotions. Second, “social norms do not only influence emotions, but, conversely, emotions also promote the enforcement and maintenance of social norms.”<sup>91</sup> Emotions internalized by members are the means to the enforcement of those social norms. Deviation from norms provokes anger, indignation, disgust, or, embarrassment, shame, and guilt, while conformity to norms can produce admiration, pride, and general positive feelings. These emotions powerfully serve to ensure members of a society conform to expected norms. In sum, emotions sustain structures through maintenance of social norms; “emotions are themselves decisively shaped by social norms, but at the same time contribute to the enforcement of norms.”<sup>92</sup>

While emotions tend to reproduce social order and maintain structures, they can also serve to weaken structures. Von Scheve insists, “it does *not* necessarily follow that socially structured emotions always and at any time promote actions that are structure-reinforcing or -reproducing... primarily because society is not a homogenous unity or

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<sup>88</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 75.

<sup>89</sup> von Scheve, 120.

<sup>90</sup> John Scott, “Norm,” in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>91</sup> von Scheve, *Emotion and Social Structures*, 144.

<sup>92</sup> von Scheve, 139.

“container” and is characterized by, for example, cultural diversity and intersectionality.”<sup>93</sup> Emotions are “the motive force behind forces that build up and sustain social structures and their attendant cultures, as well as the force that tears sociocultural formations down.”<sup>94</sup> Especially when negative emotions arise due to a common perception of circumstances, the weakening and modification of social structures is possible. Von Scheve suggests cultural diversity and intersectionality as drivers of social change. In other words, one’s identification with groups that are not among the centers of dominant power structure can shape emotions in ways that undermine those structures. Nussbaum concurs in her consideration of emotions relation to the political sphere: “all political principles, the good as well as the bad, need emotional support to ensure their stability over time, and all decent societies need to guard against division and hierarchy by cultivating appropriate sentiments of sympathy and love.”<sup>95</sup> However, emotions not only sustain laws, they “also create motivations to improve those laws and institutions,” that is to modify existing structures of a society (specifically laws here), to make for more just social structures.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> von Scheve, 100.

<sup>94</sup> Turner, “The Stratification of Emotions,” 169. Cf. “Emotions are what make social structures and systems of cultural symbols viable. Conversely, emotions are also what can drive people apart and push them to tear down social structures and to challenge cultural traditions. Indeed, one of the unique features of humans is their reliance on emotions to form social bonds and build complex sociocultural structures.” Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2015), 2–3. In this work, Nussbaum argues for love as a political emotion necessary to support a just society. She argues, love “is what gives respect to humanity its life, making it more than a shell.” Nussbaum, 15. Controversially, Nussbaum argued elsewhere that anger is normatively inappropriate and in the political realm is a “large impediment to the generosity and empathy that help to construct a future of justice.” Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 8. Jaycox argues, however, that anger serves a vital role toward the goal of bringing about justice in the face of systemic oppression. Michael P. Jaycox, “Nussbaum, Anger, and Racial Justice: On the Epistemological and Eschatological Limitations of White Liberalism,” *Political Theology* 21, no. 5 (July 3, 2020): 415–33.

<sup>96</sup> Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 135.

## ***Emotion and Ethics***

The last two chapters have explored the question of what is an emotion? It has looked at emotions on an individual level and on the group and structural level through a review of contemporary thinking on emotion from fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and others. This exercise was not an end in itself, but the groundwork for thinking about the significance of emotions for ethics. The next section will thus delve into the implications and significance of emotions for ethics. The section will conclude with a consideration of the implications for moral formation.

### **The Relevance of Emotions for Ethics**

This section will highlight four features of emotion which are significant for ethics. First, emotion plays a key role in moral reasoning. Second, emotions provide information on one's values and identities. Third, a caution to the first two points is raised due to the ambiguity of emotion. Finally, and of great consequences to this project, emotion is considered in relation to moral agency. Emotions constrain, prime, motivate, and sustain moral action, particularly as embedded in groups and structures.

### **Moral Reasoning**

Emotion is important because it is unavoidable in moral reasoning. Emotion plays a key role in our moral decision making whether we are aware of it or not. Thus, we need to attend to our emotion and not expect that "acting rationally," means void of emotion. Emotion is unavoidable and integrated into the moral reasoning process. While we tend to think our reasoning is rooted in rational arguments and facts, emotion is often the

driving influence of reasoning. In fact, those with stronger analytic abilities are more prone to twist data to fit their desires and emotions.<sup>97</sup>

Often emotion is helpful for the moral life. Emotions helps us in the numerous daily decisions that we have to make to quickly determine the appropriate action. What would otherwise take much energy and effort to understand benefits, risks, and goods, emotion can act as a trustworthy guide to making quick decisions. Furthermore, they can enrich moral reasoning in novel situations by bringing focus and sustained attention to an issue.<sup>98</sup> Daily we are bombarded with ethical issues calling for attention. When an issue elicits an emotional response, this brings focus to information pertinent to the matter at hand. On the other hand, emotions can also degrade moral reasoning.<sup>99</sup> Malformed or manipulated emotions can be a poor guide to moral decisions. Moreover, they have the potential to distract a person from relevant information when considering an issue. One can become consumed with peripheral matters and biases that divert attention from significant features and values. In sum, emotions are unavoidable and even necessary making our daily decisions and focusing on moral dilemmas.

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<sup>97</sup> Tali Sharot, *The Influential Mind: What the Brain Reveals About Our Power to Change Others* (Picador, 2018), 22–24.

<sup>98</sup> Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, 60–67, cf. 26.

<sup>99</sup> All emotions are not morally equal – some are beneficial and some are harmful for the moral life. In psychology and popular culture, the impression can be sometimes given that emotions are morally neutral. It is only how we act that matters. This is often advanced by clinicians who are sensitive to patients caught in cycles of guilt over their feelings. They encourage the patient to accept what they are feeling, in order that they can move past the undesirable emotions. However, the underlying assumption is that not all emotions are welcomed or beneficial for one's life. While we experience limited control over the emotions we experience, the goal of counseling is often to transform the emotions.



### Moral Information

Often times our motivations and beliefs that drive our decision making and behavior remain on the unconscious level.<sup>100</sup> It is important to be able to critically examine ourselves, but to do so we need to become aware of those implicit beliefs and desires. Emotions is important for giving information about what we value. As Nussbaum argues, emotions are “an intelligent response to the perception of value.”<sup>101</sup> While we may intellectually assent to certain goods as important for human flourishing, emotion clues us in to those things that drive us in our daily decisions to attain the good life (which may or may not be consonant with our explicit beliefs). Understanding those values that propel us is an essential first step for critically examining our moral life.

Emotions also reveal core identities. As discussed above under group emotion, one’s identity plays an important role in one’s affective life. The groups with which we identify become an extension of the self and thus actions by the group or directed toward the group elicit an emotional response. Smith and Mackie point out that moral actors can be surprised at their emotional reaction in a situation. They argued that often this is because we are surprised about the identity that is most salient in a situation.<sup>102</sup> Our emotional life can clue us into the identities that impart the greatest force on our moral lives.

### Ambiguity of Emotion

A further consideration must be acknowledged. While emotions can aid or degrade moral reasoning and can give moral information, emotions are often ambiguous

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<sup>100</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 490.

<sup>101</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Smith and Mackie, “Surprising Emotions,” 216.

and can fool us. They are easily manipulated through lofty language, powerful music, and group fervor. Furthermore, emotions are not a static entity within us we possess but arise from a concrete situation in which multiple dynamics, loyalties, and commitments are at play. While an emotion is intentional, there are many objects vying for one's attention that can give rise to an emotion that has mixed moral motivations. Pleasure (e.g., feeling of moral superiority) from reading and discussing about the reality and importance of addressing climate change can supplant the more difficult work of tangible action. It is for this reason that criteria are necessary for evaluating emotions.<sup>103</sup>

### *Emotion and Moral Agency*

Issues of moral agency are closely tied to an actor's emotion. Moral agency is the capacity to deliberate about one's ends and make free choices to achieve them. Our agency is constantly limited by decisions of others, oneself, and of the way the world is structured. These limits are what make agency possible for unlimited possibilities would be overwhelming and make life incoherent. It is within limits and structures that freedom develops. However, often people are unable to act in ways they understand necessary to bring about a good because of a context or condition which constrains their actions. This can be due to external constraints such as another person's action, social structures, laws, etc.<sup>104</sup> But there are also internal constraints.<sup>105</sup> Emotion is one such internal constraint

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<sup>103</sup> In the next chapter I will offer three criteria for evaluating emotions.

<sup>104</sup> For example, to avoid contributing to climate change is very difficult when living in a location where the majority of electricity generated derives from fossil fuels, where avoiding fossil-fuel derived plastics is difficult and expensive, or residing in a place where car ownership is necessary due to infrastructure and lack of mass transit.

<sup>105</sup> One example is voluntary constraints, but here constraints do not limit someone from acting for a perceived good, but limit options because of a perceived good. For example, a person decides to avoid ownership of retirement stocks in fossil fuel companies, or, on the flip side, chooses to reject eco-friendly appliances.

that can frustrate moral agency.<sup>106</sup> This can manifest in multiple ways. First emotions can lead to inaction. Emotions such as fear, guilt, or shame can weigh on a person in such a way as to make an action difficult even absent any external obstacles. Additionally, while one action can be understood as morally good, another may be affectively more appealing, making the moral act tougher to perform. Emotions can also overwhelm an agent because of the scope of a problem. In the next chapter we will look at climate change as an example. Feelings of distress and hopelessness can enervate the moral agent, leading to resignation and reduced engagement in the critical action necessary to address the problem. What we notice for each of these is that an emotion makes a perceived good difficult to realize.

In addition to constraining moral agents from acting on what is deemed good, emotions can facilitate and sustain moral action. First, emotions prime individuals and groups for action. They often prompt an “action tendency,” in other words, they cause a strong impulse to particular behavior. This can be observed in patterns of individuals and groups acting in similar ways after reporting certain emotions. For example, anger often leads to greater political engagement.<sup>107</sup> This can be manifest in higher rates of voting, in peaceful protests, and in violent riots at the capitol. Anger, fear, hope, and other emotions can be important motivators for translating ideas into both virtuous and vicious actions.

Relatedly, emotions can sustain moral action.<sup>108</sup> Calm reflection on an issue is insufficient to bring about individual and social behavior that respond to moral issues.

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<sup>106</sup> This was a constraint suggested in the Q&A time following a conference talk given by Ellen Marshall. Ellen Ott Marshall, “Moral Agency Under Constraint,” Conference Presentation (2021 Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, Virtual, 2021).

<sup>107</sup> Davin L. Phoenix, *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 6.

<sup>108</sup> Hordern, *Political Affections*, 1; Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 135.

The abolitionist movement and the civil rights movement of the 60's would not have had their accomplishments without the sustained emotional charge of its leaders and participants.<sup>109</sup> Social injustices are not easily addressed and require persistent and focused attention. Emotions support actors' resolve in moral action. In particular, hope is a strong motivator that promotes action in the face of great challenges.<sup>110</sup> Emotion can make a difficult task easier.

We now turn more explicitly to the nexus of emotion and social structures. Emotion is essential for understanding the relation of structures and individuals. Social structures are patterns of behavior that are steadily regulated by normative emotions (negative emotions are directed to those who attempt to go against the existing state of affairs and positive emotions encourage complying with the social organization). Thus, emotion serves mainly to support social structures and maintain the *status quo*. But collective emotion is also key to changing structures. Despite years of critique of the criminal justice system's approach toward people of color, it was not until the video of George Floyd's death and the emotion it produced that meaningful talk of structural change began across the larger society of the United States.<sup>111</sup> If one hopes to address the social forces that lead to injustice, one must attend to emotion as a disruptor.

It is here that groups again return to the picture. For we are not only shaped by social structures and patterns of behavior, but also by the groups which shaped identity. Groups can provide communities that offer language, symbols, and narratives that shape

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<sup>109</sup> Martha Nussbaum, "Teaching Patriotism: Love and Critical Freedom," *University of Chicago Law Review* 79, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 224.

<sup>110</sup> Sharot, *The Influential Mind*, 66ff. Sharot argues that hope is usually a much stronger motivator to action than negative emotions such as fear (unless the goal is inaction, in which fear is much more effective – Sharot, 5.).

<sup>111</sup> Though, as the strong emotions subsided, resistance to systemic change hardened among many, particularly discernible in opposition to and obsession with Critical Race Theory.

emotion in ways that challenge existing structures. These can provide resources to counter these emergent forces, and provide a new way of seeing oneself in the world. As we continue in our study, we will look at the Christian community which embodies the narrative of God's work and responds to God's promise to act in the world in a corresponding way.

We can bring this section to a close by returning to the earlier discussion on whether agency ought to be attributed to social structures. While differences of opinion exist, there is notable agreement that structures have causal power and that their continuation depends on the cooperation of individual actors. Emphasizing that structures are not reified but arise from human actions gives motivation and confidence that we have the ability to alter harmful structures through our collective actions.<sup>112</sup> However, structures often appear unchangeable due to their pervasive and extensive reach in society and individuals. It is for this reason that as we return to this issue in chapter 5, we will find it fitting to describe social structures as having agency, especially as we look at biblical texts and apocalyptic narratives which asserts agency to the powers and principalities. Apocalyptic theology calls attention to the need of an agency that transcends individual human agency in overcoming the evil structures of our world. The motivation to work for change, then, lies not in the confidence of the human ability to combat unjust social structures, but in God's promise of a good future which gives hope and propels the Christian on to faithful action even when the situation seems hopeless. The gift of grace working in and through the Christian community enables a genuine

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<sup>112</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 3, 62.

human response of rebellion against unjust structures. Crucial to that response are the emotions formed in the community.

### Emotion Formation

The significance of emotion for the moral life would be fine and interesting, but pointless if emotions could not be evaluated and shaped. Extreme versions of basic emotions or social construction theories can lead to the impression that our emotions are determined (either by biology or by social structures). However, psychological construction with an emphasis on group-level emotions complements the cognitive view of emotions' emphasis on the freedom of a person to shape their emotions. This theory presents a view that takes account of biological and social factors, but also emphasizes the responsibility we have in shaping our emotions. Though constrained by various factors, there yet exists some freedom over our emotional expressions. Following Nussbaum, since emotions are evaluations, we are not held captive by an alien force (neither biological nor social construction). We can evaluate those evaluations, and then emotions can be "in some ways altered, if they fail to survive criticism," through shaping the way we see objects and what we value.<sup>113</sup> As was described in the previous chapter, psychological construction points to an emotion arising from the perception or interpretation of events, both internal and external. Thus, the emotional life can be transformed by attending first to the inputs (bodily and external events), and second, to the interpretation of those events.

As we turn to these two angles of an emotion, we must begin by emphasizing the relational elements that permeate through it all. From birth, the process of forming

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<sup>113</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 172.

emotions begins. We have biological roots for the emotional life, but the infant in her interaction with mother and others is already beginning to learn about emotions. As the baby becomes a toddler and starts to associate words with feelings and events, the development of emotion continues. As relationships continue with families, friends, teachers, media, and in the social structures that guide a society, those emotions continue to be shaped and develop. Relationships are key to the development of emotion, and it follows that emotional changes are also connected to the social. While the psychological construction perspective persuasively highlights these elements, as many of the same psychologists move to recommendation on practical steps to take, there is a tendency to revert to individualistic solutions to altering emotions. This section will attend to their suggestions but also extend it where necessary (here sociology, social psychology, and philosophy are particularly helpful) to take account of the social implications of the theory for emotion formation.

The two input factors that are perceived and give shape to emotion are the biological and the social. To alter emotions, we must therefore attend to both of these influences.<sup>114</sup> First, emotion arises from perception of internal, physiological experiences. The emotional life is affected by the health of the body. We are embodied creatures and the health of our body is intimately connected to how we feel. The root of negative emotions may be lack of sleep, illness or poor diet. Barrett uses the concept of our “body budget” to describe this dynamic – we have finite energy resources and as they are consumed there is an impact on our internal sensations.<sup>115</sup> We may assume that someone

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<sup>114</sup> While the claim that body and cognitive factors need to be taken into account is not unique to psychological construction, this theory provides a convincing theoretical account to why these factors need to be shaped and emphasis on certain interventions.

<sup>115</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 69–71.

is being particularly difficult and disrespectful, when in fact we are more irritable and impatient due to a taxed body budget. Barrett gives an example of reluctantly going on a date as a grad student and to her surprise finding her face becoming flushed, her stomach fluttering and finding it difficult to concentrate. She concluded she must be attracted to him after all! It was only later that night she realized she had the flu.<sup>116</sup> Sickness, fatigue and hunger lead to negative affect which influences how we construe our emotional life.<sup>117</sup> Thus, Barrett concludes, “the most basic thing you can do to master your emotions, in fact, is to keep your body budget in good shape.”<sup>118</sup> This can be done through healthy diet, exercise, adequate sleep. Human touch and regular lunch dates with a friend also improve the body budget.<sup>119</sup> This has two ethical implications. First, in general, taking care of our health by eating well, exercising, and similar practices can promote healthy emotions needed for moral behavior and thus should be sought after.<sup>120</sup> Second, when the body budget is out of whack, awareness of this information can facilitate categorizing our emotion to the feelings of bodily sensations rather than an external object.

Of course, while health is connected to individual choices, health is also linked to social conditions. In particular, marginalized communities suffer from less access to quality healthcare, poorer health outcomes, and shortened life expectancy. Many studies

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<sup>116</sup> Barrett, 30. Cf. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 315.

<sup>117</sup> Also, feeling good impacts evaluation. Negative or positive affect in themselves are morally neutral. Positive emotions can be ethically harmful if, for example, a white supremacist is a health buff whose positive affect support his racist perspectives. Good health is important for the moral-emotional life, but not sufficient. Likewise, sickness does not determine a person’s moral emotional life. What is important is how the bodily feelings are interpreted and how they fit into scripts.

<sup>118</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 176. However, “modern culture, unfortunately, is engineered to screw up your body budget.” Barrett, 177.

<sup>119</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 178f.

<sup>120</sup> Though, sometimes foregoing some comfort or good, such as when fasting, can also facilitate moral emotions.



have shown that poverty is associated with health.<sup>121</sup> Obesity, heart disease, and a myriad of other diseases are correlated with social economic status. Social factors that affect health include limited access to healthy food,<sup>122</sup> poor housing, proximity to pollution, work demands, and access to quality healthcare.<sup>123</sup> Beyond income equality, race is also associated with health disparities due to social dynamics.<sup>124</sup> It is reasonable to assume health is a contributing factor in the unequal distribution of emotions described by Turner.

Second, emotion is shaped by the interpretation of external events. This is often more difficult to address as we often have a limited ability to control external happenings, especially on the societal level. Even at the interpersonal level, at times we cannot or may not want to remove ourselves from situations that give rise to emotions. However,

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<sup>121</sup> Jacob Bor, Gregory H. Cohen, and Sandro Galea, “Population Health in an Era of Rising Income Inequality: USA, 1980–2015,” *The Lancet* 389, no. 10077 (April 8, 2017): 1475–90; Raj Chetty et al., “The Association Between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001–2014,” *JAMA* 315, no. 16 (April 26, 2016): 1750–66; Dave A. Chokshi, “Income, Poverty, and Health Inequality,” *JAMA* 319, no. 13 (April 3, 2018): 1312–13; Kate Beatty et al., “Poverty and Health in Tennessee,” *Southern Medical Journal* 113 (January 1, 2020): 1–7.

<sup>122</sup> Mary Story et al., “Creating Healthy Food and Eating Environments: Policy and Environmental Approaches,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 29, no. 1 (2008): 253–72; Nicole I. Larson, Mary T. Story, and Melissa C. Nelson, “Neighborhood Environments: Disparities in Access to Healthy Foods in the U.S,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 36, no. 1 (January 2009): 74–81; Sarah Bowen, Joslyn Brenton, and Sinikka Elliott, *Pressure Cooker: Why Home Cooking Won’t Solve Our Problems and What We Can Do About It* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>123</sup> This can be due to lack of insurance or ability to afford care, or due to geographical location as many rural hospitals are closing (a problem particularly pronounced in the Southeast). Andrew J. Yawn and Maria Clark, “First the Hospitals Closed, Then COVID-19 Came. This Is How the Rural South Is Coping,” *The Tennessean*, accessed January 14, 2021, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/american-south/2020/12/14/rural-southern-towns-fight-covid-19-hospitals-close/6286551002/>.

<sup>124</sup> For an overview of health disparities by race, see Sofia Carratala and Connor Maxwell, “Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity,” Center for American Progress, accessed January 14, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2020/05/07/484742/health-disparities-race-ethnicity/>. See also, Leonard E Egede, “Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Disparities in Health Care,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 21, no. 6 (June 2006): 667–69. The disparities have been particularly pronounced in the COVID pandemic, Matthew A. Raifman and Julia R. Raifman, “Disparities in the Population at Risk of Severe Illness From COVID-19 by Race/Ethnicity and Income,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 59, no. 1 (July 2020): 137–39; L. Ebony Boulware, “Race Disparities in the COVID-19 Pandemic—Solutions Lie in Policy, Not Biology,” *JAMA Network Open* 3, no. 8 (August 18, 2020): e2018696–e2018696.

sometimes it is proper to make decisions to ignore or avoid situations, people, or media that may lead to undesired emotion. Surrounding oneself by toxic conversation or corrupt characters can make it difficult to avoid problematic emotions. Conversely, we can purposefully engage with certain questions, persons, and information which will promote moral emotions.

Beyond the interpersonal, there are many external dynamics that are beyond our capacity to change in meaningful ways. We largely cannot escape social structures or the power dynamics in which we live and function.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, we have limited influence on many of the happenings in our world. However, there are steps that individuals and groups can take to transform the status quo. We can be active in promoting change, whether it be through political participation such as elections and petitioning elected officials, or more importantly, through involvement in local community initiatives. While our actions will be limited, they are not inconsequential to our emotions, not only for the part it plays in affecting society but also because of how action influences perception and emotion. Which leads to the next element of formation.

In addition to changing the sensory and contextual inputs, emotions are formed through new categorization and ways of perceiving these events. This happens primarily in two ways. First, by a recategorization of an event, and second, by an alteration to identity and values.

First, one's emotional life depends on the *categorization* of sensations, objects and events. It follows that emotions can be changed through *recategorization*. There are multiple, related ways to recategorize our emotions. First, following cognitive theories,

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<sup>125</sup> Nor should we want to as structures are the conditions in which freedom is realized.

emotions are dependent on the evaluation of an object. By shifting beliefs and values, therefore, an agent's construals and predictions will change.<sup>126</sup> We can evaluate our emotional evaluations, and then emotions can be, as Nussbaum maintains, "in some ways altered, if they fail to survive criticism," through shaping the way we see objects and what we value.<sup>127</sup> A person ought to examine what she values (as mentioned, one's emotions can provide insight here), and move toward changing those values through deliberate consideration of our underlying beliefs (as in cognitive behavioral therapy) and through emotive means that change our predictions (e.g., empathic encounters). In connection with the section on the body, being aware of the impact of health on our emotions also plays an important role in changing our emotions.<sup>128</sup> Once Barrett realized she had the flu, she constructed her understanding of the experience with her date differently – not as attraction, but illness. Realizing the origins of feelings can alter our experiences, or, as Solomon puts it, "my knowledge of the cause of my emotion tends to undermine the emotion."<sup>129</sup>

Additionally, psychological construction proposes the possibility of recategorization through expanding and altering one's vocabulary, concepts, and scripts (three overlapping terms). An agent can learn to deconstruct his affective feelings and to apply new concepts to the emotional experiences.<sup>130</sup> Expanding our list of concepts is what Barrett refers to as "emotional granularity."<sup>131</sup> Possessing more emotional

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<sup>126</sup> Gaurav Suri and James J. Gross, "Emotion Regulation: A Valuation Perspective," in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, 4th ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2016).

<sup>127</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 172.

<sup>128</sup> This is the core insight of mindfulness practices, cognitive behavioral therapy, and exposure therapy. Awareness of our body affects how we interpret those senses.

<sup>129</sup> Solomon, *The Passions*, 95.

<sup>130</sup> Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 188.

<sup>131</sup> Barrett, 180.

vocabulary words offers additional ways to interpret our sensations and experiences. As Lindquist argues,

Understanding more specifically what you are feeling helps you know what caused the feeling and what to do about it. It is thus no surprise that learning to label feelings is at the core of many types of psychotherapy. Similarly, reconceptualizing the meaning of a feeling with a different linguistic category (as in the cognitive reappraisal tasks used in standard emotion regulation paradigms) would also help regulate emotions by helping transform one type of experience (e.g. fear) into another (e.g. anger). Not surprisingly, reappraisal, although it does not explicitly involve affect labeling, involves many of the same brain regions involved in semantics such as the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, medial prefrontal cortex, anterior temporal lobe and posterior cingulate cortex.<sup>132</sup>

Recent research has shown that those with richer emotional granularity report more positive emotional life and better outcomes in treating psychological disorders including in relapse of substance abuse after treatment.<sup>133</sup> In Russell's terminology, we can describe adding vocabulary words as accruing more nuanced emotional scripts which enable us to categorize events and sensations differently. Both the possibility of recategorizing experiences and using new language or scripts to understand events depend largely on relational factors which open a window into interpreting things differently. It is through new imaginative ways of seeing the world via encounters with others that new patterns of emotional responses emerge.

Second, one's identity and values are key to the formation and transformation of emotion. As emotions arise from perceptions of events and their relation to one's flourishing, what is seen as essential to flourishing and the weight given to such values weigh heavily on the emotional experience. One's conception of the drama of life and

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<sup>132</sup> Brooks et al., "The Role of Language in the Experience and Perception of Emotion," 180.

<sup>133</sup> Deepika Anand et al., "Emotion Differentiation Predicts Likelihood of Initial Lapse Following Substance Use Treatment," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 180 (November 1, 2017): 439–44. Cf. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 182.

their place in the larger story affect the classification of experiences. Emotional life is transformed through reimagining one's role and identity. In particular, awareness of how groups become a part of our self-identity, provide insight into our emotional experiences and self-identity. It is inevitable that groups shape emotions, however this does not mean a person has no control over his or her emotional life. As Smith and Mackie argue,

we are not prisoners of our group memberships, inevitably drawn to ethnocentric thinking that glorifies our own racial or other ingroups and derogates outgroups. Instead, our flexible social categorizations can lead us to reject fellow group members who violate norms of tolerance and egalitarianism, and to avoid-and perhaps, in an ideal world, even to confront - those individuals.<sup>134</sup>

There is the possibility to choose or reject the groups with whom we identify, to agree or disagree with a group's normative beliefs and the ability to make certain groups salient. Rarely do values change when someone newly encounters a new idea or some set of facts. Rather, a change in values arises from social interactions and with the groups we identify. A change in emotion is often connected with a group we identify, whether as a norm changes within that group or as we more closely identify with a different group. As mentioned earlier, we each identify with multiple groups, and as a particular group becomes most salient, our emotional life corresponds to that group.

Additionally, as we are exposed to persons different than ourselves, our emotions can change. This is not inevitable as simply being exposed to opposite viewpoints can cause increased polarization and entrenchment around one's views. But when common ground can first be found, it is more likely that people will listen to the other and be more open to seeing the world in a different way.<sup>135</sup> Emotion arises out of a history, and as that history develops in relation with others, new emotional possibilities arise. This

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<sup>134</sup> Smith and Mackie, "Surprising Emotions," 216.

<sup>135</sup> Sharot, *The Influential Mind*, 33–34.

connection with others and the various groups we are with make it possible to be self-critical while retaining identification of a group. Sometimes the emotion is strongest when one is critical of their group. An “emotional burden” is taken on. When disappointment at the group’s approach, this motivates an actor to take a stand.

In summary, we see the importance of interpersonal interactions and society for the formation of emotions. Emotions arise from our interpretation of internal and external events. Above all, it is in the context of society and relationships that these events arise, and most importantly, the relations influence our understanding of them.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter, we explored the significance of emotion for moral formation. It is through interpersonal interactions and society that emotions take shape in moral actors and groups which is a necessary ingredient for agency. Additionally, the formation of society is related to emotions. The ways in which we organize ourselves depends on emotions for its maintenance and transformations.

This chapter began by expanding our attention to the social nature of emotions. Not only are emotions shaped by interpersonal relationships, but they are strongly influenced by group-identity and social structures. Groups tend to develop normative emotions among members, and thus one’s identification with a group often leads to adoption of that emotion or sometimes to dissenting emotions in relation to the group’s actions. Of course, individuals find their identity as members of multiple groups, so depending on which group identity is salient at a given moment will influence the emotional experience of the person. Furthermore, beyond groups, a society’s organization also plays a significant role in the emotional life of members through the creation of

emotion climates. Structures impose meaning which give rise to affective norms. These norms in turn act to sustain society and the structures that are in place. However, emotions of moral agents also have the potential to give rise to improvements or modifications of social structures. In sum, humans are relational beings living in complex social environments. Thus, emotions are multifaceted, arising from a variety of (sometimes conflicting) social influences. While emotions are often understood and experienced as fundamentally individual events, we see that it is through the complex interactions and relations a person possesses that emotions are formed. But emotions are not only critical for individual moral development, but also for the formation of groups and social structures. They most often contribute to the stability of human organization, but also are essential for initiating new patterns of behavior. Emotions, particularly those stemming from the margins of society, are an important element for bring about social transformation

We conclude this chapter by looking back to chapter one on Barth's view of moral growth and bringing it into conversation with those represented in the last two chapters. As mentioned in chapter one, Barth did not believe that the natural and social sciences are able to discover the determination or *telos* of humanity. It is through Christ revealed in Scripture by the Holy Spirit that we come to understand that we are created for fellowship with God and in solidarity with humanity. The sciences, on the other hand, point to the phenomena of the human, that is, all those aspects of humanity that are discoverable by scientific methods of investigation. However, it is possible for those phenomena to become symptoms of true humanity when they are understood in light of

our determination in Christ. The sciences can give insight into the genuine human response to God's grace.

While Barth was attempting to do something different than these other disciplines, there are noticeable areas of convergence. Just as Barth argued that humans are at root relational creatures who are constituted in our interactions with others, the social sciences are highlighting the importance of interpersonal and social factors in human development. Our thinking, perceiving, behavior, and even feelings, are a product of these social dynamics. In other words, as Barth argues, we exist as a history. This particularly accords well with the psychological construction theory of emotion which points to past experiences and development of language as key to our emotional life.

As we turn in the next chapters to Barth's theological account of emotion, we will continue draw on the results of the last two chapters and think about the possibility of recategorization, the influence of group dynamics, and bearing of social structures on the emotional and moral life. The previous chapters have highlighted the importance of emotion for agency, thinking, and behavior. The next chapters will consider the emotions appropriate to a people who have heard the Word of God and been brought together by the Holy Spirit as witness to God's grace. In such a group, identity found in participation in Christ with fellow followers of Christ becomes more salient. It is in such a community that spiritual and moral growth should be expected. The community that hears God's Word will shape the emotions of its participants in ways that run counter to the dominant structures of today.



## CH. 4 – KARL BARTH, EMOTION, AND RELATIONALITY

### *Introduction*

In previous chapters we considered Barth's theological anthropology and ethics and contemporary understandings of emotion. This chapter will build on those materials as it turns to Barth's account of emotion. The main goal of the previous two chapters was to lay out the importance of emotions for accounts of moral formation through identifying a) the defining features of an emotion, b) the importance of attending to emotions for ethics, and c) how emotions develop. The payoff for this chapter will relatedly be threefold. First, with an understanding of emotion in hand, we can turn to Barth's theology to draw out his implicit account of emotion. We will be in a position to say Barth's discussion of certain human features such as joy, reverence, and zeal, do indeed describe emotions. If emotions are understood to be involuntary or passive bodily responses, then one can rightly question whether Barth is even referring to emotions. But, if emotions are understood as cognitive perceptions related to the body and external objects based on a history of social experiences, then we can clearly state that Barth has an account of emotion. Second, we will be prepared to bring Barth's account into conversation with contemporary discussions around emotion and ethics. Barth describes emotions as intentional, and important for the way we relate to God and the world. In particular, while the sciences are good at explaining what an emotion is and how it functions, it is ill-equipped to prescribe emotions. Barth's account, on the other hand, can provide criteria for thinking through the moral rectitude of particular emotions. Third, the cognitive sciences' interpretation of the social development of emotions complements and develops the account of moral growth described in chapter one. We begin this task of

looking at emotion formation in this chapter, with a more extensive discussion to follow in chapter five.

The central argument of this chapter is that Barth's view of emotion is shaped by his Christocentric, relational anthropology. God revealed in Christ is a relational being of radical, inclusive love. This God of love has created humans to be covenant partners that correspond to God's initiating, relational ways. Humans are elected to freely participate in Christ's faithfulness and live in a way that reflects that love in solidarity with other creatures. Emotions are relational capacities that are crucial for living out that determination. They contribute to our fundamental ability to relate with others in three ways. First, emotions are a human capacity that enables communication, bonding, negotiating, and various manners of interacting with one another. Second, the quality of the relationships that are engendered by an emotion is the criterion we must use in our ethical evaluation of an affect. The extent to which an emotion enables us to live out our determination is the measure by which we assess it. Third, emotions are shaped in and by relationships. Since humans are "beings-in-relation," it is through interpersonal and group relations that emotions are formed. In chapter 5 it will be argued further that this relational anthropology is central to Barth's distinctive theological contribution to the study of emotions and their ethical relevance. There the focus will be on the ways that structures and social forces shape the emotions and how the relations found in Christ can provide a counter-formation that are necessary for the struggle against these powers.

This chapter will proceed in two main sections. The first, and the bulk of the chapter will develop Barth's account of emotion. Through a careful study of three emotions (reverence, joy, and zeal), this chapter will argue that Barth conceived of

emotions as indispensable for the ways we related with one another and thus for the moral life. Barth highlights these emotions for theological reasons – they are grounded in Christian scriptures and tradition. However, he presents them in a particular way that yields a distinctive and important Christian relational anthropology of the emotions. Emotions shaped in correspondence to Christ are important for relating to others, for moral discernment, for motivation, and for sustaining moral action. The second section will consider Barth’s account of emotion in relation to a very practical moral issue: climate change. It will consider how emotion intersects with the challenges presented by the climate crisis and how Barth’s account of emotion can inform our response.

### ***Part 1: Barth and Emotion***

Emotions play an important role in key points of Barth’s ethic. Through looking at three of these emotions (reverence, joy, and zeal), this chapter will draw out Barth’s implicit account of emotion. This chapter will attempt to show that Barth’s understanding of emotion finds correlations with recent understandings of the emotions, namely that emotions have to do with perceptions of objects that are related to things we are concerned with and they play a vital role in the moral life.

As a preliminary and key point, we note that to understand Barth’s concept of emotion we must begin with his theological anthropology. As discussed in chapter one, our determination or telos for which we were created, is to be in perfect relation to God and in communion with fellow-humanity. Barth came to these conclusions through looking at God’s revelation of true humanity in Christ. Barth conceives of emotion as playing a critical role in fulfilling our determination before God. Emotions are part of our natural capacities, and thus part of the “phenomena” of human existence that can be

discovered through various disciplines. When they are used in light of the destiny for which God has made us, emotions become part of the “symptom” of this determination. Emotions are an important aspect of the means by which we relate to others, both God and other creatures. We bring to the encounter with God our whole selves. Barth contends,

to summarise, human existence means human self-determination. If experience of God's Word involves the determination of human existence and hence also of human self-determination by the Word of God, then by self-determination we are to understand the exercise of all the faculties in whose exercise man is man without basic emphasis upon and also without basic repudiation of any specific human possibility... the determination of human existence by God's Word can be understood just as much as a determination of feeling, will, or intellect, and psychologically it may actually be more the one than the other in a given case. The decisive point materially, however, is that it is a determination of the whole self-determining man. (*CD I/1*, 204)

This determination includes our emotion. Many years later, Barth declared, “human reasons, resolutions, [and] feelings become involved in” our response to God's word.<sup>1</sup> This affective capacity is a crucial element for how we relate with God and others, and thus the goodness of an emotion can be evaluated by how it accords to the quality of relationships demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

To expound Barth's understanding of emotion, we will spend the bulk of this chapter looking at three particular emotions of which Barth provides detailed treatment and that have noteworthy relevance for our relationships and ethics. But before moving to that task, this section begins briefly with the relation of emotion and reason. Chapter 2 made the case that emotion is best understood as integrated with reason rather than dichotomized. This is important because it informs how we think about the nature and function of emotion as well as its (trans)formation. While Barth does not address the

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<sup>1</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 212.

ontology of emotion from a theoretical perspective, I will suggest three reasons that this approach to emotion fits well with Barth's theological anthropology. First, Barth takes an integrated approach to the ontology of the person. Rather than seeing the person basically as a thinking being or as purely a material substance, Barth sees the person as an embodied soul or an ensouled body. While soul and body can be differentiated, they are inseparable. Second, Barth's understanding of emotion is intentional, that is, it's about an object to which it refers and therefore emotion is fundamentally relational. Third, for Barth, emotion is not distinct from rational knowing but is itself a type of knowing, namely a knowledge connected with one's concerns.

First, Barth is critical of approaches that separate too sharply the soul and the body. Pure soul and pure body are not possible in a human, for each depends on the other. The human is not made up of two substances but "two moments of his creaturely reality" (*CD III/2*, 399). He delves into these two moments by looking at two capacities that are necessary presuppositions to human existence: perception and activity (*CD III/2*, 399-418).<sup>2</sup> The first presupposition, perception, is made up of two elements: awareness and thinking (*CD III/2*, 399). It is an "undivided act" (*CD III/2*, 400), but "superficially" awareness is closer related to the body (and the sense organs) and thinking is associated with the soul. But Barth qualifies this ascription. He writes, "the two functions of perception cannot be distributed as though one were of the soul and the other of the body. But it can be affirmed that a special relation to the body is proper to the one, and a special relation to the soul to the other" (*CD III/2*, 401). Awareness also involves the conscious

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<sup>2</sup> Barth argues that perception is generally closer associated with the soul and activity with the body, but this division is not clear-cut. The reason will become clear in the explanation of perception that follows and of activity in the following footnote.

self while thinking is connected to our bodies. There is no neat division between these faculties, the person is an integrated whole.<sup>3</sup>

This account of perception is particularly relevant when we consider contemporary understanding of emotions as related to perceptions. For Nussbaum, emotions are “intelligent responses to the perception of value.”<sup>4</sup> And even more explicitly, for Roberts, emotions are a type of perception, namely a construal.<sup>5</sup> They develop through construals of our sense perception (awareness) according to concepts (thinking). While Barth does not focus explicitly on emotion, his account of the integrated person fits well with contemporary accounts of emotion as a cognitive act stimulated by the body. This implies that if emotions are connected to perceptions and values (and not biologically determined), then as those perceptions and values shift, we can expect emotions to change. Emotions are not reified or determined by one’s biology. And yet, as embodied creatures, the body is important for perception and thus do influence emotion.

Second, emotions have a further rational element, what philosophers call intentionality. The emotion is about something; it has an object. As discussed in chapter two, intentionality makes up an important part of the characterization of an emotion in

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<sup>3</sup> Barth goes on to a second anthropological presupposition of the embodied soul: not only can we perceive, but we can respond, or in other words, be “active” (*CD* III/2, 406). Activity arises from a combination of desire and willing. Desire, which arises from the perception of external objects, is more closely associated with the body while willing is more nearly related to the soul. But again, activity is an undivided act that comes about neither purely of desire nor will (*CD* III/2, 407). Desire is necessary for willing – we cannot will what we do not desire. The two are interdependent and jointly necessary for human activity. In sum, perception relies on awareness and thinking while activity relies on desire and willing. In turn, perception and activity make up an integrated whole for human interaction with God and the world. Barth contends, “the real life-act of real man can and will never consist in pure perception or pure activity. Perception is itself wholly and utterly human activity. Without desiring and willing I cannot sense and think. But again all my activity depends absolutely on the fact that I perceive. Without sensing and thinking I should not desire and will” (*CD* III/2, 408).

<sup>4</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 69ff; Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, 39ff.

cognitivist accounts.<sup>6</sup> An emotion has to do with the judgment or perception of an object. Likewise, for Barth, emotions such as reverence, joy, and zeal are directed to an object (God, God's honor, human life, etc.), perceiving and relating to those objects in particular ways. According to Mangina, affections in Barth, "are intentional, i.e. take the form of definite judgments about God, the world, and the self."<sup>7</sup> Barth does not understand emotions as basically morally neutral nor merely the feelings of physiological changes. Rather, they are a way of engaging with God and the world. Emotions are a fundamental feature of our relationality.

Third, emotion is intentional in a specific way: it is a way of being affected by the object. Emotion is connected to an important type of knowledge in Barth's thinking, namely, concern-based knowing. This is brought out in his discussion of the theological task. Theology must not be detached. It is about being a hearer of the Word and a disciple of Jesus Christ rather than an impassive intellectual exercise. A Christian is to be concerned about God and those things with which God loves and is concerned. In other words, knowledge of God and doctrine must become personal. For example, Barth argues that the doctrine of election cannot be simply heard or read in the abstract. It has to be heard or read as about *me* (CD II/2, 323-25). The church's task is to communicate this personal doctrine, and election "is not understood if it is not understood in this way; if thou dost not understand it as the promise which concerns thyself and in one way or another demonstrates truth to thyself" (CD II/2, 324f.). Election calls for conversion. Barth believed that Zinzendorf was correct in pointing out the importance of feeling,

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<sup>6</sup> Some physiological accounts also incorporate the significance of objects for an emotion, such as Jesse Prinz's theory. On intentionality, see Solomon, *The Passions*, 111; Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 37; Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 61; Prinz, "Embodied Emotions," 45.

<sup>7</sup> Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life*, 126.

when rightly understood as active engagement.<sup>8</sup> This is a common theme in Barth's writing and is expounded upon at the end of his career in a chapter in *Evangelical Theology* on "concern" (*Betroffenheit*) in the Christian's life before the Word of God. God confronts a theologian on an existential level and in doing so stirs concern.<sup>9</sup> Barth insists, "this object [the Word of God] seeks him out and finds him precisely where he stands, and it is just *there* that this object has already sought and found him. *It met, encountered, and challenged him.* It invaded, surprised, and captured him... The fact is now: *Tua res agitur*, the matter concerns you!"<sup>10</sup> There is a particular type of knowing that is essential for theology and the human engagement and response to God, namely, it is an *involved* knowing and perceiving. Building on Roberts' definition of an emotion as concern-based, we can thus conclude that Barth's account of theological knowing makes emotion central for reasoning when it comes to theology (and, therefore, ethics).

#### Ethical Criteria, the Command of God, and Emotion

In the next section we will delve into particular emotions that Barth discusses in the *Church Dogmatics*. Before doing so, it is important to note that reverence, joy, zeal, and any other emotion are not moral ends in themselves. In fact, it is possible to experience each of those emotions in ways that do not reflect the purpose for which God

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<sup>8</sup> Though unlike some pietists of his day, Barth argued that feeling should not be considered the basis of faith. "...That is a quiet tendency to move away from Zinzendorf. Thirty years ago I would have made the same point. But 'feeling' is thought of here not as something sentimental, but rather as emphasizing that one is actively engaged. I would lay the emphasis not on that aspect, but some feeling will be present anyway; indeed, faith cannot be a callous affair! It is about a feeling that one has in faith. It is all right to get a little warm in the process! I would like to defend Zinzendorf against too-strict *Brüdergemeine* [Pietist] pastors. Certainly, the test of whether it is the right feeling, whether it is a feeling from faith, shows itself in that one keeps affirming, 'Even though I feel nothing of your power, you lead me to the goal even through the night.' Feeling is secondary and can stop. One must not rely just on feeling. Feeling is the relative part of faith, not the absolute." Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 97–98.

<sup>9</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 74–84.

<sup>10</sup> Barth, 76.



has created us. We can revere, be joyful about, and be zealous toward wrong objects. In our discussion in the previous chapter we noted that emotions are morally ambiguous – they can both enrich and degrade moral reasoning. Emotions can deceive others and oneself. We see a clear example of this in Barth’s life with his romantic relationship with his secretary that caused significant harm to his wife and children.<sup>11</sup> Barth’s emotions toward Charlotte von Kirschbaum resulted in steps that seemed to clearly contradict what we would expect from the command of God as evident in Barth’s own writings on marriage (*CD* III/4, 195ff). Barth wrote to von Kirschbaum that they had a “right” to their relationship which would lead to joy.<sup>12</sup> This emotion served as part of the justification for inviting her to live in the family home. The powerful emotions he felt toward von Kirschbaum caused him to behave in ways that did not show concern for those vulnerable in his sphere of care (his wife, Nelly, and children). Emotions, such as joy, can deceive us into considering our actions are right.

So what role do emotions serve in the moral life? They do not function as a revelation of God’s command as was made clear in the earlier discussion of Barth’s critique of the liberal Protestants and Pietists.<sup>13</sup> The role of emotions for ethics will be explored as this chapter proceeds; here it is enough to state that the fundamental role of emotions is in the way they enable us to relate to others. They arise from and are ingredient to human interactions. Emotions can thus indicate the quality of a relationship and are also the means by which we create the relationships that correspond to Jesus Christ. This natural capacity achieves its end as it enables us to live in ways that fit the

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<sup>11</sup> Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 185f.; Christiane Tietz, “Karl Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum,” *Theology Today* 74, no. 2 (July 1, 2017): 99ff.

<sup>12</sup> Tietz, “Karl Barth and Charlotte von Kirschbaum,” 109.

<sup>13</sup> See the Introduction, pp. 8-9.

determination which God gave us. Thus, the relations that emotions engender become a central criterion in which to evaluate the moral goodness of an emotion.<sup>14</sup> Emotions that lead to a way of relating to God that corresponds to God's grace and in solidarity with other humans (especially the vulnerable) are proper to a disciple of Jesus Christ. However, this immediately raises an issue for a Barthian ethic, for identifying ethical "criteria" seems highly problematic for his command ethic.

In chapter 1, we described Barth's view that the command of God is the sole arbiter of the good. It is not a general law that can be applied to particular circumstances through casuistry, but is itself a specified, concrete command. Barth sought to avoid aligning human judgments (which is often an echo of popular culture and practices) with God's judgment of the good. The challenge of such a command ethic is God can appear as a radical voluntarist or occasionalist. We earlier explained that much of this problem was obviated by Barth's claim that God was not arbitrary or capricious since God's command is always consisted with God's eternal decision to be gracious toward humanity in Jesus Christ. Christ reveals God as generous, inclusive love. However, the question still remains: if humans are incapable of judging the right or good and wholly dependent on God for this, what is the place for human reasoning and decision making?

We will see how Barth attempted to uphold God's sovereignty in determining the good (rather than this becoming a task of human judgment and decision) without making God into an arbitrary voluntarist by drawing on McKenny's insightful distinction

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<sup>14</sup> On relationality and the quality of relationships as criteria for ethical evaluation, see Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics*, 486–92. "A resurrection ethic is... a comprehensively *relational* ethic." Campbell, 487. While his subject matter is the standard for evaluating cross-cultural instantiations of Christian community, his focus on relationality complements the account here. He writes, "relationality is what really matters because this is both what we were made for and where we are going, and the forms and structures themselves matter only to the degree that they freight this relationality." Campbell, 490.

between Barth's account of ethical reflection (*ethische Besinnung*) and instructional preparation (*unterweisende Vorbereitung*). Barth's primary concern was ethical reflection which focuses on the encounter with God where the human decision is judged by God according to its obedience to God's command. It is, "the attitude and practice in which we encounter God," including the "preparatory testing" of one's actions in anticipation of God's decision.<sup>15</sup> Ethical reflection, McKenny argues, has two parts. First, Barth understood it as the ordinary human responsibility to weigh the pros and cons of a particular course of action.<sup>16</sup> It involves rational analysis of the value and disvalue of possible activities. Second, it has to do with the testing of these possibilities in relation to God's will.<sup>17</sup> Ethical reflection is in preparation for God's testing and decision of the good, and therefore, all casuistry that determines to apply a general law to determine the right action in a particular situation is problematic. We are thus dependent on God and God's justification. In short, ethical reflection can be summed up as an act of "prayer."<sup>18</sup>

Ethical instruction, on the other hand, refers to what Barth elsewhere calls "special ethics." It does not have to do with determining the good in a particular situation, but has to do with the preparation for the encounter with God. McKenny contends that according to Barth, "ethical inquiry gives us instruction by which we can arrive at a close approximation to what God will command, but that the role of this instruction is not to

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<sup>15</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 229; Gerald P McKenny, "Heterogeneity and Ethical Deliberation: Casuistry, Narrative, and Event in the Ethics of Karl Barth," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 20 (2000): 209.

<sup>16</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 231, 234.

<sup>17</sup> McKenny, 232. McKenny argues that Barth does not clarify what this looks like. He offers two plausible possibilities. First, we should act according to our rational conclusions while acknowledging that God's will might be different than what we conclude. Or, second, and more controversial, we might have to act in ways that conflict with our best rational conclusions. These would happen at the boundary cases; however, Barth does not delineate what circumstances might arise in which we should override rational analysis. McKenny, 234–35.

<sup>18</sup> McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 265.

determine the command of God itself but to prepare us to go forth to the prayerful encounter described above, under the heading of ethical reflection.”<sup>19</sup> As far as it is part of our ethical analysis, it is a “preliminary stage of ethical reflection itself.”<sup>20</sup> While casuistry has no place in the encounter with God which decides the good, “the very features of casuistry which he finds problematic when casuistry is used to attempt to determine the command of God itself... are legitimate and necessary” for ethical instruction.<sup>21</sup> And while we can never determine the good, we can have “progressive approximation of our knowledge to the fully specified command of God,” and “we can be increasingly confident that our own decision, made in accordance with this knowledge, is in line with the divine decision,” though there will always “remain an unbridgeable gap.”<sup>22</sup> By this approach, “Barth retains the features of voluntarism that enable him to preserve the sovereignty of the divine decision without incurring other features, such as divine arbitrariness and the futility of human inquiry, that are inimical to ethics.”<sup>23</sup>

Barth spends the bulk of *CD* III/4 and the *Christian Life* engaged in ethical instruction. His special ethics are not an attempt to determine the good in a particular instance, but is a pedagogical project that lays out certain principles and criteria for anticipating what God will command. The principles are not grounded in abstract ideas or theories, but in God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Thus, the criteria are never abstracted from revelation but always refer back to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>19</sup> McKenny, 247.

<sup>20</sup> McKenny, 264.

<sup>21</sup> McKenny, 262.

<sup>22</sup> McKenny, 262.

<sup>23</sup> McKenny, 264.

Further corroboration for using a “criterion” with Barth’s command ethic is found in his own use of a criterion in *The Christian Life*. Barth reminds the reader that God’s concrete command cannot be replaced by an exposition of some general ethical principal. “Nevertheless,” he continues “there is a criterion (*Kriterium*) by which the direction God has given man in his command may be clearly distinguished from man’s own insights or the suggestions of other spirits and forces. The command of God may always be recognized as such because, as the command of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, it encounters man in the form of grace” (*CL*, 35). He goes on to discuss this criterion of grace as related to God’s eternal decision to love humans as revealed in Jesus Christ. The criterion of Christian ethics is correspondence to God’s grace.<sup>24</sup> Barth continues on in *The Christian Life*, to describe the Lord’s Prayer as the “guideline” (*Richtschnur*) to keep us on the sure path of Christian ethics (*CL*, 44). In turning to the first clause of the prayer, Barth begins by asking if, “our task is that of Christian ethics as an attempt to portray Christian life under the command of God... What are the decisive signs or marks (*entscheidenden Zügen und Merkmalen*) that distinguish it in its outworking?” He answers, “what we have in view are Christians... in their relation to Jesus Christ, and especially in the obligation and commitment that derives from this relation” (*CL*, 50).<sup>25</sup> In other words, the criterion of Christian ethics is the Christian’s relation to Jesus Christ, which he goes on to argue implies a certain way of relating to fellow humanity (*CL*, 95ff.).

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<sup>24</sup> Barth goes on to wonder why this criterion is not made more central in relating Christian ethics to other ethics (*CL*, 35). It’s not important if a Christian ethic is distinct or original in its prescription, what is important is its orientation to God’s grace (*CL*, 36).

<sup>25</sup> Though, of course, this is in the context of ethical instruction and discerning what God will command, not marks discerning the holiness of an individual which is always hidden in Jesus Christ.

Like much of Barth's ethical writings, the emphasis of this chapter will be instructional preparation. As such, it will attempt to lay out certain principles or criteria in which to evaluate emotions. We can be confident that the command of God will always decide in ways that accord with the radically loving God revealed in Jesus Christ and with our determination, namely, that we were created for a loving, covenant partnership with God and in responsible solidarity with our fellow-humanity (we will go beyond Barth and expand this determination to include our responsibility toward non-human creation later in the chapter). These relational criteria are thus fitting for the task of ethical instruction concerning moral emotions. The ways in which emotions are vital for relationships that correspond to our determination will be highlighted in the following discussions of reverence, joy, and zeal.

In sum, theological anthropology offers criterion for ethical instruction related to emotions, namely, the quality of the relationships engendered. This criterion is rooted in revelation, in Jesus Christ, so it is not "external" to the command of God. It does not become an abstracted principle, but is always dependent on and in reference to the revelation of Jesus Christ. But it does make possible a "practical casuistry" and an anticipation of what God will command.

#### Emotion and Ethics: Reverence, Joy, and Zeal

We have seen that Barth's anthropology is conducive to an account that understands the emotion as relevant to moral reasoning and ethics. The best way to explore Barth's conception of emotion in depth is to look at Barth's exposition of particular emotions. Barth elaborates repeatedly on several emotions including

gratitude,<sup>26</sup> fear,<sup>27</sup> and hope,<sup>28</sup> among others. We will limit our focus in this section to three emotions which hold prominent positions in Barth's ethical writings, namely, reverence, joy, and zeal. These three have been chosen because of their location of discussion in Barth's ethical writings as well as their particular relevance to climate change which will be examined at the end of the chapter. For each of these we will have three sections. The first section will explain Barth's account of the emotion and evaluate whether it is truly an emotion based on the understanding developed in chapter two. An emotion was identified there as the intentional construals or categorizations of objects (both internal bodily changes and external events) that are perceived as impinging on a person's concerns and cares. Emotions have a social history and a role in how we relate to others. Using this description, it will be argued that Barth's understanding of reverence, joy, and zeal indeed describe emotions. The second part will discuss the

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<sup>26</sup> While not discussed in this dissertation, gratitude is also a significant emotion in Barth's ethics. In fact, it is the most prominent emotion in his ethical writings. Gratitude is the counterpart and proper human response to grace. Even the Greek for grace and gratitude are related ("χάρις always demands the answer of εὐχαριστία. Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning" *CD IV/1*, 41). Barth cites the Heidelberg Catechism which is structured in two parts: the first half around what God has done for us and the second half, subtitled gratitude, on the human response to God's grace. Is gratitude an emotion for Barth? He explicitly says in part it is an "attitude" (*verhaltern*, *CD III/2*, 167). He quickly adds that an attitude is not enough for true gratitude. We cannot just feel thankful. Rather, we are called to act in response. There are certain reciprocal responses that are proper in response to a gift. Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*. But the emotional feeling is also central or else it is not really gratitude, but merely duty or an act of justice. As the philosopher Patrick Fitzgerald argues, "one cannot be grateful without feeling grateful." Patrick Fitzgerald, "Gratitude and Justice," *Ethics* 109, no. 1 (1998): 120. He goes on to give the example of calling his mother on her birthday. He can call her even if he doesn't feel like it, i.e. out of duty, but that would not be an act of gratitude. For Barth, we understand what God has done and how it concerns me and act accordingly. The good is still grounded in the objective Word of God, but an encounter with that truth demands a certain emotional response resulting in action toward God and those God loves, namely fellow-humanity.

<sup>27</sup> The Bible repeatedly commands Christians not to be anxious nor to fear (*CD II/2*, 597-602). However, the fear of God is proper to the Christian. This fear does not contradict the joy we experience (*CD II/1*, 653). The fear of God is not an anxious fear (*CD II/2*, 585).

<sup>28</sup> See especially *CD IV/3*, 902-942. Barth's view of hope will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

relevance of the emotion for our relationships and ethics. Finally, each section will conclude with a discussion on the moral formation of the emotion.

### Reverence

In his ethics of creation found in volume III/4 of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth explored both the positive and negative ethical demands toward life. This section is wide-ranging covering the dignity of life, non-human creation, health, war, abortion, and suicide, among others subjects. Barth made “reverence for life” the key concept that guided his discussion. As stated above, this section on reverence will proceed along three steps. First, Barth’s account of reverence will be presented and then evaluated whether it is accurately described as an emotion. Second, the relevance of reverence for our ethical approach primarily to other humans and secondarily to all of creation will be explored. Finally, the section will attend to Barth’s concept of the moral formation of reverence.

### *Barth’s Account of Reverence*

Barth’s account of the ethics of life began with adoption of Albert Schweitzer’s maxim, “reverence for life.” Before jumping into Barth’s understanding of reverence, it will be worthwhile to outline Schweitzer’s portrayal to appreciate how Barth positions his account. Schweitzer sought to establish a universal philosophy and ethic of life that did not rely on any religion or appeal to any supernatural causes, but was purely based on rational thought. Schweitzer began by establishing what he considered a universal, foundational truth. Reflecting upon his “most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness” he arrived at the assertion “I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live.”<sup>29</sup> Schweitzer concurred with Schopenhauer that the will-to-live

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<sup>29</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization* (The Macmillan Company, 1960), 309.



is “the essence of things-in-themselves, which is to be accepted as underlying all phenomena.”<sup>30</sup> The most basic knowledge we can have is that we will-to-live, we act to maintain our existence. While the will-to-live is most conscious to humans, Schweitzer echoes Schopenhauer in affirming that all life possesses it – animals and even plants.<sup>31</sup> He argued, “ethics consists, therefore, in my experiencing the compulsion to show to all will-to-live the same reverence as I do to my own... It is good to maintain and to encourage life; it is bad to destroy life or to obstruct it.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, since all life has a will to live, reverence is proper towards life in general. No life can necessarily be supposed greater or more deserving of reverence and protection than another living being.

Barth considered “reverence for life” as a “suitable formulation” for an ethics of life and that a “will to live” is rightly deemed an essential aspect of that ethic. However, he based his account not on autonomy or rationality, but on the command of God.<sup>33</sup> He wrote, “life does not itself create this respect. The command of God creates respect for it” (*CD* III/4, 339). Specifically, the command of God which addresses us reveals life to be a loan. We are not free to treat life according to any fancy, but must regard it as ultimately belonging to God. Barth argued, “God alone is truly independent. He alone belongs wholly to Himself and lives in and by Himself. Man's creaturely existence as such is not his property; it is a loan. As such it must be held in trust. It is not, therefore, under the

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<sup>30</sup> Schweitzer, 236. Cf. Ara Paul Barsam, *Reverence for Life: Albert Schweitzer's Great Contribution to Ethical Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>31</sup> Barsam, *Reverence for Life*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 309.

<sup>33</sup> Barth's chief critique of Schweitzer's ethic is he positions *life* where the *command of God* should be (*CD* III/4, 324). Barth agrees, “life should be accepted, treated and preserved with respect,” but “in theological ethics the concept of life cannot be given this tyrannical, totalitarian function” that Schweitzer gives it (*CD* III/4, 324, 326).

control of man. But in the broadest sense it is meant for the service of God” (CD III/4, 327). Our handling of this loan of life is answerable to God.

That life is a loan does not automatically make it deserving of reverence. It is that it is a loan of *great value* that is the basis of our awe and care. Barth grounds the worth of human life in the incarnation: “we may confidently say that the birth of Jesus Christ as such is the revelation of the command as that of respect for life... This unmistakably differentiates human life from everything that is and is done in heaven and earth” (CD III/4, 339).<sup>34</sup> Because of God’s identification with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, there is a special dignity to human life.<sup>35</sup> The incarnation “reveals the eternal election and love of God” which is the ground for human worth and thus reverence (CD III/4, 339). This worth is not due to something inherent in the human, but is rather rooted in God’s eternal decision to elect God’s self to become a human. It is this action by God which gives humans this distinctive status and thus a right to be treated in a way that is in accord with that position, that is, with reverence.

Since life is a loan of great worth, “those who handle life as a divine loan will above all treat it with respect” (CD III/4, 338-339). The German word is *Ehrfurcht* rather

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. “It is really surprising that the Christian Church and Christian theology have not long ago urged more energetically the importance for ethics of so constituent a part of the New Testament message as the fact of the incarnation, instead of resorting, in the vital question why man and human life are to be respected, to all kinds of general religious expressions and to the assertions of non-Christian humanism... In contrast to every other, the respect of life which becomes a command in the recognition of the union of God with humanity in Jesus Christ has an incomparable power and width... human life itself and as such is seen in the person of the man Jesus to be the matter about which God is concerned and therefore man must also be concerned in His service” (CD III/4, 339-40).

<sup>35</sup> Barth stresses the unique status humans have because of the incarnation. He does not think we can say with certainty other animals (and even plants) are not also addressed by God, but we have no way of knowing (CD III/4, 331-2). Recently, theologians sympathetic to Barth’s theology have argued that while we cannot know for certain God’s relation with the non-human creation, there are strong reasons to think that other creatures are part of God’s covenant. E.g., David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume I: Systematic Theology* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012). For these theologians, the emphasis on incarnation is not that God became human, but that God became flesh, that is, a creature (*Jn* 1:14).

than *Respekt* and is better translated reverence (as it is for the English translation of Schweitzer's work and in the *Church Dogmatics* in reference to God).<sup>36</sup> Here we arrive at our question whether reverence ought to be considered an emotion and start by noting that Barth employs subjective, emotive terms to characterize it.<sup>37</sup> Reverence is a person's "astonishment, humility and awe at a fact in which he meets something superior – majesty, dignity, holiness, a mystery which compels him to withdraw and keep him distance, to handle it modestly, circumspectly and carefully" (*CD* III/4, 339). Reverence involves a deep respect with an immense sense of awe and wonder. Reverence is a certain attitude (*Verhalten*) or conduct which is demanded the object as commanded by God (*CD* III/4, 339). We are to be disposed to experience awe at life ever afresh. It "must always be honored with new wonder" (*CD* III/4, 340). The command of God directs us to experience astonishment, awe, and wonder in the presence of human life.<sup>38</sup>

Beyond emotive words to describe reverence, Barth describes reverence as a kind of perception. Reverence is not simply a feeling, but is the perception itself of life as a loan. To perceive life as a loan is to wonder, marvel, and encounter life as an incomprehensible fact (*CD* III/4, 341). Barth writes, "we have simply to perceive this, and once we have done so we have not at any price to relinquish or even to lose sight of

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<sup>36</sup> Reverence does imply respect, however. Though absent in the English translation, Barth writes that reverence is consideration and *respect* ("*Ehrfurcht ist Rücksicht, Respekt*") *KD* III/4, 384. In quoting the English translation of the *Church Dogmatics* in this section, "respect" will be replaced with "reverence."

<sup>37</sup> While the goal in this section is to show that certain terms are best understood as emotions, Gill takes a similar approach to argue that moral passion is implicit in many ethical accounts that appear more "rational" based. (11) Gill attempts to show that authors exhibited moral passion even if not explicit in this fact by showing that their language is passionate. Gill, *Moral Passion and Christian Ethics*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> While we are to have reverence for created life, this is not the same as the reverence due God. We are not to make life into a "second God." The will to live "will not consist in an absolute will to live" but foremost in a will to live by God's decrees and commands. Without these limits, reverence for life has the danger of becoming a "principle of an idolatry" (*CD* III/4, 342). Reverence due human must not rival reverence due God.

this perception” (CD III/4, 340-341). Reverence is a way of understanding life as given and something to be handled with care. Following the earlier established understanding of emotion as a perception, we are further led to the conclusion that Barth’s account of reverence is rightfully considered an emotion.

For reverence to be an emotion it has not simply to be a perception, but a particular kind, namely, a perception that impinges on what a person values. Life as a loan may be enough to demand respect, but not reverence. Reverence is due an object of great worth, something “superior” (CD III/4, 339). Seeing life as possessing great value renders this perception an emotion.<sup>39</sup> The perception of life as a loan is not a disinterested acknowledgment of its worth, but a perception that really sees my and others’ lives being of great value deserving of reverence and awe.<sup>40</sup> Barth contends, “it is a mystery that I am, and others too, in this human structure and individuality in which we recognise one another as of the same kind, each in his time and freedom, each in his vertical and horizontal orientation. This is indeed an incomprehensible and in relation to ourselves intangible fact, inexhaustible in its factuality and depth and constantly adapted to give us pause” (CD III/4, 340). Reverence for life is a perception of an object of great worth captured by words such as awe, wonder, and astonishment. In other words, reverence is an emotion that sees life as something of great value demanding concern and care. The

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<sup>39</sup> “The blessing of life is a divine loan unmerited by man. It must always be regarded as a divine act of trust that man may live. And the basic ethical question in this respect is how man will respond to the trust shown him in the fact that he may do so. Will he recognise and appreciate the value of the gift? Will he realise that it is given him in order that he may use, enjoy and make it fruitful? Will he consider that he does not possess it for ever nor even for long, that used or unused it will melt in his hands and one day will be finally past? Will he handle it as a treasure which does not even belong to him, of which he can dispose only according to the purpose of the One from whom he has it, and therefore not thoughtlessly nor arbitrarily, but remembering that he must finally give an account of his stewardship and use?” (CD III/4, 336).

<sup>40</sup> There are parallels with the related emotion of wonder or astonishment that Barth discusses in *Evangelical Theology*. Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, Ch. 6.

perception of the emotion of reverence toward life as a loan forms the presupposition to a different engagement than simple assent to this claim. When life is seen as a loan in a way that one feels the value and worth of life, we will more likely treat it (both in our actions and in our ethical reflection) with great care. Reverence toward life is different way of knowing from a disinterested affirmation.

### *Ethical Relevance of Reverence*

While the emotions explored later in this chapter are less often associated with ethics, it is not uncommon to come across reverence and wonder in the context of ethics.<sup>41</sup> For Barth, reverence for life is important ethically for two reasons. First, Barth portrays reverence as an emotion critical for moral behavior. Second, as a social emotion, reverence promotes solidarity with others.

Reverence is vital for ethics because our perception of an object is central to the treatment of the object. After saying that reverence is the perception and subjective experience of seeing life as a loan, Barth goes on to say this is not sufficient; there is also a need for practical action. Barth argues, “a mere theoretical and aesthetic wonder is not enough. On the contrary, the theoretical and aesthetic wonder which rightly understood forms the presupposition for everything else, must itself have a practical character if it is to be the required respect” (*CD* III/4, 341). Thus, “indifference, wantonness, arbitrariness or anything else opposed to respect cannot even be considered as a commanded or even a

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<sup>41</sup> In addition to Schweizer’s ethic discussed above, see for example, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015); Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014); Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (New York, NY: Harper And Row Publishers, 1965). Reverence and wonder are of particular interest to those working on environmental virtue ethics, such as, Bouma-Prediger, *Earthkeeping and Character* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019); Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

permitted attitude” (CD III/4, 343). Rather, we are “to handle it modestly, circumspectly and carefully” (CD III/4, 339). Life is not to be fathomed as simply an object to be understood, mastered and controlled, but rather a gift that provokes within us a sense of “solemnity” (CD III/4, 340). This is in stark contrast to approaches such as the Nazis and their disregard for the life of Jews, the disabled, and countless other they deemed of not great worth and disposable. It is opposed to perceiving life as commodity. This practical action is what Barth explores through this section on *Freedom for Life* in regard to treating a life as a loan in how it relates to issues such as health and healthcare, treatment of nonhuman animals and plants, war, capital punishment, abortion, and other topics. The perception of life which entails a sense of awe and mystery is integrally connected to how we relate toward God’s creatures. Reverence “forms the presupposition for everything else,” and is thus critical for creating behavioral patterns.

Second, reverence is a social emotion which plays an important role in our relationships with others. Reverence itself is not morally right or wrong, it describes a natural aspect of the “phenomena” of human life. But when reverence toward life expresses our relationship and posture toward other humans (and other creatures), it becomes a “symptom” of our determination. We see here the aforementioned relational criterion implicit in Barth’s account of reverence. Reverence manifests as a quality of a relationship that corresponds to genuine human life as seen in Jesus Christ. Reverence for life rightly understood is not simply towards one’s own life, but all human life. Here, “egoism and altruism are false antitheses when the question is that of the required will to live. My own life can no more claim my respect than that of others, but neither can that of others. While they are not the same, but each distinct, the togetherness and solidarity of

all human life is indissoluble.”<sup>42</sup> This solidarity of created life shapes our approach to justice for all human life is a loan from the Creator and is due reverence. “Reverence for life means... daily mercy and resolute justice to all human life... It consists in granting to the other the same as one grants to oneself, and indeed in a readiness to grant him also that which one can and must renounce oneself” (*CD III/4*, 347). To use public health as an example, Barth writes, “the will for health [one expression of reverence for life] of the individual must therefore take also the form of the will to improve, raise and perhaps radically transform the general living conditions of all men. If there is no other way, it must assume the form of the will for a new and quite different order of society, guaranteeing better living conditions for all” (*CD III/4*, 363). This readiness to revere all life particularly extends to and gives priority to those who are poor and marginalized modeled after God’s own concern: “In the Old as well as in the New Testament it presents God as the Friend of the poor who go short and the avowed Enemy of those who deprive the poor of their bread or directly or indirectly withhold it from them. In this respect, [reverence for life] is full of a radiant humanitarianism” (*CD III/4*, 347). Reverence for life is due particularly to those who from our culture’s perspective seem least due respect. A genuine solidarity with and reverence toward those considered the least among us translates into action not rooted in pity or a condescending charity, but as acts of justice.

Barth is explicit that God command’s reverence directly and explicitly only toward human life since we only know through our own encounters with God that God addresses humanity which is the basis for understanding life as a loan (*CD III/4*, 332-

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<sup>42</sup> *CD III/4*, 341, modified translation.

333). At best there can be an analogical extension of reverence to non-human life (*CD* III/4, 350). This is based on our physical similarities and natural impulses shared with creatures (*CD* III/4, 348) and on our interconnectedness and dependence on the rest of creation (*CD* III/4, 350). However, while our primary responsibility is to reverencing human life, our treatment of non-human creatures is a “serious secondary responsibility.”<sup>43</sup>

### *Moral Formation of Reverence*

Barth’s description of the formation of reverence for life is admittedly thin. He primarily emphasizes the epistemic recognition that life is a loan. However, there are two relevant matters implied in Barth’s account: reverence arises from an engagement with God and through solidarity with fellow humanity. First, the perception of life which leads to reverence is grounded in an encounter with God. Specifically, it is the event of being addressed by God in which we come to understand that we are dependent on God. And thus, since our existence depends on God, we come to see that our life is to be accepted as a loan (*CD* III/4, 327). God addresses not just me as an individual, but each person which grounds the broader claim that human life is a loan (*CD* III/4, 331). In other words, our participation in Christ is the ultimate source of the emotion of reverence for life.

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<sup>43</sup> *CD* III/4, 350. Barth’s view of our relationship to non-human creation is varied. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Western ethics has wrongly ignored our responsibility to non-human beings and that Schweitzer, St. Francis, poets, and others are right to highlight our responsibility. However, the responsibility he commends often appears anthropocentric. Since we are dependent on non-human life, we ought to treat them with respect so we may continue to live. (*CD* III/4, 350) Animals are created for the use of humans as the “means of life.” (*CD* III/4, 351) However, he also argues there should never be senseless waste and destruction of plants (*CD* III/4, 351) and because we are so closely related to animals, they deserve gratitude, care, consideration and friendly action. (*CD* III/4, 352) Non-human life in the end remains an “enigma” to Barth. (*CD* III/4, 348, cf. 332-3) Since we are humans, we do not have access to non-human experience of God and only know that God addresses us and calls us. Furthermore, since Barth stresses the worth of human life residing in the incarnation of God as a *human*, this further limits what he can say about our responsibility to non-human creation.



Barth never explicitly links interactions with other humans as producing reverence, however, there are two reasons to consider this to be consistent with Barth's theology. First, it is in our solidarity with others that we encounter the Word of God (*CD* III/4, 331-332). As God's sanctification begins with the community, it is fitting to see the encounter with others as vital for developing reverence toward others. Second, building on his account of the human as a "being-in-encounter" in *CD* III/2 (as discussed in chapter 1), it seems reasonable that Barth would have seen our encounter with another as furthering the development of reverence. As we address and are addressed by one another and as we serve and are served by each other in gladness, we come to see one another in our co-existence as loved by God and worthy of reverence (cf. *CD* III/2, 250-268). The mystery that is human life is experienced in tangible ways.

In sum, reverence comes from seeing life as something that is not ours to possess and control as we wish, nor of merely instrumental value. Life has inherent worth because of God's love demonstrated above all in the incarnation. Through encounters with God where life is seen as just this loan and a loan that is loved by God, along with encounters with others where we begin to see the objects that God loves (myself and others) as a mystery worthy of wonder, we develop a sense of reverence.

### Joy

Joy is an emotion that arises often throughout Scripture. As Barth points out, "it is astonishing, and certainly does not need to be verified by quotations, how many references there are in the Old and New Testaments to delight, joy, bliss, exultation, merry-making and rejoicing, and how emphatically these are demanded from the Book of Psalms to the Epistle to the Philippians" (*CD* III/4, 375). So it is not surprising that Barth

would discuss joy often throughout his *Church Dogmatics*. What is more unexpected is that Barth's most in-depth study of joy occurs in his ethical writings as an aspect of reverence for life. In this following section, we will focus on this passage in *CD III/4*, though will add insights from other writings. Similar to the above section on reverence, we will proceed along three steps. We will first describe Barth's account of joy. We will then ask the relevance for joy to ethics, and then finish with a section on the moral formation of joy.

### *Barth's Account of Joy*

In Barth's account of the reverence for life in which God commands us to "will to live," he finds the necessary inclusion of a "will for joy."<sup>44</sup> If life is best thought of as the movement in time of desiring and striving, joy takes the form of a *fulfillment* of that desiring and striving (*CD III/4*, 376). It is in this subjective experience that movement, struggles, and even time seems to stand still (*Stillstehen*) and that life appears as if it is smiling at us in a friendly way. This fulfillment is to be distinguished from both calm resignation (*Gelasseneheit*) and contentment (*Zufrieden*).<sup>45</sup> A calm resignation can also feel as a stoppage in the movement and desiring, but joy is something more than resignation and calmness. Again, joy is similar to contentment with peace and an affirmation of life as it is, but joy goes beyond this to include not mere affirmation but the actualization and fulfillment of life for which we have been waiting and hoping. In sum, a person "has joy when there is in his life great or small fulfilment of his conscious or

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<sup>44</sup> As discussed earlier, Barth found Schweitzer's connection with a "will to live" and reverence for life as an apt approach to an ethics of life. The command of God always contains in some form a will to live (*CD III/4*, 333). For Barth, this will to live includes a will for health, a will for joy, a will for individuality or particularity, and finally a will for power, rightly construed (*CD III/4*, 356-397). That the will for life includes "the will for joy, delight and happiness," is the matter of this section (*CD III/4*, 375).

<sup>45</sup> *CD III/4*, 376, cf. 384.

unconscious desires, cravings and strivings, when an event or change occurs or a state is achieved which he can greet and welcome because openly or secretly he had been waiting for it” (*CD III/4*, 376). Barth links fulfillment to the reception of life as a gift of God’s grace. Life received as a gift is to experience our deepest desires fulfilled. Joy arises when life “presents and offers itself as a gift, and indeed as a gift of that which he has conceived of, or at least groped after or dreamed of, as genuine life” (*CD III/4*, 375). It occurs as “life manifests itself to him as God’s gift of grace, in which something of fulfillment shines out in the midst of the movement experienced and executed by him” (*CD III/4*, 378). For Barth, receiving life as a gift generates not only reverence but also joy; the will to live also includes the will for joy.

Of course, Barth acknowledges, such experiences of joy are sporadic and fleeting. Only the eternal joy of fellowship with God that awaits us will endure, but this eternal joy “has an exemplary significance” for all joys both great and small (*CD III/4*, 377). Most joy is actually anticipatory; it is a looking forward to an expectation of future fulfillment. Barth submits, “to be joyful is to expect that life will reveal itself as God’s gift of grace, that it will present and offer itself in provisional fulfillments of its meaning and intention as movement” (*CD III/4*, 378). The ethics of joy, then, is about having a readiness and expectation for joy.<sup>46</sup> Barth further clarifies that not all experiences of pleasure are true joy. To be genuine joy, the experience must “serve to refresh, console and encourage us,” rather than produce “weariness, satiety and *ennui*, which weaken, externalize and reduce the awareness of life and which make those desirous of enjoyment sadder rather than

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<sup>46</sup> The command to rejoice in Scripture includes the command to be ready for joy but this does not exhaust what it has to say, Barth writes. The command is also performative, an act that itself bring about joy. However, the ethical aspect of the command consists in the Christian’s task to be ready for joy, and thus is the main focus of Barth’s section on joy (*CD III/4*, 379).

gladder, more fearful instead of more courageous, more restless instead of more restful. It is manifest that these are not real but demonic pseudo-joys” (CD III/4, 382). Furthermore, true joy does not come at the expense of other goods such as health, work, fellowship with others, and one’s conscience (CD III/4, 382).

To experience joy is to experience life as a gift of God’s grace. The object of joy is thus first the encounter with God. But the experience of life as a gift is not some other-worldly experience, but is mediated through our everyday lives. Joy is experienced in various modes, and thus we are to expect and look for it in diverse and new ways. Joy can be found in material objects, in the arts, in nature, in our interactions with others, and in our everyday work (CD III/4, 381). It is a genuine *human* joy: “the joy of harvest, wedding, festival and victory; the joy not only of the inner but also of the outer man; the joy in which one may and must drink wine as well as eat bread, sing and play as well as speak, dance as well as pray” (CD III/4, 376). Joy can be experienced wherever life is encountered as a gift of grace.

Barth’s description of joy is rightly reckoned an emotion for two reasons. First, Barth employs typical emotive language in explaining joy. It is a fulfillment of our “desiring and striving,” received with “gratitude,” amidst our “running and striving and fighting and struggling.” True joy is that which serves “to refresh, console and encourage us,” and produce gladness, courage, and rest, rather than “weariness, satiety and *ennui*” which cause sadness, fear, and restlessness. This close connection of joy with words associated with emotive concepts clues us that joy for Barth is indeed an emotion.

Second, joy has to do with the perception of our experiences. It is the perception that something for which we desire has been fulfilled. Barth implores his readers to

anticipate, “moments in which his life manifests itself to him as God’s gift of grace” (*CD* III/4, 378). Joy is experienced in those moments when life is understood and received as from God’s grace. Thus, we are to develop a “readiness” and expectation to see life as gift. Joy has to do with our way of looking at the world where we expect to encounter God in fresh ways. That joy has to do with our interpretation is seen in that it can be experienced even amidst suffering. They are not mutually exclusive, and joy can give the possibility of enduring through suffering.<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere he writes that joy “is not without travail.”<sup>48</sup> If joy was merely a passive experience due to external circumstances or engrained wiring, it would be quite rare that joy could ever be associated with suffering. But the emotion of joy that is understood as interpretation or perception can include the experience of suffering interpreted in light of God’s grace, even in the “shadow” side of God’s grace. That joy is a concern-based perception is self-evident. For joy to be fulfillment indicates that one’s desires, that is, what one cares about, are met.

In sum, joy for Barth is the emotive concept of finding rest and fulfillment through a construal of the world in light of God’s gift of grace. The command of God demands we “will for joy” which means that we prepare ourselves and look for evidence of God’s grace at work in our world and in our lives.

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<sup>47</sup> *CD* III/4, 384. Barth argues we need to be humble in what we consider as true joy, because as God’s covenant partners, fulfillment of our desires might come through means other than we expect. This includes suffering. “The real test of our joy of life as a commanded and therefore a true and good joy is that we do not evade the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ and are not unwilling to be genuinely joyful even as we bear the sorrows laid upon us.” (*CD* III/4, 383) Barth goes on, “it is a matter of the proof of our joy in the fact that our capacity for enjoyment shows itself to be also a capacity for suffering, a readiness to accept with reverence and gratitude and therefore with joy the mystery and wonder of the life given to us by God, its beauty and radiance, and the blessing, refreshment, consolation and encouragement which it radiates as the gift of God, even where it presents itself to us in its alien form.” (*CD* III/4, 384)

<sup>48</sup> Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 79.

### *Ethical Relevance of Joy*

Joy is often thought of as more of a spiritual and individual emotion than a moral and social emotion. For Barth, however, joy is most developed in his ethical writings and is characteristically grasped as “a social matter” (*CD* III/4, 379). In the previous section we commented that Barth contrasted true joy with a “demonic pseudo-joy,” where a false search after pleasure is contrasted with a true joy of rest. This true joy is characterized by a proper way of relating to God and others. The section will develop Barth’s understanding of the relation of joy to ethics and relationality by drawing attention to two areas of particular relevance. First, election is God’s determination to create joyful creatures, that is, a people who embrace their calling as created for partnership through their correspondence to God’s joy in their moral lives. Second, Barth closely associates joy with freedom and the capability to act in ways that promote our agency to obey God’s commands. Namely, joy helps moral agents to endure and persevere in times of hardship and suffering. Joy sustains persons in their resistance to intransigent evil. Additionally, joy is important for ethical decision making when knowing the good is difficult.

First, joy is proper to the Christian life because of our election. Election, Barth contends, can be summarized as God’s determination to bring about people who are joyful and in covenant partnership (*CD* II/2, 412). The telos of the Christian life is joy. This human joy is rooted in the being of God, in particular, God’s beauty and glory. Barth writes, “God’s glory is the indwelling joy of His divine being which as such shines out from Him, which overflows in its richness, which in its super-abundance is not satisfied with itself but communicates itself,” namely, “the communication of His joy” (*CD* II/1, 647). Thus human joy is grounded in divine joy: God’s glory is God’s

“overflowing self-communicating joy. By its very nature it is that which gives joy.”<sup>49</sup> The triune God is intrinsically relational and this manifests in an overflowing joy. Since God’s commanding is an act of good-pleasure and joy, for our decision is to correspond, it must be done joyfully (*CD II/2*, 611 cf. 674). It is for this reason that election is a proclamation of joy; the antithesis of fear and terror (*CD II/2*, 13 cf. 174). As ethics is the flipside of election, it is understandable that Barth’s major discussion of joy is found in his ethical writings.<sup>50</sup> Everything ought to be done out of joy, that is, a readiness to see and receive God’s grace that fulfills our deepest desires and needs. In fact, Barth argues, we cannot obey the command of God unless we do so joyously (*CD II/2*, 611-612, 649). He argues this feature differentiates God’s command from all other commands. For any other commands, joy is an “indifferent or at least secondary” aspect (*CD II/2*, 611). Other commands cannot demand joy. But for the command of God, “we obey it only when we obey it joyously, and every time we obey it without joy, we have not obeyed it at all” (*CD II/2*, 611). We are not just commanded to certain acts. We are commanded first and foremost to come to Jesus; we are called to discipleship. Joy is a relational way of being

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<sup>49</sup> *CD II/1*, 653. Is it better to simply say that God’s glory ought to produce in us awe, gratitude, wonder, submission, and obedience? Barth answers that these are not sufficient, because God’s glory, “awakens joy, and is itself joyful. It is not merely a glory which is solemn and good and true, and which, in its perfection and sublimity, might be gloomy or at least joyless. Joy in and before God—in its particular nature, distinct from what we mean by awe, gratitude and the rest—has an objective basis. It is something in God, the God of all the perfections, which justifies us in having joy, desire and pleasure towards Him, which indeed obliges, summons and attracts us to do this” (*CD II/1*, 655).

<sup>50</sup> To recap Barth’s concept of ethics discussed in chapter one, ethics is the flip side of election. God has elected God’s self to be with and for humanity and has elected humanity for covenant partnership with God. Ethics is about our response to this gracious act. Barth summarizes, “comprehensively, ethics is an attempt to answer theoretically the question of what may be called *good* human action... the human action is good which is commanded by God in his Word and is obedient to him.” Barth, *The Christian Life*, 3. Ethics is the attempt to anticipate what action God will command in relation to God, humans, and all of creation. The command is anticipated by looking to the God-human Jesus Christ and seeking to correspond to his gracious ways. Since God has determined to be for humanity, our actions toward God and to fellow-humanity are interconnected; there is no clear demarcation between our spiritual and ethical life for Barth. N.B.: as *The Christian Life* will be an oft-quoted source in the chapter, future citations will be in text and referenced as *CL*.

before God. We are called to willingly see our existence as finding its fulfillment in this covenantal relationship. God commands our action, but this goes beyond simply ordering the activities we do and includes the way we do them. It includes not only what we do but the heart and emotion behind those actions. When someone is converted to God, “it is a matter of his heart, his thinking, his will, his disposition and also of his consequent action and abstention on the same ultimate basis. It is a matter of his disposition and action together; of the two as a totality” (*CD IV/2*, 564). Joy is the fulfillment of our desires. We were created for God, so it is right that we find our joy in God. Knowing that God’s commands are good makes joy fitting. Thus, joy is proper to the moral life.

Second, joy is important for living the moral life. This is especially true in two types of situations: when the good is known with confidence but in which it is difficult to bring about or persevere, and in those situations where the good is not easy to determine. First, in the majority of life situations, decisions are not wrestled over because they are a moral quandary. Often, the right action is more or less clear. Rather, it is the bringing about of the good that is difficult. It is here that we arrive at the issue of freedom and agency where joy is particularly critical.

As mentioned in chapter one, Barth’s account of freedom is closely related to contemporary discussions of agency. Moral agency is the ability to decide and act in ways that correspond with a perceived good. Throughout his dogmatics, Barth often links his discussions of joy to freedom.<sup>51</sup> The two go hand-in-hand, for joy is the liberating experience of fulfillment and satisfaction in life.<sup>52</sup> The experience of joy as we interpret

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<sup>51</sup> E.g., *CD II/2*, 593ff, *CL*, 263ff. In talking of joy and freedom, Barth also commonly identifies the command of God as “permission.” Cf. *CD II/2*, 585, 593ff., Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 252.

<sup>52</sup> There are many points of contact between Barth and Kant’s accounts of ethics, such as their basis of the good not on feelings but on a command or imperative. Here again we see a point of similarity with Barth’s



our actions in light of God's command empowers the freedom and agency to obey.<sup>53</sup> In "The Humanity of God," a 1953 lecture by Barth on God's freedom and human freedom, Barth claims "freedom is *being joyful*."<sup>54</sup> He continues, "human freedom is the joy whereby man acknowledges and confesses this divine election by willing, deciding, and determining himself to be the echo and mirror of the divine act."<sup>55</sup> If freedom is the capability to act according to God's command, then joy is our freely embracing that

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account of joy and Kant's description of "moral feelings." Just as joy does not determine the good for Barth but makes action on the good possible, for Kant, moral feeling is "the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty." (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399; Kant, *Lectures*, 46.) We do not have an obligation to acquire the capacity for moral feeling (all possess it), but there is an obligation "to cultivate it and to strengthen it through wonder at its inscrutable source." (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.) However, while moral feeling is not necessary for Kant, joy is necessary for obedient action according to Barth, as discussed above (cf. *CD* II/2, 611, 649).

<sup>53</sup> Thus Barth also warns of a false or apparent freedom and joy that is really no freedom nor joy *CD* II/2, 593ff.

<sup>54</sup> Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 78.

<sup>55</sup> Barth, 79. In this essay, Barth starts with an account of God's freedom, for, he contends, just as we cannot not know who God is apart from humanity (that is, God has determined to be for and with humanity, not apart from humanity – "The concept of God without man is indeed as anomalous as wooden iron." (72)), we cannot know humanity apart from God, and it is this latter statement which holds primacy. (71) If we want to know what genuine human freedom is, we have to begin with God's freedom. God's freedom is not to be thought of as "merely unlimited possibility or formal majesty and omnipotence, that is to say empty, naked sovereignty." (71) God's freedom is a "relational freedom." (72) It is the freedom God used to determine and will God's self "to be the Father and the Son in the unity of the Spirit." (71) and to be with humanity and to exist in covenantal partnership. (72) God's freedom is freedom for relationship, for the Other, not for isolated existence. Human freedom is the corollary to God's freedom. It does not mean "vague choices between various possibilities." (77) Rather it is the freedom to choose, decide, and act in ways that align ourselves with God and fellow humanity. It is not ethics as isolated individuals. "Human freedom is not realized in the solitary detachment of an individual in isolation from his fellow men... I am not Man, I am only *a man*, and I am a man only in relation to my fellow men. Only in encounter and in communion with them may I receive the gift of freedom. God is *pro me* because He is *pro nobis*." (77) It is here that Barth expounds that freedom is in fact "being joyful." (78f.) Freedom is obedience, but specifically, it is joyful obedience. He then goes on to say that freedom is the experience of gratitude, of thankful obedience. (82) Above all, freedom is the enjoyment of being with and belonging to God. (82) This enjoyment will not be fully experienced until eternal life, but "the God-given freedom breaks through in a new dimension in a decisive and definitive way" (83). This freedom, experienced as these emotions, is the foundation of evangelical ethics. Ethics proper is not a list of rules and the Bible is not a set of rules or a yardstick (85). The role of ethics is primarily not to provide a program for life but to remind Christians of the encounter with God that is the foundation of ethics (86). However, "this does not exclude the possibility of conditional imperatives addressed in concrete situations by a person to a brother" (87). A proper encounter with God is not one of disinterested neutrality, but an experience of joy and gratitude. Human freedom as a response to God's freedom is a response of personal engagement in which we experience life as God calls us to and created us for, that is, in covenant partnership with God and fellowship with fellow-humanity. Emotion is foundational for ethics.

command in grateful obedience. Joy is motivating, it allows us to embrace God's commands as our good. This emotion is particularly relevant when we are called to an arduous task.

Joy sustains actors when faced with opposition, suffering, and intractable evil. Barth argues, "in the affliction and distress that unavoidably hangs over [Christians], they call upon God as their only reliable strength and stay... as the one to whom they owe their freedom for joyful, defiant, and peaceful endurance and perseverance in this situation" (*CL*, 99). Freedom and joy are linked to endurance and perseverance. Joy is not merely descriptive of the person who endures amidst affliction but is ingredient to the endurance. Joy is not exclusive of sorrow and suffering (*CD III/4*, 383f.). It is possible to develop a readiness to receive life as a gift of God's grace even in this "shadow" side of history.<sup>56</sup> Joy does not mean passivity amidst suffering, however. In Barth's commentary on Philippians, he comments on Paul's account of subversive joy. Barth calls this joy a "defiant nevertheless."<sup>57</sup> The world may produce struggles and anxiety, but yet, Paul appeals to his readers to rejoice "in the Lord" (*Phil* 4:4). Even though life is often filled with injustices and we are called to difficult tasks, because of our participation in Christ we have reason to continue to rejoice and persevere in works of justice.

The means by which joy enables endurance is the continual renewal it provides amidst the struggle for justice. Emotion in general is a powerful motivating force in

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<sup>56</sup> Barth writes that our readiness for joy must include with a readiness for suffering, "a readiness to accept with reverence and gratitude and therefore with joy the mystery and wonder of the life given to us by God, its beauty and radiance, and the blessing, refreshment, consolation and encouragement which it radiates as the gift of God, even where it presents itself to us in its alien form." (*CD III/4*, 384) However, for Barth, this readiness to find joy amidst suffering does not imply passivity in the face of injustice. This is evident throughout his writings and life.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 40th Anniversary (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 120.

human behavior. Fear and anger are particularly motivating.<sup>58</sup> However, both can too easily result in burnout and exhaustion. Joy is an element that can sustain moral action over the long run.<sup>59</sup> Barth connects joy with an experience of rest and fulfillment.<sup>60</sup> Through life's constant striving and strife, joy is the respite that refreshes. As eschatological joy is our entering into God's eternal rest (*Heb* 4), the anticipatory joy experienced in this life is a taste of that rest. Thus, true joy revitalizes and invigorates our being and ethical life. This is in contrast to pleasures of our world which really sap our ability to seek after God and justice. These are the "pseudo-joys," that "cause weariness, satiety and *ennui*, which weaken, externalise and reduce the awareness of life and which make those desirous of enjoyment sadder instead of gladder, more fearful instead of more courageous, more restless instead of more restful" (*CD* III/4, 382). True joy sustains the moral life in the face of seemingly intractable evil.

Second, joy is critical when ethical quandaries arise where the good is not only difficult, but the right action is not evident. This claim is more controversial. There is a risk in commending joy amidst these ambiguous decisions. This risk is seen most clearly in Barth's discussion of *grenzfälle* (boundary cases) and war. The *grenzfall* is an ethical dilemma where anticipating God's command is difficult. Often, Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ make anticipation of God's command possible with some confidence. But ethical situations do arise which are quite challenging to know the right action. Barth addresses a number of these boundary cases in *CD* III/4 such as suicide, homicide, and

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<sup>58</sup> Phoenix, *The Anger Gap*, 6, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 160f.

<sup>60</sup> In *The Christian Life*, Barth writes about resistance against the lordless powers (discussed in the next chapter). The following section was to be on rest and its relation to ethics in his exposition of the third petition of the Lord's prayer, but it was never written. See *CL*, 115.

war, and offers some points to account for in anticipating God's command. But at the end of the day, Barth argues, we cannot know for sure what God will require of us, so after we partake in ethical reflection, all we can do is pray and then we must proceed with *joy* and in the freedom that we are forgiven.<sup>61</sup> In his discussion of war, Barth goes so far to say, "if war is ventured in obedience and therefore with a good conscience, it is also ventured in faith and therefore with joyous and reckless determination."<sup>62</sup> Barth's encouragement to recklessness in such situation is particularly troublesome where steps in caution, humility, and regret seem more proper.

Thus, we must ask, is joy appropriate in the face of intransigent evil and tragic dilemmas? Is not humility, fear, and trembling more fitting, especially realizing that our understanding of God's command might be mistaken? Certainly, at a minimum, we must say that Barth had a poor choice of words in his appeal to recklessness. At more careful moments, Barth argued that humility, sorrow, and seriousness ought not to be put in opposition to joy. Barth makes this explicit one year after writing *CD III/4* in his post-war address, "Political Decisions in the Unity of the Faith." The topic of the lecture is how Christian unity is related to making a political decision. Such a decision, Barth argues, must be made with political sobriety and theological insight, with courage and humility,

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<sup>61</sup> E.g. *CD III/4*, 402, 410, 412, 423.

<sup>62</sup> *CD III/4*, 463; *freudiger, rücksichtsloser Entschlossenheit KD III/4*, 530. McKenny offers a critique of this notion for Barth, especially as it comes up for him often in his boundary cases. McKenny argues that encouragement to proceed with joy is dangerous and can easily lead into recklessness. McKenny writes, "By connecting joy with faith in the reconciling work of Christ, Barth appears to hold that one can venture such a decision, with the risk that one may be wrong, only if one is confident of God's forgiveness in Christ. But Barth almost always mentions joy in connection with having a good conscience and assurance in the face of a decision – and most often the decision is for an act on the boundary of a domain. In this context, however, joy is problematic and even dangerous. The boundary is already a danger zone; to venture there in joy and a good conscience seems reckless, an invitation to the worst kinds of evil. Is it not better – far less dangerous – to go there with an uneasy conscience and in regret, in fear and trembling?... For all of the caution he counsels in leading up to the boundary case, Barth encourages a kind of moral recklessness once the decision has been made. We do well to warn against this recklessness." McKenny, *The Analogy of Grace*, 277.

and with joyfulness and severity or seriousness.<sup>63</sup> Here, joy is not exclusive of humility or seriousness amidst difficult decision. In this context, joy must not be an irresponsible recklessness.<sup>64</sup> In fact, immediately after Barth's imprudent appeal to recklessness in *CD* III/4, he immediately goes on to declare that war must always be ventured "certainly with a very heavy heart" (*sicher sehr schweren Herzens*).<sup>65</sup> In situations of ambiguity and tragic dilemmas, humility and a heavy heart are fitting. Joy yet retains a place amidst such ethical dilemmas, however. Where we must act amid uncertainty, our identity in Christ gives courage and joy that despite our inadequacies, Christ is yet faithful and lived the life for us which was good that we seek to emulate.

#### *Moral Formation of Joy*

We lastly turn to Barth's understanding of the moral formation of joy. We will look at two clues to Barth's perspective on gaining joy. First, joy is a gift to be received, not something we can manufacture. Above all, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. But, while we cannot force joy, we can yet create a readiness or disposition which expects and welcomes the gift of joy. Second, the formation of joy is a communal undertaking. Joy is a social matter.

First, joy is rightfully recognized as a form of gratitude, and thus an experience to be received as a gift. "To be joyful," Barth writes, "means to look out for opportunities for gratitude" (*CD* III/4, 378). This is to be distinguished from false joys of covetous

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<sup>63</sup> Barth, *Against the Stream*, 159–62.

<sup>64</sup> Barth's encouragement to a "reckless determination" is not defensible. If we had perfect knowledge of God's command that would be another issue. But the very character of boundary conditions is we cannot be certain.

<sup>65</sup> *CD* III/4, 463. He continues, "this means that the Christian Church will have its own part to play in a state which finds itself in this kind of emergency and therefore forced into war. But we can also see in what sense it must stand by this nation, rousing, comforting and encouraging it, yet also calling it to *repentance and conversion*" (*CD* III/4, 463, italics added).

grasping, rather it is the hope of receiving. Foremost, joy comes from an encounter with God. Barth affirms, “indeed, it is really when the Holy Spirit comes and is present that one experiences true joy” (*CD III/4*, 379). And since we cannot control the Spirit, “we cannot create or construct or produce or force it [joy] by various plans and measures” (*CD III/4*, 379). Joy is not something we can manufacture ourselves, as demonstrated in the labor put in preparing great festivals or holiday celebrations that might not result in joyful experiences (*CD III/4*, 379-81). Joy is something we can only welcome when it interrupts our life and gives a taste of the fulfillment that will come in the eschaton. Each moment of joy is truly anticipatory of that future “union with God’s eternal life” (*CD III/4*, 384).

But while provisional, we do indeed experience joy in this life, and there are steps we can take to become more joyful people. Namely, while we cannot manufacture joy, we can create a disposition or readiness to experience joy. Barth emphasizes focusing on joy in the small things rather than emphasizing major celebrations. Joy does not follow a set mode or script, but can be found in various objects. We can and ought to be joyful in material objects, in the arts, in nature, in our interactions with others in human society, and in our everyday work (though each are open to danger if taken to extreme or made ultimate; *CD III/4*, 381). Speaking specifically of aesthetics, but surely applicable to other fields, Barth argues, “we can deepen, develop, educate and train our receptiveness and taste in this field” (*CD III/4*, 381). We can learn and deepen our experience of joy by anticipating and being ready for such small joys and finding gratitude in them.<sup>66</sup> A

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<sup>66</sup> Theologians in particular ought to be joyful because of their subject matter. Barth writes, “the theologian who has no joy in his work is not a theologian at all. Sulky faces, morose thoughts and boring ways of speaking are intolerable in this science” *CD II/1*, 656.

readiness to see life as not something simply to be endured, but rather as a gift, is the key to joy.

Second, joy arises from our social existence. Joy is experienced in our relation with others, it is “a social matter” (CD III/4, 379). Foremost, it is found in the encounter with the Holy Spirit, but also in our relation with fellow humanity. Joy is experienced in these human relationships as we seek joy for others. Barth writes, “we can have joy, and therefore will it, only as we give it to others” (CD III/4, 379). In fact, he argues, to be merry in isolation is rare, exceptional, and dangerous. It too easily will morph into a form of egotism or selfishness and thus not true joy (CD III/4, 380). Joy is an important element in binding persons one to another. This is brought out in Barth’s discussion of gladness which he connects with joy. It was discussed in chapter 1 that Barth understands the genuine form of humanity to be a “being in encounter” (*Sein in der Begegnung*). This consists in 1) openness to our neighbor, 2) reciprocal dialogue and listening, 3) tangible forms of mutual assistance, and 4), the “secret of the whole, and therefore of the three preceding steps” is that the former are done in “gladness” (*gerne*), not compulsion (CD III/2, 265). This gladness is the “all-animating and motivating dynamic” that is the “secret” to human existence (CD III/2, 265). It is the “*condition sine qua non* of humanity” (CD III/2, 266).

If we are with fellow-humanity, providing assistance, etc., but are not moved from the inside (“in the heart” in biblical terms), then the being in encounter has not become part of the essence of humanity (CD III/2, 267). Humanity would then be understood as fundamentally created as individuals with fellow-humanity merely a nice add-on. Barth describes gladness as basic because it means our true humanity is found in our

relationship with each other, and thus to be with another is to be fully human. The active willing to be with one another leads to “mutual joy” (*CD III/2*, 272). We experience joy as we will the joy of our brothers and sisters. Joy is experienced when shared, and thus I ought to “ask myself from the standpoint of the other what will give him joy, and that I then consider this and put it into effect” (*CD III/4*, 380). It is possible to be around many people but to still not have the type of fellowship we were created for, namely, “mutual enjoyment” (*CD III/4*, 380). When people affirm another as a fellow elected one before God which results in a mutual acceptance, “co-existence is joy” (*CD III/2*, 272). It is in such an intersubjective encounter characterized by gladness that is the form of genuine humanity and which is necessary for the formation of a readiness for joy.

### Zeal

Barth exhorts his readers to “zeal,” in his exposition of the petition “hallowed be your name” of the Lord’s Prayer (*CL*, 111-204). He specifically addresses zeal for God’s honor. We will continue our familiar pattern of describing Barth’s view of zeal and probing its characterization as an emotion. We then move on to zeal’s relevance for ethics, and conclude with a discussion on moral formation.

#### *Barth’s Account of Zeal*

Barth’s principal writing on zeal is found in his exposition of the Lord’s Prayer in the unfinished ethical section of his *Doctrine of Reconciliation* (*CL*, 111-204). He titles his exposition of this first petition, “hallowed be your name,” as “Zeal for the honor of God” (*Eifer um die Ehre Gottes*). Barth describes zeal as a particular kind of “passion” (*Leidenschaft*). Barth gives “passion” a narrower meaning than its classical characterization. It is “a person’s suffering from an unfulfilled desire which seeks



fulfilment, the fulfilment in which it can transform itself and become delight and joy instead of pain” (CL, 111). Where our previous section focused on joy, the emotion related with fulfilment, here zeal is associated with the want of fulfilment. Each person has many such longings and desiring. There are, “yearning for life, the craving for food and drink and sleep, the desire for love and hate and hate-love, the urge to have dealings with interesting and eminent people, the longing to be acknowledged and valued by such people, the hankering for pleasure, power, possessions, and position. There are animal desires and spiritual desires; there are political, social, aesthetic, technical, and scholarly desires” (CL, 112). These are not in themselves categorically good or bad, they are simply part of what it means to be human. But these passions are not what Barth is referring to in this section. Rather, he is talking about the particular Christian passion that God will hallow his name, what he calls the “great passion.”<sup>67</sup> The hallowing of God’s name is not something that humans can accomplish in the world, the church, nor in ourselves. It is the reason that it is a *petition* in the Lord’s prayer; we are asking God to bring about. Barth insists, “only God can bring about with his own action, work, and

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<sup>67</sup> According to Barth’s assistant and biographer, Eberhard Busch, Barth demonstrated such a passion for theology in his writing and teaching. It was for this reason that Busch entitled his introduction to Barth, *The Great Passion*. Busch writes, Barth’s great passion, “has left an imprint on his theology. It is a passion in zeal for God’s glory, which zeal posits this glory in God’s ‘friendliness for humanity.’” Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth’s Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), x. Busch sat in on the lectures that were eventually published as *The Christian Life*. Commenting on the lecture, Busch noted, “even at seventy-five years of age Barth could speak of the great passion by which those who know God are ‘filled, impelled, guided, and ruled.’ The fire of this passion burned within him.” Busch, 7. He was driven by the idea that we stand before and are addressed by God. God is not just a grander version of our best traits, but someone other. A God who has yet in grace decided to not be the God apart from humanity but for humans. His driving passion was to imitate John the Baptist (especially as seen with his elongated finger in Grünewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece) and point to Jesus Christ, that Christ may increase in his life and theology (*Jn* 3:30). His dogmatics, his preaching, his teaching, his ethics, his listening to Mozart, all were driven by this passion. His reputation as a joyful theologian who sought to not take himself too seriously came out in the delight and earnestness in which he approached theology and ethics and in his openness to community and dialogue. The theological task was not a dry academic exercise but properly comes out of an active engagement with God that requires the Christian’s emotional involvement.

gifts” this request (*CL*, 113). To describe this particular passion of an unfulfilled desire to see God’s name honored, Barth uses the biblical concept of “zeal.”<sup>68</sup> For the follower of Christ, this cannot be an optional passion for the desire to see God honored is central to the Christian life.<sup>69</sup>

But is zeal an emotion? Barth is explicit in distinguish zeal from mere outbursts and enthusiasm. Christians are not, “‘angry young men’ who seek a reputation by plunging from one emotion and convulsion into the next and indulging outwardly in one eruption after another.”<sup>70</sup> While zeal for the honor of God can certainly distinguishes a good sermon from a bad one, this ought not be confused with “emotional and rhetorical enthusiasm” (*emotionalen und rhetorischen Enthusiasmus*; *CL*, 115). While Christians at times do fittingly erupt into loud expression, this is not what categorizes zeal. In fact, even when this passion erupts, an inner calm accompanies it (*CL*, 111). There are yet two reasons to consider zeal an emotion according to the understanding of this dissertation. First, while an inner calm is characteristic of a person who has this passion, Barth nevertheless describes zeal as a burning and fiery experience. This unfulfilled longing is a “hot desire” that fills, impels, guides, and rules the Christian (*CL*, 113). It is a “great, unconquerable, permanent, and even dangerous passion” (*CL*, 111). An inner calm does not exclude a consuming passion that moves a person. It is a calm anchored in knowing that God has promised to bring about this hallowing of God’s name, but a fiery passion

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<sup>68</sup> *CL*, 113. He also considers if desire or delight might be better concepts, but he thinks the latter is insufficient because of how often desire is given a negative connotation in the New Testament and delight is inadequate because it does not have the idea of a suffering desire. Barth then goes on to give an overview of zeal as found in Scripture.

<sup>69</sup> Barth goes so far as to assert, “a person to whom zeal for God’s honor is alien can be no real Christian” (*CL*, 115).

<sup>70</sup> “Angry young men” refers to the autobiography by Leslie Paul and was used to describe a postwar working class movement in England that protested social inequalities.

because this desire is yet unfulfilled. In sum, zeal is characterized by the feeling of a strong, driving desire and inner calm interpreted as a response to one's desire to see God's name honored. The distinctive Christian passion is "concern is for the honor of God" (*CL*, 113). It is a longing for God to be honored in our life, the church, and the world.

### *Ethical Relevance of Zeal*

What is the relevance of zeal for ethics? This is a particularly apropos question since Barth is neither discussing zeal for a moral cause nor even a generic zeal. Rather, the subject is zeal for the sanctification of God's name. Why, then, does Barth make zeal a subject of ethical inquiry? He does so because zeal moves moral agents and serves as a complement to joy. The previous section argued that joy is important for ethics – it is the sense of fulfillment that comes from an encounter with God's grace. It is the perception of life as a good gift of God. But joy is often fleeting and does not capture the whole of human existence. We live in a world where sin is pervasive in society, in the church, and in ourselves. Joy is a taste of a fulfillment that is not yet wholly realized. In the face of such sin and injustice, zeal complements joy. It moves us to act to transform the current state. Zeal for God's honor translates into human action because passions move us (*CL*, 112). Barth writes, Christians are "filled, impelled, guided, and ruled by this hot desire" (*CL*, 113). Our concern for God's honor in our world, church, and self, propel us to live in characteristic ways.

A zeal for God's name which petitions God to bring about God's honor has ethical import for the Christian life. It concerns not only how we relate to God, but also how we interact with other creatures. Barth writes, "there belongs—as both

presupposition and consequence—a human attitude (*Haltung*) and mode of action (*Handlungsweise*) that ineluctably comes on those who seriously bring the petition before God: something which characterizes their whole being, life, and action” (*CL*, 113). There is a disposition and way of living that comes to characterize the person who has cultivated the emotion of zeal for the hallowing of God’s name. “The order to ask God to hallow his name,” Barth argues, “implies a command to do something ourselves in the matter... The law of prayer is the law of action” (*CL*, 168). Zeal impels persons to live “analogous” to God’s work of hallowing God’s name. The command of God that demands zeal for God’s honor “does not demand an occasional, tepid, and sluggish movement in which we grow tired, are constantly pausing, or even stop altogether. It demands a movement analogous to that which we ask and expect from God... when we call upon God in this way, then, without wishing to compare ourselves to God or to replace him, we cannot possibly refrain from rising up ourselves with zeal and burning passion and going toward him and living to him” (*CL*, 169). Human action is limited and thus will not be the same as God’s, but it will correspond in a way that is proper to humans in light of God’s act.<sup>71</sup> Humans have their own active participation in the hallowing of God’s name that is proper as God’s covenant partners (*CL*, 170).

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<sup>71</sup> The hallowing of God’s name will only reach fulfillment on the future day of the Lord, meaning there is eschatological element to our zeal. Our primary task is to pray for the hallowing of God acknowledging that very often God is not honored in our lives, in the church, nor in the world. However, Christians who look forward to that day are shaped by that vision. Eschatology bears on how we live today. Barth declares, “their calling upon God with this request obviously would not be an act of obedience—they would obviously be praying it without knowing what they were praying for, or believing that their prayer would be answered—if they did not turn toward the day for whose coming they pray with some movement of their own, if their thoughts and words and works were not drawn into this forward movement toward the day, if their lives were unaffected by the petition, if they were not directed toward its content and goal, if they were not shaped and stamped by looking to this coming day, to Jesus Christ in his future” (*CL*, 168-9). This good future beckons us to live toward its reality.

The human action driven by a zealous desire to see God's name hallowed involves resistance, revolt, and rebellion against the regime of this world. "It is to this action of resistance against the desecration of God's name that we are summoned—this action which even in its humanity is similar, parallel, and analogous to the act of God himself" (CL, 175). We cannot overthrow this regime, that will be God's work. But we can rise up in revolt and rebellion against it (CL, 174). Barth continues on to link this first petition of the Lord's prayer with the second petition which Barth summarizes as "The Struggle for Human Justice."<sup>72</sup> Zeal for God's honor and the struggle for human justice [*Gerechtigkeit*] belong together. Barth contends, "zeal for God's honor can be good, obedient, and full of promise only when it is directly accompanied by the struggle for human justice... Christians are summoned by God's command not only to zeal for God's honor but also to a simultaneous and related revolt, and therefore to entry into a conflict."<sup>73</sup> In particular, zeal for God's honor and the struggle for human justice means revolt against the lordless forces and the demonic in our world – a topic that we will turn to in more detail in the next chapter.

Finally, zeal is relevant to ethics because of the social nature of this emotion. Barth elaborates on the resistance against that which opposes God in one's personal life, in the church, and in the world (CL, 182-204). It is first in one's personal life that it is necessary to develop zeal for God's honor. While this claim risks a reductionist individualism, Barth maintains it is necessary. We have initially to develop a zeal for

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<sup>72</sup> The English translation titles the section, "The Struggle for Human Righteousness," as *Gerechtigkeit* can be translated as either righteousness or justice (similar to *δικαιοσύνη* in Greek). But the content of the section makes clear that Barth has something more in mind than the English word "righteousness," which is usually associated with being made right with God. *Gerechtigkeit* here has to do primarily with human relations on earth, or "justice."

<sup>73</sup> CL, 206.

God's name to be honored in one's own life (*CL*, 183). But this is only the first step, and zeal for God's hallowing must extend to the church and world. The implication is that zeal is important for social ethics. Zeal does not imply opposition to the church or the world, but rather it means that Christian resistance against that which denigrates the Lord's name must be for the sake of the church and world.<sup>74</sup> Christian action is one of resistance; not against people of the world, but rather in solidarity with them. Barth continues,

Christian action in this sphere will have the nature of a movement of resistance: not to other people of the world with whom the Christian finds and knows himself to be in solidarity, nor against their interests as such, since these affect him too, but against the desecration of the name of God which pollutes this sphere and which is brought about by the mixture of light and darkness that rules it, against the system of the ambivalence of the knowledge and ignorance of the one true and living God (*CL*, 202).

Zeal is a social emotion with an eccentric focus toward humanity, especially the poor, as an analogous action to God's determination to be for humanity and justice. Zeal for God's honor stimulates our interaction toward liberation from the inhumanity of the evil system which reigns in the world (*CL*, 203). It is an essential feature of our determination as God's covenant partner in that it reflects a proper orientation and relating to God and one another.

### *Moral Formation of Zeal*

Once again, moral formation is not Barth's main focus when addressing this emotion. He is less concerned with the *how* we become zealous people as much as that we *ought* to be zealous as commanded by God. But we do get hints at the moral

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<sup>74</sup> The Christian's "movement in this middle circle will also have to be one of resistance, not, of course, against the church but *for* the church, a countermovement that is to be initiated and executed within the church for the sake of the church" (*CL*, 192-3).

formation of zeal. Once again, moral emotions are shaped through an encounter with God and in the community commissioned to hear and witness to the Word of God. First, zeal is shaped through an encounter with God. Zeal comes through our relation with God who is by nature zealous to make the name of God honored (*CL*, 113-114). It arises through the work of the Holy Spirit as it did on Pentecost. Just as those first witnesses were “cut to the heart,” we long for God’s glory to be magnified. Barth notes the affective element of this work: “that they were cut to the heart, not given a blow on the head!” (*CL*, 114). It is as hearers of the Word of God who turn to the day when God’s name will be hallowed, Christians become zealous. They respond in prayer wherein a “zeal and burning passion” cause a person to rise up and live toward God.<sup>75</sup> Barth concludes, “to sum it all up in a single concept, Christians have to consider, to put into effect, and to confirm the precedence of the Word of God in what they will and choose and do. As they do that, the zeal for God’s honor which is demanded of them will properly demonstrate, express, and certify itself” (*CL*, 175). Through the encounter with God, zealous people develop.

Second, zeal for God’s honor also arises through encounters with fellow Christians. Zeal is not primarily an individual passion. It comes from the commission as a member of the Christian community. Barth affirms,

the church’s witness to the act of sanctifying his name which God has performed and will reveal is the witness with which he is most urgently commissioned. It is as one of this people, standing for all and for the cause of all in his own person, that he may and should pray, ‘Hallowed be thy name,’ and that even though he is still subject to the regime of division which desecrates God’s name, he is already required to make that movement of hope and resistance and therefore, zealous for God’s honor, to live a Christian life (*CL* 188).

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<sup>75</sup> “When we call upon God in this way, then, without wishing to compare ourselves to God or to replace him, we cannot possibly refrain from rising up ourselves with zeal and burning passion and going toward him and living to him. What we are commanded in and with the order to pray the first petition is that we should rise up in this way” (*CL*, 169).

This reflects Barth's understanding of progress which we discussed in chapter one. Spiritual and moral growth of individual believers are rooted in the growth of the community. Growth occurs in the increase of the *sancta*, the holy things, which are the practices and emotions of the Christian community. Christians are "hearers of the Word," and as such, "what is to be expected of them is that this Word will give their choosing and willing a specific character" (*CL*, 201). In community, as they hear the Word of God, their emotions acquire a certain character which includes zeal for God's honor and the justice that God desires to bring about.<sup>76</sup> "The thoughts and words and works of Christians, however, will be characteristic, they will be a legible if not immediately understandable text to the non-Christians around them, and they will thus be a witness given among them, only when they follow their invocation of God and in particular their prayer for the hallowing of God's name... When they grant God's Word this place and function, their actions take on a distinct character" (*CL*, 202).

A further role of the church is in evaluating the emotion. Emotions are often not morally neutral, and this is particularly true for zeal. Not all zeal is good, even passion in the name of God. Barth gives the example of Paul's pre-conversion zeal for God displayed in violence against the followers of Christ (*CL*, 114). One can think of themselves acting zealously for God in misdirected and evil ways. Accordingly, zeal must be examined. Barth holds, "the genuineness of human zeal for God's honor needs testing" (*CL*, 205). This is accomplished through ethical discussion (*ethischer*

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<sup>76</sup> This is not to suggest that simply as a member of a church, Christians will have perfect emotions. This is to miss the nature of the church which is neither to be seen as completely unholy nor perfectly holy (*CL*, 191f.). The Christian community is the body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit is living and active. But it is also made up of sinners and thus in need of continual reformation. It is as the church is active in its task as hearer of the Word of God and as witness to that Word that the community is formed in ways analogous to God's zeal.



*Überlegung*) where we “critically compare what Christians do in zeal for God's honor with the obedient action that is demanded of them when they invoke God as their Father” (CL, 205). Through this theological reflection, the Christian community's zeal can be shaped to better correspond to God's zeal.

### Summary of Part 1

This chapter has contended that Barth's accounts of reverence, joy, and zeal, are rightly described as accounts of emotions. These emotions are not involuntary bodily reactions, but ways of construing objects about which a person cares. We then went on to speak about the importance of emotion for ethics. Emotions are important for how we relate to the world and others. Using the relational criteria grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ, it is possible to evaluate emotions in an act of ethical instruction in anticipation of hearing God's command. This discussion of emotions has put us in a position to bring Barth into conversation with contemporary moral reflections on emotions in reference to a concrete moral issue. Part 2 of this chapter will consider Barth's account of emotion in the context of climate change.

We also explored Barth's explicit and implicit accounts of the formation of these emotions. Like the cognitive sciences, Barth considers social relations and experiences as important for the development of emotions. However, for Barth, emotions form not only in relations with other humans, but most importantly in the history of encounter with God.<sup>77</sup> We cannot manufacture the hearing of the Word, but rely on God's self-revelation through the Holy Spirit. Christians therefore must be a people of prayer. Yet, for Barth,

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<sup>77</sup> As Paul writes, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (*Gal.* 5:22-23). While not all these virtues are emotions, many are, or, as Roberts calls them, “emotion-virtues.” Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 9.

even engagement with God is most often mediated by the community.<sup>78</sup> We encounter God in the historical body of Christ, that is, the church. This is why growth occurs in the context of the community in which Christ is increasing. But once again we face the challenge of relativism, for, churches have vastly different normative emotions, practices, and moral behavior. We discussed in chapter one that growth in the Christian community is related to the increase of the practice of the *sancta*, and now we can add that church practices and communities can be evaluated according to the relational criteria established in Jesus Christ. The qualities of the relations allow us to be critical of communities when they fail to line up with this. As we are immersed in communities that are living in ways that witness to Jesus Christ, we can expect to progressively see and categorize (and thus feel) the world in ways that increasingly correspond to the likeness of Christ.

## ***Part 2: Climate Change and Emotion***

This chapter has had three primary goals: to show that Barth understood emotions as important for ethics and moral agency, that emotions are to be understood as a human capacity which rightly function when they correspond to our determination before God and with fellow humanity, and that emotions are shaped in relationships. We now turn to a very practical and challenging moral issue to consider what this looks like in practice: climate change. This is a subject that provokes strong emotions on many levels. The political nature of climate change is one major cause of the strong passions, but also the challenge and threat can trigger strong feelings. One relevant area where emotions plays a

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<sup>78</sup> McKenny, "Response to Paul Nimmo," 102–5.

major role is related to the recognition of the anthropogenic origins of climate change.<sup>79</sup>

While important, this dispute will not be a major focus here. We will take for granted the human causes of our current climate crisis.<sup>80</sup> This will allow us to focus on an even more vexing issues: what can be done to combat climate change and how emotions play into our response. This section will focus on how emotions are important for moral agency in

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<sup>79</sup> Emotion plays a significant role in people's beliefs about climate change. Here the social of nature of emotion is particularly prominent. The best predictor of one's view of climate change is the group they identify with. So, for example, conservative white males are the most likely to deny climate change. Naomi Klein, *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 95. White evangelicals provide an example of a group that often does not acknowledge climate change, though this may be as much do to their political allegiances as their religious (of course, there is a great deal of overlap). Adrian Bardon, "Faith and Politics Mix to Drive Evangelical Christians' Climate Change Denial," *The Conversation*, September 9, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/faith-and-politics-mix-to-drive-evangelical-christians-climate-change-denial-143145>. As Katharine Hayhoe, a leading climate scientist argues, often it is not the science that is the major stumbling block, but that one's ideology does not seem to allow for a response that coincides. "Their real objection, 99.9 percent of the time, is that they don't think there are any solutions to climate change that are consistent and compatible with their values and their ideology." Phoebe Neidl, "How to Talk to People Who Doubt Climate Change: A Conversation with Katharine Hayhoe," *Rolling Stone* (blog), March 3, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/katharine-hayhoe-evangelical-christian-climate-scientist-953086/>. Furthermore, media outlets and social media are increasingly an echo chamber where one only hears views that align with one's existing perspectives. Abel Gustafson et al., "Climate Change in the Minds of U.S. News Audiences" (New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2020), <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-minds-of-u-s-news-audiences/>; Ashley A. Anderson, "Effects of Social Media Use on Climate Change Opinion, Knowledge, and Behavior," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*, March 29, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.369>. In a study on climate change, people were quick to accept scientific data if it fit their prior beliefs (for both those who accepted and denied anthropogenic climate change), but reacted with greater skepticism toward data that challenged it. Sharot, *The Influential Mind*, 16–17. See also the discussion on the role of emotion in climate change denial in Kari Marie Norgaard, "Climate Denial: Emotion, Psychology, Culture, and Political Economy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, ed. John S. Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, and David Schlosberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Each year this is becoming less disputed as a growing number of the American population acknowledges climate change is a result of human actions. Three recent surveys affirm this claim. A 2019 Kaiser Family Foundation/Washington Post Climate Change Survey found that 79% of Americans say "human activity is causing climate change." A Yale-Georgetown survey reported "62% of Americans understand that global warming is mostly human-caused." Finally, a 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center observed that 81% of Americans agreed that "human activity contributes to climate change." Lunna Lopes et al., "The Kaiser Family Foundation/Washington Post Climate Change Survey," *The Kaiser Family Foundation, KFF*, September 16, 2019, <https://www.kff.org/report-section/the-kaiser-family-foundation-washington-post-climate-change-survey-main-findings/>; Anthony Leiserowitz et al., "Climate Change in the American Mind: April 2020" (New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2020), <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-april-2020/>; Alec Tyson and Brian Kennedy, "Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should Do More on Climate," *Pew Research Center*, June 23, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/>.

relation to climate change and how emotions are evaluated in reference to how they engender correspondence to our determination before God.

At the most basic level, climate change refers to the unprecedented rapid increase in average global temperatures and associated new weather patterns. Climate scientists have reached a sweeping consensus that this change has anthropogenic roots, arising from the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels. Greenhouse gases capture heat from the sun resulting in an increase in global temperatures. The unparalleled rapid rise in temperatures is illustrated in the famous “hockey stick graph,” which shows the steep increase in temperature on our planet. The consequences of this warming is far-reaching. While climate is a complex system and questions about particular weather events and predictions are debated in the scientific community, the broad results of climate change is agreed on: climate change is resulting in destruction of natural habitats, mass extinction, and extreme weather patterns that are having a catastrophic effect on life on earth as we know it. Since humans are interconnected with nature, adverse outcomes on human health and social conditions are arising. David Wallace-Wells catalogs the probable impacts from climate change: heat death, hunger, drowning, wildfire, extreme weather disasters, loss of freshwater, dying oceans due to acidification, air pollution, increase in plagues and disease, economic collapse, and climate conflicts and war.<sup>81</sup> The danger is heightened as increasing temperatures threaten a cascading effect and acceleration of warming. Rising temperatures result in melting arctic ice which releases captured carbon into the air and also reduces the amount of light that is reflected off the white ice. Trees will die from

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<sup>81</sup> David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019), 39–130.

higher temperatures and more frequent wildfires which will result in less carbon capture. As oceans warm, they can absorb less heat.<sup>82</sup> This cascading effect will compound the effects of climate change. The complexity and grave risk that climate change generates is the basis for the United Nations' judgment that, "Climate Change is the defining issue of our time."<sup>83</sup>

Such a multifaceted problem, unsurprisingly, involves the emotions in diverse ways. Emotions can arise from the threat to our well-being or from understanding one's complicity in bringing it about. They also are an important aspect of the responses given to climate change. The remainder of the chapter will look at a selection of the emotions relevant to the climate crisis. Special focus will be given to reverence, joy, and zeal, since, as mentioned earlier, these emotions were chosen from Barth's writings as emotions that hold particular relevance to climate change. Barth's account of these emotions in the context of covenantal God of love shows how these emotions can be evaluated by how they work in relating us to God and fellow humanity, especially the most vulnerable. While these three emotions are by no means the only important emotions to consider (and other such as guilt, anxiety, fear, and hope will also be discussed), they highlight emotions that are highly relevant to the climate crisis and model how to consider emotions in general.

However, we first need to go one step further, and add a criterion that goes beyond Barth's account. Barth looked at Christology as specifying a particular relation to God and fellow-humans, but he made our relation to non-human creation a secondary

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<sup>82</sup> Wallace-Wells, 22, 76; Timothy M. Lenton et al., "Climate Tipping Points — Too Risky to Bet Against," *Nature* 575, no. 7784 (November 2019): 592–95.

<sup>83</sup> "Climate Change," January 11, 2016, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/>.

matter (*CD* III/4, 350). Barth left open the question of what non-human creation's relation to God and what the incarnation meant for it. However, nonhuman creation has an inherent value rooted in God's love.<sup>84</sup> This is established throughout the sweep of the Bible<sup>85</sup> and especially in the revelation of Christ as witnessed in Scripture. Mark describes Jesus as having been "with the wild animals" (*Mk.* 1:13), which shows, according to Richard Bauckham, that "Jesus' companionable presence with the wild animals affirms their independent value for themselves and for God. He does not adopt them into the human world, but lets them be themselves in peace, leaving them their wilderness, affirming them as creatures who share the world with us in the community of God's creation."<sup>86</sup> Jesus taught that even a creature as seemingly worthless as a sparrow is included in God's care (*Mt.* 6:26 & 10:29, cf. *Lk.* 12). Furthermore, Jesus Christ's reconciling work was not simply for human life, but with "all things" (*Col.* 1:20). Based on this witness about nonhuman creation, we have a third criterion in which to evaluate emotions: they can be tested by how they orient and relate us to non-human creation. Since God loves the non-human world, emotions ought to function to bring us into a proper relation with it.<sup>87</sup>

We begin with the family of emotions comprising reverence, respect, and awe.

These are emotions that have been often connected with climate change issues, especially

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<sup>84</sup> Jonathan M. Cahill, "Grounded in Love: A Theistic Account of Animal Rights," *Journal of Animal Ethics* 6, no. 1 (March 22, 2016): 67–81.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., *Gen.* 9:10 *Ex.* 23:10-12; *Job* 38-40; *Ps.* 104, *Jnh.* 4:11.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 131–32.

<sup>87</sup> David Cough, who is generally sympathetic to Barth's theology, has argued that while we cannot know for certain God's relation with the non-human creation, there are strong reasons to think that other creatures are part of God's covenant. David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume I: Systematic Theology* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012). The emphasis in the incarnation is not that God became human, but that God became flesh, a creature (*Jn.* 1:14).

through the use of film and pictures. These media sources have provided an effective way to bring awareness to the effects of climate change. Documentaries such as Netflix's *Our Planet* use videography to highlight the beauty of the earth and the damage that is being produced by rising temperatures. They provoke a sense of awe and sadness of the state of the world and a desire to see action in response. While such media typically prove emotionally powerful, their effect is often fleeting. Both the uncertainty of how to act on the emotion and the busyness of life often result in a quick fading of the feelings. Our hectic lives, in particular, occasion a loss of the pressing awareness of climate change. We know that climate change is affecting someone in some poor island country, to reefs in Australia, or a polar bear at the arctic, but it does not seem salient in our day-to-day responsibilities. The problem is not with the documentaries which do an effective job at elevating the problem to our consciousness. The issue is that the connection between our life and these problems is often not before us. Awe and sadness are a part of a short-lived, emotional experience generated by our entertainment culture. They do not change how we live. As Barth notes, "a theoretical and aesthetic wonder is not enough" (*CD* III/4, 341). This is where the Christian community can play a vital role. A community that is growing in Christ will see creation as valuable because God loves it. The responsibility of the community is to act in response to the drama of the Gospel of Christ. This means that reverence for creation does not become some sort of "second god" that we worship (*CD* III/4, 342). Life is to be received as a gift from God which implies that creation is to be revered. Community makes our connection with creation salient, keeping reverence for creation (which can arise from beautiful and instructive documentaries) central to how we see the world.

A Rocha Nashville, the local chapter of the nature conservation organization A Rocha International, is an instructive example. The Nashville chapter is grounded in the belief that care creation is both an act of worship and means of loving the neighbor: “God has called us each to be good stewards of the earth, we believe that conservation of natural resources is a worshipful response to our creator and an act of love toward our neighbors.”<sup>88</sup> This love of God and neighbor exhibits in three ways: “practical, hands-on conservation work, education, and the arts.”<sup>89</sup> They have focused on coming together as a community to help one another create more sustainable yards (planting over 100 gardens and offering various workshops).<sup>90</sup> They have offered education through children’s camps, partnering with local churches to help integrate creation care into their faith communities, and the launching of the national “Love Your Place” community which educates, offers webinars and dialog, and ways to advocate for climate change and other initiatives.<sup>91</sup> And, since it is Nashville, they have worked with the musical and visual arts community to sponsor retreats to foster the integration of care for creation into the artists’ work.<sup>92</sup> A principal practice of A Rocha Nashville for the fostering of community and support for these initiatives are events aimed at encountering and enjoying creation. Nature walks and bird watching events in local parks become a venue for fostering wonder at creation which is framed as a gift of God for which the Christian is called to care. In the shared experience of wonder and seeking after God, the community (and thus

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<sup>88</sup> Nashville A Rocha, “Our Story,” A Rocha USA, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://nashville.arocha.us/our-story/>.

<sup>89</sup> Nashville A Rocha.

<sup>90</sup> Nashville A Rocha, “Sustainable Landscaping,” A Rocha USA, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://nashville.arocha.us/sustainable-landscaping/>.

<sup>91</sup> Nashville A Rocha, “Conservation@Church,” A Rocha USA, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://nashville.arocha.us/conservation-at-church/>.

<sup>92</sup> A Rocha USA, “A Rocha Arts,” A Rocha USA, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://arocha.us/arts>; A Rocha USA, “Love Your Place,” Love Your Place, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.loveyourplace.org/>.



the individuals) are shaped and grow in love for God and neighbor. This reverence supports the further work of conservation, education, and advocacy for climate change and a host of other environmental tasks.

Barth's description of zeal provides another example of a relevant emotion for climate change. Zeal is a way of orienting a people to God and others. God is often not honored and that which God loves is not revered. Zeal for God's honor positions people to desire something more than our present reality. This emotion is particularly relevant in light of how inequality is tangled with climate change. The effects of climate change will spare no one and is already being increasingly felt across the spectrum of society, for example, in the rising frequency of powerful hurricanes and wildfires. However, those who bare the least responsibility for climate change are and will disproportionately bear the brunt of the impact, while those that have contributed the most to climate change are the least likely to be affected. The richest 10% produce over half the emissions while the poorest 50% generate only 7% of global greenhouse emissions.<sup>93</sup> And yet the rich have more resources to adapt to the changing climate and the poor while marginalized peoples will bear the heaviest toll. This perverse relationship is described by Jenkins:

in general, poorer people and nations stand to bear greater costs, yet they have contributed the least to the problem and have the least ability to change the systems that cause it... Meanwhile, those people and nations most responsible for emissions and most capable of exerting political and economic power have the least incentive to do so. Indeed, they have been using their power to suppress the political demands of the more vulnerable.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Tim Gore, "Confronting Carbon Inequality: Putting Climate Justice at the Heart of the COVID-19 Recovery" (Oxfam International, September 21, 2020), <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/confronting-carbon-inequality>.

<sup>94</sup> Jenkins, "Atmospheric Powers, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence," 72.

Poor nations will face the greatest impacts due to flooding, food shortages, disasters, and forced migration. In our existing world of economic inequality, climate change is projected to exacerbate the disparity in and across nations.

Zeal for God's honor shifts our orientation to long more for that which God desires. In Scripture we see that God has a "preferential option for the poor," that is, in the commands, the prophets, and narratives concerning Jesus, God is shown as having a particular concern for the well-being of vulnerable persons.<sup>95</sup> We have also see in Scripture that God loves creation. A zeal for God will manifest in a passion for the well-being of vulnerable people and the flourishing of all creation. Development of such a passion for God's honor happens foremost in community. Being surrounded with others growing in zeal for God is crucial for becoming people that seek the flourishing of all creation, and particularly those most at risk of harm.

The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) is one such organization that recognizes zeal for God as connected to zeal for care of the environment. Love for God is connected to and the ground of struggling against climate change and other environmental issues. Zeal for God is transformed into a passion for neighbor and the environment. They avidly affirm that zeal for environmental matters must not turn into nature worship (a fervent concern, even if not a great danger, to many evangelicals).<sup>96</sup> The EEN states, "our creating God is prior to and other than creation, yet intimately

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<sup>95</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, Revised edition (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988), xxv–xxviii, 156; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Journey toward Justice : Personal Encounters in the Global South* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 77; John R. Donahue, *Seek Justice That You May Live: Reflections and Resources on the Bible and Social Justice* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

<sup>96</sup> "An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation," Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/what-we-do/an-evangelical-declaration-on-the-care-of-creation.html>.

involved with it, upholding each thing in its freedom, and all things in relationships of intricate complexity. God is transcendent, while lovingly sustaining each creature; and immanent, while wholly other than creation and not to be confused with it.” However, worship of God ought not undermine environmental actions. Rather, creation care is an aspect of loving God and loving neighbor. The EEN declares, “one cannot fully worship the Creator and at the same time destroy His creation, which was brought into being to glorify him. Worshiping the Creator and caring for creation is all part of loving God. They are mutually reinforcing activities... the task of creation-care is part of loving one's neighbor, loving what God loves, and therefore loving God.”<sup>97</sup> A zeal for God’s honor and glory properly manifests in care for creation and the vulnerable.<sup>98</sup> For this reason, many of their resources attempt to foster one’s love for God and to connect it to practical engagement.<sup>99</sup> This insight becomes the foundation for their multiple initiatives and campaigns responding to climate change and other environmental issues.<sup>100</sup> For the EEN, a zeal for God’s honor does not divert people from responding to environmental issues, but is the motivation for engagement. Greater zeal for God ought to be embodied in greater care for creation.

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<sup>97</sup> “Beliefs,” Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/who-we-are/beliefs.html>.

<sup>98</sup> The EEN argues that to be holistically pro-life, the impact of the environment on the most vulnerable must be considered. “Pro Life Clean Energy Campaign,” Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/what-we-do/initiatives-campaigns/pro-life-clean-energy-campaign.html>.

<sup>99</sup> “Resources,” Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/what-we-do/resources.html>.

<sup>100</sup> “Take Action,” Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/get-involved/take-action.html>; “What We Do,” Evangelical Environmental Network, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://creationcare.org/what-we-do/initiatives-campaigns/overview.html>.

Reverence and zeal reflect a certain orientation of our being to God and creation. Even in the absence of climate change, these emotions are essential to live according to our determination. A zeal for God's glory and a reverence for creation received as a gift have particular embodiments in a time of climate change, but are grounded in our determinations. Other emotions, however, arise specifically in reference to the climate crisis. Climate change results in existential danger to the planet and humankind. This understandably provokes a range of emotions, many with a negative valence. The recognition that climate change is largely brought about by collective human actions produces grief, guilt, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness in the face of such an engulfing issue. These negative emotions that arise can overwhelm moral agency and lead to passivity and apathy when action is needed.

Negative emotions have unsurprisingly been most felt by those who have either experienced the effects of climate change or are most at risk to the effects. The inequality of the effects of climate change are reflected in the inequality of the distribution of negative emotions.<sup>101</sup> The feelings of fear, sadness, and anger are most concentrated with those with least power to make a difference. However, with increasingly extreme weather effecting Americans of all classes and with greater awareness of the collective complicity in climate change, negative emotions are becoming more widespread, especially among young people. While some negative emotions are a proper response to our complicity,

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<sup>101</sup> Margaret V. du Bray et al., "Emotion, Coping, and Climate Change in Island Nations: Implications for Environmental Justice," *Environmental Justice* 10, no. 4 (June 6, 2017): 102–7. The authors write, "the purpose of this cross-cultural study is to understand how emotional responses to climate change are inequitably distributed across people living in island nations with varying climate change vulnerability... Our results demonstrate that respondents in island nations with greater biophysical vulnerability are more likely to be concerned about relocation as a result of climate change, and they are also more likely to indicate their sadness or anger. Countries with higher adaptive capacity and lower biophysical vulnerability are more likely to suggest that, though they are sad about the effects of climate change, they feel neutral about its overall effect."

they can manifest in ways that encumber moral agency and leave us with a sense of powerlessness.

Comprehending our complicity in climate change can lead most obviously to guilt. As members of a society that produce an inordinate amount of greenhouse gases which have made our lives more comfortable at the expense of others well-being, guilt is a natural emotion. Even though actions were not done with the intention to bring harm to others, we find ourselves complicit in this wrongdoing. A healthy sense of responsibility can lead to constructive action, but sometimes guilt can lead to inaction or even denial as a coping mechanism. As Moe-Lobeda argues, “guilt can breed a sense of subtle or overt powerlessness.”<sup>102</sup> The pain of guilt can be overwhelming and debilitating.

Not only are we complicit in bringing about climate change, we feel powerless to break free from such a system or to make a meaningful difference on a global scale. Our individual actions are so insignificant to make a difference in our nation, much less in the world. Jenkins calls this our collective “moral incompetence.”<sup>103</sup> We will pursue the systemic nature of climate change more in depth in the next chapter, but here it is suffice to say that even though we feel guilty, it often seems there is nothing we can do; we feel powerless.

Despite sensing that our actions are limited, we often feel great burden to demonstrate that we care about the environment and act accordingly. We are pressured to act in ethical ways, not only because of internal desires, but also because of external social pressures. There is a desire to signal our virtue and show that we take seriously the issue of climate change. Additionally, in the era of social media and call-out culture,

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<sup>102</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence,” 67.

there is fear of saying or doing the wrong thing and being publicly shamed. This all can produce anxiety, frustration, and a sense of always struggling to match up to what we think we should do.

The result of these various negative emotions (guilt, overwhelmed, fear of shame) coupled with the existential threat of climate change on the well-being of ourselves and the globe, there is an increasingly common phenomenon known as “climate anxiety” (sometimes identified as eco-anxiety or climate distress). A Yale-Georgetown study in 2020 found that 66% of American reported some level of worry arising from climate change and 40% reported a feeling of helplessness.<sup>104</sup> The Federal Government’s Climate and Health Assessment added mental health to its list of risk arising from climate change: “the interactive and cumulative nature of climate change effects on health, mental health, and well-being are critical factors in understanding the overall consequences of climate change on human health.”<sup>105</sup> The risk to mental health arising from those who experience the physical effects of climate change have long been reported. Communities and individuals that suffer natural disasters commonly experience an increase in mental health issues and anxiety.<sup>106</sup> However, climate anxiety is increasingly being experienced by those who have not yet felt the physical impact of climate change in a significant manner. The existential threat felt from the apocalyptic scenarios coupled with the

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<sup>104</sup> Leiserowitz et al., “Climate Change in the American Mind,” 4.

<sup>105</sup> USGCRP, “The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment” (U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, April 4, 2016), <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/>.

<sup>106</sup> UK Environment Agency, “Prepare for Flooding to Reduce Impacts on Mental Health,” GOV.UK, January 21, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prepare-for-flooding-to-reduce-impacts-on-mental-health>; Judy Wu, Gaelen Snell, and Hasina Samji, “Climate Anxiety in Young People: A Call to Action,” *The Lancet Planetary Health* 4, no. 10 (October 1, 2020): e435–36.

limited time to act put youth and young adults particularly at risk to climate anxiety.<sup>107</sup>

Climate anxiety has been correlated with an increase in lack of sleep, inability to focus, poor health, and increased rates of suicide.<sup>108</sup>

The problem of climate change produces various negative emotions, which to a degree may be appropriate, but can generate what Moe-Lobeda calls a sense of “moral paralysis.”<sup>109</sup> Here Barth’s account of joy as it relates to his account of sanctification and the command of God are germane. In a world where approval is so closely related to performance, Barth’s account of sanctification identifies our holiness not in what we do, but in what Jesus Christ accomplished in our place. The ethical life, then, becomes one of “lived gratitude.”<sup>110</sup> This is why Barth so closely identifies the command of God with freedom, joy, and the establishment of human agency. Unlike other commands, which can be burdensome and anxiety producing, the command of God is a “permission,” the summons to act out of thankfulness for what Christ has done for us.<sup>111</sup> Joy arises as an experience of fulfillment when life is received as a gracious gift, often mediated through our everyday experiences. As we live expectantly for such joy, we are comforted as we continue the work impelled by our zeal for God’s honor. This is where zeal augments joy. Zeal is the suffering from an unfulfilled desire, and Christian zeal, more specifically, is

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<sup>107</sup> American Psychiatric Association, “APA Public Opinion Poll – 2020,” American Psychiatric Association, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://www.psychiatry.org/newsroom/apa-public-opinion-poll-2020>.

<sup>108</sup> Susie E. L. Burke, Ann V. Sanson, and Judith Van Hoorn, “The Psychological Effects of Climate Change on Children,” *Current Psychiatry Reports* 20, no. 5 (April 11, 2018): 35; Richard Atherton, “Climate Anxiety: Survey for BBC Newsround Shows Children Losing Sleep over Climate Change and the Environment - CBBC Newsround,” March 3, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51451737>; Brian Barnett Anand Amit, “Climate Anxiety and Mental Illness,” *Scientific American*, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-anxiety-and-mental-illness/>.

<sup>109</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Alan Torrance, “Jesus in Christian Doctrine,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 209.

<sup>111</sup> This is not to say anxiety or depression will simply disappear when one attempts to receive life as a gift. Both have biological components that do not easily change. As embodied persons, many cases will require pharmacological approaches in responding to the needs of mental health.

for God's honor and the eradication of sin and evil in our world. The two are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Joy is thus not a form of denial or escapism. It is certainly not joy in the calamity produced by adverse and evil situations. Rather, it is that experience of grace that nurtures zeal in face of grave evil. Joy is the "defiant nevertheless," that in the face of great seemingly insurmountable obstacles sustains moral action.<sup>112</sup>

While joy arises in the freedom to not focus on our self-sanctification, this does not mean consequences are unimportant. When it comes to climate change, we still ought to act in ways that we judge most likely bring about the greatest impact (and what God commands), but it is done as a response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Human capacities are the means by which we live out our determination in gratitude. For climate change, we should identify the emotions that motivate us to act as God's covenant partners, in solidarity with God's love for humanity (especially the most vulnerable) and creation. In addition to reverence, zeal, and joy, we are right to consider which emotions motivate moral action. Much of the news around climate change is bleak. There are increasing natural disasters and a global dragging of our collective feet to address climate change. And yet, there are also examples of positive steps being taken as people come together to enact change. We thus face a question: is it more productive to focus on pessimistic or optimistic prospects before us? Is climate change better addressed by provoking the apocalyptic imagination with the fear and doom that threatens, or is it more fruitful to focus on the hopeful steps being taken and the potential that we can yet make a meaningful difference? To love our neighbor means finding the motivation to

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<sup>112</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 120.



collectively act in ways that reduce the impact of climate change. Christian ethics here profitably attunes to other disciplines to better understand this human capacity of emotion as a starting point for considering how to live out our relational calling.

The relative value of a negative emotion such as fear compared to a more positive one such as joy or hope is an ongoing debate among climate psychologists and activists. Many argue that optimistic approaches to climate change solutions which tend to produce wishful thinking are ineffective to bringing about necessary constructive action.

Catastrophe is at our doorstep, and this reality must not be sugar-coated; there simply is not enough time to delay action any further.<sup>113</sup> The IPCC and climate scientists are often accused of such an overly-rosy presentation, and of being excessively conservative in their estimates of the threats due to the fear of being labeled “alarmist.”<sup>114</sup> Accounts that emphasize our technical and imaginative capacities to adapt to a changing world often lead to inaction. Rather, we need to emphasize the precarious position we find ourselves in. If we do not act rapidly to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C, we risk a cascading effect. The coming decade is of utmost importance to act to reverse things.

David Attenborough typified this approach in a 2018 UN speech, “if we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is

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<sup>113</sup> There is an increasing number of people who think even this is too optimistic and are appealing to a “climate fatalism.” We have passed the point of hoping that things can change in a meaningful way and we need to stop pretending that any of the steps will make a meaningful difference. We need to begin to prepare for a world that is very different than the one we live in. For example, Jonathan Franzen, “What If We Stopped Pretending the Climate Apocalypse Can Be Stopped?,” *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/what-if-we-stopped-pretending>; Jem Bendell, “Beyond Climate War: Writings on Deep Adaptation to Societal Collapse,” December 31, 2020, <https://jembendell.com/2020/12/31/beyond-climate-war-writings-on-deep-adaptation-to-societal-collapse/>. More young people are coming to this perspective: Alexandra Villarreal, “Meet the Doomers: Why Some Young US Voters Have given up Hope on Climate,” *The Guardian*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/21/meet-the-doomers-some-young-us-voters-have-given-up-hope-on-climate>.

<sup>114</sup> Franzen, “What If We Stopped Pretending?”; Klein, *On Fire*, 25, 116.

on the horizon.”<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Greta Thunberg appealed to representatives at the World Economic Summit meeting at Davos, “I don’t want your hope... I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”<sup>116</sup> Being told not to worry in a time of crisis is not helpful. This perspective is bolstered by some studies that found people are more motivated to act by the perceived threat of climate change rather than by increasing hope.<sup>117</sup> Hope is often nothing other than wishful thinking. Apocalyptic scenarios must be emphasized in order to get people to finally start acting for meaningful change in the short time we still have.

Others counter that stressing doom and gloom is a misguided approach. People far too easily dismiss such claims about the danger of climate change which leads, in the worst case, to denialism.<sup>118</sup> In contrast, Tali Sharot’s research has found that hope is usually a much more powerful means of persuasion than fear.<sup>119</sup> Even for those who do not deny the threat of the climate crisis, emphasizing impending disaster can result in

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<sup>115</sup> Damian Carrington, “David Attenborough: Collapse of Civilisation Is on the Horizon,” *The Guardian*, December 3, 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/03/david-attenborough-collapse-civilisation-on-horizon-un-climate-summit>.

<sup>116</sup> As quoted in Klein, *On Fire*, 12. Klein’s emphasis in her book is on stressing the precarious threat we face if we do not act rapidly. But she is not against hope. She locates hope not in wishful thinking, but in political resistance and activism. Klein, 110ff.

<sup>117</sup> Brandi S. Morris et al., “Optimistic vs. Pessimistic Endings in Climate Change Appeals,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 7, no. 1 (September 3, 2020): 1–8; Helena Bilandzic, Anja Kalch, and Jens Soentgen, “Effects of Goal Framing and Emotions on Perceived Threat and Willingness to Sacrifice for Climate Change,” *Science Communication* 39, no. 4 (August 1, 2017): 466–91; Susie Wang et al., “Emotions Predict Policy Support: Why It Matters How People Feel about Climate Change,” *Global Environmental Change* 50 (May 1, 2018): 25–40. On hope working as a productive individual coping mechanism but not necessarily translating into motivation for collective action, see Martijn van Zomeren, Inga L. Pauls, and Smadar Cohen-Chen, “Is Hope Good for Motivating Collective Action in the Context of Climate Change? Differentiating Hope’s Emotion- and Problem-Focused Coping Functions,” *Global Environmental Change* 58 (September 1, 2019): 101915.

<sup>118</sup> Kristin Haltinner and Dilshani Sarathchandra, “Climate Change Skepticism as a Psychological Coping Strategy,” *Sociology Compass* 12, no. 6 (2018): e12586.

<sup>119</sup> The exception is if the goal is to induce inaction or if the person is already anxious. Sharot, *The Influential Mind*, 5, 66ff.

climate anxiety, despair, and ultimately, passivity. The immensity and complexity of the crisis coupled with our limited ability to enact change encourages a sense of powerlessness and fatalism. In contrast, people are more likely to act if they are optimistic that change is possible.<sup>120</sup> Constructive hope promotes engagement with climate change.<sup>121</sup> It is this belief that has led climate scientists to stress the reasons for optimism that change is possible rather than the doomsday scenarios.<sup>122</sup> If people are not to be dismissive, distanced, or completely overwhelmed, they must have hope that change is possible.

Of course, fear and hope need not be mutually exclusive, a fact hinted in the footnotes in the previous two paragraphs. Many in the social sciences find an emphasis on optimism and hope as central for motivation, but fear and pessimism (or realism) as also playing an important role. The emotion and behavior from a communication strategy depends largely on the context and the person. As a 2018 *Nature* commentary forcefully argued, it is overly simplistic to think of emotion as simply “a lever or switch to be directly calibrated and pulled for a desired effect.”<sup>123</sup> A communication message can be received by recipients in various ways. The article goes on, “emotional responses to messages about societal risks are influenced by the beliefs, worldviews, and existing

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<sup>120</sup> Nicholas Smith and Anthony Leiserowitz, “The Role of Emotion in Global Warming Policy Support and Opposition,” *Risk Analysis* 34, no. 5 (May 2014): 937–48.

<sup>121</sup> Constructive hope is contrasted with false hope, such as hope that we do not need to act because nature will correct the problem on its own, or that God will intervene. Jennifer R. Marlon et al., “How Hope and Doubt Affect Climate Change Mobilization,” *Frontiers in Communication* 4 (2019).

<sup>122</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 156. Though, Wallace-Wells found the 2018 IPCC report on the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C rise giving permission to tell people that it’s okay to panic. Wallace-Wells, 157; IPCC, “Global Warming of 1.5 °C: An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5 °C above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty.” (Incheon, Korea, 2018), <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

<sup>123</sup> Daniel A. Chapman, Brian Lickel, and Ezra M. Markowitz, “Reassessing Emotion in Climate Change Communication,” *Nature Climate Change* 7, no. 12 (December 2017): 850.

emotions each individual brings to the table... a message designed to induce hope and resolve in one individual may incite feelings of anger and resentment in another while leaving a third person emotionally untouched altogether.”<sup>124</sup> While difficult to do on a large scale, the authors conclude that “message tailoring” to the audience is a more productive method.<sup>125</sup> This fits well with the approach to emotion mentioned here. Emotion is neither an end in itself, nor a manipulative tool, but a way that we orient ourselves to God, each other, and the world. It is not surprising, then, that emotions that most promote agency will manifest differently in various contexts. Some people need a frightening presentation of climate change to draw attention to threats about which they have been complacent. Others benefit from knowing there is hope that meaningful change is possible and their participation is important and valuable. Sometimes, a mixture of the two is needed. Doom and gloom headlines are alarming and can grab our attention.<sup>126</sup> Thus, to get one’s message to be noticed, shock can be useful. But alone this is not usually enough to motivate sustained action. Rather, “expectations of a positive outcome is a key motivator for people to commit to a cause.”<sup>127</sup> Fear and hope can thus work together to motivate, especially in this sequential structure.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Chapman, Lickel, and Markowitz, 851.

<sup>125</sup> Chapman, Lickel, and Markowitz, 851.

<sup>126</sup> Dominic McAfee, Sean Connell, and Zoe Doubleday, “How (and Why) to Stay Optimistic When It Feels like the Environment Is Falling Apart,” *The Conversation*, March 13, 2019, <http://theconversation.com/how-and-why-to-stay-optimistic-when-it-feels-like-the-environment-is-falling-apart-113461>. This popular article was based on their peer-reviewed journal article: Dominic McAfee et al., “Everyone Loves a Success Story: Optimism Inspires Conservation Engagement,” *BioScience* 69, no. 4 (April 1, 2019): 274–81.

<sup>127</sup> McAfee, Connell, and Doubleday, “How (and Why) to Stay Optimistic When It Feels like the Environment Is Falling Apart.”

<sup>128</sup> Lauren Feldman and P. Sol Hart, “Is There Any Hope? How Climate Change News Imagery and Text Influence Audience Emotions and Support for Climate Mitigation Policies,” *Risk Analysis* 38, no. 3 (2018): 585–602.

Social science studies aid theology in considering the appropriate emotions that prepare a person to hear the command of God. Fear that shakes us out of our complacency and concrete examples of hope that promote engagement can be welcomed insights. Theology is able to take these insights and relate them to our determination to be God's covenant partners and solidarity with fellow humanity. Theology can also go beyond these studies and weigh in on the normative quality of emotions. For instance, a Christian account of fear considers other aspects than the behaviors that emerge. Fear can give insight into one's orientation to God and other objects. Augustine argued, "the only cause for fear lies in the fact that what is loved might be lost, once acquired, or might not be acquired, once hoped for."<sup>129</sup> In other words, we only fear losing what we love. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on Augustine's quote said, "and thus it is that love causes fear: since it is through his loving a certain good, that whatever deprives a man of that good is an evil to him, and that consequently he fears it as an evil."<sup>130</sup> If a love is ordinate, than a corresponding fear will be good. A properly ordered love for neighbor (especially the vulnerable), one's self, and creation, fittingly provoke fear when the love is in danger. Scott Bader-Saye summarizes that for Aquinas fear can be disordered in one of two ways: "we can fear *what* we should not – either because the threat is not in fact great or imminent or because what we fear losing is not in fact good – or we can fear *as* we should not; that is, we may fear the proper object but fear it excessively."<sup>131</sup> When

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<sup>129</sup> Saint Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 70)*, trans. David L. Mosher (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 62, Q33.

<sup>130</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Volume 2* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2013), I-II.43.1. Samuel Wells argues, fear is "an emotion that identifies what we love. The quickest way to discover what or whom someone loves is to find out what they are afraid of. We fear because we don't want to lose what we love... So a world without fear wouldn't be a good thing, because it wouldn't just be a world without danger – it would be a world without love." Wells, *Be Not Afraid*, xv.

<sup>131</sup> Scott Bader-Saye, "Thomas Aquinas and the Culture of Fear," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25, no. 2 (2005): 101.

one of those loves become greater than our love for God, it is disordered. The cause of fear is always love, and a rightly ordered love produces virtuous fear.<sup>132</sup> Zeal for God's honor that leads to love for neighbor and God's creation rightly results in a healthy fear when creation and human lives are threatened.

We can briefly also look to a theological account of hope. In the earlier social science literature, hope referred to human capabilities to bring about new possibilities offering a meaningful correction before it is too late (e.g. new technologies, expansion of renewable energy sources, new policies or treaties, etc.). Theology is again right to receive these examples as indeed providing hope that a world more closely reflecting God's will is possible. But Christianity offers a deeper hope that sustains a people even in the long days when no signs of progress are visible. Christian hope perdures rooted in a belief that a) God has promised to act and make the world right, and b) God is present in the world acting even now. As Lisa Sowle Cahill argues, "the inbreaking reign of God should and can yield a practical political hope that - despite contradictions and setbacks - work for ecological justice will bring human, historical results."<sup>133</sup> This is not a hope that believes we can sit idly as things get worse since God will someday intervene. Rather, it is a hope in God's action that leads to an energetic human response. While based on

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<sup>132</sup> Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) held a similar account of fear. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2: Religious Affections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 102. Like for Thomas, Edwards understands fear to arise from the fountain of all affections, namely love (p.108). Virtuous fear arises from a rightly ordered love to God and neighbor (p.108). Fear is not wholly negative, for Jesus also experienced the natural affection of fear (p. 112). In fact, fear is central to the Christian life, "holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness." (p. 361) All fears are not holy fears, particularly not the servile fear of punishment (p. 179). On the contrary, perfect love casts out servile fear (p.180, 360, cf. 1 Jn. 4:18). Rather, holy fear is a childlike, filial fear. (p. 338, 364, 381, cf. *Charity and Its Fruits* in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 8: Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 331.)

<sup>133</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Laudato Si' and Beyond: A New Era for Catholic Social Teaching," in *Connecting Ecologies: Rehabilitating Our Common Home*, ed. James Hanvey and Gavin Flood (Routledge, Forthcoming).

God's promises rather than human abilities, Christian hope can support and motivate action that corresponds to our determination. Even in dark times, hope engenders joy and gratitude that can sustain a Christian in working for justice.

In the next chapter we will return to hope in the struggle for justice as we consider the apocalyptic imagery of Scripture and Barth's ethics. We will also attend more closely to how moral formation in community looks in relation to emotions and climate change. This section has attempted to demonstrate the variety of ways that emotion is important for our response to climate change. The threat of crisis provokes strong emotions which are not always helpful for the moral response needed. Barth's account of emotion helps us to consider emotions and the way they orient us to God and others. We ought to strive for those emotions which prepare us to answer God's invitation to love God and neighbor.

### ***Conclusion***

The aim of this chapter has been to explore a Christocentric approach to emotions. Christ reveals God as the author of a covenant of radical love that is not conditional on any prior human initiative. He also discloses true humanity, namely, that we are created for covenant partnership with God, solidarity with fellow human creatures, and care for non-human creation. Thus, the emotions appropriate to a Christian are those that enable a person to fulfill those determinations and are thus to be evaluated by the quality of the relationships they engender. Emotions are thus indispensable for the moral life and our determination as God's covenant partner in solidarity with other creatures. Barth's account of reverence, joy, and zeal describes emotions that orient us properly to others. They are particularly relevant in light of the climate crisis. Emotions that arise from

participation in Christ position a person in a way that prepares her to value life as a gift, and sustains and motivates action in light of injustices. Emotions are thus crucial for a social ethic. Emotion is the glue which binds people to one another. It fosters solidarity and it moves persons to a concern for community and the world. Furthermore, right emotion leads to revolt and rebellion against the regime of this world. The final chapter will continue to explore these themes, focusing more intently on the relation of emotion and social ethics. Reverence, joy, zeal, and other emotions are not only important on the interpersonal level, but indispensable for the struggle against suprapersonal forces at work in the world.



## CH. 5 – THE APOCALYPTIC BARTH, EMOTION, AND THE LORDLESS POWERS

### *Introduction*

The previous chapter primarily focused on emotions and moral growth of the individual in the community. This included a social dimension in that emotion is important for how we relate with others. This chapter will turn to moral growth from a different perspective: growth despite living amidst evil powers in our world. These forces shape human emotion but also depend on human emotion to sustain those powers. Such an account is important in an age that wrestles with issues such as climate change and other systemic challenges. We seem powerless to bring about meaningful change as systems and structures are so engrained in our society and in ourselves that the possibility for meaningful change seems to escape our capacities. Our time seems, in common parlance, apocalyptic.

For our apocalyptic time, we are in need of an apocalyptic theology.<sup>1</sup> Apocalyptic theologies arose in contexts of crisis and powerlessness. In a time when human efforts are recognized as insufficient to bring about a just world, such a theology is crucial. Furthermore, we need a theology that goes beyond individual soteriology and ethics and accounts for the social and structural nature of sin. Apocalyptic theologies disclose that the human struggle is not simply with sin in one's individual heart, but against powers that transcend human individuals.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of Jewish apocalypses, focusing on four important features: they develop amidst a crisis of powerlessness, include a revelation

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<sup>1</sup> As Carl Braaten writes, “we are living in apocalyptic times without an apocalyptic faith and theology,” cited in Philip Ziegler, *Militant Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 17.

that discloses a struggle with unseen powers, hold a promise that God will act decisively to defeat those forces, and often give motivation to struggle and rebel against the evil in light of that future event. The chapter then proceeds to the early Christians adaptation of this tradition in light of their experience of Jesus Christ. It will be argued that apocalyptic features go beyond the book of Revelation and are found throughout the New Testament. Jesus Christ is God's self-disclosure in whom the powers of Sin and Death have already been defeated on the cross and who will come again to bring a new heavens and new earth. While this apocalyptic hope continues to look forward to this future act, the presence of the risen Christ opens up possibilities of experiencing a foretaste of that future today.

The chapter then moves on to Barth's contribution to apocalyptic theology. While Barth's work predates much of the field, his *Dogmatics* can be read as a precursor to the area of study. In the last section of *The Christian Life*, Barth expounds the third petition of the Lord's Prayer: "thy kingdom come." He interprets this not primarily as an individualistic prayer that God's kingdom will reign in one's heart and against personal sin (though it surely includes this), but rather as a prayer that God's kingdom which is set against the powers and kingdom of this world would reign in all of human existence. The task of the church is to, first, unmask these powers and then to revolt against them. The case will be made that Barth recognizes emotion as a significant means by which these powers gain and hold their authority. Barth's attention to the lordless powers brings an important theological dimension to contemporary discussions of social structures. These powers exist in human society as forces that oppose God and human flourishing. Barth's attention to the emotional element in which they take hold is particularly significant. The

church must struggle against them, not attempting to themselves bring the kingdom of God about, but in ways shaped by the kingdom. This struggle requires moral formation, and the focus will be on the imagination of the Christian community which plays a key role in the shaping of emotions.

The conclusion of this chapter will again turn to climate change as a means of ethical instruction to consider the capacities to be shaped in anticipation of God's command. Apocalyptic motifs are often used in the context of talking about climate change. However, Christian ethics can be ill equipped to respond to such problems, especially when it is focused on the individual as the root and answer to evil. We will turn to unmasking some of the powers active in our world that make a response to the challenge of climate change difficult, namely, consumerism and individualism, and the ways in which these powers shape the affections. The section concludes by looking at the community (and its relation to individuals) as a means of faithfully living out the gospel in the context of the struggle against climate change.

### ***Part 1: Apocalyptic Theology, the Lordless Powers and Emotion***

#### Apocalyptic Theology

We begin with an overview of apocalyptic theology beginning with the Jewish Second Temple Apocalypse genre where we identify key features of these writings. We will then move to the Christian reception and transformation of the tradition in light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

#### Apocalypse as Second Temple Genre

To the modern reader, the apocalyptic books in Scripture (Daniel and Revelation) figure as the strangest of all the biblical books. Descriptions of beasts coming out of the

sea, demonic creatures, stars falling from the sky, and enigmatic numbers appear bizarre and baffling. But to audiences of the first century, these writings came in a familiar style and language. Apocalypse was a genre that thrived in the Jewish and early Christian period from 300 BCE through 200 CE.<sup>2</sup> In addition to Daniel, Jewish apocalypses, such as 1 Enoch and 2 Esdras, flourished during the Second Temple period. The early Christians also made frequent use of this genre. In addition to Revelation, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Apocalypse of Peter are prominent examples.

The term “apocalypse” comes from the first word of the book of Revelation (*apokalypsis* in Greek) meaning revelation or unveiling. Apocalypse as a topic of theological study began in 1832 with the work of Gottfried Christian Friedrich Lücke in his introduction to the book of Revelation.<sup>3</sup> However, it was not until the 1970s that scholars made a systematic attempt to define the characteristic features of the apocalyptic genre. Led by John Collins, this process culminated in the oft-quoted definition published by the “Apocalypse Group” of the Society of Biblical Literature: apocalypse is “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”<sup>4</sup> Collins later elaborated, “the mysteries they disclose involve a view of human affairs in which major importance is attached to the

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), xvii.

<sup>3</sup> John J. Collins, “What Is Apocalyptic Literature?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>4</sup> John J. Collins, ed., “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

influence of the supernatural world and the expectation of eschatological judgment.”<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the prophetic tradition of Scripture which “tended to picture a this-worldly fulfillment of God’s purpose,” apocalyptic eschatology “saw this world as already too overwhelmed with evil for redemption to occur from within it. The present world must pass away to make way for eschatological fulfillment in the setting of new heavens and a new earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Such apocalyptic writings did not arise out of mere speculation about the future, but most often developed out of a crisis.<sup>7</sup> For example, Daniel was written during the Jewish persecution under Antiochus IV while Revelation developed amidst the threat of localized persecution under the Roman empire. Apocalypses were responses to a “dissatisfaction with the present.”<sup>8</sup> They gave hope when all seemed hopeless and evil appeared unsurmountable. In so doing, many (though, not all) apocalypses aimed to motivate its recipients to resistance.<sup>9</sup> Daniel offers a “hope that empowers responding Jews to great acts of courageous obedience in the face of alien powers that grow even

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<sup>5</sup> John J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology, and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Mysteries and Revelations*, ed. John J. Collins and J.H. Charlesworth (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 16. Cited by Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 206–7.

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, ed. Gerhard Krodel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Boring, *Revelation*, 42; John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2019), 32; Donahue, *Seek Justice That You May Live*, 132–35.

<sup>8</sup> Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 10. This is at least the usual context of an apocalypse. Some of the recipients may not have been going through such a crisis. E.g. The Laodiceans in Revelation 3 are said to be rich, prosperous and in need of nothing (3:17). John attempted to jolt this wealthy group into seeing that a crisis does exist. Greg Carey, “Introduction: Apocalyptic Discourse, Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Greg Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 1999), 7. Adela Collins notes, however, they were likely relatively deprived and felt frustrated by the larger culture. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 104–7.

<sup>9</sup> Portier-Young points out this is not a necessary feature of all apocalypses. Anthea Portier-Young, “Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 154.

more alien and ominous as we move from narrative [ch. 1-6] to vision [ch. 7-12].”<sup>10</sup>

Looking particularly at Daniel and Enoch, Portier-Young argues that “in an age of foreign domination, war, and terror, early Jewish apocalypses prompted their readers to look through and beyond visible, familiar phenomena to apprehend God’s providential ordering of space, time, and created life... The apocalypses asserted a threatened identity and covenant and empowered their readers for resistance.”<sup>11</sup>

From these definitions and observations, we can identify four important features of apocalypses. First, they are not speculative ruminations about future events, but arise out of crisis or immense dissatisfaction with the present state of things. A lack of hope in meaningful change through human agency alone stimulates the composition. Second, apocalypses offer a revelation in narrative form (which, as we will see, often makes appeals to the imagination and emotions). The revelation discloses forces at work and in conflict in our world beyond what is visible and implies the inability of humans to address it. Third, apocalypses offer hope in a future event that divine agency will address the crisis through an act of judgment. Finally, while not universal, the purpose of many apocalypses are to encourage the recipients to resistance against the forces of evil.

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Tod Linafelt, *An Introduction to the Old Testament, Second Edition: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 2nd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 389.

<sup>11</sup> Anatheia E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 382. She elsewhere writes, “literature that aims to limit, oppose, or reject hegemonic institutions and cosmologies and systems, strategies, and acts of domination can be called resistance literature.” Portier-Young, “Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature,” 147.

## Christian Reception of Apocalypse

Christianity began in this second temple period as apocalypse was flourishing as a genre. While only Revelation is properly classified as an apocalypse in the New Testament, apocalyptic modes of thought are found throughout.<sup>12</sup> Apocalypse shaped how the biblical authors viewed the world.<sup>13</sup> Eugene Boring argues, “apocalyptic thought is not a marginal note in theology of the Bible... *All* the authors of the New Testament were influenced by it in one way or another.”<sup>14</sup> In particular, Jesus and Paul often communicated with apocalyptic language and concepts.<sup>15</sup> They frequently referenced angels, demons, and powers and proclaimed God’s in-breaking movement to liberate the world from evil forces that will be fulfilled in the last day.

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<sup>12</sup> On distinguish between apocalypse as a literary genre and apocalyptic as a descriptor of a way of thinking, see Boring, *Revelation*, 35; Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> The apocalyptic tradition has particularly endured as central to Christianity. Murphy argues, “Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect within Judaism. When the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, Judaism redefined itself with the Torah at its core, and apocalyptic beliefs became less important for Jews. Christianity’s identity was tied up with apocalypticism, so as it emerged as a religion separate from Judaism, it preserved its apocalyptic foundations and has done so to the present day.” Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 43–44. Käsemann famously described apocalyptic as the “mother of Christian theology.” Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W.J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1969), 102.

<sup>15</sup> The perspective here is particularly influenced by certain Pauline scholars of apocalyptic theology. This school of thought is summarized in a blog post by Douglas Campbell: “‘Apocalyptic’ is the name that has been given to a group of Pauline scholars heavily influenced by the work of the great US scholar of Paul—and of John’s Gospel—J. L. (Lou) Martyn. The group follow him, along with his illustrious predecessors, in emphasizing the importance of the arriving apocalypse or end times for Paul’s thinking about the significance of Jesus—what scholars call a little more technically “eschatology.” This group of scholars, me included, is convinced that Paul believed a couple of critical things about the end times. First, the end times, with its fiery destruction of everything around us now, and its glorious resurrection and reconstitution of God’s people in a new heaven and a new earth, is very very close. Right at the door. (So don’t get drunk and fall asleep; stay alert!) Second, the end times are pushing into our lives right now. The future is already present, and even past. Jesus’s resurrection has already taken place. God’s own Spirit, poured out in abundance, is with us now, transforming us. Miracles are happening now. Pagans are turning to the God of Israel now. The Scriptures are being fulfilled in our sight and hearing. All very dramatic stuff. In short, apocalyptic interpreters of Paul like me emphasize the way we all participate now in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in God’s Spirit, recalling that when someone rises from the dead, the end times as Jews understand them have begun.” Douglas A. Campbell, “Apocalyptic and Salvation-History in Paul - Part One,” *Apocalyptic and Salvation-History in Paul - Part One* (blog), November 12, 2019, <https://www.douglascampbell.me/blog/apocalyptic-salvation-history-1>.

Because Christians saw God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ as the definitive act of God in the world, the inherited apocalyptic tradition was developed in significant ways. The hope in a future act by God on the last day which would bring an end to evil continued to be central to the faith. However, the resurrection itself was seen as an apocalyptic act. Christians look forward to future divine action, but believe that God has already acted in Jesus Christ to accomplish the defeat of sin and death. The apocalyptic motif offers arguably the central aspect of the atonement, what has come to be known, following Gustaf Aulén, as the *Christus Victor* model.<sup>16</sup> Christ's work on the cross represents an invasion of God against enemy forces. Essential to a Christian apocalyptic is not just the future entrance of a superhuman force into human history, but that the definitive revelation and invasion of the devil's realm has happened in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Christian concept of apocalypse captures an already-not yet eschatological tension.<sup>17</sup> This is the idea found throughout the New Testament that Christ's death and resurrection has already accomplished the defeat of Sin and evil and inaugurated the kingdom, and yet Christ's full reign over the world will not be realized until he comes again. Such a linking of an apocalyptic hope and the kingdom is found in Acts 1. The risen Christ is asked by his disciples if he was now going to restore the kingdom. Jesus points, in typical apocalyptic fashion, to the Father's decision on timing. These are his

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<sup>16</sup> As N.T. Wright argues, "*Christus Victor*, the victory of Jesus Christ over all the powers of evil and darkness [is] the central theme in atonement theology, around which all the other varied meanings of the cross find their particular niche." N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2006), 114, cf. 95. However, it should be noted that Wright has been very critical of apocalyptic theology which has often been positioned in opposition to the New Perspective on Paul. E.g., N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996).



final words before he is taken up into the sky, and the disciples are left staring up at the clouds. Suddenly angels appear and ask the disciples what they are doing looking in the clouds. Jesus is going to come back (apocalyptic) so it is time to get to work (mission)! This apocalyptic expectation of Christ's return grounds the missional imperative of Acts.<sup>18</sup> The coming of Christ inaugurated the already-not tension that Christians live in today. This tension allows Christians to navigate various contexts. At times, contexts will allow for significant transformation in society and Christians have a responsibility to bring that about as they can. But, other times, transformation will appear hopeless. This was most often the case in the New Testament and one we often share today in the face of current systemic issues.

Despite modifying the tradition, we can see four of the features of the genre of apocalypse evident in the New Testament writings. First, they were written amidst crisis. Through much of the New Testament, the authors and recipients faced the very real possibility of persecution (whether physical or social). The early Christians were a marginalized group made up primarily of people of lower socio-economic status.<sup>19</sup> They were seen as an odd sect that was a potential threat to the status quo of the society. To these early followers of Christ, it was apparent their world had been invaded by sin and was actively participating in rebellion against God. Looking at their circumstances, the New Testament community had little reason to hope.

Second, while most of the biblical writings do not take a narrative framework of an angel revealing an unseen conflict, it is yet appropriate to describe Scripture as

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<sup>18</sup> Richard B Hays, "'Why Do You Stand Looking Up Toward Heaven?' New Testament Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2000): 129.

<sup>19</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 11.

dramatic.<sup>20</sup> In Christian apocalyptic thought, the revelation is not simply a message but is a person, Jesus Christ. Christ *is* the revelation of God. God revealed in Christ is one of covenantal love who is active in our world, pursuing humanity despite its rebellion with the goal of the destruction of sin and communion with the beloved. Humans are called into this story as agents who play a role in this story, not following a rote script, but improvising according to the plot that God has initiated.<sup>21</sup>

These apocalyptic texts reveal forces at work that surpass flesh and blood. God and humans are not the only actors on the scene. The drama includes a cosmic struggle between good and evil.<sup>22</sup> It opens up the behind-the-scenes reality to reveal what is really going on in the world. There are three actors at work in history, “the drama of salvation rendered by the apostolic witnesses is in fact a ‘three-agent drama’ of divine redemption wherein human beings are delivered by God from captivity to the anti-God powers of sin, death, and the devil.”<sup>23</sup> Modern Christianity has often attempted to discount the picture of these otherworldly forces opposed to God. On the one hand, liberals do not like to talk about non-material powers at all. On the other hand, conservatives are comfortable talking about spiritual forces, but do so on an individualistic level where these agents are considered personal beings tempting individual humans. But in the biblical view, spiritual

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<sup>20</sup> The pioneer at exploring theology in dramatic terms is Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Volumes 1-5. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Celia Deane-Drummond, *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> On the drama of Scripture and improvisation, see N. T. Wright, *The Last Word* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 126; Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2004); Wesley Vander Lugt, *Living Theodrama: Reimagining Theological Ethics* (Burlington: Routledge, 2014); Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 337.

<sup>22</sup> Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 338.

<sup>23</sup> Philip Gordon Ziegler, “The Devil’s Work—Divine Providence and Its Antithesis,” in *Divine Action and Providence: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Fred Sanders and Oliver D. Crisp (Downers Grove, IL: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 175. Cf. J. Louis Martyn, “Epilogue: An Essay in Pauline Meta-Ethics,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2008), 177f; Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 356.

forces are involved in politics, institutions, and social structures. Apocalyptic accounts of evil forces reveal that injustice in the world is not simply a result of individual sins and actions, but transcends these. As René Padilla maintains, “translated into the language of modern sociology, the apostle’s [Paul’s] vocabulary describes institutions and ideologies that transcend the individual and condition his thought and lifestyle.”<sup>24</sup> The biblical depiction of hostile spiritual forces point to the reality that “the powers of sin people confront every day are ascribed to forces larger than the sum of individual choices.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, a response to sin must go beyond individual responses.

Third, New Testament apocalyptic writings portray humans as ultimately incapable of addressing the crisis of sin and evil. The only hope for humanity is an event where God intervenes. The uniqueness of Christian apocalypse is that this hope is not only future but is present. God has already acted definitively in Christ. God has invaded our world in Christ and his death and resurrection was an act of judgment that defeated sin and death.<sup>26</sup> Gaventa argues,

Paul’s apocalyptic theology has to do with the conviction that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has invaded the world as it is, thereby revealing the world’s utter distortion and foolishness, reclaiming the world, and inaugurating a battle that will doubtless culminate in the triumph of God over all God’s enemies (including the captors Sin and Death). This means that the Gospel is first, last, and always about God’s powerful and gracious initiative.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> C. René Padilla, *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 52.

<sup>25</sup> J.R. Daniel Kirk, “Principalities and Powers,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 402. Cf. Stephen Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 81f.

<sup>26</sup> “The most important feature of the *Christus Victor* theme in its apocalyptic setting is that it dramatizes and guarantees the agency of God... We have argued, further, that the metaphor of an invasion of occupied territory is indispensable for several reasons, not least because it shows how we, the tyrannized inhabitants of a territory held by enemies (variously identified as Sin, Death, and the Devil), can only be liberated by a movement ‘from another quarter.’... the incarnation was widely understood during most of the Christian era to be God’s invasion of Satan’s territory.” Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 386.

<sup>27</sup> Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 81.

In Christ, sin has been judged, and we have hope that what has been inaugurated with Christ will come to fulfillment when Christ returns.

Finally, the new age that has been inaugurated with Christ makes possible acts of resistance and rebellion against the evil forces. While not all apocalypses are resistance literature, those that ended up in the Hebrew and Christian canon are rightly connected with resistance.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Jesus and the early Christians used apocalyptic themes such as the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God in ways that likewise have significance for the believer in the present.<sup>29</sup> Christ's coming inaugurated an age that is the dawning of the defeat of evil and Christians are thus to struggle against its enduring effect.<sup>30</sup>

We should note that this language of conflict pervades apocalyptic language and thus raises the question of the violent nature of this perspective. Apocalypse literature is often filled with violence and accounts of great battles. Because of such language and imagery, apocalyptic theology has been accused of generating violent and militaristic stances.<sup>31</sup> Violence appears inherent to the literature and to any theology that derives from it. Confirmation seems to come from apocalyptic religious and political groups inclined toward violence.<sup>32</sup> The crisis coupled with the battle against evil justifies acts of

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<sup>28</sup> Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire*; Fiorenza, *Revelation*.

<sup>29</sup> On the apocalyptic roots of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God, see Dr John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Revised edition, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 107, 581–83; M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 52; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypticism and Christian Origins," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 338.

<sup>30</sup> Martyn argues that, for Paul, it is in particular the church as a corporate agent that is competent to struggle for liberation. Unlike Hellenistic culture, the individual is not seen as a competent agent. Rather, it is the Spirit-led community which is addressed by Paul as the agent called by God for service in the world. Martyn, "Epilogue: An Essay in Pauline Meta-Ethics," 181–82.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Matthew Avery Sutton ties evangelical views of apocalypse to the January 6 attack on the US Capitol building. Matthew Avery Sutton, "The Capitol Riot Revealed the Darkest Nightmares of White Evangelical America," *The New Republic*, January 14, 2021, <https://newrepublic.com/article/160922/capitol-riot-revealed-darkest-nightmares-white-evangelical-america>.

aggression to promote better ends. However, while apocalyptic theology has been used as the basis of violence, many scholars argue this is due to distorted interpretations of biblical theology.<sup>33</sup> Apocalypses describe battles waged by God against the unseen forces of evil, not the listener against other persons or nations.<sup>34</sup> While our world's readiness for military engagement makes apocalyptic texts dangerous, it would be regrettable to neglect this biblical imagery. Rightly interpreted, "it stands as an invitation, not to identify our battles with God's own or to cloak our aggression in Paul's terminology, but as an invitation to see that the conflict imagery Paul employs has to do with God's actions on behalf of creation, not human actions distorted to replace God's own."<sup>35</sup> Knowing that God is faithful and will bring about a better future can provide a healthy sense of "catharsis" amidst a situation of fear and anxiety rather than channeling those emotions toward violence.<sup>36</sup>

But catharsis and an emphasis on divine agency raises an opposite critique. Apocalyptic theology is commonly accused of producing pessimism and passivity. Apocalypses arise in contexts of crisis and dissatisfaction with current realities. They see no hope in human solutions to the problem and instead look forward to God's judgment which will invade the situation and set things right. Inaction seem to be the inevitable

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<sup>33</sup> Gaventa is one such theologian: "some of the anxiety that attends the term 'apocalyptic theology' grows out of an understandable concern about some destructive apocalypticism in the contemporary scene, whether those are religious or political or environmental apocalypticisms. Christian tradition offers some horrendous examples of what can happen when apocalyptic visions are coupled with unstable leadership. Yet the latter ought not prevent our taking biblical apocalypticism seriously, since otherwise those texts are virtually abandoned to their overenthusiastic misinterpreters. I hope that these chapters will show that apocalyptic theology is not inherently destructive. On the contrary, Pauline apocalyptic theology concerns the unimaginable size of God's actions on behalf of the entire cosmos, including humanity itself." Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 84.

<sup>34</sup> Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 348.

<sup>35</sup> Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 160–61. While catharsis can be a tool of oppressors to keep the subjugated passive, catharsis can also have a liberating role in situations of utter disempowerment and in moderating incapacitating emotions for the purpose of active engagement.

outcome as the listener waits on God to act.<sup>37</sup> However, apocalyptic theologies can create and sustain agency rather than disengagement. Motivation to act and resist arises not from a confidence in human sufficiency but in God's promise and power.<sup>38</sup> As Allen Verhey argues, apocalyptic teaching, "opens the way to human agency, to respond even now in crisis... It summons us from imagination limited to present possibilities to an imagination formed by God's promises... God's promise provides the ground for our agency... The apostolic tradition does not destroy agency, it renews it in catastrophic times."<sup>39</sup> Quite the opposite of paralyzing the hearer, apocalyptic thought invigorates moral agency. One's action, while not adequate alone to bring about decisive change, are made meaningful in light of God's action in Jesus Christ, through the Spirit who is active in the world today.<sup>40</sup> Apocalyptic hope can inspire and sustain efforts to struggle amidst bleak prospects.

### Barth the Apocalyptic Theologian

We now turn to Barth and his contribution to apocalyptic theology. While Barth's writings predate much of the work done in the field of apocalyptic studies, his theology had a major influence on scholars of Christian apocalyptic theology, such as Käsemann

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<sup>37</sup> There are historical examples, such as the Essenes who "went into the wilderness to prepare for definitive divine action, not to gauge how to begin transforming the world to better reflect God's design." Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 93–94.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 30:355; Portier-Young, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature."

<sup>39</sup> Allen Verhey, "Should Jesus Get Tenure?: Jesus as a Moral Teacher and the Vocation of Teaching Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2014): 8.

<sup>40</sup> While creation continues to groan looking forward to its final redemption (*Rom.* 8:22), we can enjoy the fruits already of Christ's work through participation in Christ. Because the decisive act of God's intervention has been completed in Christ, Christian accounts of apocalyptic tend to emphasize not only the "not yet," but also the "already." Gaventa explains, "God's reclaiming of the world means liberation for humankind. That liberation is not complete, since those who are 'in Christ' still die and still experience pain and are capable of sin. Yet those who are 'in Christ' have received the Spirit, whose fruits are also visible (as in Gal 5). Those who are being 'rescued from the present evil age' are grafted into communities that together with one voice glorify God, communities characterized not by sameness but by unity." Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 81–82.

and Martyn.<sup>41</sup> Mangina argues that “the apocalyptic character of Barth's imagination has been widely attested,” in implicit and explicit ways.<sup>42</sup> His work is important in apocalyptic times because his emphasis on God’s sovereignty and initiative can sustain believers in times void of hope in human progress. Amidst *Krisis*, God is calling us into the drama of conflict with a reality of unseen forces. While God is our ultimate hope, the fact that God has acted in Christ requires that we act in correspondence to the good future that God will bring about. Furthermore, Barth’s account of unseen powers at work in our world opposed to God provides an important theological element to considering social structures at work in the world. His attention to the way emotions are engaged by these powers is particularly enlightening in regard to this project.

This section will be structured around the four features of apocalyptic theology identified earlier in the chapter. We will show, first, that Barth’s theology developed amidst crisis and thus has continuing relevance for times such as ours. Second, Barth’s account of the “lordless powers” attends to the unseen forces at work in our world. Attention will be given to the relation between Barth’s account and contemporary discussions of social structures. Third, Barth emphasized the necessity of agency from outside our world to conquer these powers. Finally, we will address the Christian’s responsibility to act even as we rely on God’s work and despite the uncertainty of the effectiveness of our actions. God’s action motivates and gives meaning to Christian efforts even in bleak circumstances. The Christian must work to unmask the powers of our age (in light of Christ’s revelation) and to rebel against them. Attention will be given

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<sup>41</sup> Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 20–25.

<sup>42</sup> See Joseph L. Mangina, “Apocalypticizing Dogmatics: Karl Barth’s Reading of the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1, no. 2 (2007): 193–94.

to the role of emotion in how the powers maintain control and the role of emotions in our resisting those powers. The first and third features will be touched on only briefly, with most of the space given to the second and fourth features of the unmasking and rebelling against the lordless powers.

### *Barth and Crisis*

While Barth's account of the Powers did not arise in the time of Barth's deepest crisis, his theology in general arose amidst global struggle and dissatisfaction with an inherited theology that stressed the possibility of God's kingdom being realized in the present. His theology went through a radical change in the wake of the first world war as his belief in the human ability to bring about an approximation of the kingdom of God was shaken by the death, destruction, and his theological mentors' support of the war efforts. In the early twentieth century, the theology of Barth and others that were reacting against the liberal Protestant tradition were initially classified as a "theology of crisis." As he wrote his most extended treatise on an apocalyptic theme, he had lived through two world wars and was in the midst of the cold war. Confidence in the inexorable progress of humanity had been shattered for Barth. His theology emerged in a time of *Krisis* which contributes to the continuing relevancy of his work amidst the crises of today.

### *Revelation and The Lordless Powers*

The revelation of powers at work in our world beyond flesh and blood is a defining feature of apocalyptic theology. For Barth, the revelation comes not from an angel in a vision, but in Jesus Christ who is the self-disclosure of God. The person and work of Christ reveal that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the



spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (*Eph.* 6:12). Barth’s first focused treatise on the powers and demons was found in his 1949 writing on doctrine of God’s providence in *CD* III/3. At this time, the theological world was still responding to Rudolf Bultmann’s 1941 lecture on the New Testament and Mythology.<sup>43</sup> After devoting over one hundred pages to angels, Barth’s discussion of demons was intentionally with a “quick glance,” occupying merely 12 pages in the English translation.<sup>44</sup> Barth’s hesitancy to give attention to demons and the powers was further exhibited in his treatment of Hendrik Berkhof’s 1953 book, *Christ and the Powers*. There was initially support to have it published in *Theologische Studien*, a series which Barth edited. But, because of concern

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<sup>43</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *New Testament & Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). *CD* III/3 was published in 1950, but was lectured on and written between the summer of 1948 to summer of 1949. Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, 364.

<sup>44</sup> Barth concludes volume III/3 with one of the twentieth century’s longest explorations of angels and demons. The bulk of the section focuses on angels where he attempts “to steer a way between this Scylla and Charybdis, between the far too interesting mythology of the ancients and the far too uninteresting ‘demythologisation’ of most of the moderns” (*CD* III/3, 369). According to Barth, angels are created beings but are not “independent and autonomous subjects like God and man and Jesus Christ,” and thus can only be understood in relation to God’s grace (*CD* III/3, 371, 480). They are created to bring praise to God and serve as messengers and witnesses of God’s revelation. After spending 160 pages on angels, he moves to discuss demons in a concluding 12 pages - a theological move he was fond of relating (e.g. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 77.). Demons have often been portrayed as the counterpart to angels. Barth thinks this is a mistake. “The two spheres do not belong together either by origin or nature. The demons are not as it were the poor relations, or the vicious, disreputable and troublesome relations of angels. Between heaven and hell, between that which comes from above and its opposite which meets and resists it from below and would like to be above, there is nothing in common” (*CD* III/3, 519-520). Unlike angels, demons are not created agents but derive from the nothingness. “What is the origin and nature of the devil and demons?,” Barth asks, “the only possible answer is that their origin and nature lie in nothingness” (*CD* III/3, 523). He goes on, “this is all to be said of demons as of nothingness. They are not different from the latter. They do not stand apart. They derive from it. They themselves are always nothingness. They are nothingness in its dynamic, to the extent that it has form and power and movement and activity. This is how Holy Scripture understands this alien element” (*CD* III/3, 523). Of course, just as with evil, this does not mean that demons do not exist. Barth contends, “everything which had to be said about this element is also to be said of demons as the opponents of God’s heavenly ambassadors. They are. As we cannot deny the peculiar existence of nothingness, we cannot deny their existence” (*CD* III/3, 523). Demons are part of the movement of evil in our world. Holy Scripture sees nothingness as a kingdom, “and this is how it also sees demons. In this sense it reckons with their actuality” (*CD* III/3, 524). The demonic is that kingdom which sets itself against the kingdom of God. Unlike for Bultmann, Barth does not think we need to demythologize Scripture but ought to let the strange world of the Bible confronts us and demythologize our modern assumptions. This means contending with the reality of the demonic and the need for God to rescue us from this power.

of the response of Bultmann and his followers, Barth thought it would be too misleading to have it published in this journal.<sup>45</sup> However, less than ten years later while writing on the kingdom of God, Barth felt at greater liberty to explore a related reality which he termed the “lordless powers.”<sup>46</sup> His 1961 lectures on these powers were located in his exposition of the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “thy kingdom come” (*CL*, 213-33). While he continued to insist that demons and the powers must not be obsessed over, he emphasized more strongly that we must acknowledge them and join God in opposition to them.

The lordless powers are part of the nothingness, the absurd and defeated reality opposed to God.<sup>47</sup> While the fall (human sin) is the root of evil, it has given rise to the

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<sup>45</sup> Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1962), 9.

<sup>46</sup> Under the term “lordless powers,” Barth groups various apocalyptic terms found throughout the New Testament. He includes, “δυνάμεις (capabilities, powers, forces, Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21), ἐξουσίαι (full sovereignties, 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15), πνευματικά (influential spiritual beings, Eph. 6:12), κυριότητες (centers and spheres of dominion, Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; cf. 2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8), more personally χύιοι (1 Cor. 8:5), also ἀχαί (authorities, Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15), again personally, ἄχοντες (1 Cor. 2:8; Eph. 2:2; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6), χοσμοκράτοες (world rulers, Eph. 6:12), once (Col. 1:16) very finely, θόνοι, empty chairs that point very effectively to the majesties that fill the vacuum but are absent—one is reminded of the empty throne in the English House of Lords to which members bow on entry! Once (1 Pet. 3:22) they are even called ἄγγελοι, presumably in analogy to 2 Corinthians 11:14, where the factors of this pseudo-objectively real and efficacious kind clothe themselves in the garments of the angels of God and imitate their work. In Ephesians 2:2 they are all represented and personified in the figure of an ἄχων τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ, of the πνεῦμα νῦν ἐνεργοῦν, whose dwelling is the air, which has the same material sense as the common designation τὰ ἀόρατα in Colossians 1:16. According to Romans 8:38f. and Ephesians 1:21, these lists do not pretend to be exhaustive.” (*CL*, 217)

<sup>47</sup> Barth characterized evil as nothingness. His most extensive writing on the subject of evil is found in his volume on God’s providence in *CD* III/3. He took an Augustinian view of evil as the privation of the good. This approach allowed him to posit evil in a way that did not compromise God’s lordship. Evil is not a power that God is struggling to overcome. God has no rivals and alone is sovereign in the universe (*CD* III/3, 292). Furthermore, he went to great lengths insisting that evil was not created by God, nor was it an ontological necessity to creation (*CD* III/3, 296). Rather, evil is the “shadow side of creation,” it is “nothingness” (*CD* III/3, 296, 350). Though evil is nothingness, it certainly exists and has a tangible impact. It is an alien factor, but it is very real (*CD* III/3, 289). Barth writes, “that which confronts God in this way, and is seriously treated by Him, is surely not nothing or non-existent... Nothingness is not nothing. Quite apart from the inadmissibility of its content, this proposition would be self-contradictory. But it ‘is’ nothingness” (*CD* III/3, 349). While describing evil as “nothingness,” Barth yet describes it in very active terms. It is a “kingdom” always marching and on the offensive against the reign of God (*CD* III/3, 523-24). In identifying evil as “nothingness,” Barth is attempting to emphasize the irrationality of evil in a world that God created as good. He considers any attempt to systematize and make sense of evil as

lordless powers (*CL*, 213). Barth argues, we must “consider very seriously, not merely man's rebellion against God, but also the rebellion unleashed by it, that of human abilities, exalting themselves as lordless forces, against man himself” (*CL*, 215). These forces do not have an independent reality outside human existence, but they attain a certain autonomy that transcends human action.<sup>48</sup> The lordless powers “are nothing but man's own abilities loaned to his creaturely nature and peculiar to it,” nevertheless, “these abilities emancipate themselves from man and thus acquire the character of entities with some kind of existence and dominion of their own” (though, this is only a “pseudo-objective reality”).<sup>49</sup> He continues, these powers are “forces that are truly and properly man's own but that have won a certain autonomy, independence, and even superiority in

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bound to fail. Evil is ultimately absurd. It is the “impossible possibility” or “unreal reality.” *CD* III/3, 351; cf. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 180. While we can't explain the mystery of the origin of this nothingness, we do know that God does not remain unaffected by evil but has set God's self on the side of the creature and in opposition to the power of evil (*CD* III/3, 356-60). In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God was and is victorious over it (*CD* III/3, 363, cf. *CD* II/1, 563). While evil continues to threaten God's creation, it has no future. Evil is a defeated power.

<sup>48</sup> Already in *CD* III/3, Barth argued demons are not personal, created beings nor fallen angels. “To bring angels and demons under the common denominator of this fatal concept of freedom is to confuse and obscure everything that is to be said of both. A true and orderly angel does not do what is ascribed to some angels in this doctrine (in obscure speculation concerning this derivation). And on the other hand it cannot be said that a real demon has ever been in heaven. The demons merely act as if they came from heaven. But the devil was never an angel. He was a murderer ἀρχὴς [from the beginning].” (*CD* III/3, 530-1) Toward the end of his career he argued, “Satan is an indicator as well. He is the ‘impossible possibility.’ Satan has not been created by God. He is a reality outside the ‘system’!... In 2 Peter as well as in Jude, one also finds the theory of the fall of angels and of Lucifer, a fallen angel (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). I do not believe this because it is a theory that allows demons to be understood. Evil cannot be explained.” Barth, 112–13. Krötke describes them primarily as ciphers for Barth: “strictly speaking, Barth deploys these descriptions [the devil and demons] as ciphers for nothingness in its ‘dynamic... movement and activity’ (*CD* III/3, p. 523). In order to prevent the ‘devil’ from effectively being conceived of as a ‘person,’ Barth sought in his own discourse to give preference to ‘neutral expressions like ‘the resisting element in humanity’ over personal expressions (though these are not debarred)’ (*CD* IV/3, p. 261 rev.). Hence, all the forms of nothingness that embed themselves in the creation - in human sin and in the death to which sin gives rise - so as to wreck it are to be understood as ‘devilish’ or ‘demonic.’ Talk of ‘the devil’ and of ‘demons’ serves to give notice that human beings are prey to a power from which they cannot free themselves if God does not come to their aid.” Wolf Krötke, “Barth on Evil and Nothingness,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. George Hunsinger and Keith L. Johnson (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2020), 215–16. Some commentators who are generally sympathetic to Barth, diverge with him on this point, e.g., Bromiley, *Introduction*, 155; Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 1995), 132, 135.

<sup>49</sup> *CL*, 215. “Pseudo-objective” because, “they are in rebellion against him but even in this rebellion, in their assumed and apparent independence of him, they are still his” (*CL*, 215).

relation to him” (*CL*, 216).<sup>50</sup> They arise from human sin but gain sway over humanity.

Consequently, “in all their strangeness they *are* real and efficacious” (*CL*, 216). The influence of the powers extends beyond individuals to the structures and activities of society. The lordless powers,

are not just the supports but the motors of society. They are the secret guarantee of man's great and small conventions, customs, habits, traditions, and institutions. They are the hidden wirepullers in man's great and small enterprises, movements, achievements, and revolutions. They are not just the potencies but the real factors and agents of human progress, regress, and stagnation in politics, economics, scholarship, technology, and art, and also of the evolutions and retardations in all the personal life of the individual (*CL*, 216).

The lordless powers possess an agency over human efforts that drive much of society's movements. Human sin has resulted in sinful arrangements that “are the real factors and agents” which steer the world's systems and conduct.

Due to this encompassing reach, the lordless powers shape and constrain human agency. “While asserting and not denying man's responsibility,” Barth argues, the New Testament “sees and understands the irrational and harmful nature of human attitudes and acts in terms of man's having fallen under the binding sway of these factors and agents” (*CL*, 218). Barth emphasizes these powers have agency: “it is not really people who do things, whether leaders or the masses. Through mankind's fault, things are invisibly done without and above man, even above the human individual in all his uniqueness, by the host of absolutisms, of powers that seek to be lordless and that make an impressive enough attempt to exhibit and present themselves as such” (*CL*, 216). However, this does

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<sup>50</sup> This description has a resemblance to our account of social structures in chapter 3. The biblical authors would not have held an account of the powers that understood them as “patterned human behavior,” but they did understand these forces as closely related to human power and actions. Barth writes, “from all the names [for the Powers given in the NT], which remind us of familiar human possibilities and functions, it may be gathered that those who bear them are related especially to humans” (*CL*, 217). A discussion of the relation between the lordless forces and social structures will soon follow.

not mean that humans lose all freedom before these powers. Liberation from their dominion is possible. “Hence,” Barth writes “they are not necessary determinations of [humanity’s] being and existence. Troublesome though they are, they are only contingent and relative determinations” (*CL*, 215). Haddorff calls attention to how Barth’s personal struggle with the political ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shaped his understanding of the powers and human freedom. He argues,

Barth was well aware of the social forces, created by human sin, that deprive humanity of its freedom to live in peace, justice, and hope. Indeed, no one was more aware of the multiple faces of power than Barth, who struggled to provide a theological account of reality in the midst of the growing imperialism of World War I, Fascism in World War II, and the East-West ideological conflict of the Cold War. Guided by his theology of gospel and law, and sin and grace, he dialectically talked about both the limitations and realities of human freedom.<sup>51</sup>

The “relative determinations” of the powers and the possibility of freedom through grace create the basis for rising up and revolting against the disorder that these powers bring about.<sup>52</sup> The Christian community’s responsibility in the face of these powers will be explored later in this chapter.

### *Powers and Social Structures*

Barth portrays the lordless powers as extensions of human actions that attain a suprapersonal agency larger than any individual action and which (dis)order a society.

This depiction bears a resemblance to the description of social structures considered in

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<sup>51</sup> David Haddorff, *Christian Ethics as Witness: Barth’s Ethics for a World at Risk* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 269.

<sup>52</sup> Barth also describes the lordless powers as the powers which result in disorder. “The general plight against which Christians are commanded to revolt and fight is the disorder which both inwardly and outwardly controls and penetrates and poisons and disrupts all human relations and interconnections. Disorder arises and consists in deviation from order. The human race exists in such deviation. The order from which it deviates is the form of an obedient life of people in fellowship with God which includes as such the corresponding form—the guarantee of human right, freedom, and peace—of a life of people in fellowship with one another” (*CL*, 211). He continues, “we have described this adversary [what he goes on to identify as the lordless powers] first as the great disorder that controls and characterizes the state and course of human things” (*CL*, 213).

chapter three. While Barth's account is not a work of sociology, he considered insights from this discipline as relevant and important for this subject. In fact, he attributed his deficient grasp of sociology as a key reason he would not revise and publish his ethics of reconciliation in his lifetime. He told his assistant, Eberhard Busch, "when I returned from the trip to the United States, I saw I must learn much more than I know. I should study sociology, not to repeat this science, but I need to think about it more. I am not able to do this but it should be a part of this ethics."<sup>53</sup> Even so, his account of the lordless powers can be constructively placed in conversation with our earlier account of social structures. We observe similarities between social structures and the lordless powers, but the two are not identical. Social structures are not fundamentally lordless powers, and the lordless powers cannot be reduced to social structures.

On the one hand, social structures ought not be equated with the lordless powers in Barth's theology. Social arrangements, in themselves, are not necessarily morally wrong or good, and thus not fundamentally "lordless." Social structures are descriptive of an aspect of human existence which arise from the remarkable human ability to organize our lives as social beings. They are a human capacity which enable humans to interact in structured and coherent ways. There is no ideal or biblical social structure that is commanded for the world or even in the church, but there are patterns that more and less reflect our determination as covenant creatures. Barth illustrates this with the church in *CD IV/3*. The church is both totally dependent on and completely free in regards to social structures (*CD IV/3*, 739). It is dependent on social structures as the Christian community must exist in some sort of social form. However, the church is totally free to adopt or

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<sup>53</sup> Eberhard Busch, "Memories of Karl Barth," in *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1986), 12.

reject certain aspects to a “form corresponding to its calling and commission” (CD IV/3, 741). The church is free to draw from society in organizing itself, but it ought to be done in light of God’s calling of the church. It must reject the patterns of behavior that are hostile to God’s purposes, that is, those structures that are lordless.<sup>54</sup> Social structures are part of the human capacity which makes our determination possible and thus cannot be reduced to the lordless powers.

On the other hand, the lordless powers cannot be simply identified with sinful social structures. Social structures describe human patterns of behavior. Barth’s account of the lordless powers sometimes describes such patterns of behavior (e.g. “Leviathan” as a form of government), but at other times do not (e.g. ideologies). While not always fitting the definition of a social structure, it is accurate to say all of the lordless powers emerge out of embodied behavior. They are the autonomous agencies that arise from human actions.<sup>55</sup> They have a power of their own that goes beyond any individual action,

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<sup>54</sup> While no structure is completely angelic nor totally demonic, there are social structures that more radically rebel against God and dehumanize. Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 72.

<sup>55</sup> While the biblical authors would not have identified the powers with “patterns of behavior,” their description of unseen forces at work in the institutions and structures of the world fit well with sociological descriptions of patterned behavior. Of course, the Bible does not give a systematic account of demons or the powers. As Verhey and Harvard argue, “nowhere in Paul or in the rest of the New Testament are the ‘principalities and powers’ made a discrete topic of instruction. But their existence is assumed by both author and audience, whether Jew or Gentile.” Allen Verhey and Joseph S. Harvard, *Ephesians: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 67. The existence of powers and demons is presupposed by the authors and used ad hoc to further an argument, not to present an ordered account of various personal beings. Scripture’s authors offer varied views of these Powers and Principalities because they reflect different times and locations. The purpose of Scripture is not to present a demonology, but simply uses common cultural concepts to make a claim. As Walton argues, “the texts use the audience’s existing knowledge of Satan and demons to talk about something else—it is simply a means to an end.” Walton and Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, 274, cf. 279f. Walton argues the unifying factor among the various biblical authors is not the ontology of these entities, but the *function*. They all serve to represent the superhuman forces at work in our world which are opposed to God and humanity. Paul’s talks of Powers not to offer a new religious vocabulary to the original audience but because it is the common way to talk in the first century (in Jewish apocalypticism and by the Romans). Verhey and Harvard observe, “among the Gentiles the concept of the ‘powers’ would not be difficult to understand. They had their own ideas about the ‘powers’ and ‘world rulers.’” Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 66. The powers are the forces that are behind institutions and nations; they are found in the ideologies and social structures that operate distinct from an individual’s action. Kirk claims that

exercising an agency that opposes humanity as determined by God. That these powers are described as agents remind us that sin is a power that goes beyond individual sin and rebellion against God. But that they arise from human behavior, means that it is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ, to revolt and struggle for justice.

Barth's account of the lordless powers brings important theological insights into the contemporary social structures discussions. The powers as manifested in social structures are described as having an agency that goes beyond individual human agencies and that thus require a response beyond what is humanly possible. This brings us to the subject of divine agency.

#### *Divine Agency and the Kingdom of God*

Apocalyptic theologies arise out of a sense of hopelessness and crisis. Jewish apocalypses emphasized a future act of God's judgment that would set things right. Christian reception of the tradition adopted this perspective, but also incorporated the

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"NT claims about principalities and powers... develop within a worldview in which the powers of sin people confront every day are ascribed to forces larger than the sum of individual choices." Kirk, "Principalities and Powers," 402. Cf. Padilla, *Mission between the Times*, 50; Markus Barth, *Colossians: The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 202. This description of powers fits with contemporary discussions of sociological structures as unseen forces embodied in human behaviors and arrangements. And like sociological structures, while the Powers are unsubstantial, we never meet them as disembodied spirits. They are never manifest apart from human agency, but always embodied. As Newbigin maintains, "the principalities and powers are real. They are invisible and we cannot locate them in space. They do not exist as disembodied entities floating above this world, or lurking within it. They meet us as embodied in visible and tangible realities - people, nations, and institutions." Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), 207–8. Cf. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 4. The powers are embodied in institutions, structures, laws, and ideologies. In other words, the powers are observed in structures and patterns of human behavior. To connect social structures with the powers is further substantiated by Paul's discussions of the powers in positive ways. While most of his references to the Powers are negative, he believes they were created by and for Christ and are redeemed. In Christ, "all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him" (*Col.* 1:16). The Powers are created through and for Christ. They were created good. As they take on an anti-God posture, however, they participate in the demonic. Cf. Cynthia L. Rigby, "Evil and the Principalities: Disarming the Demonic," in *Life Amid the Principalities: Identifying, Understanding, and Engaging Created, Fallen, and Disarmed Powers Today*, ed. Michael Root and James J. Buckley (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016), 59. Similarly, social structures are good and created by God, but can be corrupted.



inbreaking of God's kingdom beginning with Christ's incarnation and atoning act on the cross as the definitive act of judgment. In so doing, they continued to stress that divine agency is the only hope amidst an otherwise hopeless situation.

Barth likewise stressed the necessity of divine judgment.<sup>56</sup> Sin and death must be destroyed and replaced by a new creation. Earlier we discussed Barth's crisis and his loss of confidence in the human ability to bring about something approximating the kingdom of God. The coming of the kingdom is "God's own action, which does not merge into the best of human action... which does not mingle with it, let alone identify itself with it, which remains free and independent over against it, and which in its purity and freedom is God's gracious, reconciling, and finally redeeming action." (CL, 240) To pray "thy kingdom come," is primarily prayer that God will act. Christians, "turn to God, with whom alone it rests that his kingdom should come, that is, that he himself should come as King and Lord, by his intervention putting an end to human unrighteousness in both its dimensions, destroying the lordship of demons, and creating peace on earth among men of his pleasure" (CL, 245). Christians are to pray, "asking for the gracious unmasking, overcoming, and ultimate abolition" of these powers. (CL, 219). However, this does not imply that there is no place for human action. Conversely, divine action brings meaning to and responsibility for human action even in the face of intractable problems.

### *The Response of the Christian Life*

While the coming kingdom rests on God's prerogative to act, it is also true that a new age has dawned with Christ's first coming that makes possible meaningful human

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<sup>56</sup> Hunsinger argues that "Barth's discourse is never more apocalyptic in tone than when discussing the divine judgment in volume 4, part 1." George Hunsinger, "The Infinite Qualitative Difference and the Difference It Makes: A Recurring Theme in Barth's Dogmatics," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 36, no. 2 (September 1, 2020): 192. Cf. CD IV/1, 528-68.

action in the current age. The lordless powers that participate in the nothingness have already been defeated in the work of Christ and will ultimately be done away with by God. The petition, “thy kingdom come,” is a petition that looks and points “to an act of God which, although it embraces all times and places in its compass, is a once-for-all act that had not taken place before and neither needs to be nor can be repeated” (*CL*, 235). This does not mean that Christians are to passively wait for that day to come. To genuinely pray “thy kingdom come,” the church must correspond to God’s future action in relation to these powers. This prayer must include the struggle to 1) unmask these powers and 2) rebel against them.

### *Unmasking the Powers*

Apocalyptic theologies reveal forces at work beyond the visible and the individual. They disclose a cosmic conflict between forces of evil opposing God’s will. While created good, the powers are fallen and in opposition to God.<sup>57</sup> For the Christian apocalyptic tradition, Jesus Christ and his atonement provide the clearest revelation to this reality. As Lesslie Newbigin argues, “the death of Christ was the unmasking of the powers.”<sup>58</sup> Strictly speaking, the unmasking of the powers is not the task of the Christian, but was accomplished by Christ. For the Christian to unmask the powers, is to become aware of these forces at work in our world as those forces that oppose what Christ revealed as the end of humanity and creation. Each age has struggled with related but differing powers, and Christians are to seek to become aware of the presence of the powers that oppose the ways of God. Wink rightly contends, “the spiritual task is to

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<sup>57</sup> This is a gift of God to be able to discern the spirits according to Paul (*1 Cor.* 12:10). Cf. Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, 47.

<sup>58</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 208.

unmask this idolatry and recall the Powers to their created purposes in the world.”<sup>59</sup>

Pertinent to this dissertation, the unmasking of these powers includes unveiling the ways in which they morally shape people.

Unmasking the powers, according to Barth, means acknowledgement and awareness of the demonic in ways that neither ignore nor fixate on them. He believed modern theologians tend to be especially prone to minimize the reality of the powers. Nothingness deceives us “supremely by trivialising and concealing itself” (*CD III/3*, 526). As Haddorff summarizes, for Barth, “the powers corrupt social institutions that give order and meaning to people's lives and create instead communities of disorder and chaos. It is the *ignorance* of the powers, both in their existence and fallenness, which serves as its greatest potential threat to humanity.”<sup>60</sup> Modern society is so disposed to focus on the natural world, that the possibility of forces beyond the cause and effect of individual agents is often disregarded. Any evil and injustice can only be a product of an individual's heart and choices. The “magical” world of the Bible, therefore, challenges its readers today as it sheds light on the powers which vie for our allegiance.

The opposite danger is to give demons too much credit and attention (*CD III/3*, 526-27). Unlike angels who deserve our attention, Barth did not consider demons worthy of a prolonged treatise, but only a “momentary glance” (*CD III/3*, 519). He elaborates,

why must our glance be brief? Because we have to do at this point with a sinister matter about which the Christian and the theologian must know but in which he must not linger or become too deeply engrossed, devoting too much attention to it in an exposition like our own. In its own way it is very real... Sinister matters may be very real, but they must not be contemplated too long or studied too precisely or adopted too intensively... It does not make the slightest impression on the demons if we do so, and there is the imminent danger that in so doing we ourselves might become just a little or more than a little demonic. The very thing

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<sup>59</sup> Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Harmony, 1999), 29.

<sup>60</sup> Haddorff, *Christian Ethics as Witness*, 278.

which the demons are waiting for, especially in theology, is that we should find them dreadfully interesting and give them our serious and perhaps systematic attention. In this way they can finally catch out, not bad theologians, but good. For this reason, having consciously and intentionally devoted a full discussion to the angels, we shall take only a brief look at this matter. It is not a question of treating them lightly, but of handling them as best befits their nature. A quick, sharp glance is not only all that is necessary but all that is legitimate in their case (*CD III/3*, 519).

We are to study and acknowledge demons, but not become obsessed and distracted from what God calls us to focus on, namely God and God's kingdom. It must be a glance that is full of disdain and opposition to them. We cannot "believe" in them as we can believe in God or angels which indicate a positive relationship. Rather, "we oppose to them the most radical unbelief" (*CD III/3*, 521). Barth finds biblical support for this perspective: "it should be noted that the New Testament never shows any direct interest in these forces. It is directly interested only in the encounter of Jesus and his disciples with them and in their expulsion."<sup>61</sup> In sum, "the glance which we have to cast at this sphere can only be a sharp glance, a glance of aversion and not in any sense of secret respect or reverence or admiration" (*CD III/3*, 521).

A task of theology is to unmask demons and the powers in order to oppose them and the disorder they engender. If the essence of the devil is lying and falsehood, the Christian community's task is to demythologize the demons (not the Bible).<sup>62</sup> In other

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<sup>61</sup> *CL* 218. Elsewhere Barth claims, demons "make their appearance only at the moment they are cast out. Actually, the New Testament is interested only in their suppression, and we should follow suit." Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 112. Moreover, "the world picture held by the New Testament community and therefore by the authors of the New Testament writings can obviously be described as a 'magical' one and therefore as one that does not have that clarity. What is, perhaps, more important is that they were less hindered than we are by the world picture of their contemporaries, which was also their own, from taking freely into account the strange reality and efficacy of the lordless powers that are our present concern" (*CL*, 217). Therefore, when we do speak of the devil and demons, we must use "consciously mythological terms" (*CL*, 216).

<sup>62</sup> *CD III/3*, 521. Cf. "The Christian task is much rather to 'demythologize' the demons than to hunt down others." Barth, 113. *CL*, 217.

words, the demons and powers supply a myth that grounds society's workings. It offers idolatrous myths supported by affective warrants that oppose our determination and freedom. Scripture serves to demythologize these idolatrous assumptions of our world. For Barth, Haddorff shows, "the task of biblical interpretation does not begin by demythologizing the text, making it more relevant to a modern audience, but instead using the biblical narrative to demythologize the various powers that repress human freedom. The Bible is allowed to speak and challenge our view of things."<sup>63</sup>

To unmask the lordless powers is to apprehend their reality and influence in the world. The powers signify an agency that arise out of human sinfulness and morally forms individuals. They have a greater influence than often recognized and operate most proficiently when unacknowledged. Disregarding the powers results in an emphasis on individualistic accounts of contesting evil, not realizing that the problem is not simply with one's own "heart," but that one's heart itself is shaped in powerful ways by the powers. Barth's account of the powers demonstrates this often unseen affective shaping of individuals by these powers. His account of the powers resonates with the sociological accounts discussed in chapter three that emphasize that social structures shape the emotions of individuals in a society. Barth endeavored to unmask these powers so that persons can be formed in ways that equip them to rebel against the lordless forces.

To illustrate this unmasking, Barth considers four examples of the lordless powers he found particularly pervasive in his time. He labeled them Leviathan, Mammon, the intellectual powers, and the chthonic powers. Of particular note to this project, Barth's sketch of each identifies emotion as playing a significant role in the relationship between

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<sup>63</sup> Haddorff, *Christian Ethics as Witness*, 276.

the powers and individuals and groups. Barth's attempt to unmask these lordless powers will be described highlighting their connection with emotions.

First, Barth attends to political absolutes which he groups under the heading of "Leviathan." Considering Barth's earlier characterization of the lordless powers as forces set against the kingdom of God, this political manifestation is not surprising. The demonic form of politics arises when governments and political leaders forego service toward humanity (the proper role of government) but turns politics into an end itself which enslaves its people (*CL*, 220). Barth clearly had in mind the fascist regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along with the east-west struggle that was raging at the time of the lectures that became *The Christian Life*. Communism, free-market-driven democracy, and all forms of government can give rise to demonic forms. Whenever governments exist to extend their own power rather than acting for the cause of justice, Leviathan raises its hideous head. Government here seeks to take the place of God in humans' service and worship.<sup>64</sup> It attempts to assume the role of a god-human (*CL*, 221).

In Barth's account, a central means by which political absolutes attain and retain their sway over citizens is through eliciting certain emotions, particularly fear and fascination. First, the lordless regimes exercise power through inciting citizens to put their hope in it through fear. Drawing on Hobbes, Barth contends Leviathan is given authority because of the "hopeless fear of war" of its people unless they entrust the government with greater control (*CL*, 220). Citizens give up their freedoms and rights because of the terror and anxiety of the perceived alternative. Their persistent fears function to maintain the inhuman political powers. Second, "fascination" with the

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<sup>64</sup> Thus, Scripture uses the mythological language of the beast to describe this lordless power which was exercised authority and was worshipped by the peoples (*Rev.* 13:1-8; *CL*, 220).

totalizing powers of Leviathan create and strengthen this demonic force. Barth argues that various dictators with their wide ranging political ideas have this in common: they were “intoxicated, possessed, fascinated, and demonized by the Leviathan that he perceived and proclaimed, and for this reason they were able to fascinate and demonize those around them” (*CL*, 221). Barth repeatedly uses various grammatical forms of “to fascinate” (*faszinieren*) in this and in subsequent sections on the lordless powers. To be fascinated is to be drawn in and captivated by an object. It is closely related to wonder in that it holds one’s attention and interest because of some characteristic whether its novelty, strangeness, or some attractive quality. Leviathan is fascinating in that it offers power to leaders and the promise of blessing to citizens so long as they do not oppose or protest against it. Fascination is contagious and functions to sustain political power. Through fear and fascination, Leviathan morally shapes its people.

Second, Barth identifies “Mammon” as a lordless power. Barth draws on the New Testament imagery of this power which sets itself up as an alternative lord that demands allegiance (*Mt.* 6:24, *Lk.* 16:13, *CL*, 222). Mammon exercises its power when materials, possessions, properties and resources become idols. What are otherwise neutral or good aspects of human existence become objects of trust under the promise of security and comfort. Today, in our finance-dominated society, Mammon is closely associated with money (*CL*, 223). While money is of little worth in itself (especially when it is just a piece of paper or existing somewhere electronically in a cloud), it has a profound reality which can lead to market swings, cause crises, wars, benefit, and harm (*CL*, 224). Mammon arises when a human instrument begins to exert control over humanity. It is “the close relative of Leviathan” which often works alongside political absolutisms to

promote its demands or worship and allegiance (*CL*, 222). As a member of 20<sup>th</sup> century western society, Barth elsewhere focused on capitalism's relation with Mammon. Barth calls capitalism the "almost unequivocally demonic process which consists in the amassing and multiplying of possessions expressed in financial calculations (or miscalculations)." It results in the capital lying in "the hands of the relatively few, who pull all the stings" (*CD* III/4, 531-2). As Hunsinger explains, "the salient point about capitalism for Barth was not, as neoconservatives would contend, that it decentralizes power and therefore stands as a bulwark against the totalitarian 'drives' of society. On the contrary, Barth rightly insisted that capitalism generates enormous disparities in wealth and power," and "fosters unwholesome collective relationships of exploitation and dependency."<sup>65</sup> Rather than promoting freedom and responsibility, Mammon becomes the enslaving measure of worth that holds individuals and society under its sway while putting greater power in the hands of a few.<sup>66</sup>

Once again, fear and fascination are central instruments to this power's hegemony. While Mammon promises rest and good courage it in fact causes anxiety which drives greater desire for it in the quest for security and comfort (*CL*, 222). It creates a cycle of insecurity, which instigates servitude to this power through attempts to gain more money and resources, which yet inevitably results in greater anxiety and the desire for more. Additionally, Barth again identifies a "fascination," especially with the

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<sup>65</sup> Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 46.

<sup>66</sup> While Barth could be critical of communism, capitalism was his primary target. Barth was criticized in the 50s and 60s for not speaking out forcefully against communism as he had against the Third Reich. His reasoning was that at the time of the rise of Hitler, Barth was living in Germany and people were widely silent. With communism, he was neither living in that community nor was there a lack of voices rising up against the East. Barth saw his and the church in the West's primary task neither to praise communism nor to demonize it, but rather to first address the idols of their own society. Cf. Hunsinger, 47; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 6, 33, 194f., 207; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 12; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 3*, 136, 166, 360.



monetary form of Mammon, which “stirs and excites the speculative imagination” (*CL*, 223-4). This promise of control, peace, and well-being captivates and drives the desire to amass more and more possessions. Mammon captures and shapes our affective capacities with promises of well-being and happiness.

While not attempting to be exhaustive, Barth finishes this section on the powers with two characteristic groups that correspond to his understanding of humans as soul and body. The first are the intellectual or spiritual powers (*Geistesmächte*) which take the form of ideologies. The second relates more closely with the physical urges of desire, which Barth labels as the chthonic powers (*chthonischen Mächte*).

Ideologies are intellectual constructs (*geistigen Gebilde*) that arise from the remarkable human ability to organize thoughts and ideas into conceptual frameworks. These concepts can then be used to address various problems and questions that arise and prepare a person to act reflectively (*CL*, 224). This laudable ability becomes troublesome when fallen humanity uses this capacity to attempt to live independent of God. This lordless power arises as a person “thinks he can and should ascribe to the presuppositions and sketches he has achieved by this remarkable ability, not just a provisional and transitory but a permanent normativity, not just one that is relative but one that is absolute, not just one that is human but one that is quasi-divine... His ideal becomes an idol” (*CL*, 225). No longer a helpful hypothesis to help navigate the world, an ideology becomes a reified system to which a person serves and conforms.

Barth proposes three signs to recognize when a concept is transformed into an ideological power. The first sign is when an “ism” is attached to the end of the concept

which indicates a concretized systemization of a theory or principle.<sup>67</sup> The second and third signs are explicitly related to their affective target in individuals and groups. The second sign that ideological powers are in operation is the presence of slogans or catchwords. Barth contends, “the slogan is not designed to teach, instruct, or convince the hearer or reader. It aims to exert a drum-roll influence on people by awakening associations, engendering ideas and the associated feelings, and issuing marching orders” (*CL*, 226). Rather than clarifying concepts, slogans are rallying cries that aim to conform people to an ideology rather than to promote reflection or discussion of an issue. Finally, propaganda is a third sign of ideologies. “Propaganda,” claims Barth, “is putting things in black and white—the particular art and masterwork of ideologies” (*CL*, 227).<sup>68</sup> Once again, reflective and thoughtful discussion is eschewed and an ideology is presented as the dominant concept while all others are characterized as deficient. It demands fidelity to the system and assumes a position that is rightfully God’s.

Rather than engage in thoughtful dialogue and reflection, ideological powers engage the emotions to distract from relevant information. The goal of slogans and propaganda is to awaken ideas and feelings which are reductive and misleading (*CL*, 226). Barth repeatedly refers to ideologies becoming a “fascination.” They appear so wonderful that a person “thinks he should move and think and act more and more within

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<sup>67</sup> Barth lists idealism, phenomenism, realism, historicism, existentialism, liberalism, socialism, capitalism, conservatism, progressivism, among others. In Christianity, ideologies take form as Biblicism, confessionalism, pietism, Methodism, and even Christocentrism. Ideologies also take place around certain thinkers, e.g., Hegelianism, Marxism, and Stalinism (and elsewhere he includes Barthianism - Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, xii; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 2*, 13, 16, 19, 141; Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 3*, 6f.). Barth warns, “in every field ‘ism’ shows that one view, one concept, one figure in the field of human life, one possibility of human outlook and action, has assumed the role of regulator and dictator in relation to all the rest, and that round this principle a system has developed in face of which man is more or less on the point of losing his freedom or has already lost it” (*CL*, 226).

<sup>68</sup> On the Nazi’s use of propaganda which shaped Barth’s thinking on the topic, see Hancock, *Karl Barth’s Emergency Homiletic*, 98–119.

its framework and under its direction, since salvation can be achieved only through the works of its law” (*CL*, 225). The fascination with the ideology prompts one to interpret situations in light of its framework. The result is the ideology becomes “the backbone and norm of his disposition,” which further conforms the person to its demands (*CL*, 225). This in turn strengthens the power of the ideology as life becomes organized around this force. In this way, ideologies move the emotions of its hearers and, simultaneously, the affective life of its devotees strengthen the position of the ideology in a society.

Lastly, Barth discusses the “chthonic powers,” which are the powers related to a person’s physical urges and desires. Humans are not simply minds in a bodily shell, but are embodied creatures made up of soul and body into a holistic whole. Humans are more than creatures who create conceptual frameworks, they are creatures which act in our physical world and have the ability to direct creation for human service. This is all well when humanity acts as servants of God, but when we attempt to break away from God, this involvement with the created world slides into exploitation. This manipulation of nature takes on an autonomous character which in turn demands human allegiance. This power excites a person with new wants and in doing so put the person in obligation to it (*CL*, 228-9). As illustrations, Barth gives examples of technology, fashion, art, sport, pleasures, and transportation. None are evil in themselves, but they become idols as they become inhuman and lordless.

These examples may be the powers hardest to recognize. They are commonly presumed to be amoral givens of our modern world. Nevertheless, humanity’s determination as made for relationship with God and fellow creatures can be hampered by the demands of these quotidian powers. The ways these powers socially shape

individuals and communities often go unnoticed. We do not see, for example, how something such as transportation affects how we interact with others and arranges our society. This is why unmasking is such an important step. For when the powers exercise agency unbeknownst and out of sight, we do not realize how our agency is affected. The powers limit our imagination and our choices. They cause us to be emotionally content and satisfied with the current state and instinctually given to recoil at suggestions of organizing life differently. Of all Barth's examples of the powers, the chthonic powers are most obviously connected to the emotions. These powers promise comfort, pleasure, and the satisfaction of our concerns and happiness. They vow to remove anxiety, but in fact create new and greater worries (*CL*, 228). They offer pleasures and comfort, but not genuine joy (*CL*, 230). Rather than rest, when these powers become ends rather than serving the cause of humanity, they rob people of freedom and produce exploitative relationships with the world and others. They create an even greater desire to pursue comfort and security and, in doing so, the emotions evoked sustain this lordless power.

In summary, the Christian community's task in confronting the lordless powers begins with their unmasking. In our modern world, these powers often go unnoticed. Barth showed that the strange world of the Bible can help us identify them.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, his account poses emotion as sustaining these powers. Grasping how emotion links moral actors and the lordless powers is a vital aspect of opposing the powers. It is not enough to know the powers exist, but we need to understand how they

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<sup>69</sup> This is a theme going back to Barth's 1916 address, "The Strange New World Within the Bible." There, Barth's emphasis was on the question, "Who is God?" Here, in *The Christian Life*, the Bible continues to be understood as witnessing to who God is, but its strangeness also opens our eyes to the world in relation to God. Karl Barth, "The Strange New World Within the Bible," in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith Publisher, Inc., 1978), 28–50.

function in the world and how they retain their power. Barth's writing demonstrates that both control and retention of power are achieved through emotion. Understanding this reality is important, not because unmasking is an end in itself, but because it is a crucial step if Christians are to rebel against the lordless powers.

### *Rebelling Against the Powers*

The above section considered a feature of apocalyptic theology in Barth's work, namely the disclosure of suprahuman forces in conflict with God and the world. Barth attempted to unmask these powers, including the ways they shape human emotions. Awareness of the lordless forces, is essential to confronting the disorder that resists God and human flourishing. However, unmasking is not an end in itself, but only a first and necessary step toward rising up against them. Barth explains, "we have had to speak of [the lordless powers], because as a result of the fall of man it is they that bring human existence and history, both as a whole and in detail, into the disorder against which the Christian who prays the second petition of the Lord's Prayer is commanded to rebel" (*CL*, 232).<sup>70</sup> In this section we turn to another feature of apocalyptic theology, namely, the hope in a future event of judgment that addresses the crisis experienced by the author and listener. This act originating outside the world of flesh and blood grounds human revolt despite seemingly hopeless circumstances. Here, the recent sociological findings on how emotions sustain and disrupt social structures shed light. Awareness of how the powers and structures morally form us and how God's act of judgment empowers rebellion against those enemies of God are critical for those who would struggle for justice.

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<sup>70</sup> This revolt is not aimed at people (quite the opposite, as we shall see), but against the lordless powers which produce the disorder that disrupts fellowship with God and one another (*CL*, 210-211).

Barth argues that Christians are charged with revolting, rebelling, rising up and struggling against the lordless powers. Revolt does not connote simple acknowledgement and condemnation of the lordless powers, for “revolt or rebellion is more than the rejection of a particular possibility” (*CL*, 206). One can judge a power negatively, but then still participate in it without rising up against its actualization. But, on the other hand, revolt does not mean total evasion of our participation in the powers is possible. As socially embedded creatures, it is not possible to simply remove ourselves from the sinful ways of the world.<sup>71</sup> Rather, revolt calls for a struggle against the lordless forces. Barth contends, “if we call the continually new development of great disorder a revolution, we might say that even though Christians participate in it and share the guilt for the resulting plight, they are at the same time born counterrevolutionaries” (*CL*, 212). We remain complicit, but complicate the matter through active opposition.

Above all, for Barth, to struggle means to pray. He insists, “the decisive action of their revolt against disorder, which, correctly understood, includes within itself all others, is their calling upon God in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer: ‘Thy kingdom come’” (*CL*, 212). Prayer is indispensable because the possibility of a just world is ultimately dependent on a work of God accomplished in the once-for-all act of Christ's death and resurrection that will find consummation through God's future action.<sup>72</sup> Since Christians cannot establish the kingdom of God, there is nothing more fundamental or of greater consequence than prayer: “as Christians call upon God with this petition, they do

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<sup>71</sup> *CL*, 212. Christians “have both a passive and an active share in the evil and corruption of this world, in the unchaining of those demonic factors in world occurrence” (*CL*, 267).

<sup>72</sup> “Our primary contention is that the second petition that Jesus put on the lips of his disciples looks and points, as does the first, to an act of God which, although it embraces all times and places in its compass, is a once-for-all act that had not taken place before and neither needs to be nor can be repeated” (*CL*, 235).

what is qualitatively more and better than the best that all other movements for the establishment of human righteousness can do, their own efforts included” (CL, 261).

Barth’s emphasis on prayer raises the question of whether his theology ultimately leads to apathy and quietism in the face of injustice and evil. Barth did not think so. He contended that prayer ought not result in passivity and inaction in the face of injustice, for there is a corresponding human action that properly accompanies genuine prayer. Barth underlines the point that prayer must be accompanied by a certain way of living:

invocation of God in and with this prayer, obedient human action in this vertical direction, implies (as the same obedient human action) the horizontal of a corresponding human, and therefore provisional, attitude and mode of conduct in the sphere of the freedom which, as they pray for the coming of the kingdom, is already given to them here and now on this side of the fulfillment of the prayer. Thus to pray the prayer does not excuse them from provisionally rebelling and battling the disorder in their own human thoughts and words and works. On the contrary, they cannot pray the prayer aright without in so doing being projected into this corresponding action of their own which is provisional but nonetheless serious in this particular sphere (CL, 212-3).

In fact, if there is not a corresponding horizontal effort, there is reason to ask whether the prayer should be taken seriously (CL, 264). Yes, human works will always be imperfect and provisional and remain acts of “little justice,” but this is not an excuse to inaction. Rather, followers of Christ, “may and can and should rise up and accept responsibility to the utmost of their power for the doing of the little righteousness” (CL, 265). We are called to wait on the Lord, but such waiting is also a hastening. Barth affirms,

Christians live toward this, toward its day, as they live from its first coming... they *wait* and *hasten* toward the dawn of God's day, the appearing of his righteousness, the parousia of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:12). They not only wait but also hasten. They wait by hastening. Their waiting takes place in the hastening. Aiming at God's kingdom, established on its coming and not on the status quo, they do not just look toward it but run toward it as fast as their feet will carry them. This is inevitable if in their hearts and on their lips the petition ‘Thy kingdom come’ is not an indolent and despondent prayer but one that is zealous and brave (CL, 263).

God's work in Christ and future work on the day of the Lord has implications for the here and now. For Barth, "eschatology implies an ethic."<sup>73</sup> Even so, human action remains dependent on God. Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to pray "thy kingdom come" and to live in light of that good future (*CL*, 256). The freedom to pray includes the freedom to do good works. Christians, "are with great strictness required and with great kindness freed and empowered to do what they can do in the sphere of the relative possibilities assigned to them, to do it very imperfectly yet heartily, quietly, and cheerfully" (*CL*, 265).

We pray, "thy kingdom come," remembering that Jesus Christ *is* the kingdom and hence we cannot control the kingdom's presence on earth nor bring it to fulfillment (*CL*, 252). As we pointed out in chapter 1 in the discussion of moral growth and the community, for Barth, growth is associated with an increase of the kingdom (who is Jesus Christ) in the church (*CD IV/2*, 656). This growth is an increase of the presence of Jesus Christ and of the church's witness to God's reign. This is where spiritual and moral growth (associated with an increase in the practice of the *sancta*) are located - first amidst the community and then mediated through the community to individuals. While the Christian and the church are not to be equated with the kingdom of God, it is possible for them to take action that is *reichsmäßiges*.<sup>74</sup> *Mäßiges* means tempered, thus, Barth is arguing the Christian life ought to be shaped and moderated by the kingdom.<sup>75</sup> Human

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<sup>73</sup> Eberhard Busch, *Die Grosse Leidenschaft: Einführung in Die Theologie Karl Barths* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 296.

<sup>74</sup> *CL* 266. Translated "kingdom-like" in the English translation of *The Christian Life*.

<sup>75</sup> In Barth's *Homiletics*, the lectures given in 1932-33, Barth gives nine constitutive elements of the sermon. Four of the elements contain the suffix *-mäßigkeit*: *Offenbarungsmäßigkeit*, *Bekenntnismäßigkeit*, *Amtsmäßigkeit*, *Gemeindemäßigkeit*. (tempered or formed by revelation, confession, church office, and the local community). Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic*, 212-17, 221, 233. Just as the sermon is to be shaped by these elements, the Christian life is to be shaped by the kingdom of God, (*Reichsmäßigkeit*,



action does not replace or repeat the action of God, but is formed by it. The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals God's love for humanity as seen in the incarnation, life, and death of Christ. To be kingdom-tempered, then, is to be oriented to the service of fellow-humanity. Barth argues that *reichsmäßiges* means, "according to the measure of what is possible for them, [Christian] action must in all circumstances take place with a view to people, in address to people, and with the aim of helping people" (CL, 266). Barth continues,

Christians can look only where they see God looking and try to live with no other purpose than that with which God acts in Jesus Christ. This means, however, that the true and serious and finally important object of their attention, love, and will, and therefore of their thought, speech, and action, in agreement with their prayer and in correspondence with what they pray for, can only be man: man as the one whose brother God himself willed to become and became; for whom Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again; to whom he has promised the Holy Spirit; whose cause he will conduct to its goal in his final manifestation (CL, 266-67).<sup>76</sup>

While the Christian community cannot usher in nor become the kingdom of God, as it prays and increases in the reception and exercise of the *sancta*, it can be shaped and tempered in ways that correspond to the revelation of God in Christ in the struggle against injustice and for human flourishing.

### *Rebellion and Emotions*

Since the lordless powers shape the emotion and influence people through emotions, it is not surprising to see that Barth alludes to the importance of emotion for revolt. The lordless powers provoke fascination with the promises of comfort, security, power, and pleasure but in fact produce anxiety and fear which contribute to sustaining

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Karl Barth, *Das Christliche Leben: Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/4, Fragmente Aus Dem Nachlaß Vorlesungen 1959-1961* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1976), 461.)

<sup>76</sup> We continue to see here Barth's anthropocentric tendencies. While Scripture clearly assumes humans hold a special position within creation, to say that humans are the only "true and serious and finally important objects" of our attention goes against much of Scripture's witness.

their power. It stands to reason, then, that a different set of emotion must be part of the Spirit empowered response to the powers. Barth touches on several emotions by name in this section on revolt and the lordless powers. In the previous chapter we discussed Barth's account of zeal for God's glory which yields good works. He argues, "zeal for God's honor can be good, obedient, and full of promise only when it is directly accompanied by the struggle for human justice."<sup>77</sup> Zeal as the unfulfilled desire to see God's name honored is connected with the struggle for justice. The first and second petition of the Lord's prayer belong together: zeal for God's name flows into works that seek to correspond to God's acts of love. A zealous passion for God entails revolt against the lordless powers which oppose God through their false promises and unjust ways.

In addition to zeal, Barth once again urges gratitude and joy. That God has acted in Jesus Christ and will bring about justice and the defeat of the lordless powers gives occasion for these emotions. They are key to enduring in revolt against the lordless powers. To give thanks is the appropriate response where we admit reliance on God and put our hope not in our own efforts, but what God has done in Christ (*CL*, 264f.). Gratitude yields a joy ("the simplest form of gratitude"<sup>78</sup>) which strengthens moral actors to persist in the struggle against injustice. Barth writes, "if only [Christians] knew finally with what profoundest rest and joy they can withstand the inner and outer assaults of the course of the world with all the things that are so unseemly and intolerable and monstrous and impossible in it, looking ahead to its end and goal, when they do not grow indolent and slothful but persist cheerfully and industriously in the by no means heroic action of praying 'thy kingdom come'" (*CL*, 261). In this section, as elsewhere, Barth repeatedly

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<sup>77</sup> *CL*, 206, modified translation.

<sup>78</sup> As Barth claimed in *CD* III/4, 376.

associates joy with freedom.<sup>79</sup> Knowing that God will bring justice evokes joy and a freedom to call upon God and agency to draw alongside fellow sojourners.

Finally, and most extensively, the concluding section of Barth's exposition of the second petition concentrates on the importance of hope in the struggle for justice. Apocalypticism, particularly in its popular form, is often considered pessimistic and gloomy. The end of the world is coming in a climactic disaster which we are powerless to oppose. In the biblical form, however, they are not written to produce angst nor cynicism. As Käsemann argues, "apocalyptic reduced to a mood of world ruin and promoting desperate anxiety has nothing to do with the gospel."<sup>80</sup> While human action is ultimately insufficient, apocalyptic thought offers an eschatological perspective that hopes in a power from outside what is humanly possible. God has acted and will act and thus a good future is coming. As Boring insists, apocalyptic theology is faith's "nevertheless" when "therefore" makes no sense.<sup>81</sup>

Barth's apocalyptic theology has a similar hopeful thrust. Hope, for Barth, is not in the sense of hope as "wishful thinking." Rather, it has an object, namely, the kingdom of God.<sup>82</sup> Hope for the coming kingdom of God arises because it is not only a future happening, but is present already in the Easter event and in the coming of the Holy Spirit (*CD IV/3*, 293-6). This means that Christians ought not to be "gloomy" nor should we expect things to necessarily become "increasingly worse" in the world.<sup>83</sup> Rather, those "in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, enlightened by the Holy

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<sup>79</sup> And with peace. *CL*, 260, 263, 266, 269, 270.

<sup>80</sup> As quoted in Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, xiv.

<sup>81</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> *CL*, 247. In other words, the object of hope is Jesus Christ. *CD IV/3.2*, 914.

<sup>83</sup> *CL*, 263 cf. *CD IV/3.2*, 935ff.

Spirit of the Father and the Son, look ahead from that beginning to this end” and act zealously and bravely in the hope that their action in the world can correspond to God’s kingdom.<sup>84</sup> The object of our hope is Jesus Christ which is also the basis for our subjective hope (*CD IV/3.2*, 915). Hope is our “confident, patient and cheerful expectation of His new coming to consummate the revelation of the will of God fulfilled in Him” (*CD IV/3.2*, 902).<sup>85</sup>

Kingdom-temperedness entails inviting others to also hope. Humans separated from and rebelling against God and subject to the lordless forces are hopeless. We are in need of God’s rescuing. In the face of the lordless forces, humans are often tempted to despair and resignation before the inhuman forces of our world. The emotion of hope frees the church for worship, witness and service toward the world, especially in solidarity with the marginalized.<sup>86</sup> The task of the Christian is to come alongside fellow-humanity (especially those that suffer) and bid them to also hope (*CL*, 270). This is accomplished through our witness and proclamation of the kingdom of God in word and action. This means drawing alongside both Christians and unbelievers in solidarity. “As they may live by the great hope,” Barth writes, “[Christians] must stand by [unbelievers]

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<sup>84</sup> *CL*, 263 cf. *CD IV/3.2*, 918.

<sup>85</sup> We are discussing hope as an emotion and we see here some of the justification for this. Hope is confidence that a good end which I desire as something good will come about. There is a personal concern (*CD IV/3.2*, 930 Cf. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 148ff; Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid*, 281f.). Jesus Christ is our objective hope which is the basis of the subjective hope of confidence and cheer for the consummation of the destruction of sin in the world.

<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the emotion of hope leads the church to not be overly anxious about distinguishing itself from the world (as some works that accentuate ecclesial communities, narrative, and practices can overemphasize). Central to the church is the awareness that God is active and sovereign in its midst and the world. Knowing that God is active gives freedom to listen in on the world (the “lesser lights” or “parables of the kingdom” in Barth’s terminology) and to consider what the world is saying in light of Scripture with Jesus Christ always remaining the hermeneutical key (*CD IV/3.1*, 114-117). Differences will surely arise between the world and the church which responds in remembrance of Jesus, but there can yet be an openness on the part of the church to “eavesdropping” on the world to hear how God may be speaking to them. Similarly, dissent among member of the church will not necessarily be seen as an intrusion, but may even be a welcome word. Cf. Healy, “Karl Barth’s Ecclesiology Reconsidered,” 298.

even in little things, in hope venturing and taking with him little steps to relative improvements wherever he attempts them... In coming to his side [Christians] should give him the courage not to be content with the corruption and evil of the world but even within this horizon to look ahead and not back" (*CL*, 271). Hope in the *parousia* enables Christians to begin to break the cycle of the lordless powers which depend on humanity's fear and trust.

In summary, to pray "thy kingdom come" implies that the Christian community is involved with the struggle against the lordless powers. As Christians are molded and tempered by the kingdom of God, they are oriented toward service and solidarity with humanity, particularly with those who suffer. Central to the struggle is becoming a people that are not "fascinated" by the lordless powers but who are characterized by zeal, joy, gratitude, and hope.

### Moral Formation

We have discussed the Christian responsibility to unmask and rebel against the lordless powers. But how does a person become such an agent? This returns us to the subject of moral formation. In fact, this chapter has already been about moral formation, namely the formation of individuals and groups by the lordless powers. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are influenced and shaped in our participation with these powers. This section will turn to the possibility of a counter-formation. Emotions are ingredient to our struggle against the authorities of our world. But how do we become such people? While Barth contends in *The Christian Life*, that the Lord's Prayer is the "guideline" (*Richtschnur*) in which we "know about shaping (*Gestaltung*) our life as Christians" (*CL*, 44), he does not dwell on the question of formation. Rather, he focuses on the revolt

against the lordless powers, not the means by which Christians are formed to become such a people that will enter into this struggle. This section will attempt to offer an approach to formation in opposition to the lordless powers that is consistent with Barth's theology. As in chapter four, we will seek to describe formation not as becoming a people that are no longer dependent on the command of God, but as a means of forming a people to prepare for and anticipate the encounter with God. Any attempt at a Barthian view of emotion or imagination must do so in such a way that habituation does not become something that replaces the event of encountering the command of God. Neither emotion nor imagination can determine the good. But they are employed in preparation for that event as the Christian's response to God's command. These capacities (along with others, such as the reason and the will) are part of our determination and we are right to consider how they function as symptoms of that determination. We never come to have permanent possession of capacities which make our dependence on God and the community superfluous. Our Emotions are constantly being triggered and molded by ideas, stories, structures, culture, and human behavior. We remain dependent on God and the community for an imagination and emotions that are faithful to Christ. Therefore, we need to be continually rooted in the community, in dependence on our participation in Christ to renew our imagination.

This section will aim to be a form of "ethical instruction," which is shaped by God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and thus guided by a relational ethic.<sup>87</sup> After briefly

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<sup>87</sup> In other words, this will fall under the heading of "special ethics." Barth writes, special ethics is "is concerned to see and show how far this specific, concrete, special, and even very special action of man can or cannot be called a good action, that is, an action that corresponds to the divine claim, agrees with the divine decision, and conforms to the divine judgment" (*CL*, 4). This is not done through applying a general law, but by looking to the revealed Commanding God known in the true God and true human, Jesus Christ. (*CL*, 5) Special ethics framed by the revelation of Jesus Christ become relevant to "ethical instruction," the preparation for the encounter with the command of God. Barth writes, "regarding the fact that God *and*

revisiting the account of growth in chapter one, we will turn our attention to the role of imagination in the Christian life. Imagination continually rooted in participation with Christ is a key aspect in the formation of emotion. Through theology, worship, and life together, the moral imagination of the community is expanded in ways that counter the shaping of the lordless powers.

Chapter one argued that Barth understood moral growth to be rooted in the growth of the community. We are intersubjective creatures who find out being in relation to others. Who we are is because of our relationships and the patterns of relationships in which we find ourselves. We can thus expect formation to come from the communities in which we participate. For the Christian, it is the relationships in the church which listens for the Word of God that is particularly key for growth and a life in correspondence to Christ. Barth draws on Scripture's organic model of growth. Spiritual growth is like the growth in the parable of the seed: humans are involved, but the growth itself is not a result of human action (*CD IV/2*, 644). Growth is dependent on our participation in Christ as the image of the vine and branches in John 15 illustrates (*CD IV/2*, 659). Individual branches do not grow and bear fruit in isolation, rather the whole is dependent on the vine, Jesus, growing in their midst. This offers a very relational understanding of growth. The individual will grow, but it as a member of a mutually interdependent larger body rooted in Christ. The growth of the community is rooted in the experience of the increase of the Kingdom of God in its midst which occurs in relation to the exercise of

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man are not unknown but are known to us in Jesus Christ, reference to the event—the many events—of the encounter between the commanding God and the man who acts can and must become a formed and contoured reference, yet nothing more than a reference, which at least approximates to the concretion of that event. It may thus be of service to the ethical instruction with which special ethics must be concerned.” (*CL*, 6)

the *sancta*, the holy things, such as, worship, service, prophetic action, and joy. As Christ increases and the body grows, we are to expect that emotions that correspond to God's grace in Christ will develop.

While growth is ultimately a mysterious act of God, this does not mean that it happens without human involvement. Barth contends, "that human planning and speech and faith and love and decision and action are also involved [in the growth of the community] according to the divine will and order is also true. This is not compromised by the reference to the secret [*Geheimnis*] of the growth of the community." (CD IV/2, 644) We will once again step beyond what Barth wrote to consider how an account consistent with his theology might look regarding human capacities engaged in the human response to our election in the context of the powers. The thesis here is that *imagination* plays a key role in the formation of emotions.<sup>88</sup> The imagination is a human capacity that is common to humanity.<sup>89</sup> It can be enabled by the Holy Spirit to be used in ways that fit our determination. The community that increases in Christ makes possible a widening of the moral imagination that has become emaciated through the effect of the powers. The various communities we are involved with powerfully affect our imagination. The Christian community's imagination is connected to the practice of the *sancta* which provide an alternate way of seeing and living in the world. The remainder of this section will consider the relation of imagination, emotion, and moral formation, beginning with the relation of imagination and emotion.

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<sup>88</sup> While Barth gave no detailed account of the imagination, he acknowledged its importance and found a lack of imagination a major problem. "The modern Western mind," Barth writes, "is supremely fantastic in its chronic lack of imaginative fantasy" (CD III/1, 81). Barth had in mind here those who found a literal, "historical" interpretation of Genesis 1-2 as the only legitimate view.

<sup>89</sup> Barth writes, "Fortunately each of us is gifted somewhere and somehow with imagination, however starved this gift may be in some or misused by others" (CD III/1, 91).



### Imagination and Emotion

The “imagination” has been understood in various ways.<sup>90</sup> We thus begin by clarifying the concept as it will be employed here. Kristin Deede Johnson identifies two ways that imagination is commonly used in recent scholarship. First, it is used in discourse related to how we “order, interpret, pattern and give meaning to things as they are encountered, experienced, perceived or pondered. In other words, thought, language and rationality are rooted in imagination such that every time we think, speak or reason, we are employing imaginative faculties.”<sup>91</sup> This describes how imagination is intrinsic to thinking and rationality (and, we will soon note, emotion). Through imagination we are able to synthesize the world and our place in it. The second way imagination is employed is as “a creative function.” This is “the sense in which imagination enables us to repicture or remould present reality, to go beyond what is given to us in our experiences or perceptions of the world.”<sup>92</sup> This, Johnson notes, is the subversive side of imagination. The imagination “can challenge the givens of a particular cultural norm or situation by picturing an alternative norm or situation.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, the imagination is crucial for understanding both what is and what could be. These two way of understanding

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<sup>90</sup> Richard Kearney provides four main meanings of the term imagination: “1. The ability to evoke absent objects which exist elsewhere, without confusing these absent objects with things present here and now. 2. The construction and/or use of material forms and figures such as paintings, statutes, photographs, etc. to represent real things in some “unreal” way. 3. The fictional projection of non-existent things as in dreams or literary narratives. 4. The capacity of human consciousness to become fascinated by illusions, confusing what is real with what is unreal.” Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 16.

<sup>91</sup> Kristin Deede Johnson, “Brave New World? Faith, Hope and the Political Imagination,” in *Art, Imagination and Christian Hope: Patterns of Promise*, ed. Gavin Hopps, Trevor Hart, and Jeremy Begbie (Burlington: Routledge, 2012), 92.

<sup>92</sup> Johnson, 92.

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, 93.

imagination are both important for emotion and will be identified here as the “synthetic” and “creative” forms of the imagination.

In the synthetic form, imagination is recognized as important for how we think, see the world, and give meaning to events. Johnson notes that imagination is so pervasive in our thinking that no rigid separation between reasoning and imagining is possible.<sup>94</sup> We earlier noted a similar finding among many theorists of emotion (reason and emotion are integrated), and thus it is not surprising that imagination and emotion are also connected. Since emotions are cognitive and based on our interpretation of the world and events, emotion will be affected by the imagination. This has been widely attested, reaching at least as far back as David Hume who observes, “it is remarkable, that the imagination and affections have close union together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter.”<sup>95</sup> Nussbaum likewise notes the link: “emotions typically have a connection to imagination, and to the concrete picturing of events in imagination, that differentiates them from other, more abstract judgmental states.”<sup>96</sup> We can imagine ourselves on a remote beach or a mountain getaway, and feel relaxed and peaceful. Or, we can imagine a perceived slight and become angry. We can also imagine a person getting something they do not deserve and become indignant or jealous. We can imagine a world suffering the effects of climate change and be fearful or saddened. The way one imagines the world affects the emotions.

Barth has an understanding of imagination in theology along these lines.

Imagination “belongs no less legitimately in its way to the human possibility of knowing.

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<sup>94</sup> Johnson, 93.

<sup>95</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2011), II–vi.

<sup>96</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 65. Though, we should note, imagination is even necessary for abstract judgments.

A man without imagination is more of an invalid than one who lacks a leg” (CD III/1, 91). It is a cognitive process that is essential for the reading of Scripture and for all of life. Vanhoozer similarly identifies imagination as a “cognitive instrument” used to synthesize and process information and make connections that are meaningful to our lives.<sup>97</sup> While we can talk about imagination in the context of a person’s brain processes, the imagination should not be conceptualized primarily on the individual level, but rather as a shared way of viewing the world. Charles Taylor calls this the “social imaginary.” He defines the social imaginary as, “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations... the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.”<sup>98</sup> This perception of the world is generally shared by those in a community. A social imaginary provides a necessary function in human community for it guides the way we relate and interact with others. However, a deficient social imaginary gives rise to many of our society’s ethical failings. Followers of Christ are not immune, for, as Vanhoozer argues, “many Christians are suffering from malnourished imaginations, captive to culturally conditioned pictures of the good life.”<sup>99</sup> Barth argues similarly, “I think that our Protestantism has become too poor in fantasy and imagination, and where it is far too serious, it is not very serious.”<sup>100</sup> Rather than just a lack of an imagination, we suffer

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<sup>97</sup> Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 12, 240–41; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of the Church’s Worship, Witness and Wisdom* (IVP Academic, 2016), 24.

<sup>98</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 23.

<sup>99</sup> Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition*, 20.

<sup>100</sup> Barth, *Barth in Conversation: Vol. 1*, 114.

from distorted and diseased social imagination.<sup>101</sup> Sinful structures under the sway of the lordless forces, bring about the “corruption of the moral imagination.”<sup>102</sup> So while imagination is important for emotion (and thus for our moral lives and agency), the social imaginaries that the emotions depend on are often distorted. We are thus in need of new imaginaries, which brings us to the second, or “creative,” form of the imagination.

The creative function of the imagination makes possible conceiving alternate ways of being in the world. It is here that we return to Barth’s contention that Christian growth begins with the community of faith. The social moral imagination of the church can be shaped in alternative ways to conventional practices. Formation occurs as the community participates in the exercise of the *sancta*, including the prophetic ministry of the community with its alternative ways of perceiving the world. Imagination makes possible the prophetic capacity to reenvision the world in new ways. Brueggemann calls imagination, “the capacity to entertain images of meaning and reality that are out beyond the evident givens of observable experience. That is, imagination is the hosting of ‘otherwise,’ and I submit that every serious teacher or preacher invites to ‘otherwise’ beyond the evident givens, or we have nothing to say.”<sup>103</sup> In a complementary way, the Ignatian tradition holds that imagination “orients us to reality.”<sup>104</sup> The corrupted social imaginary disorients us from reality. It is as the community is shaped by the good news of the kingdom of God which has arrived in Jesus Christ, that the imagination is shaped

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<sup>101</sup> Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 4, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Ray, “Structural Sin,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 418, 429.

<sup>103</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Book That Breathes New Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2005), 28.

<sup>104</sup> Eileen Burke-Sullivan and Kevin F. Burke S.J., *The Ignatian Tradition* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2009), 99.

anew. This church has a “ministry of reimagination,” empowered by the Spirit.<sup>105</sup>

Through the participation of the *sancta*, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are freed to see and act in the world in new ways. The imagination will not decide the good, but a growing community’s imagination is an indispensable guide in preparing for an encounter with God.

Chapter three described how emotions arise from the categorization of internal sensory inputs and external circumstances based on prior experiences and learning. Categorization is the process of making those experiences meaningful according to socially constructed concepts and scripts. Thus, it was argued, new emotions are formed through relational factors where one’s values are altered or through new vocabulary, concepts, and scripts by which events are appraised. The shaping of emotions is connected to the recategorization of our experiences in community as we imagine new possibilities.

### *Imagination and Moral Growth*

What might this ministry of reimagination include? In this section we will look at three ways in which the community can shape the imagination and thus the emotions. First, while information alone does not change people, theology and doctrine are important tools in shaping the imagination and affective life of the church. Second, communal worship is a means to regularly have the imagination reoriented through practices such as the sacraments, preaching, and singing. Third, the imagination’s growth depends on a shared life together.

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<sup>105</sup> Steven R. Guthrie, *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2011), 134–36. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 40th Anniversary Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018).

First, the imagination is shaped through theological reflection. At times doctrine is seen as dry, speculative musings of individuals in an ivory tower. And critics are correct that moral change rarely occurs through the transfer of information. However, as Vanhoozer argues, “there is no more fertile seedbed for the social imagination than the theo-drama of the Christian gospel.”<sup>106</sup> As Serene Jones writes, “Doctrines serve as imaginative lenses through which to view the world. Through them, one learns how to relate to other persons, how to act in community, how to make sense of truth and falsehood, and how to understand and move through the varied terrain of life’s everyday challenges.”<sup>107</sup> Barth’s work provides an illustration. Barth’s first attempt at a Dogmatics was entitled the *Christian Dogmatics*. When he began again, he renamed them the *Church Dogmatics*, because it was a work for the church as a community. In his theology, Barth aims to serve and form the church through witness to Jesus Christ. This is especially seen in his works of ethical instruction. His special ethics are a work of theological imagination as a work in preparation for the ethical event of encounter with God’s command.

While the effect on imagination is relevant to theology in general, it is particularly germane to apocalyptic theology. Apocalyptic writings include the aim of unmasking and (often) calls on the listeners to resist the unseen powers at work. The authors were not simply writing for the sake of entertainment, but with a purpose.<sup>108</sup> Specifically,

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<sup>106</sup> Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 80.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Vanhoozer, 18.

<sup>108</sup> This is brought out particularly clearly by Rhetorical Analysis, a New Testament field of study. The study of rhetoric has its roots in Greek though, especially Aristotle’s 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE *Art of Rhetoric*. In this work, Aristotle identified three features used to move an audience: ethos, pathos, and logos. As Greg Carey summarizes, “*Ethos* involves a speaker’s credibility, demonstrating oneself as a person of virtue, knowledge, and good. *Pathos* accounts for the capacity to move an audience, particularly its emotions. And *logos* points to the appeal to reason.” Greg Carey, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 221.

apocalypse invite the listener to see the world in a new light and to encourage a new way of being.<sup>109</sup> As Jonathan Moo affirms, apocalyptic visions ought to be understood “as drama that invite us to consider afresh who we are, where we are, and what we value.”<sup>110</sup> Interpreters of apocalyptic writings have often emphasized the affective language used to move the audience. Concerning Revelation, Yarbo Collins maintains, “the primary

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Each of these aimed toward an overall goal “to affect their audiences’ beliefs, emotions, dispositions, and behaviors.” Carey, “Introduction: Apocalyptic Discourse, Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 10–11. In other words, the goal was to persuade and form an audience. Rhetorical analysis is a method of analyzing a text to understand the purpose for which it was written and what the author desired as an outcome for the audience. It “involves the analysis of how a particular author or group of authors has mobilized particular means of persuasion to a particular end or ends.”<sup>108</sup> David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 14. It is to read the “texts as arguments, intentional interventions in early Jewish and Christian social experience.” Carey, “Introduction: Apocalyptic Discourse, Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” 13. Apocalyptic writing can be analyzed using this threefold method of ethos, pathos, and logos. This is not to say that John or Paul had access to Aristotle or others’ Rhetoric handbooks, but that this understanding of the method of speaking and writing was pervasive (as can be seen in John’s contemporary, Cicero, and his writings such as *De invention rhetorica*). Greg Carey, “Moving an Audience: One Aspect of Pathos in the Book of Revelation,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2008), 166–67; deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 17. These authors intentionally would have attended to the pathos of the audience, appealing to their “deepest emotions.” Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 13.

<sup>109</sup> DeSilva argues this is what John was doing in Revelation. “Intentionally evoking particular emotions is the face of rhetoric most often described as manipulation, but neither John nor the modern Christian prophet calling a congregation toward a more faithful alignment with God’s commandments is the one who *introduces* appeals to pathos into the rhetorical situation. It is not a question of whether or not emotions are to be directed, engaged, ‘manipulated.’ Appeals to the emotions are already at work in social, cultural, economic, and political communications at all times. It is rather a question of raising the possibility and making the opportunity for affects and ambitions to be engaged by the countervision of the Christian traditions in ways that promote our integrity and preserve the countervoice of Christian witness, rather than continue to allow these emotions to be engaged in ways that conduce to assimilation and alienation or, at best, cowardice. John’s example challenges us to become more conscious of the emotions that particular sectors of our society arouse in us, seeking our support for their ends and participation in the processes that lead to those ends. In political addresses, news reports, and advertisements, speakers target our emotions. John understood how Roman imperial propaganda in its various forms sought to arouse awe and gratitude toward Rome and her emperors and emulation for the Roman life. John further understood how these affective experiences oriented people toward participation in practices that continued to support Roman imperialism at all levels. Redirecting these emotions toward other objects, and thus fostering other goals that would conduce to preserving the witness of the group and the group’s quest for God’s justice, was a necessary part of the rebuttal to society’s rhetoric.” deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 341.

<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Moo, “Climate Change and the Apocalyptic Imagination: Science, Faith, and Ecological Responsibility,” *Zygon* 50, no. 4 (2015): 938. Rhetorical analysis thus provides a particularly relevant way to read apocalyptic writings, for, as Yarbo Collins argues, apocalypses are “intended to interpret the present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.” Quoted in Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World*, 5–6. The goal of Christian apocalyptic writing was to move the hearers to certain ends, in other words, to form their audience.

purpose of the book is not to impart information. It is rather to call for commitment to the actions, attitudes, and feelings uttered.”<sup>111</sup> Eugene Peterson contends, humans “have not gotten new ideas out of the Apocalypse—they have found new feelings.”<sup>112</sup> Apocalyptic writings have the ability to elicit and create certain feelings in order to form and motivate the listener.<sup>113</sup>

Emotions are elicited through various means, such as symbols, images, strange creatures, and peculiar numbers. In apocalyptic literature, emotions arise especially from the presence of what the Greeks called, *ekphrasis*, or vivid description. Stewart contends, “the goal of *ekphrasis* is to rouse an emotional response in its hearers... [It has the power to] shape one’s imagination and produce certain emotions.”<sup>114</sup> As Witherington explains regarding John’s Apocalypse, his visions seek, “to make a vivid impression on his audience so as to stir their emotions with the ultimate aim of them heeding his exhortations in these letters.”<sup>115</sup> This use of vivid language and symbols invites the hearer to imagine themselves and their world differently. We see imagination is thus key to apocalyptic works. The works invite the hearer to participate in this world through the imagination. Emotions are a corollary of this participation and personal engagement with the work.<sup>116</sup> “To the extent that our imaginations are engaged by John’s descriptions, our emotions will be the more directly aroused by the impressions made upon our imaginations.”<sup>117</sup> And it is this (prophetic) imagination that is necessary for bringing

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<sup>111</sup> Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 144.

<sup>112</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, “Apocalypse: The Medium Is the Message,” *Theology Today* 26, no. 2 (July 1, 1969): 140.

<sup>113</sup> In terms of apocalyptic literature, feelings such as fear, aversion, admiration, and hope are often cited.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander E. Stewart, “Ekphrasis, Fear, and Motivation in the Apocalypse of John,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 27, no. 2 (2017): 232, 235.

<sup>115</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91.

<sup>116</sup> Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 144–45.

<sup>117</sup> deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 196.



about both the critical sense of what is and the possibility and energizing promise of another reality.<sup>118</sup> There is a critical, subversive element.<sup>119</sup> As Oliver O'Donovan argues, the "function of political criticism [in Revelation] is to stretch the boundaries of the political imagination itself... The imagination is purged not merely *from* the political but *for* the political too."<sup>120</sup> Imagination is engaged in order to evoke emotion which realign a person's commitments and loyalties.

This same use of theology in invoking the imagination can be seen in Barth's apocalyptic theology in *The Christian Life*. We above discussed Barth's explicit mention of particular emotions in our struggle against the lordless powers (zeal, gratitude, joy, and hope), but he also makes implicit attempts to evoke certain emotion in his readers. Through vivid discussions of Leviathan, Mammon, Ideologies, and the chthonic powers, one's imagination is piqued and the reader is invited to perceive the world afresh. This can be seen in the negative emotions of revulsion and aversion toward evil and the lordless forces that Barth intends for his readers. Unmasking reveals the hideousness of these powers. Their attractive propositions are shown to be empty promises. By showing them for what they are (demonic), we recognize their opposition to humanity. This provokes a reaction of disgust as the reader grasps that certain societal norms which had been assumed good or amoral are in fact destructive. Barth hopes to provoke a desire to shun these powers and to embrace an alternate way of being. His theology serves the

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<sup>118</sup> Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 3.

<sup>119</sup> Edith M. Humphrey, "In Search of a Voice: Rhetoric through Sight and Sound in Revelation 11:15-12:17," in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Greg Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 1999), 155.

<sup>120</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, "History and Politics in the Book of Revelation," in *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present*, ed. O'Donovan, Oliver and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 29-30.

purpose of shaping the imagination and emotion of the Christian community. Theodramatic theology is an important way in which the church is morally formed.

Second, the imagination of the community is shaped through worship. James K.

A. Smith calls worship the “imagination station.”<sup>121</sup> He goes on,

formative Christian worship paints a picture of the beauty of the Lord – and a vision of the *shalom* he desires for creation in a way that captures our imagination. If we act *toward* what we long for, and if we long for what has captured our imagination, then re-formative Christian worship needs to capture our imagination. That means Christian worship needs to meet us as *aesthetic* creatures who are moved more than we are convinced. Our imaginations are aesthetic organs.<sup>122</sup>

Worship is particularly vital for creating people who care about justice. Mark Labberton argues, “many of the classical elements of Christian worship are invaluable tools for confronting power abuse. It would be a great help if we let these elements speak to us. The best liturgies of Christian worship, whether high-church or low-church, mainline or evangelical, offer protocols for understanding power, unmasking its illusions and realigning our limits as well as our vocations in relation to power.”<sup>123</sup> These elements of imagination formation include the preaching of the Word, song, prayer, and the sacraments. Through the act of worship and praise, we come to see the world more as God does. Ellen Davis writes, “the truth is that praise does more for *us* than it does for God... This is a crucial insight about the essential function of praise. Praising God is not concocted flattery, but the most earnest human business we can undertake. Ultimately, it

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<sup>121</sup> James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2016), xi.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, 91.

<sup>123</sup> Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God’s Call to Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2007), 114. He adds later, “in a culture that often defines imagination by spectacle, God’s people should be using their imaginations to put us in the vanguard of imaginative acts of love and justice.” Labberton, 149.

is for the sake of the world: we praise God in order to see the world as God does.”<sup>124</sup> In worship, the concepts and language in which we categorize the world and our experiences take form. Our song and music are also vital for formation. Begbie maintains, “music is particularly well suited for being a vehicle of emotional renewal in worship, an extraordinary instrument through which the Holy Spirit can begin to remake and transform us in the likeness of Christ, the one true Worshiper.”<sup>125</sup> The sacraments (or ordinances) also shape us.<sup>126</sup> Markus Barth argues, “if the Lord’s Supper has the social and ethical nature I have sketched, then its radiance cannot disappear when the assembly for worship ends. It fills and determines the everyday lives of all who participate.”<sup>127</sup> Baptism marks the conversion of the believer and also an opportunity of solidarity for the rest of the community in foregoing the way of sin. Barth argues, “in undertaking to baptize him, to acknowledge him as a new member, it has every reason to accept solidarity with him, to associate itself with him in his turning aside from that old path, in realizing afresh that this is a path which it has left, which is closed and barred to it.”<sup>128</sup> Worship is the place where our imagination and emotions are shaped to form us into people of God that have a heart after God, and therefore, for justice.

Third, the community’s imagination is shaped through shared life. It is not enough to go to church once a week and then leave. When we spend one hour a week in

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<sup>124</sup> Ellen F. Davis, *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Lanham, Md: Cowley Publications, 2001), 34.

<sup>125</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, *A Peculiar Orthodoxy: Reflections on Theology and the Arts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018), 76. However, Begbie continues on to warn that the emotional power of music is open to abuse.

<sup>126</sup> Later in life, Barth argued there is only one sacrament, and that is Jesus Christ. Baptism by water and the Lord’s Supper are human responses to what God has done in Jesus Christ, and not properly sacraments. See *CD IV/4*, 108-28 and *CL*, 46.

<sup>127</sup> Markus Barth, *Rediscovering the Lord’s Supper: Communion with Israel, with Christ, and Among the Guests* (Atlanta, Ga: John Knox Press, 1988), 74.

<sup>128</sup> *CD IV/4*, 137.

communal worship and then 15 hours a week consuming social media and the news, we should expect the latter to have a much stronger influence on the imagination. To be the body of Christ requires a shared life. As Bonhoeffer argued, “the physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”<sup>129</sup> Shared life with other others is the basis of recategorization and formation. As Susan Eastman argues, “if the self is structured in other-relationship, then its liberation and health require a radically new relational matrix.”<sup>130</sup> She continues,

If human beings, then, live and move and have their being in complex, often conflicting networks, transformation also happens through those networks. This truth means that, rather than talking about change in individuals in a substantial or linear sense, perhaps it is more accurate and closer to Paul's thought to describe change rendered effective and visible through the quality of relationships. Change happens ‘between ourselves’ more than within discrete individuals... Change is elusive, evanescent, and impossible to judge fully in this life. But insofar as change happens, it happens through the characteristics of communal interaction that mediate Christ.<sup>131</sup>

As we participate in Christ through the earthly-historical body of Christ, and the church plays its role in the drama began by Christ, the imagination is shaped in ways imitative of Christ. Hope is not in individual transformations and rebellion against the powers, but in an entirely new reality outside the system of this world. The church’s hope is not in the sanctification of individual’s, but in the alien sanctification found in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, Christians are enabled to participate in the practices of the *sancta* and to become the covenant partners that God has chosen for us before the foundation of the

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<sup>129</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954), 19.

<sup>130</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 125.

<sup>131</sup> Eastman, 181–82. She continues, “It certainly is impossible for a person to discern accurately the change within himself or herself, as Paul well understood when he said, ‘I do not even judge myself’ (1 Cor 4:3). Rather, when Paul tells the Romans to think of themselves ‘with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned,’ he immediately turns their attention to the interplay of God-given gifts between them; whatever faith-informed self-assessment they do exercise will be discovered and tested in the giving and receiving of divinely gifted ministry (Rom 12:3-8). That web of relationships in the body of Christ, not isolated or inward-turned individuals, is the arena in which change happens.” Eastman, 182.

world. And it is in this participation that hopeful and apocalyptic people are formed. As Rasmussen argues, “systemic changes usually don’t materialize if they are not already present in anticipatory communities, even if those communities are modest in size and number. Anticipatory communities initially come about voluntarily; hearts, minds, and the perception of what is ‘real’ are vital elements. Outward change springs from motivation, desire, and a driving dream.”<sup>132</sup> When we see others living a life in way counter to the culture, we are enabled to imagine different ways for our own life and others.

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to position Karl Barth’s work on the lordless powers in the context of apocalyptic theology. Christ’s atoning work on the cross was not simply for the forgiveness of sins and salvation of individuals (though, it certainly was this), but marked the defeat of the powers of sin and death. As we wait for the day when Jesus Christ consummates that work, we continue to live in a world where powers are active in rebellion against God. While arising from sinful humanity, they have a semi-autonomous reality that forms humanity, particularly through the emotions. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is tasked with unmasking and rebelling against those forces in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is, Christians are called to resistance against these powers to bring about new formations in social relations. While we are ever dependent on God for the determination of the good, we can prepare for that encounter by

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<sup>132</sup> Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121.

looking to Jesus Christ. The Christian community's imagination and emotion are kingdom-tempered as they perform their role in the drama revealed in Christ.

## ***Part 2: Emotions, the Powers, and Climate Change***

We now turn to an ethical issue to fill out the role of emotion in the context of lordless powers. As in chapter four, we will turn to climate change. Climate change is a particularly fitting example because of the vast, structural dimensions associated with it, as well as the common use of “apocalyptic” language when referring to the crisis. Climate change is an example that clearly manifests the structural nature of evil. There are patterns of behavior in the United States and the globe that have put our planet on an unsustainable path. Despite growing acknowledgement that this is true, too little progress has been made. To address this discrepancy, we will return to our discussion in chapter three on the relation of individuals and social structures (the “micro-macro link”) and the bi-directional role emotions plays. Structures are emergent, causal forces that transcend individual actors, but that yet depend on individual cooperation. They shape the emotions of individuals in a society but simultaneously depend on emotions to sustain their existence.

This section proceeds in three parts, beginning with framing the issue within apocalyptic discourses. Apocalyptic language is a common way of discussing climate change and some of these attempts are surveyed. This is contrasted with the biblical interpretation of apocalyptic put forth earlier which then provides the outline for the remainder of the chapter. The second and third sections will make up the bulk of this part on climate change. They will echo the twofold nature of the relation of social structures and emotion. It was argued in chapter three that emotions are the glue that connect social

actors and structures.<sup>133</sup> There is a twofold direction between individual and structures linked by emotion. The first is that emotions are an *effect* of social structures. They shape an individual's appraisal and categorization of the world and lead to collective emotions shared among groups and society. Second, emotions are a *cause* of social structures. Emotions can support or disrupt structures. Most commonly they contribute to orderly behavior through the creation of normative emotions which regulate and enforce social norms. But emotions are also a core cause of the weakening and disruption of structures. When social change has happened in history, emotions have played a key mediating role, especially as it arose out of the margins and intersectionality.

Mirroring this bidirectional link and our approach to apocalyptic theology, the remainder of the chapter will be split between unmasking the powers (understanding how individual and collective emotions are affected by powers and ideologies that maintain our unsustainable way of life) and rebelling against the powers (considering how emotions can play a key role in disrupting social structures). First is the task of unmasking the powers. To respond to climate change, we must be aware of how the lordless powers function, particularly as they shape emotion. Particular attention will be given to the lordless powers of consumerism and individualism and their relation to climate change. Next, we look at the role of rebelling, which includes the formation of emotions that counter the powers. Since we are relational beings whose emotions are largely shaped by the groups we identify with, groups will be key in the rebellion against these powers. Focus will be on the church's role of making salient our identity in Christ and providing new ways to conceptualize the world and our experiences. A life

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<sup>133</sup> Turner, "Toward a General Sociological Theory," 319. Cf. Turner and Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, 1.

characterized by calling upon God grounded in communities of faith that are kingdom-tempered can create anticipatory communities that are an essential part of the (re)formation of society.

### Apocalypse and Climate Change

Climate change discourse frequently features apocalyptic descriptions and language. Common examples found in nonreligious contexts stress the imminent threat the earth and humanity face from climate change.<sup>134</sup> These generally describe our situation at the verge of a cascading effect of no return where we will be powerless to reverse the effects of climate change and will result in widespread destruction of our world. This can take a pessimistic form (“catastrophe is unavoidable”) or optimistic (“there is just enough time to change course”).<sup>135</sup> But even the optimistic form can create a crisis for agency with its description of impending doom and the seeming inadequacy of our actions. As Verhey argues, “an ‘apocalyptic’ imagination... dominated by catastrophic anticipation... [creates] a crisis of both meaning and agency.”<sup>136</sup> Moo points out that one of the most common criticisms of environmental apocalypses is their ineffective motivation.<sup>137</sup> He contrasts this with religious forms of apocalypse. Moo maintains, “the difference between secular and religious versions of apocalypse becomes most acute... when we ask again what role they envision for human action. Secular versions of apocalypse ask us to save ourselves from impending doom,” while religious

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<sup>134</sup> Frederick Buell, “A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse,” in *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Stefan Skrimshire (New York: Continuum, 2010), 13–36.

<sup>135</sup> Willis Jenkins, Evan Berry, and Luke Beck Kreider, “Religion and Climate Change,” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 43, no. 1 (2018): 97. The authors also note apocalyptic can be used as a pejorative term by climate skeptics and those resistant to climate change policy proposals. “Here, describing climate discourse as apocalyptic downplays the moral urgency of climate change by rhetorically associating it with religious speculation.” Jenkins, Berry, and Kreider, 97.

<sup>136</sup> Verhey, “Should Jesus Get Tenure?,” 17.

<sup>137</sup> Moo, “Climate Change and the Apocalyptic Imagination,” 940–41.



accounts expect God to be the agent that brings redemption and restoration.<sup>138</sup> However, religious accounts are not monolithic. One example of apocalyptic narratives emphasizing God's agency is found in narratives of some conservatives who use it to justify inaction against climate change and to oppose political policies addressing climate change.<sup>139</sup> Here, pretribulational and premillennial accounts of eschatology expect a future rapture of Christians out of this degenerating world which will be followed by the earth's eventual destruction by fire. The main focus of Christians, therefore, ought to be the salvation of souls, not the care for a world destined to burn.<sup>140</sup> However, Jenkins and his coauthors note, "that is not the inevitable outcome of Christian apocalypticism, which may instead construe this historical moment as a time for decisive responsibility."<sup>141</sup> Hope in God's saving action can offer significance and motivation for human agency. As Moo argues, "Apocalyptic seers like John expect God finally to bring about the redemption and restoration of all things. Yet the tradition as represented by John's apocalypse is intended finally to lend value and significance to human action in this world, even the action of those who in the eyes of the majority are powerless."<sup>142</sup> We turn to this alternative understanding of apocalyptic now, focusing on the unmasking of and revolting against the lordless powers.

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<sup>138</sup> Moo, 945.

<sup>139</sup> Jenkins, Berry, and Kreider, "Religion and Climate Change," 96.

<sup>140</sup> Drawing on 2 *Pet.* 3:10, though this is not a universal interpretation by evangelicals, for example, Douglas J Moo, "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 449–88.

<sup>141</sup> Jenkins, Berry, and Kreider, "Religion and Climate Change," 97.

<sup>142</sup> Moo, "Climate Change and the Apocalyptic Imagination," 945.

## Unmasking the Powers of Climate Change

In chapter four we discussed the vastness of the climate change challenge. Its impact will reach all facets of life throughout the globe. No one will be immune and it will have a ripple effect across societies and cultures. That climate change is evil is clear: it does great damage to the world that God has created and great harm to humans, particularly the world's most vulnerable. Unfortunately, our response to the patterns of behavior that have given rise to the current crisis is not straightforward. Americans have tended to identify the root issue as attributable to the aggregate behavior of individuals, and thus the response has focused on changing consumer decisions.<sup>143</sup> This section will highlight two ideologies or lordless powers which have fostered both the crisis and the inadequate response: consumerism and individualism. These ideologies have been embodied in social structures and have had a particularly pernicious effect on climate change.

A reigning ideology in the United States is consumerism. Laura Hartman defines consumerism as “an ethos – a collection of attitudes, values, and cultural constructs – that places great value on shopping and consumption, such that consumption defines the parameters of the good life and the ultimate goals of the human, and a concomitant lack of attention to the moral dimensions of consumption.”<sup>144</sup> Purchases make possible the good life and a means for forming an identity. As such, they become a principal means in which to communicate who we are and what we value. Klein writes, “late capitalism

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<sup>143</sup> There are some on the political left who overemphasize the structural nature of climate change in a way that individuals can be seen as having little to no agency. This also can be attributed to lordless powers, but since the more influential pattern in the USA is in the opposite direction, the individualistic powers will be the focus here.

<sup>144</sup> Laura M. Hartman, *The Christian Consumer: Living Faithfully in a Fragile World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

teaches us to create ourselves through our consumer choices: shopping is how we form our identities, find community, and express ourselves.”<sup>145</sup> The things we acquire and consume are the way we express who we are, the groups we identify with, and convey that which we find important.

Consumerism’s attention to the inadequacies and incompleteness of people due to the lack of some product or service is a key feature of this power; we are missing out on some good that will provide satisfaction. Where the good life is lacking, our purchases offer the promise of salvation. In the face of alleged deficiencies, our acquisitions “hold out a sort of redemption in and through the goods and services the market provides. Goods and services will save you.”<sup>146</sup> This extends beyond the individual level to offer social hope. Injustices can be rectified by making the right buys.

A closely related power is individualism. Individualism is an ideology that “values independence and self-reliance above all else.”<sup>147</sup> It emphasizes self-sufficiency and self-expression and is accompanied by social practices that elevate the individual’s interests above collectives. This focus on individual autonomy and independence manifests in various ways and crosses the political divide. In some settings it exhibits in the desire to be self-reliant in relation to one’s community and friends. We do not want to have to ask for help or depend on others. Knowing neighbors is thus a low priority and emphasis is put on purchasing whatever one needs. In this way, individualism is closely

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<sup>145</sup> Klein, *On Fire*, 122. Lifestyle choices even become a primary means to expressing our political beliefs. Klein, 132.

<sup>146</sup> Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 50.

<sup>147</sup> Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 3rd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), xiv.

connected to consumerism. Our ability to buy whatever we need makes us independent.<sup>148</sup>

Other groups express individualism as a focus on individual rights and skepticism of government interventions. So, for example, mask directives amidst a pandemic can be seen as an attack on one's liberties. When tied to economics, such views are associated with neoliberalism. Individual freedom and deregulated markets are seen as the most effective means for achieving a strong economy and society.<sup>149</sup> A cynicism toward government and bureaucracy is often coupled with a confidence in the invisible hand of the market to bring about the best possible society. The solution to society's problems is not government or community organizing, but the free market. Working out of self-interest, individuals and corporations will address the problems of society in the most efficient way. Thus, the most effective way for an individual to make a social difference is with the wallet.<sup>150</sup> "Consumer choices can be a substitute for political action," Wallace-

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<sup>148</sup> This form of individualism is associated with both conservatives and progressives. While progressives in general are more collectivist in thinking, they also are often less likely to know their neighbors or be in a position to ask for or offer help to those in need in one's community (especially in urban settings). Additionally, individualism often is expressed in the tendency to value self-expression and charting one's own path rather than conforming to communal expectations or tradition. Nicole Stephens and Sarah Townsend, "Research: How You Feel About Individualism Is Influenced by Your Social Class," *Harvard Business Review*, May 22, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/05/research-how-you-feel-about-individualism-is-influenced-by-your-social-class>.

<sup>149</sup> Neoliberalism is not to be identified with capitalist society as such, but a certain form of capitalism, namely free-market capitalism and a reduction in government provided social services. Neoliberalism places profits as the primary goal for bringing about a better and more just world, and generally opposes regulation as an obstacle to this end.

<sup>150</sup> Once again, consumerism is linked to this ideology. Kenneth Himes offers three understandings of consumerism. Consumerism as a "way of life," is closest to what was described above, but another meaning has to do with a particular relation to neoliberalism. In this understanding, "consumerism is a way of talking about a market mentality that defends individuals' freedom of choice and entrepreneurship while criticizing economic models like communism, socialism, or other approaches that interfere with rational agents making decisions in minimally regulated free markets." Kenneth R. Himes O.F.M., "Consumerism and Christian Ethics," *Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 133.

Wells writes, “one can do good for the world simply by buying well.”<sup>151</sup> Neoliberalism’s great myth is that we can save ourselves through our consumer choices.

Consumerism and individualism bequeath an ethic that considers most evil or wrong actions to be the result of bad actors who intentionally act in ways that bring harm. If we identify particular acts, and identify the bad motives, this will lead to a solution. The focus, then, is on consumers changing their lifestyles and choices. Social structures are simply the aggregate behavior of individuals, and thus social change will arise from enough consumers modifying their behavior. In regards to climate change, consumers need to change out light bulbs for energy efficient ones, take shorter showers, buy electric cars, buy a smaller home, forego a long-distance vacation, and recycle more. As an example, we can look to how such a perspective can play out with diet and climate change. In *We are the Weather*, Jonathan Safran Foer argues that addressing climate change needs to begin at the kitchen table.<sup>152</sup> Food is a major source of most people’s carbon footprint, due particularly to food waste and meat consumption.<sup>153</sup> A key way to struggle against climate change is through dietary choices that reduce our carbon footprint. If we can get enough people to change our diet, then we can save the world. Individual actions are seen as the key to social change and the solution to our environmental crisis. If enough consumers act, then systems will change.

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<sup>151</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 189.

<sup>152</sup> Jonathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019). Foer acknowledges that collective action is needed, but the way to go about that is through persuading individuals (a task in which Foer excels).

<sup>153</sup> Annie Lowrey, “Your Diet Is Cooking the Planet,” *The Atlantic*, April 6, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/04/rules-eating-fight-climate-change/618515/>. If food waste was a country, it would be the third highest greenhouse emitting country in the world. Amelia Nierenberg, “One Thing Your City Can Do: Reduce Food Waste,” *The New York Times*, December 11, 2019, sec. Climate, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/climate/nyt-climate-newsletter-food-waste.html>.

However, climate change challenges this narrative in a number of ways. Three will be considered here. First, the crisis is not primarily the product of people or groups who intended harm. Climate change is largely a result of well-meaning people who acted with good intentions and yet their collective action has had destructive effects.<sup>154</sup> Many have acted out of virtuous motivations such as making good use of their financial assets and providing delights for family and loved ones. Getting a “good deal” on a cheap shirt can be seen as a virtue; it’s an example of being frugal and a good steward of one’s money. However, the social impact on workers a world away or the environmental impact is often not included in the calculus of the “good deal.”<sup>155</sup> Additionally, decisions are often made in a genuine attempt to provide the best for oneself and one’s family. We have a responsibility to care for those closest to us, so buying things that bring opportunities to excel and happiness are often prioritized over the long-term environmental and social impacts. The truth is, Moe-Lobeda argues, the United States, “is a society rich with compassionate and well-intentioned people who, nevertheless, live in ways that spell death for many of Earth’s most impoverished human beings and for the planetary web of life.”<sup>156</sup> She explains, “economic exploitation is woven into our lives.” This,

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<sup>154</sup> Not all have acted without realizing the effect. Rich argues oil companies, the automobile industry, electric utilities, and the U.S. Government have all known about climate change for decades, and many acted to undermine attempts to address it. Nathaniel Rich, *Losing Earth: A Recent History* (New York: MCD, 2019), 189–91.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 128–29.

<sup>156</sup> Moe-Lobeda, 4. Along this same line, she argues, “this is not the evil of intentional or willful cruelty. Rather, it is evil that inhabits our lives by virtue of the economic policies, practices, institutions, and assumptions that shape how we live. The ‘we’ in this inquiry are the world’s small minority of extravagantly consuming people, especially those of us in the United States. Many of the movements and rhythms, the practices and products of our daily lives have destructive, even deadly impacts on countless impoverished people. Although we do not intend harm, our ways of life are killing people through climate change and through enslaving them in mines or plantations, poisoning their water or selling it on the global market, taking their land and homes, obliterating their fish supplies, and more. Moreover, through myriad

does not refer primarily to direct acts of exploitation. It may well be that I do not underpay my employees, own or manage a sweatshop, engage in ‘wage theft,’ relocate my company to skirt environmental standards or labor protection laws, and so on. Nevertheless, my life benefits materially from these and other exploitative practices or the policies and principles that enable them. These practices, policies, and principle are systemic and they are historical.<sup>157</sup>

It is not easy to disentangle ourselves from these systemic injustices, particularly for those without a great deal of financial means and flexibility. Even for well-meaning people who harbor no ill-intention, participation in structures of injustice is a way of life.

Second, a consumerist mentality tends to assume evil effects align with particular actions. This fits well with the moral stories we like to tell of heroes and villains. If there is a toxic chemical found in a river, we can assume that a person or corporation is to blame. However, the evils connected with climate change do not fit well with such narratives. While climate change arises from a cause (greenhouse gases), emissions are widespread and a particular emission cannot be identified with a specific environmental disaster. Greenhouse gases arise from the burning of fossil fuels for electricity and running automobiles, from landfill methane emissions, from food waste, and a host of other sources. Jenkins summarizes the challenge of applying an individual ethic to climate change:

instead of clear harms caused by direct actions of discrete agents, climate impacts are the indirect, cumulative outcome of many actions aggregated across space and time and mediated by nonlinear ecological systems. Burning carbon fuels counts as pollution now because of a century of emissions by agents who did not understand its consequences and because it happens in a web of trillions of similar acts. A decade from now, when someone dies of malaria in a region previously too cool for anopheles mosquitoes, the dispersed and mediated web of human influence makes assigning blame for killing difficult, even though avoidable harm clearly happened.<sup>158</sup>

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forms of ecological degradation we are disrupting a fundamental quality of God’s garden—its life-generating capacity. We are *uncreating*.” Moe-Lobeda, xvii.

<sup>157</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 12.

<sup>158</sup> Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence,” 72.

Heroes and villains are difficult to portray here, because the moral responsibility of climate change is murky<sup>159</sup> While it might not make for good TV, the reality of climate change calls for a response that does not depend on drawing a clear line between certain actions to particular disasters.

Third, consumerism and neoliberalism expect individual consumers to be the agents to bring about social change. In reality, individual consumer choices make little difference to climate change, and especially do little to effect the patterns of society that lead to the causes of climate change. A person who decides to abstain from meat or to live a simpler life makes little difference in a society that artificially keeps the price of meat low and where cheap products are made with the assumption they can be thrown away and replaced after a short period. Bill McKibben notes the futility in this approach: “dealing with that crisis one light bulb at a time is as noble as it is pointless. We need massive reductions in the amount of carbon flowing into the atmosphere.”<sup>160</sup> Wallace-Wells agrees, “the climate calculus is such that individual lifestyle choices do not add up to much, unless they are scaled by politics... We frequently choose to obsess over personal consumption, in part because it is within our control and in part as a very contemporary form of virtue signaling. But ultimately those choices are, in almost all cases, trivial contributions, ones that blind us to the more important forces.”<sup>161</sup> To address

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<sup>159</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 148.

<sup>160</sup> Bill McKibben, “Resisting Consumerism, Building Community,” in *Resist!: Christian Dissent for the 21st Century*, ed. Michael G. Long (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008), 94.

<sup>161</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 34, 90. Similarly, Klein bluntly insists, “the very idea that we, as atomized individuals, even lots of atomized individuals, could play a significant part in stabilizing the planet’s climate system or changing the global economy is objectively nuts. We can only meet this tremendous challenge together, as part of a massive and organized global movement.” Klein, *On Fire*, 133.



those forces, we need collective action and structural change. But these go against the foundational principles of neoliberalism.

We can return to Foer's contention that addressing climate change must begin with our diet. In Mark Bittman's review of the book, he is skeptical of this approach, not least because he and plenty of others have written similar accounts without any significant change in the behavior of Americans. He contends, "the argument that to address this requires changes in personal behavior so that the market is forced to respond has not worked... The truth is not news: For personal health, for lives to be less threatened by changing climate, people must eat differently. How to do this is not debatable — more plants, fewer animals, less junk — yet those who profit from the status quo will fight those changes through marketing and obfuscation of facts."<sup>162</sup> There are forces at work ensuring that prices are kept artificially low through public policies. The true costs, especially the environmental and health cost, are not included. Lobbying and interest groups use exploitive means to convince legislators and the public that these products are not so bad, or at least we cannot be sure their impact. Thus, a book geared at convincing middle to upper class whites to change their diet will not change systems. Bittman continues, "human nature is not the reason that our diet consists of large amounts of meat and junk food; availability, access and marketing determine that. For people to eat and act differently, different tools, beneficial rather than exploitative, must be employed."<sup>163</sup> Above all, government coordinated intervention with laws, stronger

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<sup>162</sup> Mark Bittman, "Meat Is Murder. But You Know That Already.," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2019, sec. Books, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/17/books/review/we-are-the-weather-jonathan-safran-foer.html>.

<sup>163</sup> Bittman.

enforcement, and financial investment is needed.<sup>164</sup> In the words of Wallace-Wells, “we won’t get there [a reduction of carbon emissions to a sustainable level] through the dietary choices of individuals, but through policy changes.”<sup>165</sup> The danger of Bittman and Wallace-Wells’ perspectives is structures can appear reified and an individual’s choices determined by the systems. Ironically, such a focus can lead to reduced motivation to change one’s lifestyle which will act to maintain the current patterns of society. As we proceed, we will continue to attend to the relation of the individual and social structures.

In sum, consumerism imagines the solution to society’s ills coming through consumers making more just purchases, a view bolstered by neoliberalism’s related expectation that corporations will follow the lead of consumers and make decisions in society’s best interest. However, this does not capture the reality of climate change or other complex social issues. Consumer choices can make a difference, but it is only as part of concerted collective actions. The Montgomery bus boycott and the Nashville sit-ins were successful because of collective organizing that began with communities on the margins and the cooperation of allies. Their goal was not to change enough individual minds about racism so that desegregation would occur naturally (though, the changing of hearts by drawing attention to the injustices was certainly an aim for creating the Beloved Community). Rather, their goal was more just laws and structures. Consumerism has limited effectiveness on changing structures when individuals act in isolation from organization and legal means. When an issue such as climate change has arisen from generally well-meaning people, where actions have only an indirect connection to the

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<sup>164</sup> Bittman cites an article by McKibben arguing for an approach similar to the government led attack in World War II. See Bill McKibben, “A World at War,” *The New Republic*, August 15, 2016, <https://newrepublic.com/article/135684/declare-war-climate-change-mobilize-wwii>.

<sup>165</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 187.

harm produced, and where consumer choices have little effect on the larger problem, a different tact is needed. The challenge is that consumerism and individualism are powers with an engrained hold on the Western imagination which makes finding effective ways to address our common problem difficult. As Klein argues, “we have not done the things necessary to lower emissions because those things fundamentally conflict with deregulated capitalism, the reigning ideology.”<sup>166</sup> In other words, this ideology has become a lordless power exerting control over our collective actions. Bell writes, “this is what the Pauline discourse on powers and principalities is all about: control, dominion, and who has it. And the answer is, disturbing perhaps, not us. Which is why it is so appropriate to talk about economy, and specifically capitalism or the free market economy as a power or principality. The free market exercises a dominion over our lives that clearly exceeds the ability of our power to change.”<sup>167</sup> Consumerism and individualism have emerged into forces that transcends any individual. They have become dehumanizing hegemonic powers in our society that demand unquestioning allegiance.

To say that the powers are hegemonic is to point to the often unnoticed way they function in shaping assumptions and ordering a society. The shared perspective of a society produces a “hegemonic vision.” Moe Lobeda explains, “this term refers to the constellation of socially constructed perceptions and assumptions about ‘what is,’ ‘what could be,’ and ‘what ought to be’ that maintain the power or privilege of some people

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<sup>166</sup> Klein, *On Fire*, 249. She argues the rise of neoliberalism coincided at just the time when collective action was becoming most necessary: “Deregulated capitalism began major spread in 80s and waged war on very idea of collective sphere right when collective action needed most.” Klein, 120.

<sup>167</sup> Daniel M. Bell Jr., “Christ and the Free Market,” in *Life Amid the Principalities: Identifying, Understanding, and Engaging Created, Fallen, and Disarmed Powers Today*, ed. Michael Root and James J. Buckley (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016), 82.

over others, and ‘blind’ the former to that privilege... ideas have the power to shape social reality and to do so in ways that may not be recognized by those who benefit most from that constructed reality.”<sup>168</sup> Hegemonic vision impedes imagining the world in any other way than the status quo. So, since consumerism is a hegemonic power, while “climate change demands that we consume less,” Klein contends, “being consumers is all we know.”<sup>169</sup> This contributes to what Jenkins calls our “moral incompetence” in the face of climate change. He writes, “because it is prior and hegemonic, a consumerist pattern of cultural action commodifies even countercultural values.”<sup>170</sup> The primary way we know to address the problem of climate change brought on by consumerism is through our purchasing power (e.g., buying an electric car or some other environmentally friendly goods). Consumerism has become a lordless power with hegemonic control over western society.

A primary way these hegemonic powers function is through the imagination and emotions. In chapter three, we discussed how social structures shape how a person appraises the world which leads to the development of affective dispositions. The patterns in which we participate shape the way we feel and imagine objects and society. Wallace-Wells argues that when it comes to climate change, “we suffer from an incredible failure of imagination.”<sup>171</sup> We suffer not simply from a lack of imagination, but from a corrupted imagination. Our imagination fails not only in the contemplation of risks, but also of solutions. The role of imagination is indicated in the term “hegemonic

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<sup>168</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 88. Or, as Portier-Young summarizes, “hegemony refers to social and ideological structures that create and maintain conditions of subordination and to the strategies and actions that aim to establish, maintain, or augment these structures.” Portier-Young, “Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature,” 147.

<sup>169</sup> Klein, *On Fire*, 122.

<sup>170</sup> Jenkins, “Atmospheric Powers, Global Injustice, and Moral Incompetence,” 69.

<sup>171</sup> Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, 143.

vision.” Our imagination – both how we see how the world is and what it could be – is shaped by consumerism and individualism. Emilie Townes calls such an imagination that sustains structural evil the “fantastic hegemonic imagination.”<sup>172</sup> She writes, in addition to rational mechanisms, “structural evil is also maintained by more heuristic forces that emerge from the imagination as emotion, intuition, and yearning.”<sup>173</sup> In other words, a corrupted imagination exists when evil has become ordinary and mundane.

Such an imagination produces distorted emotions. Consumerism in particular works through emotion. The marketing and business worlds realize that consumers largely do not make choices based on rational reasons but on emotion. One Harvard professor argues 95% of all customer decisions are made subconsciously, primarily based on emotion.<sup>174</sup> The key to a successful business is to realize that consumers are not primarily rational creatures but rather make decision based on emotion. For those in the marketing and business who can find a strategy to connect to the emotions of consumers, “the payoff can be huge.”<sup>175</sup> The key of consumerism is then twofold: to provoke an emotional dissatisfaction and to offer the expectation of finding contentment in some good. Wirzba maintains,

the triumph of consumerism as the world's leading ideology in the last century has everything to do with creating insecure and ungrateful consumers, people who do not appreciate what really is valuable and important in life. Because we are ignorant about the true requirements of life and the wealth of memberships that nurture it along the way, we are readily convinced that products can substitute for relationships. In the absence of relationships that feed and inspire us, we turn to products to fill the void. When the void becomes large enough, there is simply no

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<sup>172</sup> She draws here on Foucault and Gramsci's works. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 18ff.

<sup>173</sup> Townes, 18.

<sup>174</sup> Gerald Zaltman, *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2003).

<sup>175</sup> Scott Magids, Alan Zorfas, and Daniel Leemon, “The New Science of Customer Emotions,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 2015, <https://hbr.org/2015/11/the-new-science-of-customer-emotions>.

limit to the number of products we need to make our lives whole or a joy. Life becomes an endless shopping trip for happiness.”<sup>176</sup>

Emotion play a fundamental role in maintaining the power’s hegemony. As products become a way to build one’s identity and to express beliefs, the buying of things create strong emotions.<sup>177</sup> We judge others by what they own, and measure ourselves against them. The products we own make us proud, ashamed, happy, despairing, insecure, and exhilarated. We are formed to be a people who find out worth and identity in things. The powers of consumerism and individualism work through the emotions to retain their hegemonic influence.<sup>178</sup>

We can connect this section to the theological notion of sin. Climate change is indeed the result of individual sins. People know that certain decisions are not good for the environment and yet proceed to act in ways detrimental to God’s creation. But individual sins are not the only issue: social sin is also involved. Sin relates not only to individual acts but also indwells in the patterns of social behavior. This is closely related to Paul’s discussions of Sin as a personified power exercising dominion in our world.<sup>179</sup> It is important to address sins (as will be discussed), but it must not be at the expense of acknowledging the Sin active in our world.

In this section we have sought to unmask some of the demonic powers at work in our society. Consumerism and individualism seek our unending loyalty. Even so, they act

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<sup>176</sup> Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>177</sup> The desires of the consumer are not to be seen in individualistic or in purely psychological terms, but as mediated by culture. Eva Illouz, “Emotions, Imagination and Consumption: A New Research Agenda,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9, no. 3 (November 1, 2009): 377–413.

<sup>178</sup> Neoliberalism also relies on the emotions to control workers. For finance-based corporations to increase profits, they need total commitment which means workers ought to have their desires align with the goals of the companies. Kathryn Tanner, *Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 64.

<sup>179</sup> Especially in *Rom.* 5-7

as dehumanizing forces, resulting in patterns of behavior that do not bring lasting satisfaction but result in an ever desire for more. The consequence has been disastrous on the environment and on the quality of human life, especially for the poor. The desire for new products to fill the dissatisfaction we need results in greater greenhouse emissions, and the individualistic solution it provides is ineffective to making meaningful change. And yet, they retain their influence by affecting our emotions, which in turn support their domination in our society.

### Rebelling Against the Powers of Climate Change

Unmasking of the powers is the first step in the Christian's response to climate change. But it is not enough to simply be aware and acknowledge the effects of the powers, they must be resisted. This final section will attend to the relation of individual and group action to structures and to the role of emotion in rebelling against the powers. As to the former, we have argued on the one hand that individual actions are ineffective at bringing about social change because of the sway of social structures. On the other hand, we contended structures ought not be seen as reified systems that annul human agency. While individuals' actions alone make little difference, the cooperation of individuals is yet necessary for bring about meaningful social change. Moe-Lobeda calls this the "paradox of privilege," for "while individuals' actions will not alone dismantle systems of evil, *those systems will only be dismantled if individuals do act*. Our actions toward justice are vital, even while they may seem inconsequential."<sup>180</sup> Individuals are necessary because collective action depends on people doing their part to work cooperatively. Furthermore, individual actions are also vital because they help shape the

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<sup>180</sup> Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 98.

person and their emotions in ways that prepare them to disrupt structures in other ways. Rasmussen agrees that individual choices have limited impact on addressing the huge problem of climate change: “the individualist, voluntary focus on what-you-can-do-to-save-the-planet is an exercise in futility.”<sup>181</sup> However while they are sometimes derided as merely “symbolic action,” Rasmussen yet sees value in our individual choices, for “that action sends an important signal even if, of itself, it doesn’t produce widespread change... prophetic symbols and practices, even modes ones, move people in a direction that lets them embrace bigger changes when the moment is ripe and options are forced. Small changes are often the leaven of a better order. They are like water softening-up compacted soil, allowing new seeds to grow.”<sup>182</sup> These small steps are the seeds of a new imagination, of alternatives to the prevalent practices of a society.

To illustrate, we can return to the debate between Foer and Bittman. Food production is an important factor for climate change, and any hope for responding to the climate crisis must attend to diet and the food industry. However, Bittman is surely right that pleading with individuals (primarily middle to upper class whites) to change their diet will not bring about significant change to address climate change. Individual actions alone make little difference (only a miniscule reduction in global carbon emissions) and elegant pleas have not led to widespread changes in diet. But, Foer is also correct in contending that individuals living in countercultural ways is a necessary element in bringing about social change. Particularly in the context of community, changing one’s life in corresponding ways is crucial for persevering in lobbying for systemic change (such as with regulations and policies). Beyond simply virtue signaling, diet can become

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<sup>181</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith*, 120.

<sup>182</sup> Rasmussen, 120.



a meaningful symbol of another way of relating to creation. The way we eat shapes the imagination and is thus an element in forming one's own and other's emotions which in turn is essential for bringing about structural changes.

While individuals are essential, communities remain the locus for social ethics. Communities are significant for social ethics because it is within a collective that individual action can participate in something larger than oneself. For example, an individualistic approach to consumerism could be to simplify one's life by buying fewer items and buying more sustainable products. But in this approach, consumerism continues as a primary means by which we respond to consumerism. A more communitarian approach will form communities built around sharing and sustainable communal practices. As Bill McKibben writes, "the opposite of consumerism is not simplicity. The opposite of consumerism is community."<sup>183</sup> Communities provide the setting to participate in ways of being that oppose the lordless powers. Furthermore, community is important as the context for individual formation. Personal growth characteristically occurs in the context of the growth of a community and its collective imagination. As intersubjective people, we experience change and growth embedded in relational matrixes. Chapter three explored the critical role of communities in shaping emotions. Self-categorization into groups forms identities and effects event appraisals which result in shared emotions. The collective imagination and emotion of communities

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<sup>183</sup> McKibben, "Resisting Consumerism," 92. He continues, "Dealing with that crisis one light bulb at a time is as noble as it is pointless. We need massive reductions in the amount of carbon flowing into the atmosphere. And one way to get there is to reorient our economic lives away from individual consumerism and toward the consumption of companionship, experience, community." McKibben, 94.

in turn inspires and sustains ethical action that would be difficult for an individual alone.<sup>184</sup>

The Christian community is not only a social group but is also the body of Christ. Kingdom-tempered emotions develop in communities that embody the Christian drama in its doctrine, worship, and fellowship. These practices are a way of recategorizing our experiences. An apocalyptic imagination that looks to the event of the cross as an act of judgment on evil can bestow hope in the future when all looks bleak. Hope is grounded in a loving God who has already decisively intervened in the world and who has promised to redeem all things. As we more closely identify with the church, our identity in Christ is made more salient and bring kingdom-tempered emotions to the fore.

So what is the role of emotion in responding to climate change? The argument thus far is that climate change has arisen from hegemonic ideologies and social structures that surreptitiously operate through affect. The unmasking has attended to the powers sway on the emotions of individuals and groups. We now turn to the opposite direction of this relation and consider how emotions maintain and disrupt systems. While emotions typically support the status quo, they are also a necessary element in the struggle against the powers. We conclude with a discussion of kingdom-tempered emotions related to the fact of anthropogenic climate change.

In the previous chapter we talked about the relevance of reverence, joy, zeal, and hope for climate change. These emotions are not ends in themselves and both lordless powers and participation in Christ can provoke such emotions. It is not the emotions alone that matter, but the objects of the emotions and how they affect our interactions

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<sup>184</sup> McAfee, Connell, and Doubleday, "How (and Why) to Stay Optimistic When It Feels like the Environment Is Falling Apart."

with God, creatures, and all of creation. In other words, emotions based on the criterion of relationality found in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Emotions that prepare us to respond to the command of God are such that draw us into relation with God and into solidarity with fellow-humanity, particularly the vulnerable, and into care for the creation that God loves. Where consumerism promotes wonder at commodities, the dramas of creation and God's incarnational rescue mission evoke reverence for God and life created by God. Life recategorized as a loan produces emotions of awe that rightly translate into action that undermines the purchase of things as the basis of identity and shifts one's identity to God's gracious gift of life and relationship. Where consumerism offers a (fleeting) happiness in the consumption of goods and services, life perceived as a gift offers joy that sustains and refreshes when the struggle for justice is difficult. Such a joy is crucial for apocalyptic times when the course of history appears hopeless. While individualism promotes fervor for the ideology of the autonomous human being, a zeal for God manifests in desiring what God loves and the relations for which we are created. God's actions in Christ ought to create a passion for human justice. Where individualism puts confidence in one's self-sufficiency, hope tempered by the kingdom recognizes God's continuing presence even when events look grim. Such a hope fosters the motivation for the continued struggle to care for creation and love our global neighbors. God's defeat of the rebellious powers motivates and sustains moral action in the face of seemingly intractable evil. In sum, as these emotions become part of the ethos of a community, the dominance of consumerism and individualism are challenged. These powers begin to be undermined as a community witnesses to a new way of being and invite others to imagine a different possibility for human existence. Furthermore, these

emotions sustain actors in working for structural change through regulatory changes, funding priorities, and other similar means.

What we are arguing here is for a Christocentric ecological response. We can expect a community shaped by participation in Jesus Christ will have a zeal for that which God loves (all of creation, and especially human life), a reverence, respect, and wonder for those same things, and a joy that sustains the moral life when following Christ is challenging. The church can become an anticipatory community and the seed of a different way of being in our relation to the planet. Moral agency in the midst of overwhelming problem becomes possible.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that emotion is a basic human capacity which shapes our interactions with God, fellow humanity, and all of creation. Humans are created for fellowship with God and solidarity with fellow creatures. While this is revealed in Jesus Christ, other disciplines shed light on how particular capacities enable us to fulfill that revealed determination. Thus, chapters 2 and 3 were spent investigating this capacity by attending to the natural and social sciences and philosophy. These chapters explored what is the nature of emotion, how it develops, and what is its role in the moral life. I traced representatives from diverse fields that reckon emotions as judgments or construals of internal physiological states and external events and how those experiences are perceived to relate to one's values. They are socially formed through experience and language and are intimately connected with human behavior – both on an individual and on a social level. While these fields fruitfully shed insight on the nature of emotion, we must turn elsewhere for normative criteria with which to evaluate emotions. Barth's ethic is centered on the command of God which decides the good, but much of his ethical project is focused on the task of ethical instruction and preparation for that command. Within such a preparatory context, ethical criteria based on the revelation of Jesus Christ and our determination for God and others becomes indispensable for the moral life. According to Barth's theological framework, emotions ought to correspond to the radical love of God manifested in God's decision to be for humanity as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The quality of relationships (with God, humans, especially the most vulnerable, and all of creation) engendered by emotions are to be judged by how they comport with such Christological criteria.

The notion that emotions develop in social contexts and are closely related to how we see the world resonates with Barth's conception of moral formation as relational. While suspicious of visible signs of holiness, Barth yet offered an account of growth rooted in the community that is increasing in the practice of holy things. This view of growth is consistent with his contention that to be human is fundamentally to be in relation with God and others. It follows that moral growth does not occur through individual self-help programs but in the intersubjective context of a community that is deepening in its relationship with Jesus Christ and thus an increasing presence of the kingdom of God.

This dissertation also made the case that Barth's view of progress is relevant not only to the shaping of the community and the individual but is also critical for social transformation. This is particularly evident with emotions. Emotions are a key element for a Christian politic which seeks to shape a common life in ways that promote mutual flourishing. It is important to both understand how participation in social structures shape emotion and how emotions play a significant role in the establishment and maintenance of social systems.

Emotions are shaped by forces that transcend individual agencies. While the "powers and principalities" are part of God's good creation, they can become opposed to the things of God and dehumanize. Barth's apocalyptic theology attempted to unmask the existence of lordless powers in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. His account rightly noticed that the powers maintain their influence through the emotions. On the flip side, emotions shaped in correspondence to God's radical love are crucial to the struggle against these forces. As the body of Christ grows and as members of that community are

shaped through their participation in Christ, the drama of the gospel message shapes the imagination, and this alternate way of perceiving the world produces new emotions essential for the resistance against the hegemonic powers.

Christian ethicists do well to include emotions in considerations of the moral life. They are a crucial element in moral reasoning and action. Furthermore, they are essential for understanding the bi-directional relation of social structure and moral agents. In sum, emotions are a fundamental aspect of how we relate to God and others, and thus, are a central feature of a Christian life and politic.

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