

## KBS CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO SET FOR JUNE 18-19

In addition to its meetings in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion, the North American Karl Barth Society plans to begin having annual summer meetings, initially alternating between Chicago and Toronto.

The first of these will take place on the campus of Elmhurst College (a short trip from O'Hare airport), beginning at 2 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, and adjourning at noon on Friday, June 19.

The program will consist of two parts.

The theme of Part I will be "The Problem of Evil in Barth's Theology." Ronald W. Goetz, Niebuhr Professor of Theology and Religion at Elmhurst College, will present a paper on "Atonement and Theodicy in the Theology of Karl Barth."

The other presenter will be Robert Clifford Shippey Jr., of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, whose topic will be "The Suffering of God and the Problem of Evil in the Theology of Karl Barth."

In addition to the two papers, there will be a discussion of the section on "God and Nothingness" in the *Church Dogmatics*, III/3, §50 (pp. 289-368).

Part II of the program will be devoted to "Some Recent Work on Barth's Theology." This segment will feature the authors of two recent books on Barth discussing each other's work.

Stephen Webb, Wabash College, will review Bruce Marshall's *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Savior in Rahner and Barth* (Basil Blackwell, 1987). Bruce Marshall, St. Olaf College, will review Stephen Webb's *Refiguring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth* (SUNY Press, 1991).

Inexpensive accommodations will be available in an Elmhurst College dormitory, or (at a more comfortable level) at a local hotel. For further information or to make reservations, write Ronald W. Goetz, Department of Theology and Religion, Elmhurst College, 109 Prospect, Elmhurst, IL 60126, or call 708-617-3557.

Members of the society are encouraged to pass the word to anyone who might be interested.

-- William Placher

Thanks to the efforts of David Demson, the above notice has been placed in *The Christian Century*, *Sojourners*, and various other publications. The response has been encouraging, if not overwhelming. We currently have 87 dues-paying members of the society.

## Lutheran Conference on Barth to be held June 22-24

As reported in the September 1991 issue of the KBS Newsletter, the Institute for Mission in the U.S.A. of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is holding its fifth biennial conference on Barth June 22-24 at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The theme of this year's conference is "Christian Hope and the Human Future," with the subtitle "the Kingdom of God and the Church's Mission Today."

Speakers include Gerhard Forde (Luther Northwestern), Eric Gritsch (Gettysburg), George Hunsinger (Bangor), Mary Knutsen (Luther Northwestern), Marc Kolden (Luther Northwestern), John Webster (Toronto), William Werpehowski (Villanova), and Timot Lull (Pacific Lutheran/GTU).

Persons interested in further information can write Wayne C. Stumme, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, 2199 East Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43209 or call him at (614) 235-4136, Ext. 77.

## CORRESPONDENCE

**Charles Scalise** (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), responding to the questionnaire in the last issue of this Newsletter, suggests that the following information would be of interest to him: opportunities for research networking, book reviews, and summaries of research in progress.

He reports that he is working on a manuscript which utilizes Barth (via Childs) to explore canonical hermeneutics as a vehicle for theological prolegomena. He presented a paper on Barth and Childs at Regent's Park College, Oxford, last year. He also has an unpublished paper on the role of Ephesians 1 in Karl Barth's doctrine of election.

**Philip Butin** writes that he recently received his Ph.D. from Duke. "Although my dissertation was on Calvin, Karl Barth has always been a major influence on my theological perspective." His interests include 16th century concerns, modern European figures and movements, and contemporary systematic issues.

He also reports that there is a movement underway to add a **Reformed Studies Group** (incorporating various theological and historical concerns in the broad Reformed spectrum) to the regular AAR menu. Persons interested in this effort are urged to contact Dr. **Robert Redman**, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA 91182.

The Karl Barth Society of North America is being reactivated. A new membership list is being compiled. Members receive the Society's Newsletter and announcements of the KBSNA annual conference and of its session held prior to the annual meeting of the AAR/SBL. To become a member, send your name, address, and annual dues of \$10.00 to Professor Russell Palmer, 5061 Blondo, Omaha, Nebraska 68104.

A note from **Clifford Green**, accompanying his check to renew his membership, mentions that his *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (along with other volumes in the "Makers of Modern Theology" series) has been re-issued by Fortress in paperback at \$9.95. [Editor's note: I used this book last year as a text in my "Modern Christian Thought" class, and it works very well as a way of introducing students to Barth's thought. -RWP]

He concludes: "Thanks so much for your efforts with the Newsletter -- it's an indispensable link among scholars."

**Charles C. West**, Professor Emeritus at Princeton Seminary, writes: "I'm glad the Karl Barth Society is reviving and look forward to news of its further activities."

**Bruce L. McCormack**, the Weyerhaeuser Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary, offers the following comment:

"I am very happy to learn that the Karl Barth Society is once again sponsoring regular events. It is, without doubt, the most promising sign on the horizon. It shows, if anything does, that interest in dogmatics is still lively in many quarters."

He reports that he is working on two books stemming from his dissertation research. "The first is a genetic study of Barth's theological development from 1909 to at least 1931 and possibly as far as 1936. The second is a theological analysis of the Goettingen Dogmatics..."

"Both projects serve the same purpose: viz. to overturn the Anglo-American tendency to interpret Barth as a 'Neo-orthodox' theologian. That, in my view, has been a most unfortunate legacy of the received historiography and for that reason, I am approaching my task on both the historical and theological levels."

He closes with appreciation "for the good work you are doing in acting as the central hub for communications among Barth scholars."

**William M. Thompson**, Professor of Theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, attended the KBS session in Kansas City. He was "most impressed by the high and stimulating level of the papers by Jenson and Hunsinger and by the responses." He called attention to Hans Urs von Balthasar's notion of the Holy Spirit as an hypostasis always leading to the Son rather than to himself -- hence his "anonymity" in some sense. He cited two references to this idea in the *Church Dogmatics*: IV/2, 130, and I/2, 244.

He suggests further consideration of the issues of experience and mysticism at the next meeting. "As the current moderator of the Karl Rahner Society (although I am a great lover of Barth!), I would very much enjoy a more careful look at these issues."

He mentions that he uses Barth extensively in his Ph.D. seminar on hermeneutics, and notes that Barth appears to be the favorite of his students.

His letter closes: "Thanks again for your important work in helping us 'begin again at the beginning' with Karl Barth!"

**Bryan D. Burton**, a parish minister in New Providence, N.J., writes that he recently received his Ph.D. from Queen's University, Belfast, with a thesis on "The Relationship between Revelation and Religion in the Theology of Karl Barth and his Critics" (now under review by Oxford University Press).

He called attention to *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* by John Thompson (Pickwick Publications, 1990)

in connection with the theme of the Barth Society meeting in Kansas City last November. His review of this book will soon appear in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.

**David L. Mueller** (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) has published *The Foundation of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation: Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

**Todd Speidell**, chaplain at the Webb School in Knoxville, Tennessee, has a special interest in Barth's theological ethics. He and **Chris Kettler**, another new KBSNA member, edited *Incarnational Ministry: The Presence of Christ in Church, Society, and Family* (a Festschrift for **Ray S. Anderson**, published by Helmers & Howard, 1990). The book contains contributions by T. F. Torrance, James Torrance, G. W. Bromiley, Colin Gunton, John de Gruchy, Lewis Smedes, and others.

### *Excerepts from other letters received:*

I read with great interest your ad in *Christian Century*, announcing the reactivation of the Karl Barth Society of North America. I was a member in the early to mid 1970s and enjoyed keeping in touch with Barth-related studies, research, and activities. Enclosed is my check for \$10 to cover the cost of annual dues...

I am not an academic theologian, but a pastoral theologian with long years of combining congregational ministry with theological reflection. [Editor's note: may your tribe increase!]

**Cecil Albright**

Second Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, MO

I am delighted to send my \$10 to become a member of the Karl Barth Society of North America. I have been teaching Barth for a number of years (from 1977 to 1989 at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia and since 1989 here at PLTS and the Graduate Theological Union), so your work is of great interest to me. I have also been participating in the Barth seminars that **Wayne Stumme** has been holding for a few years...

**Timothy F. Lull**

Academic Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA

I don't know if you are keeping track of demographic information about membership, but in case you are, I am a 30-year-old white male, a pastor in the United Church of Christ. I have been interested in Barth since reading *The Doctrine of the Word of God* as an undergraduate. My first exposure to the Karl Barth Society was the conference on Hans Frei held at the University of Toronto last summer. Jim Fishbaugh introduced me to your organization. I appreciate the newsletter and look forward to attending the next conference scheduled for Elmhurst College. Can you suggest a reading list for us non-professional theologians to use in preparation for the event?

**Lynn R. Morgan**

North Tonawanda, N.Y.

[Editor's note: In preparation for the Elmhurst conference, you might try working through the section on "God and Nothingness" in the *Church Dogmatics*, III/3, §50 (pp. 289-368). For help in understanding Barth's theology as a whole, I strongly recommend *How to Read Karl Barth* by George Hunsinger (Oxford University Press, 1990). You may also wish to read the two books to be reviewed at the conference (see story on p. 1). -RWP]



I would like to become a member of the Karl Barth Society of North America. I am presently writing my dissertation for the Ph.D. in historical theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee on "Reason and Certainty of Knowledge of God in Karl Barth and Hans Küng." I hope to specialize in Barth studies in the future.

**Paul Casner**  
Fond du Lac, WI

I wish to join the Karl Barth Society. I am a Presbyterian minister and a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard. My dissertation is on Karl Barth as a "theocentric" theologian.

**William Stacy Johnson**  
Arlington, MA

Generally, I liked the mix of reviews, announcements, the brief translation, anecdotes and membership update [in the September 1991 Newsletter]. The one thing I would add is the addresses and positions of all the other members. My impression is that in its reactivated form, the Society is still rather small, so this wouldn't be too unwieldy a task. And it would certainly help facilitate "networking."

As for my current work on Barth, I am just doing some additions to and revisions of my dissertation. It's entitled "The Shift to Modernity: Christ in the Doctrine of Creation in the Theologies of Schleiermacher and Barth."

**Robert J. Sherman**  
Chicago, IL

## BARTH AND BRUNNER ON SCHLEIERMACHER

Russell W. Palmer  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

In 1924 Emil Brunner published a withering attack on Schleiermacher under the provocative title, *Die Mystik und das Wort* -- "mysticism" being his characterization of Schleiermacher's theology, and "the Word" referring to Brunner's own concern for a theology of divine revelation (*Die Mystik und das Wort: Der Gegensatz zwischen moderner Religionsauffassung und christlichem Glauben dargestellt an der Theologie Schleiermachers*, J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]). In this 400-page book (which unfortunately has never been translated into English) Brunner seeks to expose the "glaring contradiction" between Schleiermacher's system and Christian thought (312).

There are, in Brunner's view, only two ways in which the human creature can be related to God: one is mysticism and the other is faith. Mysticism is pagan. Faith, on the other hand, means hearing the divine Word. It is the human response to the speaking God. Therefore, Brunner insists, we must make a fundamental choice: either mysticism or the Word. When Schleiermacher attempts to unite these two incompatible religious options, he is engaged in a colossal self-deception (12).

Moreover, while Schleiermacher claimed to make religion independent of philosophy, Brunner sees him instead bringing religion into philosophical bondage by subordinating religion to philosophy. In fact he goes so far as to say that Schleiermacher is more a speculative philosopher of identity than a Christian theologian (17). Brunner charges that Schleiermacher's mysticism is to be equated, on the philosophical level, with the "identity philosophy" of idealism, which holds that all contradictions in reality as we perceive it are resolved at a higher level, in some sort of Ultimate Reality, and that we can arrive at knowledge of that point of ultimate identity through some sort of dialectic in thought.

In order to support this interpretation of Schleiermacher's intentions, Brunner consistently interprets the "later" Schleiermacher in terms of the earlier, i.e. he interprets the *Glaubenslehre* (*The Christian Faith*) in the light of the *Speeches on Religion*; and further, he interprets the *Speeches* in terms of the *Dialektik* (Schleiermacher's unpublished lectures on philosophical method). Brunner states the relationship this way: the *Speeches* represent the religion of the identity philosopher, while, conversely, the *Dialektik* represents the philosophy of the mystic, so that Schleiermacher's basic position can be characterized either as a pantheistic mysticism or as a mystical pantheism (60).

Not only is the autonomy of religion proclaimed by Schleiermacher tightly tied to his philosophy, but this "religion" itself is something quite different from Christian faith (28-29). In contrast to the Bible and the Reformation, Schleiermacher shifts from God-centered to man-centered religious thinking. To this extent Brunner finds Schleiermacher to be a true son of the Enlightenment, the only difference being that he makes religion a matter of feeling (33). It is Schleiermacher who is responsible for the shift in the meaning of the word "religion" from something objective, as in Reformation usage, to an inner something in the human soul, as we generally use the word today.

### **Why is the KBS program held before the AAR meeting begins?**

In response to the announcement in the September 1991 Newsletter about the pre-AAR meeting in November, several people wrote that they were planning to attend the AAR (which began the next day), but that they found it difficult to be there for the Barth Society session the day before. Several questioned whether it was necessary to hold our meeting on Friday afternoon before the beginning of the AAR meeting on Saturday afternoon.

The answer is that, as long as we are not part of the AAR structure, we must hold our meeting in advance of the regular program.

In that case, could there be a session devoted to Barth's theology within the AAR? We are told that a section on Barth would not be appropriate because the AAR does not favor having sections devoted to individual theologians. (The AAR program does, however, include a section on "Issues in the Thought of Paul Tillich." This is in addition to the Paul Tillich Society which meets, as we do, before the official opening of the AAR meeting.)

#### **Editor's note:**

If you have anything to contribute to the Newsletter, (articles, reviews, news items) or any other suggestions, please send them to the editor: Russell W. Palmer, 5061 Blondo, Omaha NE 68104. Telephone (402) 558-9725, or leave a message with Monica Saxton, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Nebraska at Omaha, at (402) 554-2628.

Brunner takes Schleiermacher to task for the "anti-intellectualism" of his view of religion. While Brunner himself is critical of the intellectualism of orthodoxy and rationalism, he faults Schleiermacher for moving beyond a necessary protest against the intellectualistic distortion of faith (in Paul Tillich's phrase) to the assertion that religion has no cognitive content at all, i.e. to a view of religion as pure self-consciousness (41).

Brunner labels this position "mysticism," and in justification points to the famous purple passages of the Second Address, in which Schleiermacher uses highly sensual and even erotic imagery, describing the religious experience as "lying on the bosom of the Infinite" and experiencing what one might perhaps call a kind of spiritual orgasm. The experience of oneness which Schleiermacher describes in these passages is "what the mysticism of all times and peoples has aimed at" (54). Brunner argues that Schleiermacher's "religion" and mysticism correspond "in all important points." Both the divine with which the mystic seeks union, and "the Universe" of Schleiermacher's *Speeches*, are entirely indefinite, undetermined, characterized only as infinite and eternal. The relation between the religious person and this ultimate Whatever is described as union, a union which is based on some sort of hidden oneness behind the apparent diversity of things. When a closer description of this union is given, it is only in imagery derived from the arts (especially music), intoxication, or sensory experiences such as touching. In all of this the mystic is striving for the obliteration of personal consciousness. And, decisively, the intensity of the experience is the criterion; as Schleiermacher put it in the *Speeches*, "the strength of the feeling determines the grade of religiosity" (56).

Schleiermacher is one with the mystics in devaluing the importance of language ("the word"). Mysticism is indifferent to truth. It seeks, rather, an indefinite feeling of oneness with the All (88). Over against Schleiermacher's emphasis on feeling Brunner places the biblical and Reformation understanding of revelation and faith. In the Bible and the Reformers, **revelation** is just what Schleiermacher rejects -- the communication of truth about God, and **faith** is holding this revelation to be true, in spite of all appearances to the contrary (83).

According to Brunner's understanding of human nature, the word (i.e. language) is the fundamental characteristic of the human spirit. It is the power of speech that makes human beings human (90). The more spirit is understood as spirit, the higher stands the significance of the word. That humanity has language is the origin of our rationality, our being in the image of God (91). With the concept of the "word" Brunner links "meaning." Only what is meaningful is spiritual. Thus faith is the opposite of all non-verbal [*wortfremd*] mysticism (98).

When the later Schleiermacher, despite his mysticism, functions as a theologian, Brunner regards him as engaging in deception. His theological statements, like inflated currency, are not worth their face value. The naive reader is taken in by the theological assertions of the *Glaubenslehre*, assuming that they mean what they say -- e.g. that when they speak of God, they are really speaking about **God** and not about **me** (111).

But, as Brunner interprets Schleiermacher, Christian faith-statements are not meant objectively, but only subjectively (112). Faith-statements have no cognitive value. They do not mean what they say. They say "God" but mean "I" (118). They are not assertions about the object of faith, but solely about the believing subject and his pious states of mind (112). This means the complete elimination of the word. The word in Schleiermacher's theology is not a word of God to humanity, but a quasi-word that proceeds **from** the religious soul -- just

one of the many possibilities of expression of religious feeling (119-20).

When Schleiermacher in the *Glaubenslehre* defines Christianity as the monotheistic religion in which everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth (§11), Brunner finds this strangely inconsistent with the thrust of Schleiermacher's thought. In Brunner's view, the word of Christ is an interruption, a disturbance in Schleiermacher's philosophical and theological system. It is only the virtuosity of the great thinker that is able to conceal the incompatibility of the two contradictory conceptions of religion that are here combined (145). The Christian element remains an alien intrusion in his system, and the tension between them is (via dialectical art) covered up rather than removed (335).

Brunner devotes chapter after chapter to an analysis of Schleiermacher's treatment of various theological topics, arguing in each case that Schleiermacher's teaching is vitiated by his concept of religion which remains dominant throughout the whole of the *Glaubenslehre* (335).

So, for example, Brunner charges Schleiermacher with trivializing the doctrine of sin by reducing it to atavism instead of a break with God at the center of human existence. As a result, there is no longer any trace of the biblical and Reformation contrast between God's will and humankind's will, but only a relative and harmless weakness of the God-consciousness vis-a-vis sensuousness, a weakness which is in the process of being gradually overcome (241-42).

Likewise, redemption for Schleiermacher is just the heightening of the power of the God-consciousness, instead of God's declaration of forgiveness in the paradox of justification.

And, in his discussion of ethics, Brunner praises the moral seriousness of the Bible, the Reformation, and Kant, stressing the conscience of the individual, which he takes to be the key to what he calls the "evangelical-Kantian" position (331-32).

Brunner concludes by calling upon his readers to recognize the necessity of making a choice: **either** the Christian faith, **or** the modern concept of religion (392).

How did Karl Barth react to all of this? He might have been expected to welcome Brunner's attempt to demolish Schleiermacher, but his review ("Brunner's Schleiermacherbuch," published in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1924, Heft 8, 49-64) was instead sharply critical.

To begin with, Barth grants that Brunner's thesis is clearly formulated and solidly supported, but complains that the approach of the book is excessively polemical. Brunner makes his presentation as though it were the speech of a prosecuting attorney, putting Schleiermacher on trial in a courtroom. It would have been better, Barth thinks, to approach Schleiermacher more cautiously, to engage instead in immanent criticism, and to interpret him as positively as possible, instead of portraying him in the worst possible light. The book would have had greater impact had it been less strident.

Furthermore, Barth protests that the real Schleiermacher presents a much richer and more complex picture than the one depicted by Brunner. Specifically, Barth objects to bringing the entire theology of Schleiermacher under the single formula "mysticism." Granted that a mystical approach to religion is to be found in Schleiermacher, Barth suggests two other motifs that are at least as strong.

One is the apologetic motif -- the attempt to make Christianity possible for modern man. No one can read Schleiermacher without being made aware of his apologetic intentions. But what does this have to do with mysticism? Even if Schleiermacher is also a mystic, his apologetic concern



is at least as prominent and significant as his "mysticism." It may even be, Barth suggests, that Schleiermacher's translation of Christianity into mystical terms was done precisely for apologetic purposes, as a strategy for commending Christianity to its cultured despisers.

Alongside the apologetic motif, another important concern present in Schleiermacher's theology is what Barth calls the problem of "culture religion." Barth calls attention to the fact that Schleiermacher, in spite of his "Moravianism," was the quintessential Berlin professor, a slave of the "work" goddess (i.e. a workaholic) who was intensely active both academically and politically, and who can even sound like a Ritschlian in his praise of "working" both individually and socially. Barth comments: "Quite an original sort of mysticism!" (57)

Barth finds in this side of Schleiermacher the apparent explanation for the surprising development in §9 of *The Christian Faith*, where the "aesthetic" type of religion is subordinated to the "teleological" or ethical type, and Christianity is assigned to the latter category as the highest type of religion. Given the discussion of the feeling of utter dependence that precedes this in the *Glaubenslehre*, not to mention the mystical tone of the *Speeches*, one would certainly have expected the opposite ranking.

This leads Barth to wonder whether the ethical or cultural interest may not after all be the chief thing in Schleiermacher's theology, so that his real concern was ethical and cultural rather than mystical. At least it would have to be said that the question as to which is really primary, mysticism or a theology of culture, is not an easy one to decide. It is at least plausible to suggest the thesis that Schleiermacher was not so much a mystic at heart as an ethicist -- a modern Protestant activist ethicist!

The point of all this is that Brunner's eagerness to get at Schleiermacher polemically has misled him into a serious oversimplification. Instead of this simplistic attempt to dismiss Schleiermacher as a mystic and his theology as mysticism, Barth thinks the critique might have gotten farther if it had seen the riddle of Schleiermacher's thought precisely in what Barth calls its "incoherent manifoldness" (58). Brunner could then have analyzed Schleiermacher in terms of the brokenness of his diverse motifs. Perhaps such an effort would not have been as tidy as Brunner's attempt to nail down one motif as **the** key to interpreting Schleiermacher, but it would have been much more convincing and, above all, more responsible.

Another thing Barth objects to in Brunner's procedure is his use of quotations from Plato, Paul, Luther, Calvin, Kant, and Kierkegaard -- an impressive array of ancestors, no doubt, but surely problematic when the theologies and philosophies which stand behind these names are simply lumped together under the heading "biblical-Reformation thought." Aside from the question of what kind of unity it is that embraces such diverse figures, there is the problem of the relation of more than one of these names to the neo-Protestantism embodied in Schleiermacher.

For instance, when Brunner uses quotations from Plato as weapons against Schleiermacher, has he forgotten the eminence of Schleiermacher as a translator and lifelong student of Plato, whose contributions won the recognition of Plato scholars? Brunner fails to show that his understanding of Plato is the right one; he should either do so or refrain from invoking Plato against Schleiermacher.

Again, Brunner's habit of quoting Luther can also backfire. After all, liberal theologians are fond of appealing to Luther in support of a theology of religious experience. Barth does not grant that they are correct in doing so, but the fact that they do

so shows that simply citing Luther quotations is not sufficient, because Luther is not so unambiguously in the anti-Schleiermacher camp as Brunner supposes.

Likewise, even an appeal to Calvin is not entirely free of difficulty, especially since Schleiermacher always regarded himself as belonging to the Reformed tradition. Barth acknowledges that it would be painful not only for Brunner but for himself if it had to be granted that Schleiermacher's theology is an authentic development of that tradition. But even if it is not, the matter is not so completely beyond doubt that one can simply take it for granted the way Brunner does.

Barth devotes the final section of his essay to some reflections about what it means to reject Schleiermacher. What does the rejection of Schleiermacher imply theologically? It is a bold and fateful step. After all, since the days of the Reformation, Protestantism has not had a greater theologian than Schleiermacher. And his theology is not by any means an isolated heresy, but, as Barth puts it, "the Niagara in which the main streams of theological thought for at least two centuries with fatal necessity came to grief" (62).

The problem this creates is obvious. How can Brunner believe in the historical power of the truth of the Reformation, and, on a higher level, in the rule of divine providence over the church, if the outcome of this history is the triumph of Schleiermacher? In order to place it within the providence of God, are we then forced to say that the history of Protestant theology must be understood as the judgment of God's wrath?

Brunner's slogan, "Word vs. mysticism!" is too sure, too sharp, too snappy to convey the seriousness of our theological predicament. Does Brunner realize, Barth asks, and does he make his readers realize, how frightening is the historical situation in which we find ourselves? Brunner seems much too confident that he has things essentially under control.

Barth's diagnosis, on the contrary, is that the ship of modern Protestant theology is sinking -- but before we can escape from it, we first have to build the lifeboat! As he puts it, "The rescue boat which must bring us from Schleiermacher's way to a better land . . . in no way stands ready for sailing, but in the sweat of our brow and in fear of our lives is first to be built, while the ship on which we find ourselves sinks deeper and deeper" (62). In other words, there are no satisfactory ready-made alternatives to Schleiermacher waiting simply to be taken up and utilized; it is up to us to create them. And Barth finds that prospect frightening.

In his book on Schleiermacher, Heinrich Scholz had made this intimidating statement: "Schleiermacher's work as a whole is so great that it can be challenged only by a corresponding counter-achievement," not by criticisms of this or that specific point. Such criticisms of detail fall into the category of nit-picking when compared to the sheer greatness of Schleiermacher's achievement.

Barth tends to agree. It is not enough, he says, to pronounce Schleiermacher an arch-heretic and then declare that something else needs to be done. Rather, what is needed is the knowledge, the ability, and the achievement to make good this other thing -- and to make it at least approximately as good as Schleiermacher made his thing. Barth asks, "Who and where is the man strong enough for this?" (63) Until this is actually accomplished, we are in no position to talk about being finished with Schleiermacher.

It is a sobering thought that the Schleiermacherian heresy is no accidental individual phenomenon, but rather the gigantic expression of a mis-development beginning not all that far from the Reformation itself. It is clear, therefore, that the "counter-



achievement" which Scholz demanded -- what Barth describes as the mighty, overcoming "Yes" which can say the "No" that really disposes of Schleiermacher -- must consist in a theological revolution, which in its depths and energy can be no less thorough than the Reformation itself. Obviously this is dangerous business.

How can we justify ourselves in such rebellion, such disobedience against history, Barth asks? Is it not *hybris* to attempt such a theological revolution? Our only justification for it, says Barth, is that "we are much more frightened of the *hybris* of these three centuries in Protestant theology, and of the demand to persist in this *hybris* today" (64).

In Barth's view, the magnitude of the task is terrifying, and he faults Brunner for failing to grasp the seriousness of it. "Brunner's clever and knowledgeable, desirable and commendable book is to me in this sense too 'fearless'" (64). In other words, Brunner is too glib, too cocky, not sufficiently aware of what it will take to really overcome Schleiermacher.

Barth in 1924 did not yet see how this could be done; the discovery of his positive theological method still lay ahead of him. But already in this essay we see him taking the measure of the task.

Brunner's book and Barth's critique of it shed considerable light on the dynamics of the dialectical theology of the 1920s, and foreshadow the diverging paths of these two theologians in the 1930s and beyond. For these reasons, this pair of writings constitutes an illuminating episode in the history of theology in the 20th century.

## KBS session at AAR a whopping success

The attendance at the Barth Society session at the American Academy of Religion in New Orleans in 1990 was about 35 people, so Walter Lowe arranged for a room at the 1991 AAR meeting with a capacity of 50. In spite of his precautions, the Heartland Room of Kansas City's Radisson Hotel was jammed, with people sitting on the floor, standing along the walls, and spilling out into the hallway!

The overflow crowd gathered to hear presentations by two outstanding Barth scholars, Robert Jenson and George Hunsinger, on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the theology of Karl Barth.

This was the third annual Karl Barth Society program held prior to the joint annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. Another is planned for the fall of 1992.

**Robert Jenson** gave his provocative paper the title "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went." Claiming that much of Barth's thinking seems *binitarian* rather than trinitarian, he reminded the group of the previous year's theme (III/2, §45): "As the Father and the Son are to one another, so therefore are Christ and humanity to one another, and so therefore within humanity are male and female to one another." In these analogies, Jenson suggested, the appearance of the Spirit as a third party "would be disruptive."

In IV/3, §69, Jenson said it is surprising that Barth grounds the objectivity of the proclamation in the resurrection of the Son, instead of in the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit and the coming-to-be of the church.

He faulted Barth for being thoroughly Western in calling the Holy Spirit the love between the Father and the Son, with the result that the "inner-divine" fellowship of Father and Son is "two-sided" (since the Spirit is the fellowship itself). Jenson

wondered "how a third party can be him/herself the love between two."

Instead, Jenson called attention to the Eastern Orthodox insistence that the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit is "a new intervention of the Holy Trinity in time," one which "issues from the third Person of the Trinity." He wondered whether Barth's avoidance of the Spirit might be at bottom a Protestant resistance to the church.

Where Barth discusses the ecclesial reality of the Spirit (IV/3, 867-72), Jenson noted that "the personal agent of this work is at every step of Barth's argument *not* the Spirit but Christ; the Spirit is denoted invariably by impersonal terms."

In contrast to Jenson's critical approach, **George Hunsinger** presented an expository analysis under the title, "The Lord and Giver of Life: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit." First, he spoke of the trinitarian ground of Barth's pneumatology, referring to Barth's insistence that what God is in revelation he is antecedently in himself. The work of the Spirit cannot be anthropologically grounded, because the basis of our communion with God is found in God alone.

Secondly, Barth's is a Christ-centered pneumatology (not, as some have suggested, a Spirit-centered christology). The Holy Spirit does not bear witness to himself, but to Jesus Christ. Or, more precisely, the Holy Spirit is the power by which the crucified and risen Christ attests himself.

The work of the Spirit, thirdly, is receptive (not constitutive) in effecting our salvation in us.

In addition to these three emphases, Hunsinger briefly noted four other points: the work of the Spirit, according to Barth, is communal in context, eschatological in form, diversified in application, and universal in scope. He indicated that he intends to develop these points further, with a view to eventual publication of the completed treatment.

The two papers engendered a spirited discussion.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Walt Lowe observed that groups tend to stay together if they have a common project. He wondered whether a book of essays on Karl Barth and the Holy Spirit would be a suitable focus. He invited those interested in the idea to meet in his hotel suite the next morning.

## The morning after . . .

On the morning after the presentations, an ad hoc group met to consider "where we go from here" with regard to the development of the theme of the Holy Spirit in Barth's theology.

The following participants expressed interest in continuing work in this area: James Nelson (North Park), Crerar Douglas (Cal State Northridge), Donald Dayton (Northern Baptist), Thomas Parker (McCormick), Bruce McCormack (Princeton), Suzanne Selinger (Drew), George Hunsinger (Bangor), Phil Cary (Yale), Robert Redman (Fuller), Stacy Johnson (Harvard), Steven Land (Acworth, GA), Henry Knight (Atlanta), Philip Butin (Oxford, NC), Robert Shippey (Southern Baptist), David Mueller (Southern Baptist), Walter Lowe (Emory), and Russ Palmer (UNO).

Walt Lowe began the discussion by asking what it would be useful to have in a book on Karl Barth and the Holy Spirit.

In the "brainstorming" session that followed, George Hunsinger noted that he is working on a book on Christ-centered radical politics, and his wife is writing on Barth and Jung. Suzanne Selinger reported that she is interested in the relation of Barth and Freud in terms of intellectual history; she also urged attention to the dialog with feminist theology.

Others thought the ecumenical concerns raised by Robert Jenson's paper should be pursued, perhaps with attention to

Barth's view of the sacraments and the place of the Holy Spirit and the church.

Don Dayton observed that, in spite of his negative views on pietism, Barth often uses those sources to make some of his key points. Jim Nelson expressed interest in a theology of Christian experience and personal transformation, as well as the pertinence of Barth's theology of nature to environmental issues.

Such topics could involve questions raised by Barth for our situation, as well as questions to be put to Barth. A concern was expressed as to what impact Barth will have as we move toward the 21st century, and interpreting Barth's thought to the church as a task for the KBSNA.

Bruce McCormack cautioned against becoming too oriented toward a scattering of current issues and interests, to the neglect of constructive theology.

Attempting to draw the discussion together at its close, Walt Lowe suggested that the core issues seemed to include the whole area of the Holy Spirit and experience, the church in the 21st century, and historical and contemporary pietism, with an interest in Schleiermacher in the background.

## **KARL BARTH SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

c/o Russell W. Palmer, editor

5061 Blondo

Omaha, NE 68104

# KBS membership list

Here is a list of those who have sent in their \$10 dues to become members of the Karl Barth Society:

## November 1990

Mary Campbell Hay, Cedar Rapids IA

## December 1990

Michael J. Root, Strasbourg  
James J. Buckley, Baltimore MD  
Mark I. Wallace, Swarthmore PA  
Gordon E. Whitney, Princeton NJ  
Andy Kinsey, Terre Haute IN  
Clifford Green, Hartford CT  
Elisabeth J. Lacelle, Ottawa Ont.  
Paul P. Parker, Elmhurst IL  
Douglas R. Sharp, Lombard IL  
Robert J. Palma, Holland MI

## January 1991

Suzanne T. Selinger, Madison NJ  
Wayne C. Stumme, Columbus OH  
Paul Hanson, Minneapolis MN  
Christopher L. Morse, NY NY  
Merle Zook, Lincoln NE  
James S. Nelson, Chicago IL

## February 1991

Walter J. Neidhardt, Newark NJ

## March 1991

Elouise & David Fraser, Gladwyne PA  
Ralph C. Wood, Winston-Salem NC

## April 1991

Craig A. Carter, Willowdale Ont.

## May 1991

Dwight J. McMurrin, Trotwood OH

## June 1991

Thomas C. Barnett, Warson Woods MO  
G. Clarke Chapman, Bethlehem PA  
Grace A. Hayden, Little Falls MN

## July 1991

Christian D. Kettler, Wichita KS

## August 1991

William C. Placher, Wabash IN  
Ronald Goetz, Elmhurst IL  
Daniel L. Migliore, Princeton NJ  
Charles C. Dickinson III, Wichita Falls TX

## September 1991

Wm. Stacy Johnson, Arlington MA  
Steven G. Smith, Jackson MS  
Ronald J. Feenstra, Shorewood WI  
Patrick A. Genseal, Drayton ND  
John D. Godsey, Bethesda MD [*renewal*]  
Lynn R. Morgan, North Tonawanda NY  
Reinhard Hutter, Chicago IL  
L. Gregory Jones, Baltimore MD  
David S. Yeago, Columbia SC  
Heup Young Kim, Berkeley CA [*renewal*]

## October 1991

Lee A. Wyatt, Louisville KY



Timothy F. Lull, Berkeley CA  
Paul V. Casner, Fond du Lac WI  
David Paul Henry, Ellsworth ME  
Joseph H. Sellers, Maple Shade, NJ  
James F. Kay, Princeton NJ  
Cecil R. Albright II, Kansas City MO  
John W. de Gruchy, Cape Town S.A.  
Philip D. Jamieson, Chagrin Falls OH  
Iain S. Maclean, Somerville MA  
George Landis, Omaha NE  
Mel Vance, Omaha NE  
Gary M. Faleide, Westmont IL  
Bruce L. McCormack, Princeton NJ  
Todd Speidell, Knoxville TN  
Helmut L. Wipprecht, Cobalt Ont.  
Mark C. Mattes, Antigo WI  
John Richardson, Sewanee TN  
William W. Ryan, Sewanee TN  
Richard Topping, Brampton Ont.  
Sheila Briggs, Claremont CA

#### November 1991

David E. Demson, Toronto, Canada  
Thomas D. Williamson, Plattsmouth NE  
Charles C. West, Ringoes NJ  
Steven Phillips, St Joseph MO  
Charles J. Scalise, Louisville KY  
Hogan L. Yancey, Nashville TN  
Marlin E. Miller, Elkhart IN  
Henry H. Knight III, Atlanta GA  
Curtis G. Lindquist, Decatur GA  
Peter A. Sulyok, Princeton NJ  
Crerar Douglas, Camarillo CA  
Dikran Y. Hadidian, Allison Park PA

#### December 1991

William M. Thompson, Pittsburgh PA  
William H. Rader, Dauphin PA  
R. Kendall Soulen, New Haven CT  
Robert J. Sherman, Chicago IL  
Paul D. Molnar, Brooklyn NY  
Jim Antal, Newton Highlands MA  
Russell Reno, Omaha NE  
James Patrick Kelley, Lynchburg VA

#### January 1992

Clifford Green, Hartford CT [renewal]  
Stephen C. Gray, Framingham MA  
Robert A. Warner, Upper Darby PA  
Philip W. Butin, Oxford NC  
J. Stephen Rhodes, Memphis TN

#### February 1992

Ray S. Anderson, Huntington Beach CA  
Frank M. Hasel, Berrien Springs MI  
Robert B. Ives, Grantham PA

#### March 1992

Bryan D. Burton, New Providence NJ  
Michael D. Bush, Richmond VA  
Hugh D. Reid, Hamilton Ont.  
Richard P. Rutkauskas, Upper Sandusky OH  
Charles C. Twombly, Sandersville GA

#### April 1992

Ellen T. Charry, Princeton NJ  
Michael B. Lukens, DePere WI  
A. Katherine Grieb, Gray ME  
Horace T. Allen Jr., Brookline MA  
David W. Johnson, Fort Worth TX  
Daniel Griswold, Dallas TX

Michael L. Westmoreland-White, Louisville KY  
William O. Fennell, Toronto Ont [*renewal*]  
Martin Rumscheidt, Halifax, Canada  
Gary Deddo, Cranbury NJ  
Donald N. Bowdle, Cleveland TN

May 1992

William V. Johnson, Ardmore OK  
Philip J. Lee, Saint John N.B.  
Mark E. Chapman, Chambersburg PA  
Thomas W. Currie, Kerrville TX  
Gerald T. Sheppard, Scarborough Ont.  
Robert Cathey, Monmouth IL

June 1992

Donald K. McKim, Berwyn PA  
Jo Berta Carr, Kissimmee FL  
Donald G. Bloesch, Dubuque IA  
Jerome F. O'Malley, Butler PA  
Henry K. Yordon, Norwalk CT  
Howard Diehl, Wheaton IL  
David A. Deyhle, Evanston IL  
Craig L. Nesson, Cape Girardeau MO  
Scott A. Moon, Cape Girardeau MO  
Gary Forbes, Lafayette IN  
Curt Anderson, Janesville WI  
Frances R. McCormick, Scranton PA  
I. John Hesselink, Holland MI  
Donald W. Dayton, Lombard IL  
Donald H. Heinrich, Phoenix AZ  
Scott Holland, McKeesport PA

August 1992

Alexander J. McKelway, Davidson NC  
Mark A. Husbands, North York Ont.  
Richard E. Burnett, New Haven CT  
Joe Bassett, Chestnut Hill MA

September 1992

Jim West, Oxford NC

**Questionnaire --**

We would appreciate some input from our readers:

What would you like to see in the newsletter? What sort of information would be of interest to you?