

REVELATION AND RELIGION
IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH
AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

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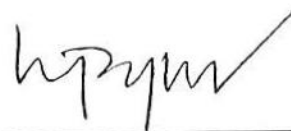
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ABSTRACT

For Karl Barth and the Second Vatican Council, revelation is God's personal self-disclosure with the purpose of drawing men and women to be saved and to have an eternal communion with God. Barth's emphasis is on Jesus Christ as the personal mediation of God's revelation, while the Council emphasizes Jesus Christ as the climax of a series of God's personal revelation. The result is that, for the Council, there are creational revelation and covenantal revelation that function as the preparations for the Gospel. For Barth, the reality of revelation is only in Jesus Christ. All other realities that might be called revelation are actually witnesses of revelation. These witnesses can become parables of the kingdom.

From such perspectives, they diverge in understanding the existence and function of non-Christian religions. For the Council, non-Christian religions are deeply rooted in creational revelation which includes human religious sense and conscience. With the nuanced motif of grace perfecting nature, the Council elaborates non-Christian religions as preparations for the Gospel of Jesus Christ whom the Council understands as the fullness of religious life. By employing the traditional doctrine of *logos spermatikos*, the Council also believes that in such religions, divine truths can also be found. For Barth, religions are primarily the products of the fallen humans. By using the theological categories of creation and reconciliation, Barth believes that divine truths can be found in such religions. However, they can be recognized as truths only by interpreting them from the perspective of Jesus Christ. They cannot serve as the preparations for the Gospel,

because, in Barth's theology, all that is needed for people to be able to come to the Gospel of salvation is the Holy Spirit as the subjective dimension of God's revelation.

Barth, therefore, puts forward the motif of *Aufhebung* in seeing religions. Thus, he is very critical towards the notion of religions. The traditional doctrines of creational revelation and *logos spermatikos* enable the Council to be much more affirmative, without neglecting the fallen nature of human beings and human religions. Although emphasizing the sinfulness of human beings, John Calvin also has such a hermeneutics of affirmation towards religions. Barth's critical view of religions has to be valued. However, this suspicion towards religions cannot be constructed without, at the same time, being generous and affirmative towards religions. Christianity is the true religion because it is the religion of revelation in Jesus Christ. But such confession does not mean to limit God's revelation only in this religion, because the revelation of God is not bound up with the religion of revelation. Theological convictions and the context of an era of religious conflicts urge us to be more affirmative concerning the presence of the other religions.

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