Storming Heaven with Karl Barth? Barth’s Unwitting Appropriation of the *Genus Maiestaticum* and what Lutherans Can Learn from It

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Abstract: This article seeks to demonstrate that Barth radically misunderstands the Lutheran doctrine of the communication of attributes, with its centerpiece the *genus maiestaticum*. However, misdirected as Barth’s criticism is, the doctrine is not without its own problems and, instead of giving expression to the integrity of Christ’s person and the co-presence of his natures, is in danger of subverting itself. After showing that Barth’s Christology actually employs what for all practical purposes is the majestic genus of the Lutherans, I propose that the Swiss theologian’s thought may offer ways of resolving the tensions inherent in the Lutheran tenet, and that by means of resources that the Lutherans already possess.

Karl Barth’s mature Christology, as it finds it expression in and as it emerges from the rhetorical cadences of his *Church Dogmatics*, has, for the most part, been recognized as fundamentally Chalcedonian in character. Admittedly, some find in it little more than a dialectical conjunction of the extremes condemned by the council’s decree – monophysite and docetic, on the one hand, and Nestorian and ebionite, on the other – underwritten, moreover, by a Platonic tendency to depreciate worldly actuality in favor of its eternal, immanently-trinitarian, ground.1 Others including Barth himself – and they seem to be in the majority – see it as celebrating the richness of Christian imagery in its deliberate, and carefully orthodox, employment of both ‘Alexandrian’ and ‘Antiochian’ idiom.2 It is somewhat tempting to map this polarity

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of opinion onto traditional Lutheran–Reformed controversies, given that to the former camp belongs the Lutheran theologian, Regin Prenter, while the latter seems to be predominantly ‘Reformed’ (at least judging by the publishers). To draw the line in this manner would, of course, explain nothing about Barth’s Christology. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to ask: what does the ‘basic Chalcedonian character’ of Barth’s Christology entail, not only in light of the fifteen hundred years of, at times intense, christological reflection that came between the council and the Swiss theologian, but also in light of both Lutheran and Calvinist claims to Chalcedon’s heritage, accompanied by charges that the other party had betrayed the council’s definitio fidei? One cannot avoid putting the question this way, given that Barth has quite a lot to say about Lutheran Christology, much of which is highly critical, even though he is not unsympathetic to some of Luther and his followers’ concerns. This is not to suggest, however, that Barth uncritically embraces Calvinist Christology, either. Rather, he creatively engages both these traditions, and this is not altered by the fact that, not surprisingly, he favors the Reformed position.

This article has no intention of reviewing the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversies by pitting the one tradition against the other. Nonetheless, my goal will be to show that Barth radically misunderstands the Lutheran teaching on the communication of attributes between Christ’s human and divine natures, with its centerpiece, the genus maiestaticum. At the same time, his criticism of the Lutheran doctrine is not entirely without merit, and it does offer ways of resolving some of the difficulties inherent in the Lutheran position. Finally, I will demonstrate that, in his wrestling with his own tradition, Barth actually appropriates what for all practical purposes is the Lutheran genus maiestaticum, albeit couched in Reformed idiom and no longer afflicted by an inner contradiction. All in all, this article will show that, though not a ‘crypto-Lutheran’, Barth, unbeknownst to himself, in a refreshing way gives voice to Lutheran sentiments, even as he seeks to take up the problems of his own tradition ‘in a new and better way’. It is by maneuvering – in faithfulness to the church’s ongoing christological witness – between the mistakes and counter-mistakes of the past that the ‘basic Chalcedonian character’ of Barth’s Christology becomes evident.


3 Given the highly pejorative character that the label ‘crypto-Calvinist’ had in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutheranism, the emotive value of this new coinage would be rather difficult to determine anyway.

4 This passage is a general commentary on what, according to Barth, constitutes the theologian’s craft. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–75) (hereafter CD), II/2, p. 10.
Barth’s misinterpretation of the genus maiestaticum

Unlike some of his earliest work, most notably the Romans commentary (1919, 1921), which depicted the sphere of creation, including human selfhood, as a distancing from God and straightforwardly equated it with sin,5 the anthropology of the Church Dogmatics (1932–67) is cast in terms of a divine–human relationship, which is constituted by both nearness and distance. This relationship finds its raison d’être and prototype in the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that the divine and the human are determined and related to each other in a manner that – despite, but also by virtue of, its unrepeatable uniqueness – remains normative and conclusive. It cannot be ignored by those to whom in Christ God reveals himself and whom in Christ he desires to save as his ‘partners’.6 Thus, according to Barth, ‘It would be a strange Christology which did not give the same attention to the true humanity of Christ as to His true deity’ (CD IV/2, p. 19). By definition, Christ’s humanity is that of all human beings.7

The danger that Barth perceives in the Lutheran doctrine of the communicatio idiomatum, especially in its so-called genus maiestaticum, is precisely an overpowering of the human by the divine. This, in Barth’s opinion, threatens the integrity both of Christ’s human nature and of the divine Subject. To begin with the integrity of Christ’s human nature, the Lutheran doctrine, as Barth interprets it, posits the nature’s uncharacteristic, direct augmentation, in consequence of which, for all practical purposes, it no longer is our nature.8 The Lutherans, Barth explains, have an ‘emphatic interest in the presence of the divinity in the humanity of Jesus Christ, in the fact that it can be seen, and experienced, and known in it’ (CD IV/2, p. 68). Unfortunately, they take this interest so far that ‘there is such an appropriation, illumination and penetration, not of the divine nature by the human but of the human by the divine, that all the attributes of the divine nature of Jesus Christ may be ascribed also to His human nature’, which then ‘as such’ and ‘directly’ shares in God’s majesty (CD IV/2, p. 77). What necessarily results is a divinization of Christ’s human nature, its apotheosis,9 which cannot but have disastrous consequences. It not only undermines Christ’s human mediatorship between God and humanity;10 ultimately, it makes Christ redundant for it only

6 CD IV/2, pp. 224–5.
7 CD IV/2, p. 81.
8 The Lutheran doctrine, Barth admits, ‘does not ... involve a destruction or alteration of the human nature, but it means that this nature experiences the additional development (beyond its humanity)’ (CD IV/2, p. 77).
9 CD IV/2, pp. 88–90.
10 CD IV/2, p. 89.

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masks the general human capacity for the divine. As a result, Barth feels compelled emphatically to reject ‘any alteration . . . any change, diminution or increase’ in Christ’s humanity (CD IV/2, p. 91), and thus the Lutheran genus maiestaticum as a ‘heaven storming doctrine of the humanity of the Mediator’ and a ‘Promethean undertaking’ (CD IV/2, pp. 83, 90).

Second, concerning the integrity of the divine Subject, it is somewhat strange that Barth should criticize Lutheran Christology for allowing a penetration of the human nature by the divine, instead of the other way round, given his own insistence on the divine Subject’s initiative in effecting the union of the two natures. I will return to Barth’s own doctrine of the incarnation below. What needs to be emphasized at this point is that he accuses the Lutheran doctrine, much as ‘it, too, is based finally on the doctrine of the unio hypostatica’ (CD IV/2, p. 78), of doing away with the divine Subject, and that in two ways. Because, according to Barth, the Lutherans focus on the effectus unionis – that is, the union of the two natures, rather than the assumption of the human nature by the Logos, the equation, rather than the act of equating, of divine and human essence by the Son of God – the divine Subject is practically ignored. Worse still, the Logos becomes ‘merged and dissolved in the humanity which He assumed, or the nature which He blessed’ (CD IV/2, p. 68; cf. pp. 51–2). As Barth put it in the first volume of his magnum opus, ‘the Word has reality through and in the humanity’ (CD I/2, p. 166), which for him constitutes an inadmissible reversal of what the church has always confessed.

In summary, Barth finds in Lutheran Christology ‘a mutual impartation of the divine and human essence in Jesus Christ’ (CD IV/2, p. 76), in consequence of which the creature becomes divinized and the Creator humanized. The Lutheran teaching thus represents a violation of Chalcedon’s insistence that the hypostatic union leaves the natures without confusion and change. Furthermore, aside from its doctrinal-confessional dimension, this teaching makes humanity as such into an inapplicable abstraction. Only one conclusion is left: ‘Luther and the older Lutherans did in fact compromise – at a most crucial point – the irreversibility of the relationship between God and man’ (CD IV/2, p. 83).

Harsh as Barth’s judgement may be, and not without a point when its motivation is considered, it is dreadfully misdirected. If Article VIII of the Formula of Concord (1577) is taken as the authoritative Lutheran teaching on the person of Christ, Barth’s criticism is hardly relevant. First of all, while affirming the ancient teaching of ‘a genuine communion [of Christ’s natures] with each other’ – which Barth does not, of course, deny – the Formula, appealing to Luther’s authority, points out that ‘the
natures are not mixed together into one essence but into one person’ (17). The person makes possible any consideration of the natures or their communion and must explicitly figure in it. Further, this personal union is based on the principle ‘that quod propria non egrediantur sua subjecta (that is, that each nature retains its essential characteristics) and that they are not removed from their own nature and transferred into the other nature, as water is poured out of one container into another. Therefore, no communion of characteristics could exist or persist if this personal union or communion of the natures in the person of Christ were not real’ (31; cf. 19). What all this means is that the person of the God-man is given primacy and that the attributes of the natures are not exchanged in any other way than by being also, and above all, attributes of the one person. This manner of speaking of Christ’s natures was dubbed genus idiomaticum by the later Lutheran dogmaticians. Corresponding to the Chalcedonian ‘without confusion, without change’, it did not constitute a point of controversy between the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

Building on the genus idiomaticum, the Formula of Concord then goes on to assert, quoting Luther, that ‘since the divinity and humanity are one person in Christ, the Scriptures ascribe to the divinity, because of this personal union, all that happens to humanity, and vice versa’ (41, emphasis mine). There is thus reciprocity between the two natures, but it is a reciprocity in the action of the person. Because they are both found in one person, each nature works, or is actualized, only in communion with the other in a way that is proper to each – the natures ‘work’ together because, in reality, it is the person, endowed with both, that works. This manner of referring to Christ’s natures was later labeled genus apotelesmaticum. Reflecting the Chalcedonian ‘without division, without separation’, it was also accepted by the Calvinist party under the name communicatio operationum. Thus, declares the Formula, ‘Christ is our mediator, redeemer, king, high priest, head, shepherd, etc., not according to one nature alone, whether it be the divine or the human, but according to both natures.’

Significantly, it is only on the basis of these two genera that the Formula introduces a third, later called the genus maiestaticum. Contrary to what Barth opines, its goal, even as it draws the inevitable conclusion from the preceding two, is precisely to prevent both the erasure of the divine Subject as the source of initiative.

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13 The citations are from The Book of Concord, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000). Since they are all taken from the Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration (hereafter FC SD in the notes), Article VIII, they will be identified in the text solely by paragraph numbers, which correspond to those of the German edition, Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930, 1991).
14 FC SD VIII.25, 36.
15 FC SD VIII.46.
16 In contradistinction to the Formula’s exposition, the seventeenth-century dogmaticians, for the most part, classified the genus maiestaticum as the second of the three. See Heinrich Schmid, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3rd edn (1875; reprinted Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), pp. 313ff.
in the incarnation and the overpowering of Christ’s humanity by his divinity. This goal is all the more important in light of the Lutheran emphasis not so much on the *effectus unionis* in Barth’s understanding of it as abstract and depersonalized communication of attributes on the level of the natures, but on the sole personal reality that has emerged out of the hypostatic union. In short, the *genus maiestaticum* aims at preserving the integrity of Christ’s person by showing how, in and as this same concrete person, Christ is always both God and a human being. By introducing this third genus, the Lutherans did, in fact, go where Chalcedon had failed to go. Robert Jenson credits Luther with being the first Western theologian to work out the full christological implications of the Chalcedonian definition. Though the council carefully distinguished between hypostasis and natures, it failed, according to Jenson, to determine what sort of ontological category ‘hypostasis’ was. In light of what Chalcedon says about the natures, one may, in fact, conclude that “the “one hypostasis” is nothing actual, and that the natures’ union has no material consequences for the state or activity of either nature”.17 It was Luther who, in defiance of this Western apprehension,18 insisted that the hypostasis of the God-man is not merely, or practically, notional in character but is rather the real and only agent, the sole and active locus of the natures’ actualization.19 Briefly put, by necessarily spelling out the material – rather than merely verbal or rhetorical – consequences of both Chalcedon’s *definitio fidei* and the first two genera, the third genus, at the same time, seeks to prevent their subsequent evaporation in its overarching hypostatic focus. It supplies a fitting conclusion to the first two genera, only in this conclusion to embrace them even more.

Specifically, concerning the divine Subject, the *genus maiestaticum* states: ‘In, with, and through this [human] nature *he* [i.e., Christ] demonstrates, reveals, and exercises the same divine power, glory’ (64, emphasis added). What is interesting about this statement is that the divine Subject is here also the human Subject – Christ is a single Subject. And yet there is also a clear indication of directionality: just as it was ‘the only begotten Son of God . . . [who] was made man’, and not the other way round, so also the Subject as divine (and human) is said to work *in, with and through* his human nature. The non-reciprocity of the genus assures simultaneously the divine

18 Barth recognizes in the *genus maiestaticum* a ‘theologumenon . . . closely akin to the distinctive Eastern Christology and soteriology of the Greek fathers’ (*CD* IV/2, p. 79).
19 Following Luther, the ‘Catalog of Testimonies’, intended as an appendix to the *Formula of Concord*, explicitly recognizes this when it states: ‘concrete terms are words which designate the entire person in Christ, such as “God,” “human being.” But abstract terms are words by which the natures in the person of Christ are understood and expressed, such as “deity,” “humanity.” According to this distinction, it is correctly said in concrete terms that “God is a human being,” “a human being is God.” On the other hand, it is incorrect to say in abstract terms: “deity is humanity,” “humanity is deity.”’ Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 223.
source of initiative and the resultant inseparability of the human nature from it – the God-man is the actor who acts sustained by the divine initiative. Thus the *Formula* can confidently affirm that ‘there is and remains in Christ only one single, divine omnipotence, power, majesty, and glory’ (66). This majesty is the essential prerogative of the divine nature alone.

The human nature *shares* in its exercise and privileges only by virtue of the personal union. If it did not; that is, if the prerogatives of divine majesty were only Christ’s according to his divine nature, then the work of divine majesty in the humanity of Jesus would be no different from the providential operation of God’s majesty in creation. The person would disintegrate, and the Logos would remain the only real actor. Having pointed this out, the *Formula* is at pains to dispel any possible misunderstanding of this communication: the divine attributes do not become poured into the human nature and detached from their source; nor are the essential characteristics of the human nature suppressed or transformed into the deity; the human nature does not become equal to the deity; nor do the actions corresponding to the two natures become identical. In and of itself, therefore, the human nature remains nothing but human: ‘the human nature, like every other creature in heaven or on earth, is not capable of bearing God’s omnipotence in such a way that in itself it would become an omnipotent essence or would possess the characteristic of omnipotence in and of itself’ (71). In short, there is no augmentation of the human nature, let alone apotheosis.

When Barth accuses the Lutherans of treating the natures in abstraction, he is, to some degree at least, leveling this charge at his own handling of the Lutheran doctrine. What the *Formula*’s exposition intends to demonstrate is precisely that Christ’s human nature cannot be abstracted from the divine and, more fundamentally, from the person of the God-man. To do so would be to undermine the reality of God’s redemptive self-disclosure. In Luther’s own words: ‘wherever you place God for me, you must also place the humanity for me. They simply will not let themselves be separated and divided from each other. He has become one person and does not separate the humanity from himself’ (84).

20 *FC SD* VIII.67–8.
21 *FC SD* VIII.62.
22 The citation is from Luther’s ‘Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper’ (1528), *Luther’s Works* (American Edition), vol. 37, p. 219 = *Luthers Werke* (Weimarer Ausgabe), vol. 26, p. 33. Luther elaborates elsewhere: ‘We Christians should know that if God is not in the scale to give it weight, we, on our side, sink to the ground. I mean it this way: if it cannot be said that God died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God’s death and a dead God lie in the balance, his side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale. Yet he can also readily go up again, or leap out of the scale! But he could not sit on the scale unless he had become a man like us, so that it could be called God’s dying, God’s martyrdom, God’s blood, and God’s death. For God in his own nature cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is called God’s death when the man dies who is one substance or one person with God’ (*On the Councils and the Church* [1539], *LW* 41:103–4; *WA* 50:590).
Between de-historicized Christ and a *Logos extra carnem*: the majestic genus’ self-contradiction

Unfortunate as Barth’s misreading of the Lutheran understanding of the communication of attributes is, the doctrine itself is not without its problems. It seems that Barth’s engagement of his own tradition can help not only to shed light on their nature but even to suggest a possible resolution.

Specifically, if Christ, as God-man, exercises his majesty ‘in, with and through’ his human nature, it still needs to be shown how this dogmatic proposition embraces and manifests itself through Jesus’ earthly life in its variegated concreteness. The *Formula*, as a compromise document, seems to equivocate on this point. On the one hand, it states, as is to be expected in light of the foregoing, that Christ ‘possessed this majesty from his conception in the womb of his mother’. He thus had, and never ceased to have, this majesty in consequence of the incarnation, even as he forever retains his human nature [*humanam vero naturam... in omnem aeternitatem retinet*]. What, then, is one to make of the assertion that, when exalted, he ‘was installed into the full possession and use of his divine majesty according to his assumed human nature’ (26)? This second statement – by trying to do justice to the servant-like character of Christ’s life – seems to imply that the majesty was Christ’s, according to his human nature, only after his exaltation. Further, even if one naturally maintains that Christ was already, in the incarnation, in full possession of the divine majesty, did he simply ‘keep it secret’ or did he actually ‘empty’ himself of it in an act of self-humiliation? (26).

That this is not an imaginary problem was evidenced by the controversy that erupted in the early seventeenth century between the theological faculties of Giessen and Tübingen. The debated issue was whether, *in the state of humiliation*, Christ, *according to his human nature*, participated in the exercise of the divine attributes and merely hid it, or whether, by assuming the form of a servant, he had surrendered the human nature’s share in the divine majesty altogether. To make this more concrete, ‘in, with and through’ his humanity, was he secretly present to all creation and did he rule it prior to his resurrection and ascension, or not? The former position was that of Tübingen; the latter that of Giessen. The decision rendered at the time came in favor of Giessen, presumably because of this position’s more historically, narratively, dynamic character. However, as Barth correctly notes in his brief

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23 Note that in Lutheran dogma Christ’s sequential states of humiliation and exaltation cannot be equated with the incarnation, even though the latter is, of course, their precondition. The incarnation does not belong to God’s humiliation, otherwise, when exalted, Christ would have had to shed off his humanity.

24 Cf. *FC* SD VIII.27: ‘after this he did not merely ascend to heaven as any other holy person, but, as the Apostle testifies, he ascended far above all the heavens, truly fills all things, and now rules everywhere, from one sea to the other and to the end of the world, not only as God but also as a human being’.
discussion of the controversy,25 the view expressed by the Tübingen faculty was far
more consistent with Lutheran Christology, given its emphatic insistence on the
co-presence, in the one actual person, of the human and divine natures and
the Lutherans’ condemnation of the Reformed tenet of the Logos’ existence extra
carnem (which the Lutherans dubbed extra Calvinisticum). Unfortunately, the
dilemma is hardly solved by an appeal to Christ’s, presumably human, will.
According to the Formula’s mediating position, the ‘fullness [of deity], with all its
majesty, power, glory, and efficacy, spontaneously [liberrime; freiwillig] shines forth
in the assumed human nature (when and how Christ wishes)’ (64; cf. 26). If anything,
this appeal not only does not dispel the danger of a Logos extra carnem, inherent
in Giessen’s construal, thus failing to secure the integrity of the person; it also
relativizes and de-historicizes the humiliation and exaltation framework, as was done
by the Tübingen theologians. In short, the majestic genus in Lutheran theology seems

to pervert itself in its very unfolding.

The problem, I believe, arises out of the fact that the non-reciprocity of the genus
maiestaticum is posited not only to reflect the divine initiative in the assumptio carnei.
Far more pronounced in this context is the Formula’s insistence on the metaphysical
postulate of God’s absolute ontic immutability, and that in spite of its genuine desire
to do justice to the reality of the God-man’s suffering and death. In consequence, the
incarnation has simply no effect on the static being of God.26 Here, I think, Lutherans
have something to learn from Karl Barth’s criticism that their exposition of the genus
maiestaticum makes the natures into an abstraction – though not so much in the sense
of separating them from the historical person, as Barth thought, but of considering
the person in a metaphysical vacuum. Paradoxically, the Lutherans do not need to
borrow any alien elements here. All the components necessary for contextualizing
the third genus are already present in their system: the sole actuality and unity of
Christ as a single person (no Logos extra carnem under any circumstances), the
desire to deal with the historical redemptive reality of the God-man, including his
death, and, last but not least, the insight that the will of the Logos and the will of
the man Christ may factor into a solution that, instead of dismissing the genus
maiestaticum as an extravagant and self-contradictory piece of speculation, will
show it to be, indeed, an indispensable christological conclusion.

Barth’s genus maiestaticum

In order to avoid the self-subversion in the genus maiestaticum, it is clear that the
movement of God the Son into the flesh, his divine initiative in the assumption
of humanity to himself, cannot simply be an inert movement of an absolutely
immutable deity. (This is not to suggest, I should note in passing, that to remove
absolute, ontic immutability from God is to remove all, especially ethical,

25 CD IV/1, pp. 181–3.
26 FC SD VIII.49.
immutability altogether – far from it!27) Rather, God’s taking humanity to himself must represent an event in which humanity is, as it were, met by God, who thus – without ever ceasing to be God, of course – nonetheless, finds himself in a new situation. This two-sided movement – though in its entirety God’s initiative – will assure the correspondence between God’s coming into the flesh and humanity’s assumption into the divine. What all this implies is that the required solution must not only be explicitly trinitarian but it must also view the Christ-event as exceeding narrow historical ‘contingency, externality, incidentality and dispensability’ (CD IV/2, p. 35). Such a solution, I believe, is afforded by Barth’s dual doctrine of election and revelation, found at the heart of his robustly trinitarian Christology. This said, I now turn to an exposition of those elements of Barth’s Christology that will demonstrate that it does, in fact, postulate what, for all practical purposes, amounts to the Lutheran genus maiestaticum. Though Barth’s doctrine is not without its own problems, it seems to avoid some of the pitfalls of the Lutheran teaching.

The trinitarian ground of the personal union

Barth builds his theological system around the axiom that ‘God is the One who loves in freedom’ (CD II/1, p. 257), which implies both a certain dynamism, namely, that of love, and an even more fundamental persistence of identity, given that God loves freely, in and out of himself. For in himself God is, first of all, sovereign – with no tautology involved, God is God. This sovereignty is manifested in the fact that ‘God ultimately wills Himself’, he wills his glory. But his ‘willing is primarily a determination of the love of the Father and the Son in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost’ (CD II/2, p. 169). In this apparent self-seeking, the seeking of his glory28 – and this is where Barth’s unique contribution comes in – God desires, however, to find himself together with a particular man, identifiable by a name and a life-story. Only as this theanthropic totality does God’s willing constitute God’s primal self-determination: ‘In this primal decision God did not remain satisfied with His own being in Himself’ (CD II/2, p. 168) but rather ‘has caught up man into the sovereign presupposing of Himself’ (CD II/2, p. 176). So much so that the Logos, the second mode of divine subsistence, is and remains a stopgap if ‘it’ is considered without the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth.29 What this means is that God’s being, as such, is

28 CD II/2, pp. 142, 178.
29 On the construal of the pre-incarnate Logos as a ‘stop-gap’ for Jesus’ humanity, see CD II/2, p. 96. See also Eberhard Jüngel, God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being
decision\textsuperscript{30} – decision for otherness, for creatureliness made in the loving freedom of God.

Moreover, in the same way that God’s self-willing is not a self-seeking, neither does God’s self-knowledge remain enclosed within himself. It is undoubtedly true that ‘God is known by God, and what is more, by God alone’ (\textit{CD II/1}, p. 233) – should there be any doubt as to our status or capacity, God’s ways are not only not our ways but are beyond our ways. This being said, one must keep in mind that it is in willing himself that God eternally comes to know himself. And so, on account of his loving decision, God does not know himself without humanity: ‘the only begotten Son of God and therefore God himself . . . has become the bearer of our flesh, and does not exist as God’s Son from eternity to eternity except in our flesh. Our flesh is therefore present when He knows God as the Son the Father, when God knows Himself. In our flesh God knows Himself’ (\textit{CD II/1}, p. 151).

All this means that the relationship of Christ’s two natures cannot be considered \textit{in abstracto}. This relationship cannot even be considered – and this is directly relevant to the Lutheran position – in the context of the personal union unless the actuality of the person is itself given a historical dimension. Therefore, on Barth’s understanding, Jesus Christ is not simply a person – he is both a concrete life in the course of history and history’s chief constituent.\textsuperscript{31} God’s assumption of the flesh into God’s triune life, as self-determination of God for historical otherness, necessarily comprehends God’s movement into history, which simultaneously determines this historical otherness. This calls for a radical reconsideration of how the biblical categories of humiliation and exaltation were applied by the Protestant dogmaticians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead of a sequential understanding of these states of Christ – solely according to his human nature and, therefore, with no intrinsic connection to the incarnation\textsuperscript{32} – Barth now sees humiliation and exaltation

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{CD II/2}, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{CD IV/1}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{32} I have already indicated why the incarnation could not, according to Protestant orthodoxy, have been a part of Christ’s humiliation (see n. 23 above). The state of exaltation, naturally, follows the incarnation, so the latter cannot belong to it either. One could of course postulate (though I am not aware of any such explicit attempt) that Christ’s humiliation is somehow circumscribed within his exaltation and then equate the incarnation with the exaltation of the human nature, as the \textit{Formula} seems to do when it ascribes to Christ in Mary’s womb the fullness of divine power and majesty. However, the \textit{Formula}’s indecision, regarding whether Christ, according to his human nature and in the course of his earthly existence, veiled or renounced the divine attributes, effectively prevents any equation between Christ’s incarnation and the exaltation of his human nature. In short, the incarnation, on the one hand, and the states of humiliation and exaltation, on the other, remain mutually irrelevant. I find unconvincingly supported Steiger’s claim that, according to Luther, as opposed to his successors, ‘Christ has gone into glory as the emptied one.’ The fact that Christ, while seated at the right hand of God, remains, nonetheless, near us and continues to battle against sin, which assails his people,
as two simultaneous actions, comprehended in the Christ-event and pertaining to the Logos and the man Jesus respectively. He, further, embeds these actions within his doctrine of the *praedestinatio gemina*, which he also understands as an event in God and so also a historical and history-making event. As a result, God’s double decree is a decree of humiliation and exaltation – a self-humiliation of God, who out of love goes into the far country, into the creaturely sphere, to be judged and condemned in the creature’s stead, and the homecoming, the exaltation of humanity, Christ’s and in him that of all believers, to fellowship with himself.33 To sum up with Barth’s own words:

As a history which took place in time, the true humanity of Jesus Christ is, therefore, the execution and revelation, not merely of *a* but *the* purpose of the will of God, which is not limited or determined by any other, and therefore by any other happening in the creaturely sphere, but is itself the sum of all divine purposes, and therefore that which limits and determines all other occurrence. (*CD IV/2*, p. 31)

Barth conceptualizes this historically dynamic relationship of Christ’s two natures in terms of an ‘exchange’34 that truly reveals the character of each. God, says Barth, ‘is not a prisoner of His own exalted status, but can also be lowly – not in the surrender but the *affirmation of His divine majesty*’; he then goes on to explain: ‘In itself and as such, then, humility is not alien to the nature of the true God, but supremely proper to Him in His mode of being as the Son’ (*CD IV/2*, p. 42; cf. *I/2*, p. 150; *IV/1*, p. 159). Having thus implicitly disposed of an abstract, metaphysical conception of God’s ontic immutability, Barth is free to equate the incarnation with the self-humiliation of God35 – a self-humiliation, likewise, not construed abstractly as beneath God but as the movement of God’s very mercy and love. Now, by virtue of this coming of God among humans as one of them, humans, in turn, receive knowledge of themselves. In the humanity of Christ elevated to fellowship with God, they cognize their own humanity and the humility proper to it on account of its creatureliness.36 But Christ did not merely assume some ideal humanity; therefore, his is not only creaturely but also determined by sin, corrupt and perverted.37 Yet in Christ this aspect of human nature is shown to be ‘unnature’ (*CD IV/2*, p. 27). Thus in Christ humans also see the deadly self-contradiction of their quest for godhood;

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33 *CD II/2*, pp. 163–4; *IV/1*, pp. 157ff.
34 ‘the amazing exchange between God and man’ (*CD II/2*, p. 173; cf. *IV/2*, p. 32).
35 *CD IV/2*, p. 72.
36 *CD IV/2*, p. 42.
37 *CD IV/2*, p. 25.
they become aware of their bondage to ‘the shadow world of Satan’;\textsuperscript{38} and they admit their need for a Mediator and Reconciler, for Christ, who alone is the hope of their homecoming, in truth to their humanity.

What the foregoing shows is that in Barth’s Christology the relationship between Christ’s divinity and humanity has the form of a dynamic union. This union has its source in the inner-trinitarian self-determination of God. On account of God’s initiative in willing and knowing himself with and in the humanity of Jesus, the divinity and the humanity are fundamentally co-present: ‘God was not alone, nor did he work alone, at that beginning of all his works and ways . . . At no level or time can we have to do with God without having also to do with this man’ (\textit{CD IV}/2, p. 32). Thus not only is there no man Jesus without God the Son, but there is, \textit{in actuality}, no God the Son without the man Jesus.\textsuperscript{39} To think otherwise is to engage in pure speculation. This union, as it arises out of God’s inner-trinitarian self-determination, further both posits, and unfolds itself as, history. In its economic dimension, it is characterized by a movement of the divine Subject toward the human essence, even as the latter is given existence by being taken up into God the Son’s life. This leads Barth to dismiss what the Lutheran dogmaticians commonly derided as the \textit{extra calvinisticum} of Reformed Christology, that is, the ‘fatal speculation’ about the being, work and knowability of the Logos \textit{extra carnem} (\textit{CD IV}/1, p. 181). Barth could hardly be more emphatic:

There is only one God the Son, and no one and nothing either alongside or even in Him. But this One exists, not only in His divine, but also in human being and essence, in our nature and kind . . . There is, therefore, no knowledge of God, no calling upon Him, no worship, no trust or hope, no obedience to His will, no single movement towards Him, which on any pretext or in any way can escape His humanity (and therefore our own), or in which the Father and the Spirit can be sought except in and by Him. (\textit{CD IV}/2, pp. 50, 101)

The natures are thus, according to Barth, not only in ‘conjunction’ but in ‘the strictest relationship’ (\textit{CD IV}/2, p. 115), which is a nod toward the Lutheran ‘\textit{conjunctim et unite}’ as opposed to the traditional Reformed ‘\textit{conjunctim}’ (\textit{CD IV}/2, p. 104).\textsuperscript{40} All in all, Barth’s understanding of the \textit{unio personalis} accords very well with the Lutheran insistence on the sole actuality of Christ’s divine-human person, who

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{CD II}/2, pp. 122, 124.
\textsuperscript{39} Barth is quick to dispel any suspicion that God might be dependent on humanity for being God – this determination is grounded in God himself: ‘in His work and action God is primarily true to Himself . . . But not even in the being of the triune God is there any analogy for the fact that He does actually do [this work] . . . as though God were under a necessity to do it’ (\textit{CD IV}/2, p. 59).
\textsuperscript{40} Barth generally shies away from referring to the union (\textit{Vereinigung}) of the natures as a ‘unity’ (\textit{Einheit}) because he thinks it entails either a transmutation of one nature into the other or the emergence of some third nature (see \textit{CD IV}/2, p. 63); there are, however, places where, in line with the dogmatic tradition, he describes the union as a unity (see, e.g., \textit{CD IV}/2, p. 46).
‘throughout all eternity retains his human nature’ and does not exist without it. The added advantage of Barth’s exposition lies in the fact that he gives this actuality an ineradicable and inescapable dimension by rooting it in God’s inner-trinitarian life.

Two-sided participation and divine initiative

So far our discussion has centered on the union of the natures in Christ and the integrity of his person in Barth’s thought. In this context, we should note, in addition, that the Swiss theologian affirms a ‘two sided-participation’: as the Son of God, Christ participates in the human essence, as the Son of Man, he participates in the divine (CD IV/2, pp. 62–3). This idea is interesting in that, at first sight, it seems to go farther than the strictly non-reciprocal genus maiestaticum. But things are not as radical as they might appear. First of all, this participation seems to be based on the concept of the communio operationum (genus apotelesmaticum), even though it lays greater emphasis on the participation of the Subject, according to one nature, in the work proceeding from and proper to the other nature, rather than, as was done traditionally, on the natures’ working together in a way proper to each. Second, and this is an indication that the majestic genus is, nevertheless, involved, Barth immediately qualifies the two-sided participation as sequential, even though simultaneous: the initiative comes from above to below and only then is it complemented by a corresponding movement from below to above. As I now proceed to trace in Barth’s Christology the elements of the genus maiestaticum proper, it is necessary to consider the precise character of this sequential participation. First of all, however, it may be useful to summarize our findings concerning the Lutheran doctrine and its problematic aspects.

As has already been shown, the non-reciprocity of the genus maiestaticum has, to some degree, to do with the divine initiative sustaining the being and work of the human nature: the divine-human Subject works in, with and through the assumed human nature in such a way that, through divine initiative, the human nature shares in the properties of the divine. Fundamentally, however, the non-reciprocity of the genus is justified by the Formula of Concord through an appeal to the metaphysical perfection of God: unlike the human nature, the divine can have nothing added to or taken away from it. Leaving aside whether, on the Formula’s own presuppositions, the sharing of the human nature in the attributes of the divine is really an addition (which the Formula does not seem to say it is), I have shown that, unless there is a movement of the divine Subject from above to below, as Barth postulates, the genus maiestaticum subverts itself in trying to account for Christ’s historical life by leading

41 ‘There is no element of human essence which is unaffected by, or excluded from, its existence in and with the Son of God, and therefore from union with, and participation in, this divine essence. Similarly, there is no element of His divine essence which the Son of God, existing in human essence, withdraws from union with it and participation in it’ (CD IV/2, p. 64).
either to a (partial) cessation of the communicatio (and thus to a Logos extra carnem) or it makes the person of Christ into an a-historical abstraction. Only a self-determining (hence not out of character) movement of the divine Subject, as it then becomes actualized in, with, and through the human nature caught up in this movement, can assure both the historicity of the person and the person’s integrity. Given, therefore, the inevitable dismissal of God’s absolute ontic immutability, it seems that Lutheran theology has no choice but to settle on a weaker version of the genus maiestaticum if it wishes to maintain it at all, that is, one that, while ascribing primacy to the divine, is, nonetheless, in some manner reciprocal.\textsuperscript{42} One may ask at this point whether it would not be easier simply to abandon the construct altogether. Recall, however, that it is the genus maiestaticum that conclusively assures the integrity of the person. Neither the idiomatic genus, with its ascription of the natures’ properties to the person, nor the apotelesmatic genus, with its emphasis on the natures’ working in communion with each other, can assure the fundamental co-presence of the natures in the person who alone is possessed of actuality. The genus maiestaticum draws the inevitable conclusion out of the preceding two, even as it seeks to uphold their exact Chalcedonian character. As such, the third genus is indispensable, and yet, in order not to subvert itself, it must assume its weaker form. It is this that I propose to uncover as a vital element of Barth’s christological thought.

To begin with the divine initiative: Barth maintains its primacy by repeatedly affirming the dual doctrine of the anhypostasis and the enhypostasis of the human essence.\textsuperscript{43} In negative terms, despite the two-sided participation, Christ’s human essence has no existence of its own; in positive terms, it subsists in the existence of the Logos, who assumed it into himself. ‘He is the One who founds and sustains this union [Union]’, – that is, both in the eternal counsel of God and in its execution – ‘who makes this different and alien thing, His being as man, both possible and actual as His own’. In fact, when the divine initiative is considered, says Barth, ‘the unity [Einheit (!)] achieved’ in the historical act of divine self-humiliation ‘has to be described, not as two-sided [!], but as founded and consisting absolutely and exclusively in Him . . . the eternal Son’ whose will it is to be the divine Son only as simultaneously the Son of Man (CD IV/2, pp. 47, 46).

\textsuperscript{42} This would be closer to Luther’s own position, as the citation in n. 22 above illustrates. Along somewhat similar lines, Werner Elert sees the excessive preoccupation of Luther’s successors with God’s metaphysical attributes as an inadvertent surrender of Luther’s strong emphasis on the redemption effected by the God-man Christ. In consequence of this preoccupation, ‘God’s inexhaustible will to confer grace’ was reduced to the cause of the ‘assumption of the human nature’ instead of remaining its ‘decisive content’. Elert writes: ‘Even though it was correct to say that the “suffering” as such took place only in the human nature, yet the basic thought could be carried out in such a way that in the very act of voluntarily bearing the curse of sin through His Son God limited Himself, namely, His right to punish . . . but that in doing so He also limited his very “majesty as the Lord”. What thus appears to be a breakdown of the “absolute” omnipotence of God is . . . the revealed omnipotence of his mercy.’ Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, trans. Walter A. Hansen (1931; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1962), p. 230.

\textsuperscript{43} E.g., CD I/2, p. 163; IV/2, p. 49.
Another term that Barth employs to express the primacy of the divine Subject is *communio gratiarum*, which he defines as ‘the address to human essence in Jesus Christ’ that takes place in the mutual impartation of the natures (*CD IV/2*, p. 73). Following an older dogmatic precedent, he distinguishes this form of communication from both the *genus idiomaticum* and the *genus apotelesmaticum*. In the mutual impartation of the natures, there is, according to Barth, ‘a twofold differentiation’ that consists in their determination: ‘each of the two natures without being either destroyed or altered, acquires and has its own determination. By and in Him the divine acquires a determination to the human, and the human a determination from the divine’. In consequence, the human essence receives ‘a part in the divine’ from the divine-human Subject.  

Having so defined the character of the divine initiative, we now need to inquire into what happens to the humanity in consequence of this home-bringing. As indicated above, Christ’s humanity is like ours both in its creatureliness and in its affliction by sin. Significantly, it is only in Christ that the separation and self-contradiction of the two becomes plain: the one is revealed as our nature, the other as unnature. Without Christ, we remain ‘doubly hidden from ourselves (by our creatureliness and by our sin)’ (*CD II/1*, p. 229). This disclosure is possible because there is a third determinant to Christ’s humanity that rends apart what was seemingly one: in consequence of its assumption into the existence of the Logos, his humanity becomes royal humanity, different from ours. Let us look at this likeness and unlikeness in more detail.

Our discussion so far has shown that the being-in-willing of God is the foundation of the historical *existence of humanity*; at the same time the self-knowledge of God underlies the possibility of *our knowledge of God* as the one who, being one of us, loves us in his freedom. There is in Barth an *‘intrinsically divine basis of God’s revelation’* (*CD II/2*, p. 97, emphasis added) founded on the inseparability – beginning already with the actuality of God’s self-willing and self-knowledge – of the Logos’ divinity and humanity. It is, therefore, important for

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44 ‘In Him divine essence imparts itself to human, and human essence receives the impartation of divine . . . There is a true and full and definitive giving and receiving’ (*CD IV/2*, p. 74).

45 ‘As He is, there takes place the humiliation of the divine for the exaltation of the human essence, and the exaltation of the human by the humiliation of the divine. As He is, *nothing is kept back*’ (*CD IV/2*, p. 75, emphasis added).

46 *CD IV/2*, pp. 154ff.
Barth to emphasize not only the strict co-presence of the two essences but also that Christ’s humanity is our humanity, for on account of it and in it, first, God is knowable to us, and, second, because he has first known us in this way, we are knowable to ourselves as what we are and what we should be. This revelatory knowability of God by humans and of humans to themselves, in turn, plays a crucial role in Barth’s doctrine of election, where Christ’s humanity is that of his community, elected by him and in him.\(^\text{47}\) In brief, there is no divinization of the human nature in the personal union but only its exaltation\(^\text{48}\) – a misdirected emphasis given Barth’s misinterpretation of the \textit{genus maiestaticum}.

But, as noted, Christ’s humanity is also unlike ours because ‘although He, too, exists as a creature and therefore because God exists, He also exists as God exists’ \((\text{CD IV/2, p. 90})\). This manifests itself already in God’s primal decision of election and its historical unfolding. The Son, in his humanity, is equally the elected object and the electing Subject.\(^\text{49}\) Even more specifically, he is the plan and decree of God,\(^\text{50}\) and as such both \textit{the} elect and the executor of the primal decision, the will of God in action, the divine freedom itself in its operation \textit{ad extra}.\(^\text{51}\) Being thus unconditionally affirmed by the Father and the Spirit, and so in a position, likewise, to affirm them, the Son of Man is, according to Barth, different qualitatively as well as quantitatively from other humans.\(^\text{52}\) Note that this dispels the subsidiary concern of the Lutheran \textit{genus maiestaticum}: because Christ is not simply a human among humans, the genus can focus on bringing out the positive implications of the union, instead of degenerating into a device for distinguishing the work of the divine majesty in sustaining creation from its operation in Christ.

In the divine economy, this electionary unlikeness of the ‘Son of Man [who] . . . obviously wills to be considered and understood for himself’ \((\text{CD IV/2, p. 156})\) manifests itself by his redemptive authority.\(^\text{53}\) In its exercise, ‘He simply revealed the limit and frontier of all . . . things – the freedom of the kingdom of God’ \((\text{CD IV/2, p. 172})\). He subverted the antitheses of human thinking, negating the world of sin and chaos and affirming fellow humans.\(^\text{54}\) His miracles revealed ‘the living God who has elected and ordained to be the God and Creator and Lord and Partner of man’ \((\text{CD IV/2, pp. 224–5})\). But above all, ‘He was the man who met and defeated His mortality in His death’ \((\text{CD IV/2, p. 164})\). As such, Jesus was the glory of God and peace among humans.\(^\text{55}\) Without a doubt, Christ’s humanity in its enhyopstatic actuality has ‘a glory and dignity and majesty’ \((\text{CD IV/2, p. 102})\).
In sum, Christ’s unlikeness to us consists in his being not a man from among humans.\textsuperscript{56} It consists in the \textit{particularity of his life}, lived in union with the eternal Son. ‘It relates to the particularity of the history which took place when He became man, and still takes place as He, the Son of God, is man.’ But this dissimilarity does not lie in his \textit{humanity as such}. ‘Because and as He is the Son of God, He is exactly the same as we are but quite differently’ without ‘a destruction or alteration of His humanity’ (\textit{CD IV/2}, pp. 27–8). In short, Christ is unlike us only in his likeness to us.\textsuperscript{57}

Again, there seems to be no substantial difference between how Barth construes the asymmetry in the mutual impartation of the natures and the Lutheran \textit{genus maiestaticum}, regardless of its form: weak or strong. Two additional things need to be mentioned in closing: one that is an advantage of Barth’s Christology and one that is a possible corrective. First of all, because Barth rejects ontic immutability in favor of ethical immutability, and in so doing affirms the fundamental character and self-identity of God as love, the eternal Son can go into the far country and, as it were, meet humanity. The self-determining divine will always assures the perfect correspondence of the divine and the human by regulating, as it were, the Logos’ entrance into this history-making history. Because this movement is none other than the freedom of God’s love, it is nothing but an affirmation of God’s glory and majesty. It is in the fullness of this dynamic glory and majesty, proper to the divinity, that Christ’s humanity shares.\textsuperscript{58} As in classical Lutheran Christology, there is, in Barth’s Christology, no renunciation of his divinity by the Logos, no \textit{genus tapeinoticon}. And, as has already been mentioned, neither is there the opposite danger of a \textit{Logos extra carnem}. What still needs to be added at this point, in regard to reciprocity, is that there is no need for the divine to participate in the attributes of the human, since the divine has this capacity for going into the far country in itself. This is not to suggest that the divine is not affected by, that there is no two-sided participation in, this going out. Most importantly, however, with his version of the \textit{genus maiestaticum}, it is possible for Barth to affirm the death of God, in his mode of subsistence as the Son, with far more integrity and rigor\textsuperscript{59} than the Lutheran schema ever allowed.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{CD IV/2}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{CD IV/2}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{58} Wolfhard Pannenberg’s failure to take this properly into account is, I believe, the reason for his dismissal of Barth’s Christology as involved in the same contradictions as the traditional Lutheran teaching. See \textit{Jesus – God and Man}, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 302–3.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{CD IV/2}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{60} Eberhard Jüngel mentions the seventeenth-century controversies that were sparked by a line in the Lutheran chorale ‘O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid’ which in different versions reads either, ‘Gott selbst ist tot’ or ‘Gottes Sohn ist tot’. See \textit{God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism}, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 64. The indecision regarding the doctrinal correctness of the former variant and the general
Second, the danger inherent in Barth’s Christology, with its movement of God into the far country and thus with its co-presence of the natures, may lie in the fact that the human nature may then become only an instrument of the Logos’ historical actualization, its necessary corollary, as the Logos, in and out of his divine capacity for humiliation, moves into the far country.  

I believe that this is only a danger in Barth’s thought; nonetheless, Barth, unwittingly perhaps, makes it all the more real in those passages that not only ascribe the divine initiative to the Logos but seem to make the naked, as it were, Logos into the exclusive agent of the person. There are, of course, other passages where the agent is divine-human (in that particular order). The Lutheran insistence on the divinity-humannature of Christ’s person and the person’s sole actuality as always divine-human may prove a useful corrective. Only as divine-human does the person act in, with and through the human nature – which is what the Lutheran genus maiestaticum seeks to affirm.

Conclusion

The goal of this article was, first, to show that Barth radically misunderstands the genus maiestaticum of the Lutheran doctrine of the communication of attributes. I then showed that the Lutheran teaching – much as it seeks to preserve the integrity of the person and the co-presence of the natures – is not without its own problems. Finally, I proposed that Karl Barth’s Christology employs what for all practical purposes is the majestic genus of the Lutherans, while, in addition, offering ways of resolving the tensions inherent in the Lutheran tenet, and that by means of resources that the Lutherans already possess. In the course of the argument I have presented as

preference for the latter betrays, I believe, the weakness of the Lutheran justification for the genus maiestaticum.

61 So, for example and not unjustifiably, Prenter, ‘Karl Barths Umbildung der traditionellen Zweinaturlehre’, p. 79. So also, more recently, Bruce McCormack, who finds inconsistent Barth’s affirmations of, and references to, the Trinity prior to the dual reality of election and revelation (the continued overemphasis on the agency of the Logos would, I believe, fall into this category). See Bruce McCormack, ‘Grace and Being: The Theological Role of God’s Gracious Election in Karl Barth’s Theological Ontology’, in Webster, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth, pp. 101–4. The danger of Christ’s humanity being reduced to the role of a mere instrument is particularly evident in the early volumes of the Church Dogmatics, where the revelatory veiling and unveiling of God seem to be correlated with humanity and God respectively. Consider, for example, the following quotation: ‘In His revelation, in Jesus Christ, the hidden God has indeed made himself apprehensible. Not directly, but indirectly... Not in His being, but in sign... The revelation of God is that God has given to the creature whom He has chosen and determined for this end the commission and the power to take His place and represent Him. The Word was made flesh: this is the first original and controlling sign of all signs... Jesus Christ and His visible kingdom on earth: this is the great possibility, created by God himself, of viewing and conceiving Him: and therefore of speaking about Him’ (CD II/1, p. 199).
the only viable form of the majestic genus its weaker version, which, while desirably shying away from any ontic notion of divine immutability, continues to stress both the divine initiative in assuming humanity into the divine life of the Son and the fundamental co-presence of the natures in the sole agentive actuality of the person. It seems to me that these two points were what Chalcedon itself strove to affirm. At the risk of stating the obvious, Barth’s Christology is thus, without a doubt, to be regarded as a genuine contribution to christological reflection firmly rooted in Chalcedonian orthodoxy – all the more valid because it seeks to wrestle with those who, likewise, wrestled with Chalcedon’s definitio fidei, without ignoring their struggles and their own contribution.62

62 My thanks go to Ronald Thiemann for his exemplary mentorship and to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions, all of which have helped improve this article.