

# THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST: THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

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## *Introduction*

**I** THINK it is of the highest importance that anyone with theological pretensions, speaking on any subject to any sort of audience, should be made to state clearly at the outset what on earth he thinks he is doing. These are days – and we ought to be constantly thanking God for it – when the whole business of theologizing, of speaking theologically, of using theological words, has come under just questioning. What does the theologian think he is telling us with his big words about God and God's actions or dealings or relationship with the world? Does he suppose that we ought to take him literally? How literal can you be about God? What sort of God would God be if you could talk about him literally? And if the theologian is not speaking literally, just how does he mean what he says – how are we meant to take his words? He must give some account of himself as a theologian, some account of how he means what he says when he theologizes. Is it not the case that his whole logic must be a very peculiar one? After all, his is a subject – God – to which ordinary human logic cannot, by definition, apply. So he must tell us, somehow, what the peculiar logic of his language is. Otherwise we will get him wrong. We will think that because of some native endowment, or, more dubiously still, because of some supernatural gift, the theologian is in a privileged position from which he can pass down more literal information about God than is ordinarily available to those who lack either the leisure or the insight to work it out for themselves. But since theology is not a matter of learning or of passing on literal information about God, the theologian must be doing something else.

What on earth is he doing then? The problem can perhaps be seen at its most acute when the theologian is faced with a task like talking about the theological dimensions of the ignatian exercise of the Kingdom. If, in the spirit of this exercise, I may use a sort of analogy to illustrate my problem, I would put it like this: it is as if you had asked a botanist to show you round the Chelsea Flower Show. I suppose we are, most of us, roughly familiar with a variety

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of ordinary garden flowers – roses, tulips, chrysanthemums, dahlias, daffodils and what not. We know them well, and we recognize them for what they are when we see them. And there really is nothing more to be said: ‘a rose is a rose is a rose’, and that’s that. By any other name it smells just as sweet. We know the typical colours and scents and appearances of flowers, and that is all we can know or need to know about them. Nor do we perhaps want to know anything more about them, even if we could. So when your botanist takes you round the flower show, there is a true sense in which he can tell you nothing more about the flowers. At a lower level, if he tells you that such and such a flower is a *taraxacum officinale* *Weberil*, when all the time you know it is a dandelion, he has in fact told you nothing. Such experts can often do nothing more than generate tedium. I am reminded of the famous little girl who, when asked to review, for the children’s section of a certain sunday colour supplement, a ten-guinea coffee-table book on life in the Arctic, wrote: ‘This book has told me more about Eskimos than I want to know’. So your botanist; and so also your theologian. But what perhaps your botanist can do is to generate appreciation: make you know what you already know from new angles, not by giving you more literal information about flowers, but by letting you see a flower in a new light, in a different context, against an enhancing background, and so forth.

When a theologian talks on the ignatian exercise of the Kingdom he seems to be doing something very like a botanist at a flower show. He is unlikely to be able to give any new information to people who know the exercise: no more than he could give a fellow-believer more information of a literal kind about God. The Kingdom is an exercise which springs from and calls forth faith in the ultimate centrality of Christ. It is, I believe, an acutely powerful presentation of the core of all we believe as christians about God, and about God’s relationship to mankind and the world. It is, very obviously, the work of a christian genius who was far more than a mere theologian. All a theologian can do is perhaps to generate appreciation of its grasp of christian truth, by labelling and tagging and comparing aspects of it to set it in new contexts, so that we might see it even more clearly for what it really is. The theologian really has nothing to add. He can hope not to subtract anything from it. He has to be very careful, because it is all too easy to destroy what you seek to appreciate. I can only hope that, like Wittgenstein’s philosopher, I shall leave everything as it is.

*The christian logic of the Kingdom*

I want to look first at what I might be allowed to call the christian logic of the Kingdom. In the first main part of the exercise, I am to imagine a christian king, who appeals to his christian subjects to share in both the hardships and the victory of a campaign against the non-christian. I am then confronted with the inescapable ignobility of any christian who refuses to respond to such an appeal.<sup>1</sup> The real force and appeal of this part of the exercise derives, I think, from five factors:

- a) the christian character of the campaign
- b) the christian, indeed already Christ-like, qualities of the King
- c) the peculiarly christian conviction that hardships and victory are inextricably conjoined
- d) the christian certainty of success
- e) the fact that I am supposed to be a christian.

If to all this we add the preliminary section of the exercise, in which we are to start with the background of Christ our Lord's work on earth, and approach him as the source of the grace to hear his appeal and to do his most holy will promptly and diligently, there can, I think, be no doubt that we move, in the whole of this exercise, not in the realms of normal human logic at all, but in the sphere of a christian logic which is based on, and is an exercise of, an already radically christocentric faith. Now this might well seem very obvious to people who have learned to get away from those presentations of this exercise which used – at least in my small experience – to give this part of it as a piece of common-sense thinking, an imaginative *argumentum ad hominem*, which would convince anyone of reasonable good will. In fact, it does not work like this. Take my third factor alone: there is no inevitable conjunction, no logically necessary connection, between hardship and victory in any merely human logic. In christian logic, the logic of christian faith, there is, however. This we accept on the basis of Christ's own suffering and death, which we see as inevitably linked with his glorious resurrection. And the link is theo-logical – in terms of a particular interpretation of events in which we see God at work, and whereby we find the meaning of Christ's death in his resurrection, and the meaning of his resurrection as inevitably linked with his death. A new dialectic is at work here, and one that goes beyond,

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<sup>1</sup> Exx 92–98. Cf *supra*, pp 4–5.

if not contrary to, what is discernible by the ungraced human mind. And my point is that it is this new and christian logic which makes this part of the exercise of the Kingdom work. It is already theological, indeed christocentric, and a valuable clue to the working of Ignatius's mind.

'The second part of this exercise consists in applying the preceding example of the temporal king to Christ our Lord'. We might be led here into supposing that we have to do with a straightforward use of analogy, applying the merely temporal to the eternal in an attempt to grasp its ungraspable dimensions. If what I have said is true, this cannot be the case. The temporal king is already a theologically loaded example. His applicability to Christ our Lord is already built into him – as is the applicability of his appeal to the christian believer. The analogy does not so much limp, as analogies normally do, as run ahead of itself in its effort to prepare the believing mind to accept the call of Christ himself. To put this another way, it contains an already christian *vorverständnis* – a prior understanding – which provides the mind with a sort of Christ-shaped outline or type, of which Christ our Lord is revealed as the true fulfilment or embodiment. Indeed I think one could well ask whether the movement of thought laid down in the text of this exercise is not in precisely the opposite direction to that which in fact takes place in the mind of the believer. Is there not a case for saying that in fact it is the kingship of Christ our Lord which is the given in this exercise, and that it is from a prior understanding of this kingship, and its appeal to the christian believer, that the first part of the exercise about the temporal king can alone derive any convincing force at all? In other words, are we in fact not dealing with a cata-logical exercise rather than with an ana-logical exercise, as might at first sight appear? I ask these questions not because I want to accuse Ignatius of logical sharp-practice. I ask them because I think it is important to make clear that Ignatius's logic is, from beginning to end in this exercise, moving in the sphere of the peculiar logic of christian belief. And the reason why he does not, and perhaps cannot, think otherwise is, I suggest, because he is so much possessed of the central truth of Christ. We are dealing with a man whose grasp of christian truth is altogether special.

Just to what extent this is true of Ignatius is brought out in very unambiguous terms in the main body of the exercise of the Kingdom. So strongly has the foundation in christian logic been laid that in fact argument ceases. We are presented with conclusions

drawn with ignatian logic from the central and universal truth of Christ grasped with a grand simplicity, even a kind of graced naivete: conclusions which mount up to ever greater heights of selfless generosity. Firstly, it is taken as obvious that more attention is owed to the appeal of Christ our Lord, the eternal King, that each and everyone should be ready to bear hardships and suffering along with Christ in the universal campaign of conquest directed at the world and all his enemies; because then, along with Christ, they can enter into the glory of his Father. Obvious, that is, as the exercise itself proceeds to tell us to those with judgement and *razón* – which is, according to Courel, a spiritual faculty, never independent of nor apart from grace, which leads us to act as directed by the good spirit, and which is, so to speak, the foothold that the good spirit has within us.<sup>2</sup> This *razón*, he adds, is something distinct from the understanding (*entendimiento*), which is simply the ordinary discursive faculty. A valuable indication, this, that what we have said about the christian logic of the Kingdom is correct. At no point, and certainly not at this point, are we working within the rules of human logic. It is certainly not a logical conclusion in the normal sense that men should offer their whole selves to undergo hardships: which is the response required by Ignatius's peculiarly christian logic at this stage.

Still less is it a logical conclusion in the normal sense that Ignatius draws in the concluding sections of this exercise. Here it is a matter of a greater love and distinguished total service of the eternal King and universal Lord which goes beyond the undergoing of hardships. Here we enter the realm of a deliberate self-abnegation which makes possible the self-offering of still higher value and moment. Here christian faith is brought to its earthly consummation in terms of its own logic as actual imitation of Christ in earthly suffering and poverty.

### *Christocentricity and Karl Barth*

I have briefly examined the exercise of the Kingdom in this way for one purpose only: to bring out the peculiar scope and depth of its christocentricity. Here is surely its prime theological dimension. Christocentric faith provides the whole working logic of the exercise, and it is the consistency and power of this logic which shows up, even in this single exercise, its author as theologically quite

<sup>2</sup> *Exercices spirituels* (Desclée, 1960), p 68, n 2; p 101, n 1; cf sections 182, 314.

remarkable. So much so in fact that one is driven to think of a kindred modern whose theology displays the same characteristic. Strangely perhaps, but I think rightly, the modern figure who looms into sight is none other than the mighty Karl Barth. Of course there can be no question of instituting here and now an exhaustive comparison between Ignatius and Barth, an interesting and challenging project though that would be. Time and incompetence on the one hand, and the need to stick to the exercise of the Kingdom on the other, fortunately limit what can be done. But I feel that it is in comparison with Barth that not only the remarkable theological stature of Ignatius, and also the prime theological dimension of the Kingdom, will most readily be made plain.

This slightly sudden shift to Karl Barth might be justified by the following summary account of his christocentricity:

His theology is like a vision dating from what may be termed the resurrection-period. It is as if he had walked with Jesus and his disciples during the forty days between Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead and his ascension, when Jesus no longer appeared to his disciples only as the man Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had known in the flesh, but, as the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, was now truly revealed to them in the full majesty and glory of his Godhead. Then Barth had come to see as in a vision, a vision however based upon and corroborated by holy scripture and thus no mere speculation, that the thought of man, the thought of the God man Jesus Christ and of his fellowship with men, had been with God from eternity. That experience, as if by means of a powerful searchlight, illuminated to Barth everything, not only retrospectively beyond the incarnation right back to the inner trinitarian life of God and his eternal decree before time, but also prospectively right to the end of time and beyond it. For it was then revealed to him that Jesus Christ is not only the eternal Son of God in his union with humanity, but also the Lord of heaven and earth, who, in anticipation of what will take place in his eternal Kingdom at the final revelation of him as the Lord of the cosmos and of all men, has already now communion with individual men, with his disciples, and, further, that all this had been planned by God before time, in his eternity.<sup>3</sup>

It would not be difficult to correlate visions and experiences granted to Ignatius with this dramatized account of Barth's basic insights. But here is not the place to do that. All that can be done here is to quarry from Barth something of his massive view of

<sup>3</sup> Hartwell, H.: *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (London, 1964), p 98.

Christ, by way of promoting our appreciation of the remarkable christocentric dimensions of the Kingdom.

What calls for mention here is, of course, the completely over-arching position of Christ in the barthian scheme of thought. 'With him, Jesus Christ is the bridge between God and the world, between God and man, in literally every respect, not only intellectually, that is, from the perspective of revelation, but also from the standpoint of election, creation, reconciliation and redemption . . . Barth's theology . . . is wholly christological in that in it . . . Jesus Christ is made the point of departure of every theological proposition'.<sup>4</sup> The revealed Word of God is, for Barth, the one and only criterion of church dogmatics; and the revealed Word of God is identical with Christ. Now the particular barthian dogma which is of greatest interest to us, as we consider the ignatian Kingdom of Christ, is his impressive view of Christ's role in God's election of grace. It has been said that the heart of Barth's theology beats in this doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Here is Barth's own view of it:

The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel because of all the words that can be said or heard it is the best: that God elects man; that God is for man too the One who loves in freedom. It is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because he is both the electing God and the electing man in One. It is part of the doctrine of God, because originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of himself. Its function is to bear basic testimony to eternal, free and unchanging grace as the beginning of all the ways and works of God.<sup>6</sup>

You will notice in this typical declaration at least two characteristics of Barth's whole approach in theology. What he says comes always from above. God is known through God and God alone, as God has revealed himself in his Word, Jesus Christ. And what is said of God is always wholly concrete. Barth does not discuss possibilities to do with God, nor does he speculate in an abstract way about God. Such an approach just disappears in face of what Barth sees to be the concrete, completely actual, graciously given reality of the God who is who he is in his act of revelation: personal, living, free and graciously creating fellowship between himself and us in Jesus Christ. God as he actually is in his Godness, as concretely revealed in Jesus Christ, stands in a free, definite relationship *ad*

<sup>4</sup> Hartwell, *op. cit.*, p 96.

<sup>5</sup> Cf Hartwell, *op. cit.*, p 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Church Dogmatics*, 11/2, p 3.

*extra.* Quite concretely in the person of Jesus Christ, God has made a free and gracious decision before the creation of the world and of man to unite himself with man in the person of his eternal Son, who is the man Jesus of Nazareth. God has eternally determined himself, elected himself, to fellowship with man, and has elected man to fellowship with himself – in Jesus Christ. In Christ he has taken upon himself the rejection which sinful man deserves, while sinful man is elected in Christ to participation in his own glory. Let Barth himself expound this:

Between God and man there stands the person of Jesus Christ, himself God and himself man, and so mediating between the two. In him God reveals himself to man. In him man sees and knows God. In him God stands before man and man stands before God, as is the eternal will of God, and the eternal ordination of man in accordance with this will. In him God's plan for man is disclosed, God's judgment on man fulfilled, God's deliverance of man accomplished, God's gift to man present in its fulness, God's claim and promise to man declared. In him God has joined himself to man. And so man exists for his sake. It is by him, Jesus Christ, and for him and to him, that the universe is created as a theatre for God's dealings with man and man's dealings with God. The being of God is his being, and similarly the being of man is originally his being. And there is nothing that is not from him and by him and to him. He is the word of God in whose truth everything is disclosed, and whose truth cannot be over-reached or conditioned by any other word. He is the decree of God, behind and above which there can be no earlier or higher decree; and beside which there can be no other, since all others serve only the fulfilment of this decree. He is the beginning of God, before which there is no other beginning, apart from that of God within himself. Except, then, for God himself, nothing can derive from any other source or look back to any other starting-point. He is the election of God, before which and without which and beside which God cannot make any other choices. Before him and without him and beside him God does not, then, elect or will anything.<sup>7</sup>

In this exposition we see how, for Barth, Christ is the sole, eternal, divine plan, Word, decree, beginning, election. In short, how Christ is the sole, eternal, divine will of God in the concrete for all men. In Christ, God elects, wills himself into covenant-partnership with man, and man is elected, willed in Christ into covenant-partnership with God. This universalistic approach gives Calvin's

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11/2, p 94.

double predestination an altogether new twist. Here there is no *decretum absolutum*, 'whereby according to the inscrutable will of an absolute God, a *Deus nudus absconditus*, mankind either before the fall (Supralapsarians) or after the fall (Infralapsarians) is divided into those who are elected for salvation and those who are rejected and, consequently, are destined to eternal damnation'.<sup>8</sup> What we have here is a *decretum concretum* of the divine will, whereby God resolves 'to determine himself in Jesus Christ for *sinful* man, and *sinful* man for himself, and therefore to take upon himself in Jesus Christ the rejection with all its consequences which sinful man deserves; while man, sinful man, is elected by him in Jesus Christ to participation in his own glory'.<sup>9</sup> Barth's double predestination is in the dual effect of the sole decision of the divine will to elect himself in Christ, and man in the same Christ, into covenant-partnership. This covenant provides the internal basis for the eventual creation of the world and man – again in Christ. Creation in Christ is the external basis for the working out of this covenant, whose ultimate fulfilment is the eternal positive will of God, to be achieved through reconciliation and redemption of men, in and through the Christ in whom all God's work *ad extra* is eternally and originally willed and planned.

Again, let us hear Barth express this in a passage which must surely remind us in some ways of the first preamble of the Ignatian exercise which follows on the Kingdom, the contemplation on the Incarnation.<sup>10</sup>

In the beginning, before time and space as we know them, before creation, before there was any reality distinct from God which could be the object of the love of God, or the setting for his acts of freedom, God anticipated and determined within himself (in the power of his love and freedom, of his knowing and willing), that the goal and meaning of all his dealings with the as yet non-existent universe, should be the fact that in his Son he would be gracious towards man, uniting himself with him. In the beginning it was the choice of the Father himself to establish this covenant with man by giving up his Son for him, that he himself might become man in the fulfilment of his grace. In the beginning it was the choice of the Son to be obedient to grace, and therefore to offer up himself and to become man, in order that this covenant might be made a reality. In the beginning it was the resolve of the holy Spirit that the unity of God, of Father and Son, should not be disturbed or rent by this covenant with man; but that

<sup>8</sup> Hartwell, *op. cit.*, p 106.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Exx 102.

it should be made the more glorious, the deity of God, the divinity of his love and freedom, being confirmed and demonstrated by this offering of the Father and this self-offering of the Son. This choice was in the beginning. As the subject and object of this choice, Jesus Christ was at the beginning . . . at the beginning of God's dealings with the reality which is distinct from himself. Jesus Christ was the choice or election of God in respect of this reality. He was the election of God's grace, as directed towards man. He was the election of God's covenant with man.<sup>11</sup>

And thus:

Jesus Christ is not only the *manifestatio* and *speculum nostrae praedestinationis*. And he is this not simply in the sense that our election can be known to us and contemplated by us only through his election, as an election which, like his and with his, is made (or not made) by a secret and hidden will of God. On the contrary, Jesus Christ reveals to us our election as an election which is made by him, by his will which is also the will of God. And he tells us that he himself is the one who elects us. In the very foreground of our existence in history we can and should cleave wholly and with full assurance to him, because in the eternal background of history, in the beginning with God, the only decree which was passed, the only Word which was spoken and which prevails, was the decision which was executed by Him.<sup>12</sup>

I have dwelt with Barth in the heights of 'the eternal background of our history', in the election of God's grace in Christ as seen by Barth to be the sole source of christian truth about God from above, because I think it provides the fitting theological background against which we can come to a better appreciation of the universalistic concrete call of Christ in the ignatian exercise of the Kingdom. It is obvious, I fancy, how what Barth says about Christ establishes Christ's eternal Lordship and Headship over the created universe; and Barth is, of course, not slow to speak frequently of Christ's kingship, of his *munus regium*, as it is called in the protestant tradition. Indeed he speaks at great length of the regal status of Christ, as 'both the Lord (Son of God) who in the man of Jesus of Nazareth became a servant and the servant who as the true, the royal, man was exalted to the right hand of his Father in his resurrection and ascension and thus became the Lord. . .'<sup>13</sup> But this is a further aspect of Barth's Christ which we can only mention. And we cannot go into Barth's difficult view of *das Nichtige*, the *Nihil* or

<sup>11</sup> *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, p 101 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, p 115.

<sup>13</sup> Hartwell, *op. cit.*, p 101 ff.

Nothingness – that which is hostile and antagonistic to God’s good creation; and for that reason is evil, the non-real, ‘the impossible possibility’ that God has said ‘No’ to, in saying ‘Yes’ to creation in Christ, that God rejects, and that Barth’s royal Christ battles with and triumphs over in his death and resurrection. Here are fascinating points of contact with Ignatius’s kingly Christ and his work of conquering the entire world and all his enemies. But more centrally, it is Barth’s view of Christ as eternally electing God and elected man as subject and object of divine election, that provides the closest point of contact with the Christ of the ignatian Kingdom.

*The Christ of the Kingdom*

The Christ of the Kingdom lives in glory, the glory of his Father into which he has entered.<sup>14</sup> He is, therefore, son of the Father, and, as Son, he is the *eternal King*.<sup>15</sup> He is also *our Lord*,<sup>16</sup> and even *God our Lord*.<sup>17</sup> This Lordship of Christ is universal: he is universal Lord,<sup>18</sup> who has ‘before him all the universe, which he is calling, at the same time as each one in particular’,<sup>19</sup> who wills ‘to conquer the entire world and all his enemies’.<sup>20</sup> More directly, he is ‘eternal Lord of all things’.<sup>21</sup> This universalism in Christ’s Lordship is prefigured in the temporal king who claims the ‘respect and obedience of all christian leaders and all their followers’,<sup>22</sup> and whose ‘will it is to conquer all the territory of the infidels’.<sup>23</sup> But Christ’s Lordship surpasses this claim on christians. It is without such limitation altogether. It encompasses the whole universe. There can be no mistaking the Godness of this Christ. Apart from his eternal Kingship and his universal Lordship, which he exercises now from his state of glory, holding heavenly court with his glorious Mother and all the men and women saints,<sup>24</sup> his goodness is infinite and his majesty is most holy.<sup>25</sup> He is the sole source of grace<sup>26</sup> and of favour and help.<sup>27</sup> The overall impression given of Christ’s eternal Kingship and universal Lordship is very powerful. These theological ‘qualifiers’ (as the late Ian Ramsey would have called these adjectives) are of great importance. They express something quite vital about the way in which the Christ of this exercise was ‘disclosed’ to Ignatius. They indicate the extent to which the call of this kingly Lord is rooted in the divine call of all men to covenant

<sup>14</sup> Exx 95.

<sup>18</sup> Exx 97.

<sup>22</sup> Exx 92.

<sup>26</sup> Exx 91.

<sup>15</sup> Exx 91, 95, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Exx 95.

<sup>23</sup> Exx 93.

<sup>27</sup> Exx 98.

<sup>16</sup> Exx 91, 95.

<sup>20</sup> Exx 95.

<sup>24</sup> Exx 98.

<sup>17</sup> Exx 92.

<sup>21</sup> Exx 98.

<sup>25</sup> Exx 98.

partnership through God's eternal election of men to grace. This Christ is the electing God in person, the eternal subject of election.

At this point we do well to recall Barth's words: 'Jesus Christ reveals to us our election as an election which is made by him by his will which is also the will of God. And he tells us that he himself is the one who elects us'. I think it is true to say that the most important thing about the Christ of the Kingdom is, precisely, his will – 'his most holy will'.<sup>28</sup> On this will depends the purpose of the whole exercise: 'If your most holy Majesty wills to choose me and admit me. . .'.<sup>29</sup> The universal call or appeal of Christ<sup>30</sup> proceeds from his divine will to conquer what is, in virtue of his royal Lordship, his by eternal right: 'My will is to conquer. . .'; just as it is the temporal king's will to conquer.<sup>31</sup> Christ's human will, as Barth sees it, is 'also the will of God'. The two wills of Christ, divine and human, are in that perfect unison which is grounded in the unity of his divine person. So: Christ elects us, calls us, into covenant-partnerships. But Christ the Son is also, concretely, he whom alone God eternally elects into covenant-partnership with himself. He is eternally the elected one as well as the electing God. His human will, in his eternal humanity, as also in his historical humanity, gives the sole perfect filial response – since it is personally the human will of the eternal Son – to the initiative of the electing God. This perfectly filial response of the Son is what glorifies the Father, what brings Christ through suffering and death to the Son's glory as Son of the Father, the glory he had with the Father before the world was made.<sup>32</sup> His human will in tune with his divine will, the will of God is bent to a single purpose: to conquer what does not belong to the eternal creative plan of his Father, what is unfilial, *das Nichtige*, and thus to enter as Son into the glory of his Father.<sup>33</sup> He is the eternally elected one, the eternal object of God's election, elected to reveal and embody God's gracious election of man to that filial, obedient covenant-partnership with God in Christ the eternal Son which alone brings man to his fulfilment and God to his greater glory as eternal Father. Although it is not expressly said in the Kingdom that Christ is elected, the eternal election of Christ seems, to me at any rate, to be strongly hinted at in the quite explicit election of the temporal king, 'chosen by the hand of God our Lord'.<sup>34</sup> Be that as it may, the notion of the eternal election of

<sup>28</sup> Exx 91.

<sup>32</sup> Cf Jn 17, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Exx 98.

<sup>33</sup> Exx 95.

<sup>30</sup> Exx 95.

<sup>34</sup> Exx 92.

<sup>31</sup> Exx 93.

Christ to Kingship of the universe certainly appears implied in his God-given task of conquering the universe and leading it to the glory of his Father.

Christ's being the eternally elected one means that his human will is perfectly at one with the eternal purpose of God's electing will with regard to man and his world. Hence it is into union with the human will of God's sole elected one that the whole exercise of the Kingdom leads the exercitant.<sup>35</sup> This is a union of wills between Christ and the exercitant which can abide no limits. It is not a union deduced and calculated by human logic. It is simply the means whereby alone we can become what we are eternally elected and called in Christ to become: partakers in the covenant-relationship of sonship of the Father in Christ, the eternally elected, royal man in whom alone our manhood is perfectly realized. Hence the progressive self-abandonment of the second part of the Kingdom, aimed as it is at actual imitation of the earthly Christ. His suffering and poverty was the expression of his totally filial response as God's elected one, and through it he entered into the glory of his Father. As men elected in him by the Father from eternity, we are called to follow no other path to the glory for which we are created.

### *Conclusion*

It is, I submit, by seeing the Christ of the Kingdom in terms of the dual role of Barth's Christ as electing God and elected man, that we can gain what is perhaps a new appreciation of the prime theological dimension of the whole exercise; and also come to appreciate the peculiarly christocentric logic which makes the exercise effective for the believing mind. That it is possible to illustrate Ignatius's mind from the works of a neo-orthodox protestant theologian like Barth need not cause surprise if we recall what has been said, for instance by Hugo Rahner, about Ignatius the theologian.<sup>36</sup> Ignatius's grasp of God came, we are told, *de arriba* – from above. There cannot be a better description of Barth's whole approach to theology. Ignatius's grasp is always intensely concrete. So, as we have seen, is Barth's. To judge from the Kingdom, Ignatius's view of Christ is both universalistic and, we must not forget, optimistic. These words certainly describe Barth's basic theological stance. I am suggesting that in Ignatius and Barth there

<sup>35</sup> See Courel, *op. cit.*, p 65 n 2.

<sup>36</sup> Esp. in the eponymous essay in *Ignatius the Theologian* (London, 1968).

is much the same insight into the centrality of the mystery of Christ. I am not suggesting that there are no differences. There is, for one thing, the obvious difference between the vast tracts of Barth's almost preaching prose and Ignatius's brief dramatic sketch of Christ's kingship in this exercise. For another thing, as we know from many sources, Ignatius's grasp of Christ came not from a lifetime of theological study but from visionary insights of a highly mystical nature. In any ultimate analysis Ignatius must emerge as much more than a theologian; but however deeply one went into Barth, he would, I think, emerge as no more than what in fact he has already become, a theologian's theologian.

All the same, I hope that even the sketchy comparison I have made between the two of them and their ways of presenting the eternal, divine and human, concrete, universalistic and, above all, challenging and appealing Christ has done something towards generating appreciation of the Christ of Ignatius's Kingdom. I hope that the use of Barth's scientific approach has not diminished the Kingdom, nor detracted from its effectiveness as a spiritual exercise. I hope I have left everything as it is. Perhaps, if I have been in any measure successful, I have done no more than to illustrate how much good christian theology may contribute to sound spirituality.