

The Fragmentation of Theology at the Limit of the Text

The Theological Reading of the Bible Beyond Biblical Theologies
in the Works of Karl Barth and Johann Andreas Quenstedt

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“Therefore a biblical theology can never consist in more than a series of attempted approximations, a collection of individual exegeses”.¹ Although “at no time and in no situation and under no pretext can theology know any more urgent concern than always remaining true to itself and always becoming truer to itself as *scriptural theology*”,² the so called ‘church father of twentieth century theology’ obviously ruled out the idea of a coherent *system* of biblical theology. To claim that Barth is nonetheless one of the most important *biblical* theologians in twentieth century theology would be carrying owls to Athens and has been at the focus of numerous studies on his hermeneutics.³ The early Barth’s turn to what later has been called Dialectic Theology was first initiated by Barth’s struggle with how to interpret the Bible. The question how to interpret it adequately led him to

¹ KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter CD) I/2, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley/Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by George Th. Thomson/ Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 438 (= *Kirchliche Dogmatik* [hereafter KD] Bd. I/2 [Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon 1938], 535). The English text of CD is quoted by reference to *The Digital Karl Barth Library* (<http://solomon.dkbl.alexanderstreet.com>).

² Cf. CD I/1, 285, my emphasis (KD I/1, 302).

³ Cf. REGINE PRENTER, *Glauben und Erkennen bei Karl Barth. Bemerkungen eines lutherischen Boso zur theologischen Methode Karl Barths*, *KuD* 2 (1956): 176–192, 185: “Daß hier Schrifttheologie getrieben wird mit einer Intensität, wie nur bei den allergrößten Lehrern der Kirche, ist jedem Beobachter von vornherein klar.” On Barth’s scriptural theology cf. e.g. RICHARD E. BURNETT, *Karl Barth’s Theological Exegesis. The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* (WUNT 145, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001); HELMUT KIRSCHSTEIN, *Der souveräne Gott und die heilige Schrift. Einführung in die Biblische Hermeneutik Karl Barths* (Aachen: Shaker 1998); MICHAEL TROWITZSCH (ed.), *Karl Barths Schriftauslegung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1996); KLAAS RUNIA, *Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1962).

write his famous commentary on Romans.⁴ An occupation with the interpretation of the Bible lasted throughout his work, and his Church Dogmatics are packed with discussions of biblical texts.⁵

Yet according to Barth it is “the Bible that is *not yet interpreted*, the free Bible, the Bible that remains *free in face of all interpretation*”, which “continually confronts Church proclamation as a judicial authority”.⁶ For Barth this does not result in a *system* of Biblical theology, although his Church Dogmatics for good reason has been called the most impressive and comprehensive system of a theology in the 20th century.⁷ The freedom of the biblical text resides in its remaining externality: No reading, no sermon, no interpretation, no theology affects this freedom of the text. Therefore, theological reference to the Bible as the Holy Scripture of faith has to deal with the text’s withdrawal. Theology never gets hold of the text which is its only basis of argument. In interpreting the biblical text theology thus breaks apart in fragments, into “a series of attempted approximations, a collection of individual exegeses”. Theology, I suggest, is about collecting these fragments of interpretation, drawn from various approaches to the text in different angles and perspectives.⁸ This is quite contrary to Barth (and Quenstedt) though I doubt it is appropriate to systemize this collection of fragmentary observations as a coherent system of Dogmatics.⁹ In this essay I will show that the concept of text, which is missing in Barth’s theological hermeneutic, leads to a fragmentation of theology. Even though Barth becomes aware of the genuine mediality of the biblical text, he loses sight of its materiality due to his concept of faith. The Lutheran Orthodox theology of Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688) provides us

⁴ On the genesis of Barth’s commentary on Romans and the importance of the hermeneutical questions at stake cf. esp. BURNETT, Karl Barth’s Theological Exegesis; cf. also KIRSCHSTEIN, Der souveräne Gott, 28 f. et passim.

⁵ Cf. the numbers provided by BURNETT, Karl Barth’s Theological Exegesis, 9. On the continuity of Barth’s hermeneutics cf. KIRSCHSTEIN, Der souveräne Gott, 112, 127 et passim.

⁶ CD I/1, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley/ Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1975), 259 (= KD I/1 [Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon 1952], 273), my emphasis.

⁷ Cf. PRENTER, Glauben und Erkennen, 178 and MARTIN SEILS, Glauben (HST 13, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1996), 203.

⁸ Thereby this concept of theology resembles Wittgenstein’s understanding of his Philosophical Investigations. Cf. the preface to LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Blackwell 2001), Preface: “The philosophical remarks of this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes [...]. The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made.”

⁹ PRENTER, Glauben und Erkennen, convincingly argued that the systemization has to do with Barth’s concept of knowledge (“Erkenntnis”).

with an alternative view: here the textuality of the text comes into sight. As different as Barth's and Quenstedt's theologies are, they coincide in focusing on the externality of Scripture in the event of Scripture, but while Barth tends to ignore textuality, Quenstedt interprets it theologically. By arguing that this difference has its roots in two different concepts of faith, I will demonstrate that questions of biblical hermeneutics are deeply woven into fundamental questions of theology.

1. Barth's Doctrine of Scripture

1.1. Scripture as the event of God's Word

It is a well-known fact that Barth's doctrine of Scripture is part of his doctrine of the threefold form of God's Word as revelation, Scripture, and proclamation.¹⁰ Although the basic concept of Barth's doctrine of Scripture is the concept of witness, I suggest considering first his concept of the *event* of God's Word.¹¹ Barth does not foster a simple biblicism in identifying the Bible as it is with the Word of God, but the Bible happens to *become* Word of God – every now and then: “Thus in the event of God's Word revelation and the Bible are indeed one, and literally so.”¹² By means of this event-character of God's Word in the Scripture, Barth can connect the unity and difference of revelation and Holy Scripture, as well as the unity and difference of God's Word and the human word: “If we have really listened to the biblical words in all their humanity, if we have accepted them as witness, we have obviously not only heard of the lordship of the triune God, but by this means it has become for us an actual

¹⁰ On the threefold form of the word of God as revelation, scripture, and proclamation cf. CD I/1, §4. Cf. on the relation of Trinitarian theology and the threefold form of God's Word in Barth: KIRSCHSTEIN, *Der souveräne Gott*, 131–149.

¹¹ Even though this goes against the flow of argument in Barth's text, it pays respect to the weight of this concept, which, e.g., is obvious in CD I/2, 503 (= KD I/2, 558): “It is round this event [of God's Word] that the whole doctrine of Holy Scripture circles, *and with it all Church dogmatics*, and with it, too, preaching and the sacrament of Church proclamation” (my emphasis). This quotation shows first that the concept of the event of God's Word is at the centre not only of Barth's doctrine of Scripture but also of Church Dogmatics. It shows second that this event remains withdrawn: we only circle around it. Herein, the argumentative side of the early Barth lives on in his Church Dogmatics. Already in his early text “Das Wort Gottes als Aufgabe der Theologie” (1922) Barth argued that we can only say “Yes” and “No” simultaneously and thereby circle around what lies between both. Cf. KARL BARTH, *Das Wort Gottes als Aufgabe der Theologie*, in: *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1922–1925* (GA III.19, Zürich: TVZ 1990), 144–175, 167 f.

¹² CD I/1, 113 (= KD I/1, 116).

presence and event".¹³ We are neither dealing with a simple identity (e.g. Scripture is God's Word) nor is it simply difference (e.g. Scripture is only a human word and God's Word is something else behind or beyond Scripture). In the *event* of God's Word Scripture bears *witness* to God's Word of revelation and therein to God. Thus in the concept of witness unity and difference are not only kept together, but witness itself becomes a mediation of God's presence.¹⁴ Considering Barth's concept of witness in detail would lead beyond the range of this essay.¹⁵ Here I will take into account just one more aspect: as reader I have to answer to the witness of Scripture, whether by confession or by denial – I cannot not answer it.¹⁶ The answer of faith according to Barth is at first instance *obedience* to the Word of God as it happens in Scripture.¹⁷ Accordingly, one would completely miss the point of witness if one asked for reasons to accept the witness: the witnessing character of Scripture would thereby be put to question and this would already be an act of disobedience. In answering to the witness there is no neutral position: we are either obedient or disobedient, we either accept it as witness of God's Word or we do not. In due course there can be no other reason for the truth of the witness of Scripture but its self-vindication in the event of God's Word.¹⁸ Only Scripture itself can bear witness to itself being the witness of God's Word of revelation. It is this circular figure of thought Barth points to when he explains that the sentence "The Bible is the Word of God" is an analytical sentence theology can describe ever anew, but never justify.¹⁹ Theology therefore is scrip-

¹³ CD I/2, 463 (= KD I/2, 512). Cf. also CD I/1, 113 (= KD I/1, 116): "On the one hand *Deus dixit*, on the other *Paulus dixit*. These are two different things. And precisely because they are not two things but become one and the same thing in the event of the Word of God, we must maintain that it is by no means self-evident or intrinsically one".

¹⁴ This aspect of Barth's doctrine of Scripture is completely ignored in FRANK M. HASEL, *The Christological Analogy of Scripture in Karl Barth*, ThZ 50 (1994): 41–49, in which Hasel very much emphasizes the humane and fallible character of the Bible according to Barth, but thereby ignores the mystery of God's Word in Barth's thought.

¹⁵ Cf. though, the essay of HANS CHRISTOPH ASKANI, *Zeugnis ohne Ende?*, in this Volume, 433–453. Even though he does not deal with Barth's concept of witness, his discussion of Ricoeur's concept of witness seems to me quite compatible with the thoughts developed here.

¹⁶ Cf. PHILIPP STOELLGER, *Missverständnisse und die Grenzen des Verstehens. Zum Verstehen diesseits und jenseits der Grenzen historischer Vernunft*, ZThK 106 (2009): 223–263, esp. 224: "Die biblischen Texte stellen Ansprüche, auf die die Theologie nicht nicht antworten kann."

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. CD I/2, 457 f. (= KD I/2, 506 f.).

¹⁸ Cf. CD I/2, 458 (= KD I/2, 506).

¹⁹ Cf. CD I/2, 535 (= KD I/2, 595): "We have to admit to ourselves and to all who ask us about this question that the statement that the Bible is the Word of God is an *analytical* statement, a statement which is grounded only in its repetition, description and interpretation, and not in its derivation from any major propositions. It must either be un-

tural, biblical Theology if it accepts that the text of Scripture poses a limit to theology it cannot go behind. It cannot reason why this text of Scripture comes to be revelation, why the Word of God happens in and through this Scripture, because this event only takes place when and where God himself takes the action to identify himself in his word with these texts – *ubi et quando visum est Deo* (CA V). This event is not at the disposal of the interpreter of the text, whether it be the Church or a theologian.²⁰ Due to this change of subject in the process of interpreting Scripture,²¹ Barth resists every fixed method of interpretation:²² all interpretation of Scripture can be about is keeping things open and giving God room to act through Scripture: it is a theology of expectation.²³

It is this withdrawal of the event of Scripture, as I would like to emphasize, wherein the authority of Scripture resides. Scripture as witness of God's Word is a "sign which [...] does at least point to a superior authority confronting the proclamation of the Church".²⁴ This is why "the Bible has this priority", why it itself "is the Word of God".²⁵ This 'is', however, is nothing one can get hold of: Scripture 'is' the Word of God and at once it is not, for in becoming God's Word it at once withdraws itself as such. In the terms of Barth this is the *mystery* of the Word of God in Scripture.²⁶

derstood as grounded in itself and preceding all other statements or it cannot be understood at all".

²⁰ CD I/2, 482 (= KD I/2, 534): "The Church has no control or power over what may lie between, over the event that this witness is the witness of divine revelation not only in recollection and expectation, but here and now".

²¹ Cf. BURNETT, Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis, 202 f.

²² Cf. MICHAEL TROWITZSCH, Pfingstlich genau. Zur Hermeneutik Karl Barths, in: Michael Beintker (ed.), Karl Barth in Deutschland (1921–1935). Aufbruch – Klärung – Widerstand (Zürich: TVZ 2005), 363–391, 385 f.; cf. also MICHAEL TROWITZSCH, Nachkritische Schriftauslegung. Wiederaufnahme und Fortführung einer Fragestellung, in: his (ed.), Karl Barths Schriftauslegung, 73–109, 93–99.

²³ Cf. TROWITZSCH, Pfingstlich genau, 389.

²⁴ CD I/2, 457 (= KD I/2, 505).

²⁵ CD I/2, 502 (= KD I/2, 557).

²⁶ Cf. CD I/1, 162–186 (= KD I/1, 168–194) on "The speech of God as the mystery of God". These considerations do apply to Barth's Scriptural theory in so far as it is concerned with Scripture as Word of God: "Thus in all applications of the proposition that proclamation, Scripture or revelation is God's Word we must have regard to the fact that this is true only in this twofold indirectness. In the speaking and receiving of God's Word what is involved is not just an act of God generally, and not just an act of God in creaturely reality as such, but an act of God in the reality which contradicts God, which conceals Him, and in which His revelation is not just His act but His miraculous act, the tearing of an untearably thick veil, i.e., His mystery" (op. cit. 168 [= KD I/2, 174]). Therefore what is said in this passages about God in his word also applies to God's revelation in Scripture: "The truth is, however, that God veils Himself and that in so doing

Corresponding to this mystery of the Word of God is a peculiar temporal structure of this event: it is present only as past event, as something that has happened. We can speak of this event only in retrospect, we never can say: here and now revelation takes place in Scripture. But because of the past event we can hope that it is going to happen again, that it is also a future event: “If we say: the Bible has this priority, it is the Word of God, we must first replace the ‘has’ by a ‘had’ and ‘will have,’ and the ‘is’ by a ‘was’ and ‘will be.’”²⁷ The present of God’s Word only comes into sight as the *in-between* of what *has* happened and what *will* happen, it is a present “over which we have no power”:²⁸ According to Barth we are not even able to speak about the present of this event. What happens here “is the event of what God Himself decides and wills and does in divine freedom and superiority and power”.²⁹ Once again we only “circle round this event” while the event itself remains withdrawn – at least to our conceptual understanding, our rational talking about it. It remains an incomprehensible act of God, a “divine present”, which should not be turned into a “human present which we can seize and control”.³⁰

In focusing on the idea of the unavailability of the event of Scripture Barth construes the text as the limit of Biblical Theology by reference to a temporal conception of event as withdrawal of Scripture in the present. Biblical Theology breaks apart in fragments because it never gets hold of its subject in the present. Yet Barth’s argument loses sight of an aspect I take to be of some importance for biblical theology, namely the text as something materially present in the present. The idea of the self-vindication of Scripture relies on a crucial difference between the event of Scripture as event of God’s Word and on Scripture as text. If the sentence that Scripture itself bears witness to as the only witness of God’s Word is not to be a mere circle, a distinction must be drawn: Scripture *as event* bears witness to Scripture *as text*. Because Scripture happens to become God’s Word, we read the text of Scripture as witness to the Word of God – because it *has* happened, we expect this text to become again God’s Word. But this entails that the temporal dialectics of the event of God’s Word Barth has developed needs to be related to the phenomenon of the text of Scripture: in the present the text is materially present. And it is this text we say becomes God’s Word. How then does *this* text relate to the event that has happened? How does *this* text relate to the Christian hope of it hap-

– this is why we must not try to intrude into the mystery – He unveils Himself” (CD I/1, 169 [= KD I/1, 175]).

²⁷ CD I/2, 502 (= KD I/2, 557).

²⁸ Op. cit. 503 (= KD I/2, 558).

²⁹ Loc. cit.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

pening again? How is the textuality of the text to be conceptualized in regard to its becoming God's Word?

In one sense Barth knows quite well to write about the present of the text and God's Word within it: "God Himself *now* says what the text says. The work of God is done through this text."³¹ Yet in pointing out that this always remains a miracle and in emphasizing that it is God who acts within this event of Scripture's witness, Barth characterizes the text *as text* primarily by limiting attributes. The main information about the textual form of Scripture is: it is a mere human, fallible text. The positive counterpart to this is the miracle that God uses this human and fallible form in the event of revelation. Certainly, Barth has to admit, it is *this* specific text by means of which God speaks.³² This way Barth finds something positive to say even about the doctrine of verbal inspiration: "If the word is not to be separated from the matter, if there is no such thing as verbal inspiredness, the matter is not to be separated from the word, and there is real inspiration, the hearing of the Word of *God*, only in the form of *verbal* inspiration, the hearing of the Word of God only in the concrete form of the biblical word."³³

By referring to the unity of matter and word, of God's Word and biblical text, Barth thus alludes to aspects of a theology of text, but does not explicate and explore them any deeper. He evades these explications in two ways: First by reference to the fallibility of the text as a writing of human hands, second by focusing mainly on the *content* of Scripture. As I have already said something about the first aspect, I will now say something more about the second: The focus on the content of the biblical text has to do with Barth's concept of the Word of God. Already this concept does focus on the content of the word and thereby rules out its material form. This is distracting, because as Barth asks for the differences between the three forms of God's Word one should expect him not only to discuss the differences of time, but also the differences of the materiality of the form: the bodily incarnation of God in Christ as the materiality of the revealed word, the text as the materiality of God's Word in Scripture and the spoken word as the materiality of God's Word in proclamation. In discovering that text and subject matter cannot simply be taken apart Barth scratches the surface of Scripture's textuality, but he does not recognize the materiality of this surface.

³¹ CD I/2, 532 (= KD I/2, 591), my emphasis.

³² Cf. CD I/2, 532 f. (= KD I/2, 591 f.).

³³ CD I/2, 531 f. (= KD I/2, 592), emphasis in accordance with the German original.

1.2. Faith as acknowledgement (assensus) and obedience to the content of the Word

There are, nonetheless, some ambiguities, for Barth did not simply reject the idea of inspiration. In his prefaces to his commentary on Romans he even saw himself quite close to the way Calvin spoke about verbal inspiration.³⁴ Richard E. Burnett makes quite a lot out of the early Barth's statements on inspiration, as they are most clearly opposed to Barth's view before 1915. According to Burnett "the most important thing Calvin taught Barth was to focus on the text itself."³⁵ On the one hand this certainly is true, yet on the other what mattered most for Barth, the early as well as the late, was the "subject matter" the text gave witness to: "Barth's great discovery [...] was that God, that revelation, is the actual content, subject matter, and theme of the Bible."³⁶ It is to some extent the very classic divide between *verba et res* which Barth makes use of: the words of the text do point to the subject matter (*res*), which is revelation and therein God himself. What Barth seems to lose sight of is that this 'subject matter', the *res Scripturae*, is something happening in and through the text. Nonetheless, Barth knows well that he deals with a reversion of the concept of understanding: "the subject matter, content, and theme of Holy Scripture establishes itself as such",³⁷ which becomes evident in the terminology of the "event" used in his Church Dogmatics. Yet even though there is this recognition of Scripture as active subject and of the reader as someone understanding passively, Barth sticks to the concept of subject matter.³⁸ Yet the problem is that words like "subject matter" ("Sache"), "content" ("Inhalt") and "theme" ("Thema") all focus on what we talk *about*. The focus hence is on the cognitive dimension of Scripture: it is what we have to assent to in becoming ourselves witnesses. Because all interpretation of the Bible as God's Word has to deal primarily with the subject matter (the content of Scripture),³⁹ the textual form can be discussed as a hindrance to this content.

This negative imprint of the human form is already spelled out by Barth in his concept of God's Word: The "form [of God's Word] is not a suitable

³⁴ Cf. esp. the preface to the third edition: KARL BARTH, *Der Römerbrief*. Zweite Fassung 1922 (Zürich: TVZ 1989), XXVIII. Cf. BURNETT, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegeses*, 98 f.

³⁵ BURNETT, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis*, 252.

³⁶ *Op. cit.* 224. Cf. 55 et passim.

³⁷ *Op. cit.* 238. Cf. 60 f.

³⁸ On the semiotic aspects of Barth's hermeneutics cf. KIRSCHSTEIN, *Der souveräne Gott*, 215 ff., on the relation of signified ("Signifikat") and signifier ("Signifikant") cf. *op. cit.* 218.

³⁹ Cf. BURNETT, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis*, 55, 224 et passim.

but an unsuitable medium for God's self-presentation. It does not correspond to the matter but contradicts it. It does not unveil it but veils it."⁴⁰ Thus the concept of 'form' is from the very beginning negatively imprinted:⁴¹ the different forms of God's Word not only reveal, but in revealing they at once conceal what they reveal. This is the mystery of the Word of God.⁴² Scripture as one of the forms of the Word of God does participate in this dialectics of mystery. Hence even though the content of God's Word is only given within this threefold worldly form, this coincidence of form and content again remains withdrawn: "What is discernible by us is always form without content or content without form."⁴³ The unity of form and content remains in the hands of God's acting with this text.⁴⁴ As much as Barth tries to relate content and form in such a dialectic manner, it becomes obvious that in the end he lays all emphasis on the *content* of Scripture, which – unlike the concept of form – is positively imprinted: the focus lies on the question of what Scripture is about, what its subject matter is.⁴⁵ Barth's way of thought is thus guided by the "What"-questions: 'What does the revelation that Scripture bears witness to and that is proclaimed in sermon and sacraments have to tell us? What is revealed?' The questions "Why" and "Whereby" are secondary. "The living and inalterable content of the Word [...] must [...] reach its goal":⁴⁶ The *content* of Scripture is efficacious, the textual form is cumbersome.

The efficiency of the Word takes place as *obedience* to the content of God's Word, as my decision, which in itself is a decision reached only by means of God's power.⁴⁷ In being obedient to the Word of God, I acknowledge His word. Acknowledgement (lat. *assensus*) points to the efficiency of God's Word in the hearer or reader of Scripture as an act of his recognition, as affecting his knowledge. This way acknowledgement and ob-

⁴⁰ CD I/1, 166 (= KD I/1, 172).

⁴¹ Here it makes sense to speak of a kind of Platonism in Barth's thought as e.g. OSWALD BAYER, *Theologie* (HST 1, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1994), 364 ff. does (he is not so much engaged with the antimaterialism of Barth, but rather with his emphasis on final unity). It is, though, what Kurt Flasch has called a "shrink-Platonism" ("Schrumpfplatonismus"), more akin to the vulgar Platonism of Augustine than to the Philosophy of Plato itself. Cf. on the "shrink-platonism" of Augustine: KURT FLASCH, *Augustin. Einführung in sein Denken* (Stuttgart: Reclam³2003), 34.

⁴² Cf. CD I/1, 168 f. (= KD I/1, 175).

⁴³ CD I/1, 175 (= KD I/1, 182).

⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

⁴⁵ Cf. CD I/1, 91 (= KD I/1, 93). The prefaces to his commentary on Romans already pointed in this direction, especially his call for an interpretation "more in accordance with its [the Bible's] subject matter, content, and substance" (BURNETT, *Karl Barth's Theological Exegeses*, 65).

⁴⁶ CD I/1, 160 (= KD I/1, 166).

⁴⁷ Cf. CD I/1, 161 (= KD I/1, 167).

edience come to be the crucial aspects of faith brought about by means of God's Word. What is most interesting about Barth's hermeneutical investigations is that he thereby conceives of the act of understanding Scripture as the Word of God itself as an act of faith: understanding Scripture is to have faith in God, and to have faith in God is to understand Scripture, i.e., the Scripture which in an inaccessible way, *ubi et quando visum est Deo*, happens to become the Word of God. A hermeneutics of Scripture then is an analysis of faith, and therein an analytical approach towards the event of the Word of God in Scripture. Understanding faith at once means understanding the structure of our understanding of Scripture. Barth comprehends this structure as acknowledgement (*assensus*). Faith according to Barth is to acknowledge the Word of God in being obedient to its content. This content is expressed by the words "God with us" – "Immanuel", hence the content of Scripture is Christ and there is an "equation of God's Word and God's Son".⁴⁸ This acknowledgement of the person of Christ is in respect to Scripture nonetheless an acknowledgement of the *propositional content* of the biblical text.

For a Lutheran theologian one thing is irritating: if we consider the triad of knowledge (*notitia*), acknowledgement (*assensus*), and faith (*fiducia*), there has always been great consensus within Protestant theology about the last, i.e., *fiducia*, being the heart of faith – and not *assensus*. This raises the question, what would a theological concept of understanding Scripture look like, if understanding Scripture were not conceptualized by means of the concept of *assensus* as done by Barth, but by the concept of *fiducia*? Does conceptualizing the understanding of Scripture as *fiducia* lead to a concept of understanding that pays more respect to the material form of Scripture? The following sections aim to introduce such a concept by reference to the Lutheran Orthodox theology of Johann Andreas Quenstedt's main work, his "Theologia didactico-polemica" (1685).

⁴⁸ CD I/1, 137 (= KD I/1, 142).