Karl Barth and the Resurrection of 'Time Past':
The Risen Jesus, Sovereignty over Time, and Absolute Identity

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Abstract: In the section 'Jesus Christ, Lord of Time' in Church Dogmatics III/2 Karl Barth held that lordship or sovereignty over time was central to the reality of the risen Jesus. I argue that his enacting sovereignty over time coincided with the very resurrection of time itself - the past recapitulated in the present – in a way necessarily involving the conceptuality of absolute or numerical identity rather than mere generic or sortal sameness.

Keywords: Karl Barth; sovereignty over time; Church Dogmatics III/2; resurrection; the risen Jesus; absolute identity; generic sameness; sortal sameness.

INTRODUCTION

As Karl Barth has it, neither scripture-fulfilment nor kyriocentric vision is central to the Gospels’ understanding of the significance of the risen Jesus’ resurrection appearances. In particular, as regards a certain kind of theophanic presence or vision, the central thematic is not a ‘new and glorified corporeality in which Jesus appeared to His disciples.’1 The ‘main theme and significance’ is not ‘the inauguration of the second creation, the new æon ….’2 Barth continues:

Is it not surprising that if we really wished we could find more along these lines in the story of the transfiguration than in the records of Easter, which mention the white (Mk. 16\(^2\)) or even "shining" (Lk. 24\(^4\)) raiment of the angels, but have no great interest in the new form of Jesus as such?3

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1 Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, tr. G Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1953), 145.
2 Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 145.
3 Barth continues: ‘If we want information on the latter point we have to look for it, drawing deductions (as from the appearances through closed doors),
In the very place where one would expect a transfigured Jesus, there is none – no indication that Jesus’ appearance is of another form, angelic, shining, or otherwise. As Barth would have it, there is not even such a presence in John’s intention to speak of the divinity of Jesus at 20:28: nothing there resembles any theophanic presence or vision of YHWH in the Old Testament. Instead, according to Barth there is a startling claim about Jesus’ sovereignty over time. I believe Barth was right about this as regards the Gospels and indeed I hold that sovereignty over time is to be found there because of Genesis 1:3-5’s claim that the first thing YHWH (God) created was time. But my intention in this essay is to explore the sense in which it can be said that Barth’s notion of lordship or sovereignty over time in Church Dogmatics III/2 necessarily involves the concept of numerical identity. Is there evidence there that this is how he ought to be understood? I answer, yes, and hold that Barth was a pioneer on this matter. He saw that insofar as sovereignty over time involves any notion of identity it must be numerical identity. Central to his explanation of the significance of the resurrection appearances is the absolute recapitulation of the past in some such respect. This is not merely referencing his well-known view of the simultaneity of the past, present and future in the risen Jesus but rather pointing in some sense to the action of the resurrection of and therefore answering questions which are not posed in this context by the Evangelists themselves’ (Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 145).

4 Here I affirm Claus Westermann’s view in his commentary on Genesis, Westermann, Genesis 1-11 tr. John Scullion (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1985), 112-122. It is pre-eminently to Westermann’s magisterial commentary on Genesis that we owe the insight that in the beginning the first two things YHWH created were time and space. Westermann attributes the intentionality of the action of the creation of time to Genesis 1:3-5 and the intentionality of the creation of space to 1:6-10. Pre-eminently YHWH is Elohim because he is the creator of the very dimensions in which the world has its life: YHWH is ha Elohim – the greatest god and therefore God (Elohim as a proper name as used in Genesis 1) - because he is the creator of time and indeed of space. The Priestly writer then proceeds in his narrative to fill up the dimensions of time and space with events and objects. In this sense it can be understood as a kind of ‘container’ universe not too far removed from the way Isaac Newton understood the relationship between, on the one hand, space and time and, on the other, objects and events. Space and time are the absolute ‘forms’ of the creation, they are not as Gottfried Leibniz held second-order functions of events and objects, far less a kind of necessary a ‘priori synthetic’ filter for the human mind to perceive truths about the fundamental particulars of the world (as Kant thought).

5 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2 tr. Geoffrey Bromily (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961).
the past, of time itself. I begin my account on a personal note of how I came to view Barth in this way.

CHURCH DOGMATICS III/2: THE EVIDENCE

There is a passage in Barth’s Church Dogmatics to which I have often turned when seeking insight into the resurrection narratives. The passage is in the form of an excursus found in volume IV/2, pages 144-6. On the particular occasion of having begun to wonder about sovereignty over time and numerical identity I sought inspiration on precisely how ‘numerical identity’ could be present in the actions of the risen Jesus. Previously, my interpretation of Barth on the moment of Jesus’ self-revelation to the disciples in this excursus had been resolutely ‘generic’ in nature: I had taken the reference to what I now interpret as identical action to be generically the same action - as in doing the same (exact species of) action (as in ‘he raised his arm in exactly the same way five times’). Even though I was cognizant of Barth’s view in Church Dogmatics III/2 of the risen Jesus as in some sense uniting past, present and future in his person – a species of absolute unity of time based on biblical passages such as ‘I am the one who is, who was, and is to come (cf. Revelation 1:4, 8)’ this did not stop me from thinking in terms of generic

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6 Barth introduces his understanding of Jesus’ lordship over Time in Church Dogmatics III/2 in terms of the contrast between the human reality of time - time as ‘succession’ – and ‘God’s eternity’ understood as the ‘simultaneity of present, past and future’ (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, 438. Subsequently he proceeds to the material that constitutes the biblical basis of this view. Central to this is Rev. 1:8:

Of all the relevant passages in the Apocalypse, the clearest is Rev. 1:8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (παντοκράτωρ). The context leaves us in no doubt that the speaker is not God in abstracto, but God in concreto, God in His identity with the man Jesus (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, 465).

Barth understands this to involve a divine temporality where past, present, and future constitute an absolute unity of time:

[Jesus] ascribes to Himself a being in time. The same truth emerges unmistakeably from the allusion to the three dimensions, the second dimension being significantly placed first in verse 8: "which is, and which was, and which is to come." His life embraces a present, past and future. Here is no timeless being, but a strictly temporal one, though of course it differs from all other temporal being as that which is divinely temporal. (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, 465).

So also:
sameness when I read IV/2. This is for example how I interpreted what Barth said of Mary Magdalene’s recognition of the risen Jesus. She ‘recognises Him simply by the fact that - obviously not for the first time - He calls her by her name (Jn. 20:16) (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 145). It made sense to say that generically the same action reminded Mary of Jesus and prompted her recognition of him in an event that could therefore in principle be explained naturalistically. The passage is certainly consistent with this assertion but of course as I will claim it is not the only explanation. It did not in fact occur to me then that Barth could mean something akin to numerical identity and that this would involve the miracle of Jesus enacting sovereignty over time as in resurrecting the identical but past action.

Likewise, when Barth spoke about the overall significance of the resurrection appearances he appeared at least to me to mean what I now understand to be the concept of sortal sameness or continuity of identity through time as thoroughly endorsed by the classical tradition. That is how I understood the following:

> the question how [the disciples] came to recognise Him when they saw and heard Him is rather strangely answered - although not with equal definiteness - by the radical assertion that He was known as the One

That is to say, I am sovereign over my own being. Even as present I am He who was and will be. All this is applied to the being of the man Jesus in time. The all-inclusive "I am" rules out any notion that the three dimensions, present, past and future, simply follow one another in succession. The very fact that 18 puts the "I am" and the "which is" first is a plain warning. It means: "I am all this simultaneously. I, the same, am; I was as the same; and I will come again as the same. My time is always simultaneously present, past and future. That is why I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last. Since my present includes the past and future it is both the first and last of all other times.' (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 465).

Barth offers the same kind of commentary on Hebrews 13:8 (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 466). My analysis of the form and direction of Barth’s exegesis in *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 465-474 leads me to believe that Barth took passages such as Revelation 1:8 to constitute commentary on the risen Jesus’ action attested in the Gospels inclusive of the action of self-revelation. To that extent he understood their truth at least in part ultimately derivable from the actual historical reality of the actions of the risen Jesus involving as they do the recapitulation of the past. The qualification is added because I think that the temporal dimension of the future does not play the same role as the other two in Barth’s account of sovereignty of time as enacted by the risen Jesus in his appearances. I would not want to say it is completely absent but it is less emphatic, less explicit, and to this extent less central.
who had been among them before and was then crucified, dead and buried (Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 145). It was also what I read into this passage: What the Evangelists really know and say is simply that the disciples saw and heard Jesus again after His death, and that as they saw and heard Him they recognised Him, and that they recognised Him on the basis of His identity with the One whom they had known before. And they say this because it seems to be their particular intention to say it (Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 145).

Accordingly, to my way of thinking there was nothing in IV/2 that implied the risen Jesus recapitulating an action absolutely identical with an action of his in the past or indeed revealing himself to be the recapitulation of a Jesus absolutely identical with the Jesus of the past. There was nothing in these passages that appeared to intimate the very resurrection of time, and of time past (or time 'before') in particular. As I say, it was only when I read the excursus in terms of sovereignty over time and this in terms of numerical identity that I wondered whether this was indeed what Barth himself had meant. I tested what was only a hypothesis by examining those passages in ‘Jesus Christ, Lord of Time’ in Church Dogmatics III/2 where Barth focussed on the risen Jesus actions in the Gospels and, to my great surprise, when I read Barth’s exegesis of the Emmaus narrative in Luke 24 the following set of statements leapt out at me. I had read them before but by comparison had ‘barely blinked’ then chiefly because I took them to be referring to generic sameness and sortal sameness. But now I could see that neither of these

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7 I have wondered whether the qualification Barth makes here is significant. Why should the answer be ‘strange’ as in ‘remarkable’ (merkwürdig; Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/2 [Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1960]. 162)? It might be because Barth was making a claim regarding the strange presence of numerical identity rather than mere sortal or generic sameness. Barth may be making good his claim that the way in which he understood Luke’s Emmaus narrative – Jesus’ lordship over time - was the interpretative lens through which he viewed the other appearance narratives. In other words, he had in mind numerical identity and not generic or sortal sameness.

8 A human being who merely raises their arm twice generically cannot be said to enact sovereignty over time since they are not enacting the identical first raising of their arm; they are only ‘copying’ it; they are not resurrecting the identical action. A human being who merely exhibits sortal sameness in the resurrection of the body rather than conforming to absolute identity in some sense cannot be said to enact the resurrection of time (though Jesus’ resurrection understood sortally would I contend manifest sovereignty over a specific physical object, namely Jesus’ own body). By analogy: it had not occurred to me that Barth could be thinking in any other way about Jesus.
concepts did Barth justice. Before I present these passages and explain why I thought such concepts do not do his thought justice I should explain my terms, and in particular explain why numerical identity is literally in a class of its own. It means in effect explaining the distinction between identity and sameness. The latter concept breaks down into generic sameness and sortal sameness and neither can I contend fulfil the task of delivering sovereignty over time.

IDENTITY, GENERIC SAMENESS, AND SORTAL SAMENESS

The tendency is to use ‘identity’ and ‘sameness’ synonymously. We must insist on keeping them separate. We must discriminate between: speaking about sameness under a sortal concept9 e.g. being the same man or being the same boat or being the same body10; speaking about generic sameness as in doing the same action repetitively; and speaking about strict and absolute identity of the kind that satisfies the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals, what one might call the simple uncluttered notion of identity. In the influential essay ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’11 the philosopher Delia Graff Fara unpacks the various distinctions that must be made between identity and sameness. In doing this she hopes to isolate a very precise notion of identity which is so ‘absolute’ and ‘too unyielding a relation’ that it does

9 A term introduced into the philosopher’s vocabulary by John Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding in 1690 to indicate what the essence of a thing is, sortal sameness in the context of the present essay is used to refer to continuity and persistence and sameness of an object through time. It is therefore designates a conceptuality existing intermediately between on the one hand mere generic sameness and on the other absolute identity.

10 Harold Noonan’s paper ‘On the Notion of a Sortal Concept’ brilliantly captures all the ingredients essential to the articulation of this issue. See H W Noonan, ‘On the Notion of a Sortal Concept’, Philosophical Quarterly 28 (110) 1978, 58-64. He argued that what he called identity under a sortal concept e.g. being the same man or being the same boat is not to be understood as the strict unyielding notion of identity. This is because it does not satisfy the principle of indiscernibility of identicals. As we will see, Delia Graff Fara advises that we should retain the concept of identity only for the latter and the former should be referred to as sameness under a sortal concept. There is on the one hand the unyielding because absolute concept of identity and on the other there is sameness under a sortal concept.

not even apply to the sameness and continuity of an object through time, a sortal concept e.g. being the same boat or the same human being, far less what we understand as generic sameness. She writes:

There is a distinction between identity and sameness. There is only one identity relation but there are many sameness relations. As many have said, identity is that relation which everything bears to itself but to no other thing. But something may be the same, in a number of different respects, as something other than itself. Sameness relations fall under at least two categories. First, there are those that are relativized to a quality — e.g., same color or same height. Second, there are those that are relativized to a sort of thing — e.g., same person or same boat (Graff Fara, ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’, 3).

The first category is relatively unproblematic: there are degrees of generic sameness culminating in the ‘special case of sameness relativized to a quality: sameness with respect to every quality.’ (Graff Fara, ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’, 3). Things belong to the same class or set such that there is more than one example of the same thing or quality. Another name for this is qualitative sameness.

The second category is sameness relative to a sort (e.g. the same person or same boat). This is the concept of sameness that Graff Fara is most determined to distinguish from numerical or absolute identity. It happens to be the one that, as we will see, looms large in discussion of the risen Jesus in the classical tradition under the concept of continuity of sameness leading to this simplistic notion of Jesus living on in continuity with his past self in some sense. She writes:

... the boat that Michael just embarked on is the same boat as the one he will later row ashore (should all go as planned), even though the boat that he embarked on is not absolutely identical to the boat that he will row ashore. Like Theseus’s ship, Michael’s boat will have exchanged or lost some of its parts over the course of its long river crossing. This suffices to make the embarked-upon boat numerically distinct from the rowed-ashore boat. But it does not suffice to make them different boats (Graff Fara, ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’, 5). She concludes:

12 ‘[I]f Michael does not in the end row his boat ashore because it capsizes, then the boat that he would have rowed ashore—if only his boat had not capsized—would be the same boat as the one he in fact embarked on, even though the boat that he would have rowed ashore in that event would not be absolutely identical to the boat he did in fact embark on.’ (Graff Fara, ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’, 5).
The boat we’re on now is the very same boat as the one we were on last week. But they are not identical, for identity is “too unyielding a relation” (to borrow Robert Stalnaker’s words) to hold of entities composed of different matter (Graff Fara, ‘Possibility Relative to a Sortal’, 6).

So the boat in question is the same boat but not identical to the boat Michael embarked on because it will not have numerically the same properties. It will as she says be composed of different matter. We should be more radical than Graff Fara on this point though I endorse all the distinctions she makes. I would hold the boat would not be the identical boat even if it were able to persist in the exactly the same way such that it wasn’t composed of different matter. Identity requires that the boat rowed ashore can only be the boat embarked on if it were identical to the boat embarked on, which is to say, if it were the boat embarked on. But not only would the boat embarked on and the boat rowed ashore differ in terms of duration of existence – perdurance - even if its material properties did not depreciate, age, or change in time in any way; it would also differ in terms of time of existence. Both these must hold in order for absolute identity to apply.

BARTH ON JESUS’ LORDSHIP OVER TIME

My terms duly elucidated, why do the concepts of generic sameness and sortal sameness not do justice to Barth? Here is Barth’s interpretation of the denouement of the Emmaus narrative, Jesus breaking bread as Luke 24:30-31 has it:

> Not until He performed a certain action was this state of affairs changed (“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him,” v. 31). That action was not something new and special, but the very action He had performed on the night of His passion when He re-interpreted the Passover as a prefigurement of His own passion and death in their saving significance, thus showing that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt had now become a reality (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, 472; my italics).

Now, I grant you one could conceivably read this to mean mere generic sameness in the context of sortal sameness (the same Jesus continuing in time). But neither generic sameness nor sortal sameness permits one to write the following:

The limitation of the past had been burst. The past of Jesus had become a present reality (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, 472; my italics).

Or this:

… it was this Jesus who encountered them in the Easter time, emerging from the past as a figure of the present, alive for evermore, abiding with them, their Lord and Contemporary for all time. It was He and none other, in the form which belonged to the past, who must now be
manifested to them as the content of the Gospel (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 473; *my italics*).

Or this:

… this figure of the past whose abiding *presence* [i.e., being present] is guaranteed by the event of Easter (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 473; *my italics*).

Or this:

Jesus the Lord whom he proclaims *is identical with that figure of the past* who has made Himself eternally present as the Lord in the Easter time (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 473; *my italics*).\(^{13}\)

Or this:

And in the light of the Easter time *the two different times are made one time in which the present is filled by the past of Jesus, because this past has not remained the past but irrupted into the present* ...(Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 473; *my italics*).

‘The past has not remained past but irrupted into the present’: this is central to Barth. The insight informs everything he says above. The past irrupts into the present such that ‘two different times are made one time.’ The past irrupts into the present such that the ‘limitation of the past had been burst. The past of Jesus had become a present reality.’ The past irrupts into the present such that Jesus is present ‘in the form which belonged to the past.’ With hindsight it is perfectly explicable that neither generic sameness nor sortal sameness would figure in Barth’s thought. Neither of them deliver sovereignty over time. The core reason is that neither are about the resurrection of time itself: generic sameness cannot but testify to the loss of time; the persistence characterizing sortal sameness indicates survival of the object or agent but not the resurrection of time. It is clear that generic sameness does not permit the past to irrupt into the present ‘to become a present reality’, it only copies the past without recapitulating absolute identity. Likewise sortal sameness may in some sense carry the past into the present and into the future but this is emphatically not a matter of the unyielding notion of identity. With these distinctions to mind, we see that what Barth had to say about the risen Jesus and his actions correspond to numerical or absolute identity.

How does the irruption of the past into the present happen? The best answer is that the risen Jesus enacts this reality. Beyond this there may be nothing more logically primitive to say. It may be helpful to think of Jesus’ lordship over time in terms of the mechanics of film-editing. By this I mean

\(^{13}\) I concede the reference here to Jesus’ eternal presence subsuming the category of future but I continue to think that this is more mere assertion than a proposition based on his actual expression of his understanding of what is central to the risen Jesus’ enactment of sovereignty over time. For more on this see footnote 6 above.
something like Jesus re-orders time, manipulates time - superimposes one
time on another - as a film-maker might when he or she cuts and pastes
celluloid film. In other words, Jesus does to time - and therefore to the reality
it encompasses or contains – what the film-maker does to celluloid film. To be
sure, the analogy of Jesus as a divine film-maker cannot do justice to the
reality; it is rather that Jesus is able to do to the fabric of time what a film-
maker is able to do to the fabric of film. But of course time is not a fabric like
celluloid film; so it is the very fact that Jesus can ‘cut and paste’ something as
evanescent as time that is the true miracle.

A PARADOX RESOLVED
Divine temporality understood in terms of the simultaneity of present, past,
and future does not of itself imply that there would be actions in history
recapitulating an identical feature of the past. For the two realms need not
ever have come into contact with each other. This may mean that the latter
entails the former at least in part but the converse does not hold true. Thus
one could hold the former without entertaining the latter. There is a reason
one might be grateful for this. It could be argued that Barth meant the
impossible. We might object that the resurrection of time in this sense does
not quite meet the strict conditions of absolute identity. How could it? Surely
the fact that it was enacted at a time in the past, in the before, means that it
cannot now – the identical action - be enacted in the present or indeed again
at any time at all. This is because part of what makes it the action it was is the
fact it was enacted then as opposed to at another time. It follows, so this logic
argues, that no action in the present can be identical with an action in from
the past.

Moreover, the conceptuality of past irrupting into the present implies
that there was a time i.e. before the reality of the risen Jesus when the two
actions were not identical. How can they be absolutely identical if it was the
case that at one time they were not? Surely this violates the principle of the
indiscernibility of identicals.

This is not the right way to think of Barth on this matter. The paradox
is resolved when we understand Barth as saying it is the numerically identical
past action or past feature of being that comes to be in the present. To use
language adapted from Michael Tooley’s masterful *Time, Tense, and Causation*
it is a matter of ‘actuality as of a given time’ being ‘actual at another given
time’ (Michael Tooley, *Time, Tense, and Causation* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), chapter
2, ‘Actuality and Actuality as of a Time’). It is in this sense a matter of
numerical identity. It is actual in the present because Jesus enacted its
actuality. Note Barth does not say the irruption of the action or being *per se*
continues into the present; it is not a matter of sortal sameness, of sameness
prolonging itself into the future (or from the vantage-point of the past, the
present)! It is a matter of numerical or absolute identity: absolute identity
presenting itself in the present via Jesus’ enactment of sovereignty or lordship over time. Jesus enacts not merely the object or the event but the time of the object or the event recursively including the object or event. This is the sense in which the ‘past irrupts into the present.’ The time of the action or event is absolutely identical with itself except that what it was at the earlier time (the ‘before’) – its time - is re-presented at the later time (the ‘after’). It turns out that the past action of feature of past being is in fact identical with the present action or feature of being. The intentionality is to say that its time is ‘resurrected’ at a later time. In this sense ‘two different times are made one time.”

This indeed is the primary meaning of sovereignty over time as opposed to mere sovereignty over events and objects in time. If this distinction is not possible then sovereignty of time understood in terms of numerical identity is not possible. I hold both to be possible. And I hold this on the grounds that, in the spirit of Quine, we can invoke the claim that reality supervenes over our notion of what is a priori possible. It seems to me it is possible to enact an action or an aspect of being absolutely identical with the past precisely because it makes sense to say of the risen Jesus that this is what he did.

We must speak as Barth does of the resurrection of time itself. Only if Jesus is sovereign over time rather than merely sovereign over the events and objects that occupy time, can he be identified as God. We may indeed require something like Michael Tooley’s concept of ‘actual as of a time’ to distinguish between an event taking place at one time as opposed to taking place at another. According to Barth, Jesus enacts the identical action that he enacted the night of his betrayal, the action that was, to use Tooley’s language, ‘actual at that time’ not merely generically the same action that he might have

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14 It may mean that Saul Kripke’s seminal breakthrough to a concept of identity whose epistemic mode of truth was a posteriori - a posteriori numerical identity - is relevant here. See Kripke, Naming and Necessity, 2nd edition (Oxford, Blackwell, 1982). The identity of the morning star with the evening star – Hesperus with Phosphorus (Kripke, Naming and Necessity, 101-5) is a matter of spatial identity. It turns out that the planet (Venus) identified as the morning star and as the evening star satisfy the indiscernibility of identicals in terms of spatial coordinates (as well as of course in all other respects). The same logic transposed to the category to time applies to the resurrection of time. In particular, just as one could not know a priori that the morning star is (identical with) the evening star then so one could not know a priori that this action or feature of past being was in fact identical with present action or feature of being. But this does not preclude either being an expression of absolute identity.
enacted on another occasion when he broke bread.\textsuperscript{15} Barth also seems to imply that it was the fact the action was \textit{this action} – this identical action from the past – that was crucial and necessary in eliciting recognition. Generically the same action could have had no such effect. Nor could sortal sameness. Joseph Fitzmyer made a brilliant and nuanced observation: ‘What is above all important is that the disciples report that they knew him “in the breaking of the bread” (v. 35) and not by seeing him’ (Fitzmyer, \textit{The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV}, [New Haven: Yale, 1985], 1569). Jesus is not recognizable other than in this action (absolutely) identical with the past.

All this amounts to the fact that Barth envisaged time to be a level up from the existence of objects and events (as Ilya Prigogine the Nobel Prize-winning scientist said in another context: ‘Time precedes existence’, Prigogine, \textit{The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature} [NY: The Free Press, chapter 8 ‘Does Time Precede Existence?’]). Time was manipulatable just as objects and events were – except that only God could do the former.

\section*{Concluding Remarks}

If I may end on a note of irony regarding Barth’s attribution of sovereignty over time to the Gospel of Luke. I don’t myself believe that Luke meant this. I do think that what Jesus did then is what Barth holds him to have done but that is another matter. I do think that is feasible to say that sovereignty of time understood in terms of numerical identity is what John means to attribute to the action of Jesus that elicited Mary Magdalene’s recognition of him (his saying her name, “Mary”, 20:16). But that too is another matter. Barth claimed that the Emmaus narrative for Luke is the lens through which to understand all the other resurrection-appearance narratives: ‘It is surely no accident that Luke, the Evangelist who more than any other has the reputation of being a historian, records this story as an indispensable commentary on all the other Easter narratives’ (CD III/2, 272). I think this is not true. My view is that notwithstanding the utter brilliance of his exegesis Barth read too much into Lukan intentionality and that if sovereignty over

\footnote{To be sure, Barth was less determinative in Church Dogmatics IV/2 when he referred to the action in Luke 24:30-31: ‘And Luke tells us that ”as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them” (Lk. 24\textsuperscript{30}). But even to the very words and order this is exactly what had happened at the last supper and the earlier feeding of the five and the four thousand’, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 145. But it may be that he was simply undecided because he didn’t know which it was given the words were ‘identical.’}
time was anyone’s insight it was John’s. But if as I believe there is significant mileage in approaching the risen Jesus in terms of time understood in terms of a posteriori numerical identity Barth surely must be credited with being the first to make the breakthrough.

In the latter part of his life Barth famously spoke of eternal life in the following vein:

Eternal life is not another and second life, beyond the present one. It is this life, but the reverse side which God sees although it is as yet hidden from us—this life in its relation to what He has done for the whole world, and therefore for us too, in Jesus Christ. We thus wait and hope, even in view of our death, for our manifestation with Him, with Jesus Christ who was raised again from the dead, in the glory of not only the judgment but also the grace of God (Barth, “‘To Werner Rüegg’, Hombrechtikon, Zurich Canton, Basel, 6 July 1961”, Karl Barth Letters 1961-68. Trans. Geoffrey William. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 9-10).

Barth wrote Church Dogmatics III/2 something like fifteen years before. It seems to me he was on to an abiding truth of the Gospel when he spoke of the risen Jesus being present in the form which belonged to the past. It seems to me that the distinctiveness of Judaeo-Christianity’s perspective on life after death is that it does not involve (or should not involve) the conceptuality of another life after this but that it should reconceive it as Barth did in terms of the resurrection of time past.