



## ECO NW Presbytery Theology Reading Group

### Barth's Ecclesiology at the Intersection of Theory and Practice Church Dogmatics IV.2 §67 (pp. 614-726)

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*"We grant, indeed, that so long as we are pilgrims in the world faith is implicit, not only because as yet many things are hidden from us, but because, involved in the mists of error, we attain not to all. The highest wisdom, even of him who has attained the greatest perfection, is to go forward, and endeavor in a calm and teachable spirit to make further progress."*

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*"Yet in the study of the faith the discussion has never been acknowledged as an ecclesiastical means of grace. . . . Nevertheless, it is a common fact of experience that many owe their faith and its growth much more to conversations and religious discussion groups than to the officially recognized ecclesiastical means of grace. The fact is that the Spirit uses this means, and that he does so increasingly in our modern times."<sup>2</sup>*

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*"The Holy Spirit is the quickening power with which Jesus the Lord builds up Christianity in the world as His body, i.e., as the earthly-historical form of His own existence, causing it to grow, sustaining and ordering it as the communion of His saints, and thus fitting it to give a provisional representation of the sanctification of all humanity and human life as it has taken place in Him."*

#### Barth's Summary of §67 The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.2.4.

<sup>2</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 359.

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## **General Rationale**

Theology matters for the life of the church and the life of the church matters for theology. While teaching the faith to people in the church is important the benefits of regular theological discussion amongst colleagues ought not be overlooked. Ongoing peer-to-peer discipleship is important. Outside of the seminary and university context, making time for this to happen often requires intentional effort. This group aims to make that effort and provide a space for colleagues to gather and discuss how we ought to understand ourselves and our callings, the churches we serve in, the world we witness to, and the God who wants to be known and acknowledged in gratitude.

## **Commitment Expectation**

If you are pressed for time, there is no need to feel obligated to read everything. Come to the discussion with one or two observations/questions that arose from the text that you think are worth discussing further with the group. This is a discussion among colleagues, it is not a class or seminar, the reading is meant simply to be a catalyst for conversation in our shared pursuit to grow in our theological understanding.

## **Session Specific Rationale**

For this session we will attempt to understand part of Karl Barth's view of the church (in *CD* IV.2 §67) and then assess how it does, doesn't, should, or shouldn't match up with our lived reality of life and leadership in the church. We want to understand the theory of Karl Barth's theology of the church as it intersects with the lived reality of our practice as leaders in the church today (both locally and more broadly). We'll use Barth's work as catalyst to think more deeply together about what flourishing churches ought to look like and how they ought to understand their identity as the body of Christ as we approach Barth's ecclesiology here at the intersection of theory and practice, at the intersection of a proposed ideal and our lived reality, at the intersection of a claimed theological reality and the sociological reality of our churches here and now.

# Reading Plan / Schedule 2025-2026

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Reading Plan and Schedule Tuesdays 3-4pm PST  
Weekly (February 4 through May 27) or Monthly (February 25, March 25, April 22, May 27)

*Page numbers below for each weekly meeting/discussion*

## Section Outline of §67 The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community

1. The True Church
2. The Growth of the Community
3. The Upholding of the Community
4. The Order of the Community

### February §67.1 “The True Church” (pp. 614-641)

- February 4 (pp. 614-621)
- February 11 (pp. 621-630)
- February 18 (pp. 630-641)
- February 25 (pp. 614-641)\*

### March §67.2 “The Growth of the Community”

- March 4 (pp. 641-645)
- March 11 (pp. 645-652)
- March 18 (pp. 652-660)
- March 25 (pp. 641-660 and 614-660)\*

### April §67.3 “The Upholding of the Community”

- April 1 (pp. 660-665)
- April 8 (pp. 665-671)
- April 15 (pp. 671-676)
- April 22 (pp. 660-676 and 614-676)\*

### April/May §67.4 “The Order of the Community”

- April 29 (pp. 676-688)
- May 6 (pp. 688-701)
- May 13 (pp. 701-714)
- May 20 (pp. 714-726)
- May 27 (pp. 676-726 and 614-726)\*

*\*indicates monthly reading*