
In this critical analysis of Karl Barth's theology of culture, DeCou reinterprets the significance of Barth for contemporary thought through a creative approach to popular culture and entertainment. The central concepts of freedom and play illuminate the, perhaps unexpected, happiness of a Barthian theology of culture in contrast to the more dominant theological concepts of work and cultural productivity. Part 1 outlines in four chapters Barth's response to Schleiermacher, his own approach, eschatological perspective, and hermeneutic of culture. The three chapters of the second part relate Barth to popular entertainment and take this theoretical framework to the practice of the theologian of culture, in general, and to the world of television programming, in particular. DeCou's argument that the theologian should play, rather than work, or at least that play is not alien to the theological world, is noteworthy not only for its challenge to the dominant theological perception in the West, but also for its re-reading of Barth's dominant theological voice for many in the contemporary discipline. However, whether Barth indeed offers a “middle way” for successfully steering the path of popular culture between the freedom of secularism and the freedom of religion might depend more on how we bridge the challenges to a fusion of secular cultures and theologies in the southern hemisphere and the East than on the adoption of Barth's resounding voice in the West by those already attuned to the ubiquity and dominance of television, technology, and entertainment.

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