

Shipping Container Librarianship

*Creating Comprehensive Research Collections
in Theological Libraries*

STEPHEN D. CROCCO

This chapter tells the story of two comprehensive research collections created several decades ago by library staff at Princeton Theological Seminary: one devoted to the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) and one to the Dutch pastor, theologian, journalist, educator, and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). At this writing, the Center for Barth Studies, which houses the Barth collection, is thriving. The Abraham Kuyper Institute of Public Theology closed as an institute several years ago, but the massive collection acquired to support research in Kuyper studies and Neo-Calvinism remains in the Princeton Seminary library. Accounts of the origins of these two collections illustrate that comprehensive collecting inevitably has backstories. The narratives presented here provide opportunities to consider “lessons learned” and function as an “af-

ter-action report” of what worked and what did not and may be useful for libraries considering comprehensive collecting. As such, the stories reveal some of the goals, methods, and pitfalls awaiting those who take this path.

There are three questions that beg to be answered at the outset. What are comprehensive research collections? Why is there a chapter about them in a volume devoted to special collections? Why would any library want to create a comprehensive research collection in the first place? To answer the first and third questions, I turn to “collecting levels” as described by the Library of Congress (“Collecting Levels” n.d.). These levels are offered to libraries as tools to describe existing collections as well as goals to guide ambitions in collecting. Inevitably, these collecting levels are aspirational and subjective. The levels go from zero to five, from 0—“Out-of-Scope,” meaning the library does not collect in an area, to level 5—“Comprehensive Level,” meaning that the library collects everything in an area. In between, are levels 1—“Minimal Level,” 2—“Basic Information Level,” 3—“Instructional Support Level,” and 4—“Research Level.” University libraries typically acquire materials at level 4 in areas for which they have some responsibility. Most theological libraries collect materials at levels 3 and 4, which (in comparison to university libraries collecting at levels 3 and 4) suggests the aspirational or relative character of the levels. When librarians talk about their collections being at a “research level” and needing an appropriate level of funding, they often have these levels in mind. Almost by definition, level-5 collections are few and far between, even at major university libraries. They imply commitments to long-term—even perpetual—spending for materials and curatorial support, which few libraries are willing or able to make. Early in my time at Yale, I recall a conversation with a collection development librarian about the Barth and Kuyper collections. He could not grasp that those collecting areas were set up without substantial and permanent endowments to fund acquisitions and staff. He had a good point.

Why is a chapter on comprehensive collecting included in a book on special collections, when “special collections” materials normally include manuscripts, rare and antiquarian books and pamphlets, photographs, and realia, all used by patrons under the supervision of library staff? The Library of Congress’s (“Collecting Levels” n.d.) full description provides the rationale. A comprehensive collection is one

which, so far as is reasonably possible, includes all significant works of recorded knowledge (publications, manuscripts, and other forms), in all applicable languages, for a necessarily defined and limited field. This level of collecting intensity is one that maintains a 'special collection.' The aim, if not achievement, is exhaustiveness. Older material is retained for historical research. In law collections, this includes manuscripts, dissertations, and material on non-legal aspects.

The explicit reference to manuscript material and the inference that curators would need to acquire it and patrons would need to be supervised in its use, hints at the "special" character of comprehensive collecting. After word got out that Princeton was collecting Barth and Kuyper, opportunities quickly surfaced to acquire manuscripts, photographs, annotated books, and ephemera, which immediately thrust its curator into issues normally associated with special collections.

What sorts of materials lend themselves to comprehensive collecting? Consider the following categories, from the bottom to the top, most general to most particular.

Karl Barth	Abraham Kuyper
Confessing Church	Anti-Revolutionary Party
Swiss Neo-Orthodoxy	Dutch Neo-Calvinism
Modern Swiss Protestantism	Modern Dutch Protestantism
Swiss Protestantism	Dutch Protestantism
Swiss Christianity	Dutch Christianity

For all intents and purposes, it may be impossible for a library to collect any of these categories at the comprehensive level, except the top one in each column. Even collecting an individual at a comprehensive level has its challenges, but it is at least within the grasp of a library. Aspiring to collect anything more general than an individual, an organization, or an institution is possible, but doing so runs the risk of missing the weightiness and demands of comprehensive collecting. In other words, the more general the subject, the more aspirational comprehensive collecting becomes. With Barth and Kuyper collecting up and running, Princeton also considered creating comprehensive collections to support two other interests: Korean Presbyterianism and American Presbyterianism. While the library had strong holdings in both areas and patron groups interested in them, there was no way to put borders around these areas that would allow

for even aspirational comprehensive collecting. They both failed the test of being a “necessarily defined and limited field.”

More basic than a budget for materials and a curator, comprehensive collecting requires a worthy subject, a desire to promote it, and an iron determination to will it into existence. Why collect anything comprehensively? Someone needs to have decided that the subject is important and therefore worth the cost and the effort. The Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College, the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin University, the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, and the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, which collects C. S. Lewis and six other authors from the United Kingdom often called the Inklings, all started with an idea and found the funding and support for it.¹ Today, the collections at St. Olaf, Calvin, Yale, and Wheaton all aspire to some level of comprehensive collecting.² As these ideas settled into their institutions and comprehensive collecting began to take shape (often around a gift of money and/or materials), someone had to will these collections into existence. Doing so is no small feat. The status or significance of the subject contributes to the complexity and the perceived value of the task. Both Barth and Kuyper were prolific authors, generated a massive secondary literature, and have deep and wide legacies to the present day, all of which contribute to the complexity of the task and the value of their collections. Conversely, a smaller output and less influence make comprehensive collecting easier, but perhaps less significant too in terms of the breadth of interest. For example, comprehensively collecting works by and about Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1974) or Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977)—two important figures in Swiss Neo-Orthodoxy and Dutch Neo-Calvinism, respectively—would be much more manageable than collecting Barth or Kuyper, simply because they did not generate the same amount of literature, and their legacies are not as extensive. However, they do have legacies. Thurneysen remains important for those seeking to think theologically about pastoral care, and Dooyeweerd is significant for those seeking to articulate a distinctly Christian philosophy. There are plenty of figures who lack the status of Barth and Kuyper yet are deemed worthy of attention by scholars. For any comprehensive collecting, someone must be passionate about the subject and have a vision for its usefulness in the modern world. It is difficult to imagine any institution aspiring to collect comprehensively without thinking the individual collected is worth the attention. Ideally a comprehensive collection should be a gift to scholars and students and should be a jewel in the

crown of the institution that hosts it. The link between collecting and promoting raises the question of the amount of purchase the subject has or should have on the school and those who teach and study there. That question, in turn, raises questions about the authority or freedom of a library to create such collections.

Not surprisingly, there are institutions in Europe that have collections of Barth and Kuyper materials, often built around original archival collections. What comprehensive collecting at Princeton brought to archival collections in Basel and Amsterdam was a renewed conviction that the world would be a better place if materials by and about Barth and Kuyper were curated and promoted. It also brought an energy to create partnerships and, to varying degrees, to provide the funding to make materials available to wider audiences. In addition to collecting primary and secondary materials, Princeton held conferences, acquired background materials, preserved at-risk items, digitized materials, and translated texts. The result was to change the nature of Barth and Kuyper scholarship. To illustrate, this chapter now turns to brief accounts of the two Princeton collections to show how they were conceived and then willed into existence. By telling these stories—of Barth more than Kuyper—the chapter illustrates the kinds of histories and settings out of which comprehensive collecting can rise and fall. Good fortune and the human capacity for relationships across cultures and languages figure heavily into the accounts, as do human foibles and prejudices.

The Center for Barth Studies

By the time of Karl Barth's death in 1968, a plan was in place to edit and publish his extensive literary remains. That plan would move forward by the work of a *Nachlasskommission* (legacy commission) consisting of Barth's living children and his son-in-law Max Zellweger. Its goals were to make the works of Barth known and to encourage the study of his thought, to collect and preserve all writings by and about him, to publish a critical edition of his works, and to promote serious biblical and theological work through conferences and publications. Another provision of the plan was to create a *Karl Barth-Stiftung* (foundation) to raise funds to help with the publication of his posthumous works, support research, and arrange conferences. In 1971, that plan led to the transformation of Barth's house

at Bruderholzallee 26 into the Karl Barth-Archiv, keeping Barth's and Charlotte van Kirschbaum's studies basically intact. The house also contained over one hundred thousand documents and Barth's personal library of approximately ten thousand volumes. His home would also serve as the residence for an archivist, whose work was essentially that of the editor of the editors of the Karl Barth *Gesamtausgabe*. Without question, the driving force behind these activities was Barth's oldest son, Markus (1915–94). From 1940 to 1953, he was a pastor of a Reformed church in Bubendorf, a town southeast of Basel, during which time he received a doctorate in New Testament from the University of Göttingen. Markus left Switzerland in 1953 to accept a teaching position at Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa. Two years later, he moved to the University of Chicago, and, in 1963, he took a position at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where he remained until 1972. Karl Barth died in late 1968, putting his son's plans into effect. Markus was aware of the steady stream of Americans who studied with his father and hoped their interest would lead to financial support for the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*. He also believed his father's theology could make important contributions to the American theological and social situation. To help institutionalize these goals, Markus envisioned a Karl Barth society in North America, a substantial collection of publications by and about his father, and an ecumenical center for theological study located at Pittsburgh Seminary. His plans quickly hit roadblocks; chief among them was Pittsburgh's lack of interest in supporting these projects financially. Markus was a man on a mission and wasted little time taking the plans to his friend and colleague David Demson at the University of Toronto. The result was the same. At Toronto, like Pittsburgh, there were no hearty welcomes or blank checks. While the idea of an ecumenical theological center had some appeal, there was little interest in tying it closely to Karl Barth, whose influence in North America had supposedly peaked and was on the wane. Discouraged, Markus gladly accepted an offer from the University of Basel and returned to Switzerland in May of 1972, taking the extensive correspondence related to these matters with him. The main thing to come of his American efforts was the creation of the Karl Barth Society of North America, which flourished primarily in its Midwest chapter (KBSNA).

In 1983, I joined the faculty at Elmhurst College in the western suburbs of Chicago. Ronald Goetz, a theologian at Elmhurst, was an active member of the KBSNA and friend of David Demson.³ Given its central location in the Midwest, Elmhurst College was the scene of

many KBSNA Midwest chapter meetings. After four enjoyable years at Elmhurst, I followed a deep urge to give up full-time teaching and pursue a career in theological librarianship, replacing Dikran Y. Hadidian as the library director at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. While getting the tour of the library from Hadidian, we stopped and admired the desk of Karl Barth, which Markus arranged to give to the school in 1962 for its new library building (Busch 1975, 475).⁴ A New Testament scholar and close friend of Markus Barth, Hadidian told me the story of Markus's efforts to start a Karl Barth center at Pittsburgh Seminary fifteen years earlier and that, like Markus, he too had been dismayed by the school's lack of interest. There was no collection of Markus Barth's papers in the Pittsburgh archives, so my knowledge of the plan came almost entirely from Hadidian. That was the end of story, except that I started a small collection of Barth's writings at his desk and set out a few artifacts that belonged to Barth—a pen, a pair of glasses, and a pipe—also gifts of Markus—in a nearby display case. A few years later, I encountered Thomas F. Torrance, who was on campus for a lecture, staring at Barth's desk. I remember him shaking his head with a sense of awe at Barth's achievement. Maybe it was time to revisit Markus Barth's idea for a collection of materials by and about his father.

There was not much interest in Barth at Pittsburgh Seminary in those days, and so the idea of a Barth research collection there made little sense... but perhaps somewhere. To that end, I suggested to the Executive Committee of the KBSNA that it put out an RFP to see if a theological institution would step up to host a center for Barth studies. Instead, they named me to the executive committee and tasked me to issue an RFP. News of this process was published in the Fall 1995 *Karl Barth Study Newsletter* under the heading "A Center for Barth Studies?" A year later, two schools had submitted RFPs: Yale Divinity School and Princeton Theological Seminary. Both schools could make a claim for the importance of Barth to the theological ethos of their schools, but Princeton was chosen by the KBSNA because it committed two spacious rooms in the new Henry Luce III Library and a salary for a director.⁵ Midway through the executive committee's work, Princeton Seminary approached me about becoming its library director, and I recused myself from the KBSNA's final deliberations. On September 8, 1997, about three months after I began at Princeton, President Thomas Gillespie announced the formation of the Center for Barth Studies (CBS) with well-known Barth scholar George Hunsinger as its first director.⁶ Bruce L. McCormack,

a systematic theologian at Princeton, also brought much to the fledgling center. His 1995 book, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936*, established him as a first-rate Barth scholar. McCormack completed the research for his book at the Karl Barth-Archiv, under the supervision of archivist Hinrich Stoevestandt. In Basel, McCormack became friends with Markus Barth and familiar with the Karl Barth *Nachlasskommission* and *Stiftung*. More than anyone, McCormack had his eye on ways the CBS at Princeton might support the publication of the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*. It was also a boon to the CBS that McCormack had remained friends with Niklaus Peter, a ThM student at Princeton Theological Seminary a decade earlier, who was the husband of Verena (Vreni) Barth, the daughter of Hans Jacob Barth and Renate Ninck, and a granddaughter of Karl Barth. From 2000–04, Peter was head of Theologischer Verlag Zürich (TVZ), publisher of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* and the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*. These relationships opened doors, made connections, and provided energy to the developing partnership between Basel and Princeton.⁷

During the CBS's early months, another Princeton faculty member—a Barth scholar, at that—questioned what right I had, as the school's librarian, to set up an academic center—a decision he thought should be left to the faculty. Telling him that I had the rank of professor did not satisfy him, though, when he started seeing the results, he became an active participant and supporter of the CBS. A few Princeton faculty members complained because Barth was too conservative for their liking, though there was a general sense that a CBS made sense at Princeton Seminary, given the school's role as a major broker of Barth's thought to the English-speaking world. More than once, I heard from faculty members that, had they known there was money and space in the library for a research center, they would have proposed one of their own. I invited them all to conversations about their ideas, but no one made a proposal. The relationship between the subject of a comprehensive collection and faculty opinion is an important issue that will be considered again in the discussion of the Kuyper Institute.

The CBS opened its doors with two spacious but empty bookshelf-lined rooms: several desks with computers and file cabinets in one room and a seminar room set up in the other. Hunsinger offered Barth reading groups for Princeton students and pastors in the area. He also took the lead in establishing annual conferences, beginning in June 1999 with "For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Fu-

ture of Ecclesial Theology”—a conference that attracted over three hundred people. Both activities suggested that Barth’s thought was useful and important in the United States. The CBS was eager to start acquiring publications by and about Barth and did so in close cooperation with the collection development librarian because Princeton was already acquiring Barth at a level 4—research level. Working out this division was one of the early issues facing the CBS, since there was only so much duplication the library could afford. A Barth bibliography by Hans Markus Wildi gave Princeton a good start collecting literature, especially since Wildi managed to track down many obscure sources (Wildi 1984).⁸

Before long, it was time for a trip to Switzerland. First stop was the headquarters of Theologischer Verlag Zürich. At TVZ, we were politely received, as we shared a vision for digitizing Barth’s *Kirchliche Dogmatik* and *Church Dogmatics*. However, without funds in hand, there were no next steps. From Zurich, we went to Basel, where we met the new archivist, Hans-Anton Drewes—a DTheol from Tübingen and a student of Eberhard Jüngel. Drewes was far less formal than his esteemed predecessor was rumored to be. Sitting in Barth’s study, drinking tea, we encountered someone who grasped our vision and went out of his way to support us, including introducing us to Barth’s relatives in the Basel area. These encounters set up the CBS’s first big break. With Drewes’s encouragement, we were contacted by the children of Markus Barth. With the passing of their parents, they were interested in finding a home for their father’s extensive library and papers. Surprisingly, and to the great benefit of the CBS, Drewes directed the family to Princeton, even though he knew the papers contained much material directly relevant to the work of the Karl Barth-Archiv, e.g., many letters between father and son. Perhaps even then Drewes realized that Princeton and Basel would form a partnership that made the ownership of such materials ultimately irrelevant for purposes of research and publication. I suspect he could afford to be prescient on this issue, because he was the single greatest force in Switzerland making it happen.⁹ Before long, a large shipping container arrived in Princeton with thousands of books, including Markus’s *Weimar Luther*.¹⁰ Of greater interest were many boxes of Markus’s correspondence, going back to his youth—including records of his efforts to establish a Barth center in North America. Correspondents included prominent scholars, church leaders, and family members (including his father).¹¹ Of special interest were primary source materials related to the Confessing Church movement

and student notes of his father's classes, including provisional publications of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*. If there was one treasure in the collection—and there were many!—it was a copy of a first edition of Barth's *Römerbrief* with an inscription to his wife Nelly, translated: "My love, wife, and helper, Nelly. Christmas 1918." The Markus Barth family was not interested in payment for these materials; instead, they asked Princeton to make a gift for Roma relief. By acquiring this collection, with its correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, rare materials, and ephemera, the "special" character of the CBS collection was undeniable.

The CBS's second big break came in November 2000 with a grant from the Lilly Endowment. Princeton's appeal to Barth's great influence in the United States persuaded Lilly to look favorably at a proposal to preserve Barth's legacy and to present it in new formats. The \$1.1 million grant was designed to support the digitization of Barth's published works, including the *Church Dogmatics* and *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*. It also provided for the manuscript materials in the Archiv to be organized, microfilmed, and digitized. Until that time, there were no copies of those one hundred thousand pages in other locations.¹² The Lilly grant supplied the funds for filming interviews of a dwindling number of Barth's personal acquaintances, including his daughter-in-law Renate Ninck Barth and Herta Baier, Barth's housekeeper from 1934–37. Also included in the filming project were interviews with Barth scholars and historians in the United States and Europe. The partnership between Basel and Princeton was celebrated in April 2002 with the signing of a formal agreement in the Bischofshof in Basel, speeches by dignitaries, and a banquet. By intention, the agreement allowed a great deal of Barth research to shift from Basel to Princeton, although the Archiv retained the right to grant permission for access to certain manuscripts, a number that dwindled with time. While there were still reasons for Barth students and scholars to visit the Archiv—to consult with the archivist, to do studies that required the investigation of actual manuscripts, examine Barth's personal library, or have a tour, for example—the archivist was able to direct researchers with routine requests to Princeton, which allowed him to focus on editing volumes of the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe*. This was Princeton's indirect contribution to financially supporting the publication of Barth's works. Along the way, it became the CBS's informal mission to be a "one stop" location for Barth scholars anywhere in the world. A project that Princeton was not able to fund was to deacidify and digitize Karl Barth's personal library. That

work still needs to be done. A catalog of Barth's library is available through the University of Basel Library.¹³ Another unfinished project was to provide a conceptual framework around the Markus Barth collection and a collection received a few years later—the papers and library of Thomas F. Torrance. Both men were heavily influenced by Karl Barth, and some thought was given to a secondary layer of comprehensive collecting that acquired the writings of prominent scholars deeply influenced by Karl Barth. The next thinker on my radar screen was the French Christian thinker Jacques Ellul, who readily acknowledged his significant debts to Karl Barth.

The story of the CBS frequently turns to McCormack, who had become acquainted with Gerritt Neven of the Theological Universiteit Kampen in the Netherlands, through their collaboration on the *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie*. McCormack and Neven proposed holding biennial meetings between Princeton and Kampen, which began in 1999.¹⁴ Neven and his research assistant Hans van Loon sketched out plans for a freely accessible online bibliography of the works of Barth and invited Princeton to join. For its part, Princeton secured the rights to publish the Wildi bibliography in digital form. In 2004, a call went out to Barth scholars in designated countries and languages to funnel bibliographic references for inclusion in the online bibliography. This is a good place to mention that, in developing various programs, we soon discovered other centers related to Barth (and Kuyper) around the world. All of them were eager to cooperate. The [CBS website](#) provides an overview of its history and current activities.

During these years, Clifford B. Anderson moved from student worker and doctoral student to curator of Reformed research collections to head of special collections.¹⁵ With a dissertation on Barth's view of science, facility with the German and Dutch languages, and computer programming skills, Anderson was exactly the kind of person Princeton needed to take its efforts to the next level. With news of the Lilly grant, Barth's publishers—TVZ and T & T Clark—suddenly had reason to pay attention, and they did. Princeton soon had a digitized text of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* and the *Church Dogmatics* as well as translations of the hundreds of Greek and Latin phrases in those volumes. Plans were also in place to identify and re-translate troublesome English passages and to identify individuals, cultural references, and literary allusions for English readers. Publisher William B. Eerdmans allowed Princeton to digitize some of its Barth titles to add to the mix.¹⁶

Princeton had high hopes for a long-term partnership with T & T Clark and Continuum, its parent company at the time (now Bloomsbury Publishing). We envisioned that Princeton's substantial investment in digital editions of Barth's works would encourage Continuum to reciprocate by incorporating these improvements in a new edition of the *Church Dogmatics*. A team of Princeton scholars managed to include Greek and Latin translations and make other improvements in the first three volumes of Continuum's forty-volume student edition of the *Church Dogmatics*—the equivalent of volume 1/1 in the regular edition. What happened? Sensing a market, it appears that Continuum was eager to publish a student edition, even though the rest of the volumes used the same text as the original T & T Clark edition. Without adequate funding, Princeton's efforts to improve the remainder of the texts ran out of steam. Princeton retained copyright to the electronic edition of the *Church Dogmatics* and was free to make improvements but was greatly restricted in providing access to it. On a brighter side, an annual seminar for young translators led to three volumes of the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, Gespräche* published as *Barth in Conversation* (Busch 2017; 2018; 2019). A lesson to be learned here is the complexity and difficulty of using funds raised by a center to promote publication of materials with strict copyright restrictions and publishers eager to monetize them.

The Kuyper Institute and Collection

The story of the Kuyper Collection at Princeton is more quickly told, because it lacks a pre-history. Also, Princeton collected and promoted Kuyper in many of the same ways it collected and promoted Barth, and so there is no need to repeat them here. The few differences are worth mentioning and will be the focus of this section. What was the origin of this interest in collecting Kuyper? In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Princeton Seminary had strong connections to Dutch theological thought, which was noted for its robustness and orthodoxy. Kuyper delivered his famous *Lectures on Calvinism* at Princeton Seminary in 1898. Geerhardus Vos and Cornelius van Til were Princeton faculty members in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, respectively. However, by the 1990s, there were few traces of Kuyperian theological thought to be found at Princeton Seminary.¹⁷ Around 1995, Rimmer de Vries, an immigrant from

the Netherlands who served as chief economist at J. P. Morgan, approached Princeton Seminary about a gift to endow a lecture series that came to be known as the Abraham Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life. De Vries had a passion for the Reformed faith in its Dutch expressions and, like Kuyper, an interest in that faith as it expressed itself in all areas of life, not just theology and ministry. He sought a venue that would promote Kuyper in mainstream American intellectual life, and so he approached Princeton Seminary rather than one of the historically Dutch institutions about setting up an annual lecture and a generous prize. The prize was first awarded to Dutch historian George Puchinger in 1996.¹⁸

George Harinck, an historian at the Documentation Center at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) Amsterdam, was a frequent visitor to Princeton in those years.¹⁹ As a one-time student of Puchinger, Harinck was aware of the Center for Barth Studies. He started wondering out loud—with Princeton professor of ethics Max Stackhouse—whether there was room at Princeton for a similar center devoted to the thought of Kuyper. Clifford Anderson and I were soon included in the conversation. Anderson had traveled in the Netherlands and had a good grasp of the Dutch language and Neo-Calvinist thought. In my graduate school days, I had exposure to Neo-Calvinism through the Institute of Christian Studies in Toronto and the writings of the contemporary Dutch theologian G. C. Berkouwer (1903–96). I was also aware that Berkouwer’s book, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, was deeply admired by Barth (Barth 1958, xii).²⁰ We began to imagine some interesting connections between the CBS and a possible center for Kuyper studies. Although no one on the faculty was particularly interested in Kuyper or Neo-Calvinism, we envisioned a center with a collection and similar activities and programs as the CBS, but we had to do so without the help of a \$1.1 million Lilly Endowment grant.

At Harinck’s suggestion, I traveled to the Netherlands to talk to Puchinger about his personal library. Puchinger, who had just moved to a retirement home, said to me, “I hear you want to start a Kuyper Center. Then you need a library. I have a library.” I soon discovered that he was a bachelor married to his books, which filled nearly every room in his spacious house in The Hague. Princeton Trustee Henry Luce III, a member of the library committee of the board, funded the purchase. He was glad to see that the Princeton librarian was traveling to Europe to buy books. Puchinger had no family, and his house was being emptied, and so whatever Princeton did not want

was going to be sold. Since there was still room in the large shipping container after it was packed with books, we added a massive two-sided antique desk and chair, decorative items, and a portrait of Puchinger to give an historical look to the Kuyper Institute reading room we envisioned. One thing led to another and soon approximately thirty thousand volumes of European—but mostly Dutch—history, theology, philosophy, and literature were on their way to Princeton. Puchinger's library was not a comprehensive collection of Kuyper. What it did was to get Princeton a significant collection of Kuyper in a single action and a substantial collection of background materials related to the study of Kuyper and European theology, too. Puchinger was perhaps best known for a series of interviews he conducted, including one with Barth that was done on April 15, 1965 and eventually published in English in *Barth in Conversation: Volume 3, 1964–1968*.

There are two points to make here. The first is that it is much easier to build on a collector's work than to start from scratch. Comprehensive collecting can get a huge boost by discovering individuals willing to part with their collections.²¹ The second point is that, when the word gets out that an institution is in the market for materials, people step up. Many collectors reach a point in their lives when finding a home for their collections becomes a nagging concern, eventually as important as their collections themselves. Two other Kuyper collectors approached us during this period, and Princeton acquired both sets. Puchinger's library contained many Kuyper materials, but nothing compared to the collection gradually and obsessively acquired by Tjitse Kuipers, a pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church. At the front of Kuipers's sixteenth-century house, overlooking a canal in the city of Kampen, was the Kuyper Room—a small museum and antiquarian book library. The second floor library was dwarfed by the massive attic that was full of materials related to Kuyper's ecclesiastical and political contemporaries—friends and foes. Kuipers also collected different editions and even different printings of books and pamphlets, as well as duplicates. The best copies were kept in the Kuyper Room and the rest were in the attic. The Kuipers collection came with many things commonly associated with special collections: manuscripts, photographs, presentation copies, and ephemera such as busts, coin banks used for fundraising, celebratory cigar bands, and commemorative stamps. Kuipers's materials filled the third shipping container sent to Princeton Seminary during these years.²²

Princeton's collection of Kuyper materials soon became the foundation for Brill's *Abraham Kuyper: An Annotated Bibliography 1857–2010* (Kuipers 2011). Nearly three hundred digital editions of Kuyper's books and pamphlets can still be found in Princeton Theological Seminary's [Theological Commons](#). Princeton entered a partnership with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to digitize Kuyper's extensive correspondence and secondary Kuyper literature. Unlike the situation with Barth, there were few copyright issues with Kuyper's materials. Princeton had plans to sponsor translations of Kuyper's works, but that work was picked up by the Acton Institute and published by the Lexham Press. Bravo!

What happened to the Abraham Kuyper Institute for Public Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary? It is a tale of woe that points to some of the pitfalls associated with comprehensive collections and the efforts to promote them. It was soon obvious that, while the idea of a Kuyper Institute had some support in the faculty, that support was directed more to public theology generally than anything to do with Kuyper or Neo-Calvinism. A center in the spirit of Kuyper's broad interests and accomplishments was one thing. A center devoted to promoting Kuyper's thought and Neo-Calvinism generally was another. Recall that Barth had strong support among some of the Princeton faculty. Kuyper had little or no support among faculty members; in fact, few people had heard of him. One vocal faculty member could not get past the fact that, long ago, some Afrikaner theologians in South Africa appealed to Kuyper's notion of *verzuiling* (pillarization) to justify apartheid.²³ While De Vries was pleased by the status of Kuyper Prize winners, the research collection, and the conferences sponsored by the Kuyper Institute, he regretted that Kuyperian thought played no role in the curriculum of the school. To address that situation, De Vries endowed a chair in Reformed theology and public life as a new faculty position. Realizing that he could not dictate a faculty appointment, he expected Princeton to hire a faculty member who could or would occasionally teach Kuyper and Neo-Calvinism, whether that person was a Neo-Calvinist or not. It is not difficult to see where this led. Some faculty members protested, complaining that donors were dictating the curriculum, encroaching on faculty turf. The school struggled to make an acceptable appointment until Dirk Smit was hired in 2017. Smit, a South African from Stellenbosch University, was trained in the Netherlands and worked comfortably in Neo-Calvinist and Barthian traditions. That same year, protests about an announced Kuyper Prize winner plunged the

Kuyper Institute into controversy from which it never recovered. To make a long story short, the Kuyper Institute closed.²⁴ Although the large collection gathered to support it remains in the library's special collections, there are few traces of Kuyper at Princeton Seminary today.

The closure of the Kuyper Institute points to what seems to be the inevitable political dimension of comprehensive collecting. Do the long-term commitments to materials and staff make comprehensive collecting feasible? It seems an open question, until we try to imagine the worlds of Calvin, Edwards, Kierkegaard, Inklings, and Barth scholarship without the centers and collections devoted to them. If these collections were all adequately endowed to exist in perpetuity, the winds of change could be mostly ignored. Short of that, perhaps there is a need for an informal association of comprehensive research collections that would monitor the political and financial climates at such centers and, if necessary, attempt to move centers from institutions no longer wanting them to those that do. This might seem far-fetched, but it would be far better than watching a research collection become stagnant due to shutting off funds, or worse, watching it be broken up and sold. When contemplating comprehensive collecting, administrative buy-in seems to be essential, particularly given the inevitable fact of leadership turnover. Faculty support is desirable too, though the required extent is not clear, and it is also the case that faculty turnover is an issue. Do faculty members hold veto power over the origins and growth of comprehensive collections? How many faculty members does it take for a comprehensive collection/center to be born and live—or die? For example, it may be that no one at Yale Divinity School complains about the Jonathan Edwards Center because it is accepted that this is something Yale simply “must” do, since Edwards is one of their own and his papers are there. Plus, for now, the Edwards Center has its own funding. Moreover, it is doubtful that any faculty members see Edwards as a threat to their politics.²⁵ Recall the Princeton faculty member who questioned my “right” to set up a Center for Barth Studies without faculty buy-in. Of course, he had a point, but deciding how to gauge faculty buy-in and then taking it into account could have led to there being no CBS at Princeton.

In closing, I want to suggest that librarians should have some say about these matters, regardless of faculty opinions. Otherwise, librarians are only servants of the faculty and the curriculum and not also educators, caretakers, and curators of important ideas and

figures. In the cases of Calvin, Edwards, Kierkegaard, Barth, the Inklings, and even Kuyper, librarians and archivists stepped up as caretakers of those who shaped significant parts of the Western theological tradition in ways and to degrees that no one else did. Pitfalls notwithstanding, comprehensive collections make genuine and substantial contributions that will cause generations of scholars and students to rise up and call the libraries and schools that sponsor them blessed.

References

- Barth, Karl. 1958. *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.
- , ed. 2017. *Barth in Conversation: Volume 1, 1969–1962*, dited by Eberhard Busch. Westminster/John Knox Press.
- , ed. 2018. *Barth in Conversation: Volume 2, 1963*, dited by Eberhard Busch. Westminster/John Knox Press.
- , ed. 2019. *Barth in Conversation: Volume 3, 1964–1968*, dited by Eberhard Busch. Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Busch, Eberhard. 1975. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- “A Center for Barth Studies?” 1995. *Karl Barth Society Newsletter*, no. 13 (Fall): 1–2.
- Kuipers, Tjitse, ed. 2011. *Abraham Kuyper: An Annotated Bibliography 1857–2010*. Translated by Clifford B. Anderson. Leiden: Brill.
- Library of Congress. n.d. “Collecting Levels.” <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/cpc.html>. Accessed February 10, 2021.
- Wildi, Hans Markus. 1984. *Bibliographie Karl Barth*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich.

Notes

1 I am not suggesting that these collections aspire to be comprehensive as per Library of Congress guidelines or, if they are, that they are comprehensive in the same ways. There is no checklist of what it means. For that reason, most comprehensive collecting is subjective and aspirational. After some deliberation, I decided to include the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale. Like other centers, it sponsors conferences and publications as well as maintains associations with Edwards centers around the world. However, most of its work transcribing and publishing Edwards is with images of his manuscripts on deposit in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Moreover, it does not actively collect published literature by and about Edwards.

2 Consider the following mission statements:

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is a research center specializing in John Calvin, Calvinism, the Reformation, and Early Modern Studies. Since opening in 1982, our extensive book, rare book, article, and microform collections has attracted scholars from all over the world. The Meeter Center sponsors lectures, hosts seminars sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, awards scholarships to faculty, pastors, graduate students and high school seniors, offers occasional courses on Early Modern French paleography and hosts events for the Friends of the Meeter Center and the local community throughout the year (<https://calvin.edu/centers-institutes/meeter-center/about>, accessed December 21, 2020).

The Hong Kierkegaard Library (HKL) serves as the world's official repository for books by Søren Kierkegaard as well as those influencing and influenced by his authorship. The HKL offers programs and courses aimed at stimulating and nurturing the study of Kierkegaard among St. Olaf students and faculty, as well as domestic and international scholars. The HKL is both a Special Collection and a Center for Research and Publication and as such, it fosters an intellectual community highly conducive to reflection on faith and values. (<https://wp.stolaf.edu/kierkegaard>, accessed December 21, 2020).

The Marion E. Wade Center promotes cultural engagement and spiritual formation by offering a collection of resources available nowhere

else in the world. We emphasize the ongoing relevance of seven British Christian authors who provide a distinctive blend of intellect, imagination, and faith: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dorothy L. Sayers, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams. (<https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wa-decenter>, accessed December 21, 2020)

The mission of the Jonathan Edwards Center is to support inquiry into the life, writings, and legacy of Jonathan Edwards by providing resources that encourage critical appraisal of the historical importance and contemporary relevance of America's premier theologian. The primary way that we do this is with the *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, a digital learning environment for research, education and publication, that presents all of Edwards's writings, along with helpful editorial materials that allow the reader to examine Edwards' thought in incredibly powerful, useful ways. (<http://edwards.yale.edu/about-us>, accessed December 21, 2020)

- 3 At KBSNA meetings at Elmhurst, Demson spoke occasionally of a small Barth research collection he had assembled in Toronto.
- 4 The desk given to Pittsburgh Seminary was Barth's father's desk and the desk at which he wrote the *Church Dogmatics*. In exchange, Barth received a "splendid new desk."
- 5 Yale Divinity School expressed serious interest in hosting the CBS. However, at that time, the Yale Divinity Quadrangle was in a state of disrepair to the degree that serious thought was given to razing it in favor of a compact Divinity School building—minus housing and a separate library—in downtown New Haven. In any case, Yale easily envisioned space in its renovated Divinity Quad but could not make the concrete commitment Princeton did.
- 6 Hunsinger, a well-known Barth scholar, was married to Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, a member of the faculty at Princeton. His availability for the position secured instant credibility for the CBS. A few years later, Hunsinger left the CBS to join the faculty.
- 7 A great deal of the early business between the CBS and interested parties in Switzerland was conducted at a fine Italian restaurant in Basel on several memorable occasions.
- 8 Wildi's three volumes—works by Barth, about Barth, and an index—were prepared in cooperation with the Karl Barth-

Stiftung, the Aargau Canton library, and the Karl Barth-Archiv.

- 9 On more than one occasion, Drewes indicated he believed that, with the establishment and success of the CBS, the locus of Barth studies shifted from the German-speaking to the English-speaking world.
- 10 Princeton accepted these books with no conditions that they would be kept or kept together. Making such arrangements unnecessarily ties the hands of the library in terms of providing space and bibliographic control for items that are already in the collection. Heavily annotated books were a different matter, as were books that belonged to Markus's father. Karl Barth's books were returned to Basel.
- 11 At one point, the *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe* planned for a volume of letters between Karl and Markus.
- 12 After the Barth manuscripts were digitized and microform copies were scattered for safekeeping, Hans-Anton Drewes expressed great relief that he could leave the Archiv for the weekend without fearing he left the oven on.
- 13 The path to accessing Barth's personal library in the OPAC at the University of Basel Library is a complicated one. Researchers interested in getting access are advised to contact the library directly at <https://ub-easyweb.ub.unibas.ch/en/contact>.
- 14 Barth scholars with Neo-Calvinistic roots and interests provided an unanticipated dimension to the CBS that readily spilled over into the Kuyper Center.
- 15 Anderson was the curator of Reformed research collections from 2002–06 and head of special collections from 2006–12.
- 16 The Digital Karl Barth Library was published by Alexander Street Press. See <https://dkbl.alexanderstreet.com>.
- 17 J. Wentzel van Huyssteen was an exception in that he knew of the Neo-Calvinist tradition. Van Huyssteen was a professor of theology and science at Princeton Seminary from 1992–2014. Born in South Africa, he was ordained in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and received his PhD from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- 18 Other Kuyper Prize winners included novelist Marilyn Robinson, philosopher Alvin Plantinga, former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, and Prime Minister of the Netherlands Jan Peter Balkenende.
- 19 Harinck was, until his recent retirement, the director of the

Archives and Documentation Center of the Reformed Churches, Kampen, and a staff member of the Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

- 20 Here Barth praised G. C. Berkouwer's *De Triomf de Genade in de Theologie van Karl Barth* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1954).
- 21 The Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College was built on a major gift by Howard and Edna Hong, fixtures in the philosophy department at St. Olaf for four decades. "In the course of their translation efforts, the Hongs collected an enormous body of literature which includes writings from Kierkegaard's contemporaries and the thinkers who influenced him as well as interpretive studies about Kierkegaard. Their private collection was donated to St. Olaf College in 1976 as the foundation of the present Howard V. and Edna H. Kierkegaard Library" (<https://wp.stolaf.edu/kierkegaard/history>, accessed December 21, 2020).
- 22 At least one tractor-trailer's worth of materials came from within the United States. In 2000, Princeton acquired fifty file cabinets and hundreds of boxes associated with Presbyterian firebrand minister Carl McIntire.
- 23 "Pillarization" was Kuyper's proposal for how different worldviews might relate in the public sphere. He envisioned a society where Protestants, Catholics, socialists, etc. would be free to develop their own institutions—labor unions, political parties, schools, newspapers, etc.—without interference. As Kuyper envisioned them, these pillars were voluntary associations. However, in South Africa, some appealed to Kuyper's concept to justify apartheid—a bastardized version which resembled a separate but equal status that was not equal. See George Harinck, "Abraham Kuyper, South Africa, and Apartheid," remarks delivered at the opening ceremony of the Abraham Kuyper Institute for Public Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, Nassau Inn, February 1, 2002. Published under the same title in the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23, no. 2 (2002): 184–7, <https://commons.ptsem.edu/id/princetonseminar2322prin-dmd007>.
- 24 The Kuyper Prize and the conferences developed around it went to Calvin University. As for some of the digital projects Princeton helped to develop, they were picked up by institutions in the Netherlands. "The Archive of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920)" belongs to the collection HDC [Historical Documentation Center]/Protestant heritage of the University

Library of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (UBVU). This archive occupies a central position amid the source material concerning the history of Neo-Calvinism. It contains many works on the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the Free University, the *Doleantie*, the school struggle, Kuyper's ministry, his network, and his personal life; the archive includes nearly nine thousand letters. A decade ago, Princeton Theological Seminary (USA), together with the HDC, started digitizing the archive. Eventually, the NRI took over and completed the work that Princeton began. See <https://en.tukampen.nl/news/kuyper-and-bavinck-online> (accessed December 21, 2020).

- 25 Edwards owned a series of house slaves, so “cancelation” is a possibility.