



The True Worship of God: Servants of the Most High God

by Rev. Sterling Durgy

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Two closely related concepts help us to understand the true nature of Christian worship. These concepts are found in the Old Testament and remain important in the New.

The first is the concept of reverence for God signified by prostration, bowing down before the Lord. Abraham "fell on his face" at the presence of the Lord as God appeared to make His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:3). Abraham "bowed himself to the earth" as God approached him at the Oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18:2). There is more than Oriental courtesy here. This is an act of *obeisance* -- obeisance being the honor one gives to a ruler. It is the recognition of the sovereignty of that ruler over one's life. Moreover, in Judaism and Christianity it is voluntarily yielding control of one's life to the only true God, the Most High God. In Scripture, this honor is never given correctly to an impersonal force. It is honor and respect given from a creature to the living God. Even when actual bowing down does not occur, the attitude of heart represented by prostration is the attitude of the one acceptable to God. This respect for God is so strong that it is often described as fear (Proverbs 9:10, Psalms 111:10, II Corinthians 7:1). It is not a fear that debilitates, but a fear that leads to comfort and trust in the power of the God who loves us.

The second concept is that God's people are His servants. The service of God separates Judaism and Christianity from all other religions. Other religions are means whereby people seek to manipulate God, gods, or nature to serve themselves. In paganism, ceremonies, magic, and sacred writings are the means whereby a worshipper seeks to control what God does. Often the goal is to "merge" with God or nature in some kind of ecstasy - an ecstasy that seems to confirm a special relationship with God or nature and, thus, special favors. In Judaism and Christianity, the worshipper places him or herself at God's disposal as a servant.

The twin concepts of "reverence" and "service" are not simply found sprinkled throughout both testaments, they are pervasive. They are seen not only in the words that are chosen in the Old and New Testaments to describe worship, but in the acts and attitudes of those approved of God throughout Scripture. Even when Jesus tells us to call God our Father, even "abba," which is a term of endearment, respect and readiness for service are never absent. We see this dual attitude in Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre as he bargains, respectfully, for any righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah to be spared judgment (Genesis 18). And, of course, we see this supremely in Jesus Christ, whenever He addresses God the Father and whenever He acts (John 17, 4:34, 8:29).

In Philippians 2:5 Paul writes, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul

then describes how Jesus, knowing that He was God and had all the privileges of God, lowered himself, not just to become human being, but to become a servant. This attitude of service was so strong, so loyal, that Jesus even submitted Himself to the cruel and despised death of crucifixion on behalf of mankind. It was because of His attitude of service, unique in all of history, that, Paul writes, Jesus is exalted and every knee shall someday bow to Jesus and give Him praise. Paul continually presented himself as a servant, and at the beginning of the letter to the Philippians introduces both himself and Timothy as "bond-servants of Christ Jesus."

The dual concepts of reverence and service describe what it means to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus drove this lesson home at the last supper by taking a washbasin and a towel and washing His disciple's feet - then telling the disciples that they must live their lives as servants of one another, as He had just demonstrated (John 13:3-17). Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

This attitude transforms all of life into an arena for the service of God. There is no more distinction between the spiritual and the unspiritual. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). Just as the Mosaic Law reached out into all parts of life (diet, health, community, law, religious life), so too, the Gospel reaches out to transform all parts of life. The challenge is to love God by doing all things, even the common everyday things of life, in such a manner that God is honored. As compasses point continually to magnetic north, we, by the way that we live, in truth, integrity, and honor, point always to God (II Corinthians 5:9, 14-15, Titus 2:11-14). This is why there is so much practical advice in the New Testament about how to conduct our daily lives. This is why the apostle Paul wasn't wasting time when he was making tents - for even here he had a spiritual motivation for what he did - and was living in such a manner as to bring glory to Christ (I Corinthians 9:18, I Thessalonians 4:11).

In such a life, though not in a strained or superficial manner, and as appropriate, Christians speak of and to the God they serve. These habits of life, together with the willingness to witness to faith in Christ, help others to know why we live the way we do. This, in turn, brings more honor to God, especially when others decide to serve Him as well.

Formal times of worship, public or private, are times set aside to come before the Lord we serve. The more important and frequently used words that we translate "worship," *proskuneo*, *latreia*, *leitourgia*, all tie reverence and service to the worship of God. Seen from this perspective, worship is not an entirely different part of life. Instead, it is a part of a larger whole in which the service of the Most High God, motivated by love, is the goal. It is for this reason that the Word of God traditionally plays such a central role in Christian worship, just as it does in the synagogue. Worship is, therefore, governed by all of the same freedoms and constraints as all Christian life. Coming before God to learn about Him and His ways is preparation for service that is lived out when formal worship is over.

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The Worship Service: A Hindrance Or A Highway For Revival

INTERNATIONAL AWAKENING MINISTRIES

Ron Owens

The uniting of God's people in corporate worship is of crucial importance to the life of the church. What takes place during this time should prepare the way for God to visit His people in revival. It is possible, however, for what occurs in the "worship service" of the church to actually be a hindrance to revival. How can this be true? Let's look at some of the ways revival may be hindered by what we do, or don't do, in our services.

A Misunderstanding of What It Means To Worship. The word "worship" has numerous connotations in today's churches. This in itself has resulted in many of the problems we face. In order to truly worship God as He desires to be worshiped, we must understand what worship is from His perspective. We must allow His Word to give us a true definition of worship.

The primary word used in the Old Testament for worship is the Hebrew word *shachah*. In each of its 170 uses, it has the same meaning: to prostrate oneself, to bow down or stoop. In the New Testament, the Greek word for worship, *proskuneo*, has virtually the same meaning: to crouch, prostrate oneself, to kiss the hand, do reverence, to adore. True worship, therefore, must begin with a *heart attitude of bowing or prostrating oneself in adoration and reverence before the One Who is being worshiped*. In many instances there may be a physical expression of worship as well.

"And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6b).

"And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." (Rev. 5:14b)

Today, we see very little of this attitude of stooping, of humbling oneself in worship. Instead, it seems the church is spending an inordinate amount of time standing and celebrating. Although both worship and celebration should be part of the life of the church, there is a significant difference between the two. In worship, there is a sense of awe and reverence for *who God is*. He is the focus of worship. In celebration, we rejoice and enjoy *what God does*, or *has done*. In actuality, the truest celebration springs from a worshipping heart. There is obviously a place for celebration in the life of the church, *but it ought never to replace worshipping God!*

In today's church climate, with its focus on celebration rather than worship, an unbeliever or backsliding Christian can actually feel "at home" and enjoy himself in many of our services. In true worship, however, when the focus is on God, a sinner will not feel "at home." In God's presence, sin is revealed. A sinner will be faced with his sin and his need to bow before a holy God in repentance.

There is no record of revival beginning among a people who were always celebrating, but never worshipping. The record, however, is full of those times God came in revival blessing while His children were on their faces before Him. God's requirements have not changed: "if My people . . . will humble themselves" (2 Chron. 7:14).

Seeing Worship As A Means to An End, Rather Than An End in Itself. Our drive to evangelize and our desire to grow numerically have led us to "use" worship as a tool to reach the lost. We have gone so far as to turn our worship services, as opposed to evangelistic services, into "seeker-friendly" meetings, so the world will feel at home when they come into the house of God. We should always be sensitive to the unsaved, but nowhere in Scripture are we told to accommodate the world in what God calls the believer to offer to Him.

Worship, as we find it in Scripture, is the exclusive right, privilege, and responsibility of the child of God. It is spiritually impossible for an unbeliever to worship. The prevailing idea that the church needs to sound like the world in order to win the world demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of what church really is. It demonstrates more concern with what the world thinks than with what God thinks.

There is one fundamental reason why the living God wants His people to assemble in worship: that is, to ascribe to Him the worth and value that are His, individually and as a body, and to present their bodies as living sacrifices. *Worshipping God is not a means to an end; it is an end in itself!*

Missing Ingredients in Worship. In some churches, the vital elements of worship are being omitted from the service because so much time is being taken for other things. What are these "vital elements" of worship? One of them is prayer. Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Mark 11:17), yet prayer is not central in so many of our modern day services.

In our travels, I have sometimes checked the amount of time churches actually spend praying in their worship services. At one point, four out of five spent more time welcoming the visitors than all their praying combined. Two out of those five spent more time making the announcements than in prayer. Recently, in one of the largest churches in our land, a total of forty-five seconds was actually spent in prayer, while ten minutes were given to a humorous Sunday School promotion.

Another vital element of worship missing from our services is the reading

of Scripture. How often have you heard an entire chapter of God's Word read in a worship service? The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to give attention to the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13). We, too, need to heed this instruction.

When Man Sees the Pulpit as "His" Stage. We live in a society that craves entertainment. Sadly, this desire to be entertained has gained more than a foothold in the church. By design, many of our church buildings have become theaters. What was once called the "pulpit area" has now become known as the "stage" for "religious performing." This is true both in preaching and in music.

There is no place in a worship service for entertainment. The people are not in need of seeing how clever man is, but how holy God is. They need an encounter with Him. Yet so often a congregation leaves more impressed with the singer than with the Savior; more impressed with the personality of the preacher than with the power of the Holy Spirit. In entertainment the focus is on man, while in worship the focus is always on God. Today it seems that, especially in the world of "Christian music," God is often being used to display man's talent, rather than man's talent being used to display God. We must strive with all our being to keep the congregation's focus where it needs to be. God, after all, is our "audience" in worship. It is His approval that we are to seek. We must continually remind ourselves of this:

It matters not if the world has heard, or approves, or understands;
The only applause we're meant to seek is the applause of nail-scarred hands.

Insensitivity to What the Holy Spirit is Doing in a Service. It is extremely important that those of us involved in worship leadership remain open and sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit when we are leading the church in worship. The pushing of our own agenda can quickly hinder what God is doing at a particular moment in a service. Let's look at some specific examples involving different areas of leadership.

Imagine a point in a service when something has taken place that has unquestionably led the congregation to a serious evaluation of their lives in light of God's holiness. The people's hearts have been deeply moved. The choir is scheduled to sing next, but they have planned to sing a rhythmic, upbeat version of "Blessed Assurance." There is nothing wrong with the song, but the timing is not right. Music Director, what do you do? Do you just go ahead and do what you have planned, or do you adjust and have the congregation sing a hymn or chorus that is in the flow of what is happening? How often I have seen the Spirit of God quenched by the wrong music. A soloist or choir may be scheduled to sing, but if what is planned would turn the people's focus away from what God is doing, it would be better not to do anything. There are times when the best thing

that could happen is silence.

Organists, pianists, and musicians must also be sensitive to what is going on in a service. If, for instance, the service has closed with a deep sense of conviction, they must be careful what they play for a postlude. The focus can so quickly be turned away from God and what He has been doing, and turned toward themselves and their music by playing some boisterous number. Sometimes it may be best to just continue quietly playing the commitment hymn.

Many times I've seen the Holy Spirit grieved by a pastor who, after God has spoken deeply through special music or in the corporate worship of the congregation, gets up and tells a funny story in order to "get his audience." What has really happened is that the pastor has drawn the focus away from God and toward himself. Worship has been hindered.

We must remember that those who are part of the worship leadership will either help or hinder what God wants to accomplish in the service. We must be careful not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit by being "out of the Spirit."

Substituting "Adrenalin Highs" for the Holy Spirit. Many in the Christian world seem unaware of the powerful effect music can have on the emotions. The secular world and the New-Age community are well aware of the adrenalin rush that can be produced by the continuous repetition of words and musical phrases.

In his book, *Adrenalin and Stress*, Dr. Archibald Hart points out that adrenalin addiction is just as real as an addiction to drugs. He shows how this happens within the context of some worship styles. In many of our churches today we have mistaken "adrenalin highs" produced by constant musical repetition for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In our day, when so much emphasis is placed on "having an experience," people are open to deception. The "feeling" one may get from the constant mantra-like repetition of choruses is not the Holy Spirit. When it becomes necessary for people to get a certain "feeling" when they worship, they may very well have become addicted to what the music does to them. The tragedy is that in such situations, the Lord's "manifest presence" has departed, yet no one realizes it. That is exactly what was happening in Jeremiah two, when not even the leaders were asking, "where is the Lord?"

Offering what is Unacceptable to God. The presenting of offerings which are unacceptable to God is, and always has been, the fundamental hindrance to God's blessing of His people. Numerous Scriptures record God's dealing with His children because they were offering Him worship He could not accept.

One example of this is in the book of Isaiah. In chapter one, we find

Israel going through the motions of worship. Even though the people had all the outward appearances of "doing it right," God turned His back on their sacrifices and prayers because their hearts were not His. The words He spoke to them should make us pause and think: "Bring no more futile sacrifices . . . When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear . . . Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean" (vs. 13-16).

It is not the outward excellence of the offering God looks for; it is the excellence of the heart. The sight and the sound of our offerings make no impression on heaven unless they are being lifted up with holy hands. No matter how beautiful they may be, the voices of unregenerate or backsliding church members are unacceptable to God.

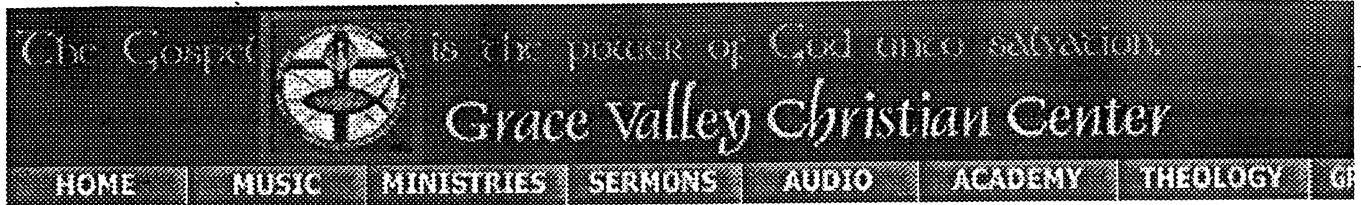
Yet our loving God still says to us, "Come now, let us reason together . . . Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). His words still call out to us as His people: "Return to Me, and I will return to You" (Mal. 3:7).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said that the most important and highest activity any company of God's people could ever engage in was to offer Almighty God acceptable worship. Jesus said that the Father was looking for a people who would worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Such a people prepare the way for revival.

Lord, may our worship services be a highway for Your presence, and not a hindrance.

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Grace and Glory

Message #95001

Worship

Psalm 95:6,7

By P. G. Mathew, M.A., M.Div., Th.M.

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What does it mean to worship God? The word "worship" to us from Old English. It actually means "worthship." Worship is the response to another in recognition of the worthiness of that person. How do we respond to the infinite, personal, almighty God? We cannot truly worship him unless we have come to an awareness and understanding of his true dignity and worth. That is why a lot of emotionalism without an intellectual apprehension of the dignity and the worth of God is not true worship.

True Worship

The Greek word for worship, *proskuneo*, means to prostrate oneself. One prostrates before another because of his awareness of the great worth and dignity of the other person as well as his awareness of his own unworthiness. And so in Psalm 95:6 we read, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." There is a recognition that God is the Creator. He is our God.

Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian, once said, "Worship is the most glorious action that can take place in a human life." What is the most glorious action? It is not eating and drinking, making money and building cities or going to other planets. No, the most glorious action that a creature can perform is to render acceptable worship to the one true and living God.

Therefore, worship is the recognition of the worth and dignity of the true God and our response in adoration as his creature. Why is idol making and idol worship the most reprehensible thing in the face of God? Because it is the exact opposite of true worship. It is a degradation of God. It means we are bringing God down to the level of a creature, or even down to the level of a creature's handiwork. Therefore, God punishes idolaters because, as we read in Exodus 20:5, he is a jealous God.

How Can We Worship?

One of the most important passages in the New Testament in regard to worship is found in the fourth chapter of the gospel according to John where Jesus was speaking to a Samaritan woman. Beginning with verse 21 we read, "Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will

worship the Father"--notice, worship is always rendered to God the Father--"neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. . ." It was false worship, in other words. It was nonsense. "We worship what we do know." Notice the intellectual element in worship. You cannot worship without using your mind, because it is with your mind that you apprehend, to some degree, the worth of the exalted infinite God. "We worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming, and has now come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." Must worship! It is not an option for a creature. It is a mandate, a necessity.

The question, of course, is, how can a sinner with defiled conscience, who is dead in his spirit and an enemy of God, come to God? And what type of God are we speaking about? We are speaking of God who is infinite; God who is personal; God who is sovereign, Lord of all; God who is almighty; God who is wisdom; God who is absolute holiness; God who is omnipresent--that is, he is everywhere in his fullness; God who is self-existing and self-sufficient; God who is omniscient; God who is the Creator of the whole cosmos and the whole universe is finite and nothing before him. How can a sinner come to such a transcendent, holy, other God and worship him by recognizing his true worth and dignity? A sinner is blind. He doesn't understand who God really is. He has no true knowledge of God. He is an enemy of God and hates God. In fact, he refuses to worship God. The essence of sin is that one is an enemy of God, and one refuses to worship, honor, praise, and exalt him.

You Must Be Born Again

So it is interesting that in John 4 we are told that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. How can this happen? The way we can come to worship God is revealed in John 3 in terms of another must. In John 3:7 Jesus said, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" That which is born of the flesh is flesh. We have to worship God in spirit; therefore, how can we have spirit? We must be born again. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. In other words, before we can worship God acceptably, we must be born of the Holy Spirit so that we have a spirit with which we can commune with God who is a spirit.

No unbeliever in Jesus Christ can worship God. He is incapable of it. We must be born again, which is a sovereign, mysterious work, unilateral work. It is a recreating work in which we have no part. God causes us to be born of the Spirit, and we become spirits.

Unless we are born again, Jesus says, we cannot see the kingdom of God, meaning we cannot understand and perceive the nature of the kingdom of God. And what is the heart of the kingdom of God? It is recognition of the King--God himself! Only a born again person is given the capacity to perceive the worth, the dignity, the transcendence, and the exalted nature of the one true and living God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So we say you must be born again.

Faith in Christ and His Work

In John 3:14-15 we are told, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man"--notice, another must--"must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." A person must not only be born of God, but he must also come to realize the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ. He must realize the importance of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ on the cross, that Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross in our place. Jesus died for our sins and was raised up for our justification. A person must have faith in Jesus Christ and his work.

If we have been born of God and made able to understand the exaltedness and the transcendence of God the Father through our understanding of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are in a situation in which we can now worship the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. We are able to do that because we ourselves are now made spirit through regeneration.

Worship in Spirit and in Truth

In John 4:24 Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth." I agree with Dr. James M. Boice who said in his commentary on John, "Many persons have been led astray in thinking that when Jesus spoke of 'spirit' in this verse He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. I do not believe that this is the case" (James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1985], 253). This "spirit" means our spirit, which we now have as a result of regeneration. So we must worship God in spirit. Our regenerated spirit has the capacity to worship God who is Spirit. It is spirit worshipping Spirit. God is a Spirit and is to be worshiped in spirit. Our resurrected spirit of man is capable of recognizing the worth of God, that he is Creator and the God of transcendent attributes, and worshipping him.

The second chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith gives a certain definition as to who God is. We should read that, because if we do, we will have some intellectual grasp of who God is. Intelligence is important in worship.

We must worship God not only in spirit but also in truth because truth reveals who God is. Because we are born again, we are able to appreciate truth. Here again, we must notice the importance of intelligence, especially the intelligence of a born again individual. We must worship in truth. That means, first of all, we must worship wholeheartedly, not with hypocrisy, as the Pharisees tended to do.

Second, it means we should worship him biblically. "Thy word is truth," Jesus said in John 17:7. In other words, if we really want to worship God, which, according to Karl Barth, is the greatest and the most glorious action that a human can experience, then we must ask how can we worship God fully? Let me assure you, a person who asks such questions is directed to studying the Scripture, because worshipping in truth means worshipping biblically. It is in the Scripture that we begin to understand who God is.

Third, we must worship God Christocentrically. All worship that we render to God the Father is in recognition of what the Father has done for us in Jesus Christ, who himself said that he is the truth.

We find an important passage on worship in Philippians 3. In verse 3 Paul says, "For it is we who are the circumcision. . ." and there I would say "the circumcision" means "we are the covenant people" ". . . we who worship by the Spirit of God"--that is, we worship God by the Spirit of God--"who glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh."

Elements of True Worship

What are the elements of true worship? To answer that, again you have to read the Bible. And when you read the Bible, you discover certain elements of worship.

The first aspect of worship we notice is prayer. But how do we pray? We must pray in a way that is

informed by the biblical revelation, by the truth. Our praise, our singing and our prayer should be done in a way that is biblically correct. Reading of Scripture is another element of worship. Preaching of the word is an important element, especially in Reformed churches. Confession of sin is an aspect of worship when we come to a holy God. Confession of faith--confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, especially in baptism, is an important aspect of worship. Celebration of the Lord's Supper is an aspect of our worship. Giving gifts to God is an aspect of worship. That is why when you steal God's money you are not worshiping acceptably. Fellowship is another aspect of worship--fellowship with God as well as fellowship with one another. We cannot have Holy Communion without fellowshiping with God's people.

Additionally, all of our life is worship. And we should live remembering that whatsoever we do, we must do it for the glory of God. That is worship. All of our life is sacred, and there is no division of the sacred and the secular.



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God Lets Loose Karl Barth

by Douglas Horton

Douglas Horton translated the earlier works of Karl Barth, thus introducing him in full-dress to an American public just becoming aware of this new giant on the theological scene. This article was published in the *Christian Century*, February 16, 1928. Copyright by The Christian Century Foundation, used by permission. Current articles and subscription information can be found at www.christiancentury.org. This article was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

"Beware," warns Emerson, "when the great God lets loose a thinker in this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city and no man knows what is safe or where it will end." Nothing less than conflagration appears to have broken out in the religious thought of Europe. Many incendiaries may be pointed to, but there is one whose torch seems to have burned more brightly and to have been applied more effectively than that of any of the others.

Five years ago one began to hear, at the tables of the student clubs and restaurants of Germany, the name of Karl Barth. A young theologian recently called from Switzerland had made an amazingly impressive debut at the University of Göttingen. His chair-- that of Reformed or Calvinistic theology-- was subsidized in part by American Presbyterians, and was not in itself sufficiently exalted to catch the eye of Lutheran Germany. This circumstance made only the more significant the number of students who soon crowded his lecture hall, and the number of students, professors and townspeople who filled and overflowed any church where he had been advertised to preach.

He was remembered by many as having been himself a student in Tübingen and Berlin little more than twelve years before. Even then he had been marked as a man of unusual, if not wholly conventional, vitality. Born in Basel, in 1886, he had returned at the end of his university career to be the minister of the church in the little town of Protestant Aargau, north of Lucerne; and there, during the war period, he had preached on Sunday mornings before the good peasant folk, to the antiphonal booming of guns in near-by Alsace. The sombre thought of guns and of the stricken and perplexed Europe, governed then by guns, gave him long hours in his study. He studied, dreamed and wrote, until, almost simultaneously with the armistice, was announced the publication of his commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. It was this which elicited his call to Germany.

Of all the commentaries which have appeared since the birth of biblical criticism, this is the weirdest. It is in reality 500 pages of pithy sermons

upon the verses of the epistle taken in order. Of learned exegesis it is innocent, though not contemptuous. Of mighty feuilletons of etymology and textual apparatus there is no trace. It is a veritable Koran for paradox and want of sequence. But by the scholarly and lay world alike it was found fascinating. For four years, until his departure for his present eminent position at Munster, Professor Barth remained at Göttingen, and during that time he saw his theology, set forth in further books and in lectures and addresses, sweep through the universities of Germany, and today there seem to be hardly more than two classes of religious thinkers in the country, Barthians and anti-Barthians.

It is little wonder that Barth has been called by Count Keyserling the man who saved Protestantism in Germany. In the year that he took his seat on the faculty at Göttingen, no less than 246,302 nominal Lutherans, under the new laws of the support of the churches by taxation, professed atheism. Whether or not the work of Barth and his friends Gogarten, Thurneysen and others directly affected the drift of popular opinion in the republic, it is nonetheless true that the turn of the tide back toward the churches was almost synchronous with the beginning of the Barthian movement.

As for the world of thought, the very furor the young theologian has aroused in academic Protestant circles proclaims him a portent of the first magnitude. Harnack, the Zeus of the historical critics, has broken the seclusion his years would seem rightly to permit him to indite a series of essays against the new movement. Professor Troeltsch -- whose too-early death is lamented on every hand -- and Professor Julicher, two other Olympians of the last great generation, have treated Barth with seriousness and apprehension. For every critical Oliver, the Barthian theology has an admiring Roland. Young Germany hears the new gospel gladly. And Professor Lange, whose painstaking researches in Reformation and post-Reformation history make his utterance authoritative, does not hesitate to call Barth "the greatest man since Schleiermacher." Among Roman Catholic writers are found almost as many eager friends of the new thought as among Lutherans and Calvinists. In general they seem to accept it as far more cousinly to their own doctrines than anything else Protestantism has produced since the days of the Reformation.

But the crowning tribute to the man Barth is the almost universal acknowledgment of religious debt which even his critics have made to him. The acrimonious words which are likely to flash from any debate, and which have not been wholly absent from this, are smothered beneath the expressions of generous gratitude with which opponent after opponent prefaces his discussion.

One of the secrets of the swift access the new theology has found into the life of the Continent is that it takes its beginning from the scene in the local church rather than in the university library. Barth, like Schleiermacher, and unlike many of the book-theologians of the last

decades, has enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a pastoral contact with real people. His approach to the problem of life and the beginnings of his "theology of crisis" were made when as a minister he first realized the utter impossibility of communicating to his hearers the faith by which he himself was animated.

According to Barth, man is safe upon the sea that lies between God and the world as we know it because the sea is God's and he made it, but he persistently tries for the Godward shore, and is usually either expecting to reach it or deluding himself that he has already done so. Security is his aim and illusion -- economic security, religious security, moral security, intellectual security. But there is no way from man to God.

For man to attempt to know God and to solve the problem of life is to set sail upon this infinite sea. His best hope will be to beat back and forth into the wind, but what can it profit him? Philosophy is only an endless oscillation, a dialectic never finished.

Professor Barth's ethics are such as to delight the realist without disturbing the idealist, the search for the morally right being a form of hopelessness, but a thoroughly sanguine form. Its object is always attainable but never attained. Here Professor Barth is the embodiment of the continental reaction to associating Christianity with a particular social movement, whether it be "kultur," pacifism, socialism or anything else. His part of Switzerland had been heavily under the influence of Ragaz of Zurich, the blazing prophet of social Christianity who, like his friend Walter Rauschenbusch, saw in the labor movement the greatest single contemporary salient of the advancing kingdom of God. Barth gathers the questionings of his friends into one gigantic interrogation point, and flings down to ethical theory the demand that it base itself not upon the conscious will of man but on the uncertainly, though actually, felt will of God. The truest rallying cry that can be used by any leader, he would say, is that suggested by Carlyle for Margaret Fuller, "I don't know where I am going; follow me!"

There is a trend in morality which corresponds to the dogmatic movement in thought. We become superior, and if we are honest with ourselves we will recognize our superiority -- but the shorter name for conscious superiority is pride.

Pride being the hatefulest of the virtues, the human spirit now turns away from this certain-sure morality, though it has nothing else in particular to turn to. It begins to ride loose to all current ethical forms. It loses squeamishness about the decencies. It extols freedom as an end in itself. It becomes emancipated. It bobs its conscience. It blows ideals as smoke rings. It hates Eighteenth Amendments because they are constitutional. It will maintain its emotional integrity. It will follow its own desire. But no mood is more perfectly unsatisfactory to the morally in earnest. They do not wish to follow their own desire; they wish to follow God's.

There is nothing left but to fall back on paradox -- to seek God's will zealously with the conclusion foregone that God's will cannot be found -- to join the contemporary crusades for righteousness with the conviction that they will be one day proved, like the great Crusades, to have been ill advised and wrong! This is not discovering God's will, but it is, after all, acknowledging it.

Professor Barth's animadversions upon worship are the very dissidence of dissent. To him the ordinary service of the church is the maddest of all man's efforts to reach God. One can expect from it only an unedifying oscillation between fictitious spiritual tranquillity and honest skepticism.

Shall one then enjoy God in worship, when the naked essence of such worship is a selfish self-hypnosis? -- or shall one, in want of any certainty, eschew the life of prayer entirely? The paradox, once more, is our refuge: let a man realize at once his infinite need for finding God, and the infinite futility of his search, and in the clash of those two infinities within his soul, the God of the infinities will be adumbrated -- but only adumbrated

Many of his critics have harassed the young professor of Münster for what they name his desperate pessimism. "There is no way from man to God." They forget his other theme: "There is a way from God to man." It is in this thought that his paradoxes are ultimately resolved; since any attempt to use God, even for purposes of describing him to others, throws us into dilemma, we must allow him to use us.

"There is a way to come into relation with the righteousness of God. This way we enter not by speech, nor reflection, nor reason, but by being still." God, in a word, takes the initiative and reveals himself. Allow him then to do so, preaches Barth. It is only when you are agonizedly aware of the failure of your own effort that God begins to move upon you.

Karl Barth, in a word, is a reincarnation of John Calvin. His message, *in nuce*, is the Sinaitic sovereignty of God. Only when you ultimately confess the poverty of your own thought, only when you acknowledge yourself a bewildered sinner in his sight, only when you know yourself, even at the gate of death, to be the shadow of a breath, will the vast Transcendence make you miraculously aware of himself in you. He will come to you as strange content of reality, rather than form, for form is only your manner of adopting him. Give him form, and his presence shrinks back into a hint. Add nothing to him, and he will remain to you the dreadful Perfect.

To the German people, stunned by the war and the consequences of defeat, their former optimism shattered and spent, shuddering to contemplate the debt-darkened years of the future, Barth in the phase of his dreadful insight into the futility of all search for security must seem a

veritable Jeremiah, and his teaching an evilly perfect rationalization of their indigence and perplexity. But in the phase of his harking back to the perfect sovereignty of the ruler of this world and all worlds, his words must seem an embodiment of their one hope.

Professor Barth has recently been introduced personally to a paradox which he is not the first man in history to have discovered: he now knows that the people stone their prophets. On the occasion of his being called to succeed the venerable Doctor Ludemann in the chair of systematic theology in Bern, such a storm of protest arose from an articulate group of Bernese churchmen as would have dismayed the doughtiest. There is "culture-Protestantism" elsewhere than in America. Its devotees in Switzerland do not relish this theologian's suggestion that the modern worship of the state or even of the family, instead of God, has the same effect as the worship of the "beast of the bottomless pit" or of some "voracious idol." They join with others in their own country and in Germany in condemning his thought as "desperado-theology." To Barth, being such a one as saith among the trumpets, Ha Ha! the very protest must have made the call more tempting; but he declined.

As an immense counterblast in his behalf, the voice of the friends of the new viewpoint was lifted up throughout the German-speaking world. There is a vast company of folk in stations high and low who find his paradoxes singularly satisfying and alive. They feel in them a hint of "Reality" -- of a Reality which we cannot reach but which can reach us. Among this company many of our English poets and thinkers would, I am persuaded, have numbered themselves. This is hardly strange in view of the long-standing influence of Calvin among us.

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