

Reading Appendix 1 Assertiveness of Grace

- John MacArthur, Jr.:

Is social reconstruction even an appropriate way for Christians to spend their energies? ... The weakness of the church is not that we're too uninvolved in the politics or the administration of our society, but that we too easily absorb the false values of an unbelieving world ... too much assimilation.¹

- Don Carson:

It is crucial that we learn the gospel and proclaim it. But it is also vitally important to understand that the people to whom we speak bring with them their own particular prejudices, backgrounds and biases. The way we go about communicating the gospel will need to vary depending on the audience. ... If the example of Paul is anything to go by, we must address the cultural presuppositions of our hearers so that we do not unwittingly obscure the gospel.²

On this showing, the aim of the exercise *cannot* be the discovery of the objective truth as to what the text 'actually says': we simply do not have access to what it 'actually says'. For us there is no such thing; there is only *interpreted* 'truth'.³

¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Vanishing Conscience: Drawing the Line in a No-Fault, Guilt-Free World* (Dallas, London, Vancouver, Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1994), 12.

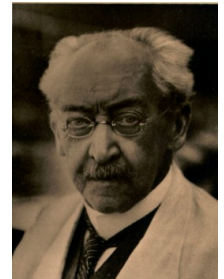
² Don A. Carson, 'The Worldview Clash', in *Southern Cross Quarterly* (summer 1998), reprinted www.focus.org.uk/carson.htm.

³ Don A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 71; cf. 21.

Reading Appendix 2 Barth's Liberalism

- Barth as student in Bern 1904-6
- Student in Berlin for a year
— Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930)

[Barth] heard Harnack with such enthusiasm (and with a little less zeal Kaftan and Gunkel) that apart from the work I did for his seminar in church history I almost completely neglected to make use of the many facilities for general education that were available in that foreign city.⁴



- historico-critical research gives theology a scientific and objective method with which to persuade the 'cultural despisers of religion'
- story of early Christianity was of syncretism – the dogmatic mutation of the primitive Christian faith as it came into contact with Hellenistic philosophies

— Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922)

"the theological teacher of my student years".⁵ Barth enthusiastically "absorbed Herrmann through every pore."⁶

Herrmann is the one from whom I learned something most basic, something which, once I followed it out to its consequences, caused me to say everything else in a wholly different way, even to interpret that most basic matter quite differently from him.

- faith constitutes true religion
- faith = not primarily assent to some external historical facts; but = experiential assent to inward epiphany of divine grace in the hidden depths of individual experience

All that can be the object of Christian doctrine is summed up in religious experience.⁷

- this is self-authenticating and therefore unprovable apart from faith

A God who has been proven to exist is of the world and a God of the world is an idol.⁸

- inner life of Jesus – "the Christ outside us is the Christ within" [Barth]
- 1909 Barth joined the staff of *Christliche Welt*
- soon after moved to a church in Geneva as assistant pastor
- 'Moderne Theologie und Reichsgottesarbeit (Modern Theology and Work for the Kingdom of God)' of 1909;⁹
- 'Der christliche Glaube und die Geschichte (Christian Faith and History)' of 1912.¹⁰

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⁴ Karl Barth, 'Münster Faculty Album', in Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, *Letters 1922-1966* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 153.

⁵ Barth, *Theology and Church*, 238-271.

⁶ Barth, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, 35f.

⁷ Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian God*, 36f.; citations from Dorrien, ch. 1.

⁸ Wilhelm Herrmann, cited in Barth, *Theology and Church*, 243.

⁹ Asked to account for the fact that so few young people were offering themselves for mission work Barth replied that theological training these days, with its emphasis on religious individualism and historical relativism, left one wondering not only about mission but about the pastorate.

¹⁰ Faith cannot be threatened by the findings of historical research. Faith rests on Jesus' own consciousness of God which can be mediated to us through the NT, but also through the work of artists and composers, among others.

Reading Appendix 3 Barth's Crisis With the War (1914)

- For a year before Barth had warned and lamented the coming of war, and on 1 Aug. 1914 Kaiser Wilhelm II finally declared war (the declaration was written by Harnack himself).
- In Sept. 1914 Barth wrote to his friend Eduard Thurneysen that

The unconditional truths of the gospel are simply suspended for the time being and in the meantime a German war-theology is put to work, its Christian trimming consisting of a lot of talk about sacrifice and the like. Here is sufficient proof that the 'truths' were nothing more than a surface varnish and not an inmost possession of this '*Christliche Welt*' Christianity. It is something truly sad! Marburg and German civilization have lost something in my eyes by this breakdown, and indeed forever...¹¹

- 1 Oct. 1914 – Barth wrote to Martin Rade explaining that his long-held respect for the “German character” was being destroyed [cited in Bruce McCormack, 114].
- 3 Oct. 1914 – 93 German intellectuals, among whom were almost all of Barth's university theological teachers, signed a manifesto of support for Kaiser Wilhelm II:

we believe that for European culture on the whole salvation rests on the victory which German 'militarism', namely manly discipline, the faithfulness, the courage to sacrifice, of the united and free German nation will achieve. [Cited in Rumscheidt, 202f.]

- Dorrien – it actually took him a further 6 years to fully accept that he no longer belonged to the tradition of Schleiermacher [36].
Gorringe – in June 1916 both Barth and Thurneysen “realized that for them the theology which began with Schleiermacher was finished.” [1999, 36].

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¹¹ Karl Barth, letter to Eduard Thurneysen (4 Sept., 1914), in *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, trans. J.D. Smart (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 26. Martin Rade and other German theologians had written in three successive editions of *Die Christliche Welt* in 1914 that God was the “only possible ground and author” of the surge of German war enthusiasm [cited in McCormack, 111].

Reading Appendix 4 'The Righteousness of God' (1916)

- 1915 visits Christoph Blumhardt at Bad Boll – interest in a more God-centered way of thinking
- Nov. 1915: 'Wartime and the Kingdom of God' –God's absences from contemporary secular life.
- 1 Jan. 1916: to Thurneysen – the day was coming when they would have to "strike a great blow against the theologians." [RTM, 36]
- Jan 1916: 'The Righteousness of God', in Town Church of Aarau – powerful rhetorical counter-move against, or wake up call for, the state of the national life, morality, religion and the church, all in the name of the righteous God who alone is God, the destroyer of our idols.

– *Religion and Christianity are self-deceptions:*

There seems to be no surer means of rescuing us from the alarm cry of conscience [of the righteousness of God] than religion and Christianity. Religion gives us the chance, beside and above the vexations of business, politics, and private and social life, to celebrate solemn hours of devotion – to take flight to Christianity as to an eternally green island in the gray sea of the everyday. There comes over us a wonderful sense of safety and security from the unrighteousness whose might we everywhere feel. It is a wonderful illusion, if we can comfort ourselves with it, that in our Europe – in the midst of capitalism, prostitution, the housing problem, alcoholism, tax evasion, and militarism – the church's preaching, the church's morality, and the 'religious life' go their uninterrupted way. And we are Christians! Our nation is Christian nation! A wonderful illusion, but an illusion, a self-deception! We should above all be honest and ask ourselves far more frankly what we really gain from religion. ... What is the use of all the preaching, baptizing, confirming, bell-ringing, and organ-playing, of all the religious moods and modes, ... the community houses with or without motion-picture equipment, the efforts to enliven church singing, the unspeakably tame and stupid monthly church papers, and whatever else may belong to the equipment of modern ecclesiasticism? ... Are we not rather hoping by our very activity to conceal in the most subtle way the fact that the critical event that ought to happen has not yet done so and probably never will? Are we not, with our religious righteousness, acting 'as if' – in order not to have to deal with reality? Is not our religions righteousness a product of our pride and our despair, a tower of Babel, at which the devil laughs more loudly than at all the others? [WGWM, 19f.]

- *"We are fixed firmly, very firmly, in human righteousness." [WGWM, 20]*
- *God's righteousness is silenced, and even made a subject for discussion:*
- *The war reveals the god we worship to be an idol, the silencing of the righteousness of God.*

He cannot prevent his worshipers, all the distinguished European and American apostles of civilization, welfare, and progress, all zealous citizens and pious Christians, from falling upon one another with fire and sword to the amazement and derision of the poor heathen in India and Africa. This god is really an unrighteous god, and it is high time for us to declare ourselves doubters, sceptics, scoffers and atheists in regard to him. ... He is an idol. He is dead. [WGWM, 22]

- *Need to turn to the God who does not simply underwrite the moral codes our consciences so easily approve.*

It is our calamity from which there is no possibility of rescue or release, that with a thousand arts we have made ourselves a god in our own image and must now own him – a god to whom one must put such comfortless questions and receive such comfortless answers. In the question, Is God righteous? Our whole tower of Babel falls to pieces. In this now burning question it becomes evident that we are looking for a righteousness without God, that we are looking, in

truth, for a god without God and against God – and that our quest is hopeless. It is clear that such a god is not God. He is not even righteous. [WGWM, 22]

- *Instead of trying eagerly to improve things ourselves, and therein “Much too quickly we have made ourselves comfortable in temporary structures” [WGWM, 23], we have to allow God to take his own work in hand – we have to learn to wait on God. “[W]e may presently be brought to silence, and with that will begin our true redemption.” [WGWM, 23f.]*
- *We must learn to do God’s will.*

To do his will, however, means to begin with him anew. His will is not a corrected continuation of our own. It approaches ours as a Wholly Other. There is nothing for our will except a basic recreation. Not a reformation but a re-creation and re-growth. [WGWM, 24]

- *Only then will we recognise “God once more as God.” [WGWM, 24]*
- *Be recreated:*
- *And only then do morality, state, culture, religion, and church become possibilities.*

For the will to which the conscience points is purity, goodness, truth, and brotherhood as the perfect will of God. It is a will which knows of no subterfuges, reservations, nor preliminary compromises. ... In its presence the first need is for humility. ... Life receives its meaning again – your own life and life as a whole. Lights of God rise in the darkness and powers of God become real in weakness. Real love, real sincerity, real progress become possible; morality and culture, state and nation, even religion and the church now become possible – now for the first time! One is taken with the vision of an immortality or even of a future life here on earth in which the righteous will of God breaks forth, prevails and is done as it is done in heaven. In such wise the righteousness of God, far, strange, high, becomes our own possession and our great hope. [WGWM, 24, 26]

—This, then, is the way of Jesus Christ, “the simple way of faith” [WGWM, 26]. Only then will we recognise “God once more as God.” [WGWM, 24]

- June 1916 – Thurneysen suggests that what was needed was a “wholly other” foundation.
- 27 July 1916 – beginning a “copy-book” of comments on Paul’s letter to the Romans that summarised Paul’s message in modern language.
- Autumn 1916, ‘Strange New World Within the Bible’, in Lentwil church