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The Divine-Human Encounter

Introduction

The Doctrine of Reconciliation, to which Barth devoted over two thousand pages in his thirteen-volume *Church Dogmatics*, is introduced first under the heading "God with Us" as the "most general description of the whole complex of Christian understanding and doctrine."[1] Barth admitted that he was "very conscious of the great responsibility laid on the theologian at this centre of all Christian knowledge. To fail here is to fail everywhere. To be on the right track here makes it impossible to be completely mistaken in the whole."[2] Failure here is failure everywhere because it threatens to erode the central message of the gospel, namely, that there is a specific relationship between God and humanity. Failure here threatens to obscure both the name of God as Emmanuel ("God with Us"), and the implications this has for the existence and actions of human beings. For Barth, the doctrine of sanctification lies at the heart of that discussion of the divine-human relationship because fundamentally, for him, "sanctification" means the intimate relationship between God and humans. It is wholly concerned with the reality and distinctiveness of the divine-human relationship in correlation to the life of individual people.

Eduard Thurneysen, one of Barth's closest friends from his Safenwil pastorate, once wrote that "because his concern was with this [Jesus Christ's] message, . . . Karl Barth's theological thinking was from the beginning directed to the life of man. The existence, the life of man, on the one side, and on the other the Word of God that meets this life, lays hold

1. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV: I, 4.
2. Ibid., ix.

of it, and transforms it."[3] Even before Barth's break with liberalism, he was a theologian concerned with struggling to get the divine-human relationship correct.[4] It was partially his keen observation that the majority of his theological mentors must have misunderstood this relationship when they aligned themselves with Wilhelm II that caused him to search elsewhere for a secure theological foundation. It was also Barth's desire to understand correctly the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the corresponding actions of humanity that caused him to distance himself from certain forms of the socialist movement. Barth sensed deep-seated deficiencies both dogmatically and ethically in the theology of his day.

In constructing a new theological foundation, Barth felt that he needed to say something new, something different from what had already been said, something "wholly other."[5] The pale theology dominating modern discussions, relegating God to passive activity in a thriving human culture was now exposed as a fraud in Barth's eyes. In 1915, several years of struggle, discontent and development came to a head, and as Barth stated the question of the "living God" "came down on me like a ton of bricks."[6] What needed to happen was now clear to Barth. The old idols needed to be knocked down; modern theology had to be stripped of its lifeless content and Protestant Theology set back on the right path: God must be God and humanity must be humanity. Only then could anything real and true be said.

> Was it the discovery that the theme of the Bible—contrary to the critical and orthodox exegesis, in which we had been brought up—definitely could not possibly be man's religion and religious ethics—could not possibly be his own secret godliness, but—this was the *rocher de bronze* on which we first struck—the

3. Barth and Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, 13–14.

4. That Barth was concerned with man's ethical response in relationship to God can hardly be ignored considering his great interest and enthusiasm in studying with both Adolph von Harnack and Wilhelm Hermann. Although at this stage in Barth's life he was focused on the "role and response of man to God, rather than to the action of God towards man . . . which also assumed a given *relationality* between the human and the divine" (Willis, *The Ethics of Karl Barth*, 7).

5. "'My child, what are we now to speak?' These well-known words from *The Magic Flute* continue: 'The truth, the truth, lest she also be complicit'. But that was easier said than done. It was Thurneysen who once whispered the key phrase to me, half aloud, when we were alone together: what we needed . . . was a 'wholly other' theological foundation" (Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 264).

6. Busch, *Karl Barth*, 91.

> Godness of God, precisely God's Godness, God's own peculiar nature over against not only the natural, but also the spiritual cosmos, God's absolutely unique existence, power and initiative above all in His relationship to man? We felt that it was in this way, and only in this way, that we could understand the Voice of the Old and New Testaments, and that it was from here, and only from here, that we could from now on be theologians and particularly preachers, *ministri Verbi Divini*.[7]

Barth's earlier writings are extremely significant because they emerge from the fast-paced period when he had set himself to the task of clearing away what was being said in modern theology and restating what needed to be said in its place. As John Webster rightly noted this was a period of reinvention for Barth. It was a time when he began to rebuild "Christian theology from the ground up. . . . The process of reinvention involved Barth in a two-fold task of ground clearing and construction . . . Barth found himself having to say 'no' in order to create a space for the affirmations which he wished to make."[8] Barth's lectures and writings from this early period are a tremendous force that catapulted him into the forefront of a theological coup. It was during this time that Barth began to drastically reshape the theological landscape of the world, changing the face of the Christian church's dialogue.

During the period from 1916 through 1922, just before and slightly overlapping his appointment as Professor of Reformed Theology in Göttingen, Barth expressed the content of the Christian life in fellowship with God primarily by disabling false constructions of human piety or self-righteousness by emphasizing righteous human living grounded in and vividly portrayed in *God's* own righteousness. This notion, which drastically shaped Barth's doctrine of sanctification, was one of the key theological components for upholding and describing the divine-human relationship for Barth in which the gospel message was seen as the power that affirmed both God's love and redemption of humankind, and humanity's faithful life response. This chapter explores the notion of *encounter* in which Barth affirms that God has in fact drawn close to humanity in distinction over and against them, and in this way transforms their existence in freedom. This conception becomes the basis for Barth's discussion of sanctification early on, and is explored in three important works: "The Righteousness of God" (1916), "The Christian's Place in Society" (1919),

7. Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 39.

8. Webster, *Barth*, 20–21.

and "The Problem of Ethics Today" (1922). As this chapter will show, Barth's doctrine of sanctification was not only shaped by an intimate portrayal of the divine-human relationship, but was also inherently linked to his fundamental concerns at the time.

Several comments are required up front concerning Barth's work during this period. First, these writings should not be treated as if they are pieces of systematic or dogmatic theology proper. There is a real danger in overly systematizing these earlier writings because of the congruencies that are noticeable with his later dogmatic works. Barth had been in the pastorate since 1909 and it was not until the fall of 1921 when he was appointed to the University of Göttingen that he began a somewhat more developed approach to his theological task. Therefore, these earlier writings are marked more by pastoral thrust and tone rather than dogmatic nuances. They are to be sure infused throughout with deep instinct and great passion, but anyone seeking tidy exposition of Christian doctrine will perhaps come away frustrated.

For example, in the years directly following Barth's 'break' with Protestant liberalism he did not often refer distinctly to the term 'sanctification,' or 'justification' for that matter, to describe the impact of the work of reconciliation within human life. Rather, Barth frequently seems to press in on the reality of the encounter between God and humanity and the meaning this has for human life and living to describe that actuality. The point in this first chapter then is not to argue for a direct equivalency of terms, i.e. righteousness or encounter equals sanctification as such, but to explore themes related to the way in which Barth describes the relationship between the grace of God and the 'living' of the object of God's attention, and thereby gaining insight into the way in which Barth discussed the divine-human relationship from the beginning. While many of his earlier writings might not expressly detail Barth's use of the term 'sanctification' they do in fact lay down a framework or pattern of discussion which characterizes Barth's concern about the life of those encountered by God beyond the mere forgiveness of sins.

Second, because these are not systematic pieces one must continually be on guard not to import later developments back into them. In many ways these earlier writings offer great insight into later developments and the theological instincts which Barth possessed from the beginning, but when the informal-pastoral distinction is not maintained there is a danger of casting a light upon these writings which might not be fair

or helpful: either making the early writings say too much, or seeing a complete discontinuity between the early and later works.

Thirdly, and closely related to the previous two, is the inevitable danger of perceiving this younger Barth as an entirely negative thinker; believing that he was more concerned with overturning idols than re-establishing any positive theological agenda, and, therefore, taking him as a merely de-constructive theologian. It should be noted from the beginning, then, that the strokes from Barth's theological brush which clear the canvass do in fact also at the same time lay down crucial foundations for a content rich doctrine of sanctification that carry through the entirety of his work.

An Encounter with Grace

Many of Barth's early theological manoeuvrings were related in particular to the modern Protestant theological establishment. What seemed to frustrate Barth the most about modern theology was its confusion about the relationship between God and humanity.

> With all due respect to the genius shown in his work, I *cannot* consider Schleiermacher a good teacher in the realm of theology because, so far as I can see, he is disastrously dim-sighted in regard to the fact that man as man is not only in *need* but beyond all hope of saving himself; that the whole of so-called religion, and not least the Christian religion, *shares* in this need; and that one *cannot* speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice. There are those to whom Schleiermacher's peculiar excellence lies in his having discovered a conception of religion by which he overcame Luther's so-called dualism and connected earth and heaven by a much needed bridge, upon which we may reverently cross. . . . The very names Kierkegaard, Luther, Calvin, Paul, and Jeremiah suggest what Schleiermacher never possessed, a clear and direct apprehension of the truth that man is made to serve *God* and not God to serve man.[9]

Barth felt that both liberal theology and the Religious Socialist movement, both of which had strongly influenced him, seemed to confuse this relationship to the point of inverting it. Modern theology, he felt, was essentially "anthropocentric theology." This meant that talk about God was really talk about humanity, that theological language was primarily and essentially

9. Barth, "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry," 196.

anthropocentric language. As a result, sanctification was perceived by liberalism as stages of psychological development, or as cultural advancement by the socialist movement (notions of sanctification expressed wholly inward or entirely outward); both of which seriously lacked any sense of a critical divine objectivity.[10] Their views were not critical in the sense that they did not regard "God as a Reality which is complete and whole in itself apart from and prior to the knowing activity of human individuals."[11] Their views were not objective in the sense that, "where nineteenth-century theology originated in a 'turn to the subject,' Barth's course now clearly gave evidence of a 'turn to theological objectivism.'"[12] Barth proposed that without a critical objectivity descriptions of the Christian life are merely descriptions of "the preliminary but not the final, the derived but not the original, the complex but not the simple. It sees what is human but not what is divine."[13] Any account of the divine-human relationship that lacks the specifically objective component derived from the reality of God is incomplete and, therefore, entirely misleading. In the end, it binds rather than looses people for freedom in God.

One of the first issues that Barth sought to correct in light of this confusion was the re-establishment of a proper understanding of the divine-human relationship—God must be God and humanity must be humanity. That is, Barth sought to re-establish "a relation in which the two members stand over against each other with no possibility of a synthesis into a higher form of being."[14] This idea is specifically taken up in the theme of *encounter* which, significantly, was also one of the key themes Barth utilized to express the precision of the divine-human relationship in his final writings as well. He wrote at the end of his career, "God and man do in fact confront one another: two partners of different kinds, acting differently, so that they cannot be exchanged or equated."[15] The idea of *encounter*, which

10. Barth himself wrote in his article "Moderne Theologie und Reichsgottesarbeit" (1909) that "all questions can be answered only by [man] himself and there is neither any universally applicable *ordo salutis* nor any generally valid *Offenbarungsquelle* [source of revelation]." Barth's early conception of religion was highly individualistic and inwardly focused (yet highly ethical). See Barth, "Moderne Theologie und Reichgottesarbeit," 342f.; quoted in Rhee, *Secularization and Sanctification*, 54.

11. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 129.

12. Ibid., 130.

13. Barth, "The Righteousness of God," 9.

14. McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 129.

15. This is a theme fundamental to all of Barth's work throughout his life and is captured succinctly in this quote from his final work, *The Christian Life*. Unfortunately

critically differentiates God and humans, was Barth's basis for discussing the impact of the grace of God within human life in any meaningful way even early on, because fundamentally what he recognized even here was that the doctrine of sanctification is the exposition of a specific relationship. Within these earlier texts, Barth is largely concerned with stating that as God approaches humans in grace a transformation occurs, the form and content of this transformation are not always entirely clear. What is clear, however, is that for Barth any theological account that confuses or disregards the critically realistic priority within which the divine-human relationship exists has already failed.

"The Righteousness of God"

This relational concept was forcefully stated in Barth's 1916 lecture "The Righteousness of God." In this address given at the Town Church in Aarau, Barth declared that, because human righteousness had been taken for the righteousness of God, humanity was continually condemned to and preoccupied with self-delusion, forever entangled in their own web of deceit. Humanity's intense focus on self-piety and human righteousness effectively silences the "conscience," a term which, as David Stubbs indicates, "is used [here] by Barth not so much to refer to a human capacity, but rather becomes a kind of conceptual placeholder for the event of the in-breaking of God's will in the human realm,"[16] and its proclamation of the righteousness of God and any true good.[17] This address, which flows like a sermon rebuking and encouraging, is split

all too often many readers simply focus upon the clearing aspect of this encounter and see Barth as attempting to disable the human agent altogether, instead of simply "making space" to speak rightly about both God and Man. John Webster examines the theme of "encounter" in *The Christian Life* which Barth uses to depict the relationship in which the divine commanding and human willing exist. See Webster, "The Christian in Revolt," 123.

16. Stubbs, "Sanctification as Participation in Christ," 82. A similar notion of conscience as described by Stubbs is taken up again in Barth's 1928/9 *Ethics* lectures in much greater detail as a way of understanding in part how the grace of sanctification effects man concretely within his life.

17. Barth wrote in the foreword to *The Word of God and the Word of Man,* which contains the lecture "The Righteousness of God," that "as the reader takes his way between the first and last of these addresses he will find the landscape changing . . . (Naturally I would no longer speak of 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness', as I have done here on the first page, as "the voice of conscience)."

into three main sections. Section 1 sets out the fundamental issue: God is the truly righteous one. Here Barth posed what he saw as the seminal question in light of the righteousness of God: How should human beings respond to God's righteousness; or put differently, how should people live in light of the reality of the in-breaking presence of God?[18] Section 2 addresses the fundamental problem: Humanity, upon feeling the call of God's righteousness, lapses too quickly, gives up, and accepts their own self-righteousness instead of God's. "Now comes a remarkable turn in our relation with the righteousness of God," writes Barth, "we stand here before the really tragic, the most fundamental, error of mankind. We long for the righteousness of God, and yet we do not let it enter our lives and our world" [19] And the third section deals with the confrontation between human self-righteousness and God's own righteous will. In the end Barth states that it is only when the question of God's righteousness is truly posed to humanity by God that false piety may be demolished. "We make a veritable uproar with our morality and culture and religion. But we may presently be brought to silence, and with that will begin our true redemption." [20] Only in confrontation with the "Wholly Other" then can real human righteousness exist as lived righteousness.

What is striking in this lecture is Barth's desire to affirm true righteousness in both God and humanity. But the *way* he does this is not by building up human beings along side of God as a partners, co-operators with God living within the world, but by emphasizing that God and human beings truly are different subjects *encountering* each other, one establishing yet limiting the other. It is only in differentiation, Barth's argument follows, that human righteousness, in relationship with and dependent upon the righteous God, garners any concrete significance.

In Barth's estimation, modern theology had confused this encounter, blurring the lines of action so that the identities of each subject were either exchanged or equated, essentially stripping humanity of any "real" basis for righteousness.[21] He writes, "The righteousness of God which we have looked upon . . . changes under our awkward touch into all kinds

18. Barth, "Righteousness of God," 9.

19. Ibid., 14–15.

20. Ibid., 23–24.

21. "The 'real' for Barth was not the world known empirically. The truly 'real is the wholly otherness of the *Self*-revealing God in comparison with whom the empirical world is mere shadow and appearance" (McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 130).

of human righteousness."[22] This, Barth saw, was the fundamental error of the modern conception of the divine-human relationship, that when human righteousness is taken for God's righteousness those things that have the possibility of becoming good within the world are destroyed. And this was the problem that Barth tried to highlight and rectify by re-establishing the critically realistic character of the divine-human relationship, by affirming true human righteousness within God's self-righteousness. By rightly stating who God and humans are in relationship the foundation was laid for a meaningful account of human life lived in fellowship with God.

What follows is a brief exposition of the primary matters concerning the divine-human encounter set forth in "The Righteousness of God."

Humans Are Needy

Throughout this essay, Barth emphasises that humanity exists in utter need. They are unrighteous, unholy, and above all seek their own self-will. Though at times they may glimpse their deepest and most profound inner need, may perhaps even call out for divine aid, they cannot help turning even this need into a perversion:

> As a drowning man grasps at a straw, all that is within us reaches out for the certainty which the conscience gives. If only we might stand in the shining presence of the other will (God's will), not doubtfully but with assurance! If only, instead of merely guessing at it as men who can only hope and wish, we might contemplate it quietly and take enjoyment in it! If only we might approach it, come to know it, and have it for our own! The deepest longing in us is born of the deepest need: oh that Thou wouldest come down! Oppressed and afflicted by his own unrighteousness and the unrighteousness of others, man—every man—lifts up from the depths of his nature the cry for righteousness, the righteousness of God. Whoever understands him at this point, understands him wholly. . . . In what haste we are to soothe within us the stormy desire for the righteousness of God! And to soothe means, unfortunately, to cover up, to bring to silence.[23]

In this sense humanity's deepest need, the need for God's righteous will and ways to be expressed *within individual lives*, is not simply a

22. Barth, "Righteousness of God," 17.

23. Ibid., 13.

matter of knowing what one ought to do and therefore doing it.[24] Neither individual morality nor social justice embodies this "other will," the will of God. In actuality, the need signals something completely lacking in human nature. Which is precisely why even though humans may recognize their deep inner need, that which they long for, they still turn away and take up their own self-sanctification—the attempt to justify their way of living. Barth writes, "We are inwardly resentful that the righteousness we pant after is God's and can come to us only from God. We should like to take the right thing into our own hands and under our own management, as we have done with so many other things."[25] Humanity, though, cannot supply that which they desperately desire by turning to themselves. Simply stated, Barth says, humans cannot make themselves righteous.

In emphasizing this deficiency within humanity Barth in one stroke attacked the modern idea of moral and spiritual autonomy, and at the same time began a perceptive discourse concerning the divine-human relationship, which placed high value upon the notion of human dependence on God, rather than despising it.

God Is Holy

For Barth then, righteous human living, as an expression of the will and ways of God breaking forth within one's life, is only ever derived from *God's* gracious activity. God's righteousness is the "surest fact of life," the "final," the "original," the "simple"—it is that from which all other righteousness derives. In other words, humanity must seek beyond themselves to satisfy their needs, and ultimately this "beyond" is not an extra *human* quality, but God Himself:

> God himself, the real, the living God, and his love which comes in glory! These provide the solution. . . . We have prayed, Thy will be done! And meant by it, Thy will be done not just now! We have believed in an eternal life, but what we took for eternal life and satisfied ourselves upon was really only temporary. And for this reason we have remained as we are. . . . When we let conscience speak to the end, it tells us not only that there is something else, a righteousness above unrighteousness, but

24. Stubbs, "Sanctification as Participation," 95.

25. Barth, "Righteousness of God," 15.

> also—and more important—that this something else for which we long and which we need is God.[26]

For Barth, righteous human living, rightly stated, comes from above; it is that which is beyond and greater than all human self-righteousness. And yet it is not found in searching for that which is beyond, for an "other" type of righteousness than our own. Humanity has continually reaped the fruitless benefit of pursuing righteousness for its own sake because, as Barth stated, "we have been much too eager to do something ourselves."[27] Like praying "Thy will be done," but meaning "Thy will be done not just now." The force of this critically realistic approach comes through as Barth states simply, "And then God works in us."[28] Thus righteous human living can come only by encountering "God himself, the real, the living God." God himself is holy, and He graciously transforms those with whom He *lives* in fellowship with.

Emphasizing God's holiness, that which is above all else—the most appropriate form of God's own will, was perhaps the clearest way in which Barth was able to affirm real goodness within the world. Only in God's holiness can a positive answer be given to the question posed to Religion, the State, our Morality, and Duty: *Cui bono?* Apart from God's righteousness, such things become oppressors and false gods, but when God takes up His work those human things may now be transformed, though never apart from God's present action, into something good.

God and Humanity Encounter Each Other

Finally, Barth writes, within this divine-human encounter, God is the active One. Humans, for their part, must simply listen:

> He is right and not we! His righteousness is an eternal righteousness! This is difficult for us to hear. We must take the trouble to go far enough off to hear it again. We make a veritable uproar with our morality and culture and religion. But we may presently be brought to silence, and with that will begin our true redemption. It will then be, above all, a matter of our recognizing God once more as God.[29]

26. Ibid., 23.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 25.
29. Ibid., 23–24.

The whole address converges on this final idea that *something real happens*, indeed "the only real thing which can happen," when God takes up His work. God acts and humans receive. God is the primary and humanity the derived. This derivation is no negative quality, although it lacks the doctrinal specificity that will come later on. Within the divine-human relationship, "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."[30] Something new begins to flourish within humans who are, in humility and joy, which here Barth calls faith, overcoming their own unrighteousness. In faith, "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!"[31] Righteous human living, then, says Barth, is not simply a divinely "corrected continuation" of our own will, a positive human spirit set back on the right track. It is the "re-creation and re-growth" given in the encounter between the Holy, Living, Righteous God, and the humble, joyful human. In this sense human righteousness is the aspect of the fellowship between God and man in which human existence and action is affirmed in God's own self-righteousness. This, Barth believed, was the correct expression of the divine-human relationship, which neither pandered to an abstract anthropology or a divine fatalism. Neither God nor humanity can truly be known or understood if this critically realistic relationship is confused or exaggerated. When human endeavour becomes a central subject of interest, the divine-human relationship becomes deceptive and misleading; for ultimately individual morality cannot help but to shut oneself off from and forsakes one's neighbours, the state eventually crushes with one hand what it frees with the other, and religion above all else manipulates and gives a false sense of security.[32] Only in confrontation with the holiness of God does true righteous *living* occur. This means, first and foremost, that God must be recognized as God and humanity as humanity.

Implications

At first glance, "The Righteousness of God" appears to lack the theological specificity to actually set this critically realistic distinction between

30. Ibid., 26.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 17–20.

God and man apart from the modern theological account. For example: it becomes clear by the end of the article that there is no distinct Christology or pneumatology present. Barth does briefly discuss the "simple way of faith," which is the way of Christ that "wherein one simply believes that the Father's will is truth and must be done."[33] But even this is found only in the last paragraph. There is no explicit discussion of reconciliation, although the notion is implied throughout, or of Christ's sacrifice, or resurrection. Nor is there any mention of the Holy Spirit, particularly as the bond between God's righteousness and human participation. Barth does affirm that "we ought to apply ourselves with all our strength to expect more from God, to let grow within us that which he will in fact cause to grow, to accept what indeed he constantly offers us, watching and praying that we may respond to his originative touch."[34] Yet he never explicitly describes how these benefits are accomplished, except to say that God gives and humans receive. At this point, one wonders if Barth has gone far enough to distinguish his idea of the objective encounter with "this God" from modern theology's anthropocentric account.

However, two things must be remembered. First, Barth is only at the beginning of his theological revolution. Many of his ideas here are truly vibrant and full of content. For example, Barth writes that people should expect "a joy that God is so much greater than we thought. Joy that his righteousness has far more depth and meaning than we had allowed ourselves to dream. Joy that from God much more is to be expected for our poor, perplexed, and burdened life."[35] Barth wants to convey a real fullness, one that goes beyond a mere abstract existentialism, about the reality of the divine-human encounter. Much of the time, however, he simply lacks the framework to develop certain specific theological arguments (i.e., the formal distinction between justification and sanctification as the single work of reconciliation). In the following years though as Barth pursues this critically realistic description of the divine-human relationship further many of these ideas gain tremendous clarity, and Barth will go to great lengths to specifically, and positively, articulate who God and humanity are in relationship.

Secondly, Barth's specific purpose must be kept in mind. Barth was in the midst of rebuilding Protestant theology from the bottom up, a process

33. Ibid., 26.

34. Ibid., 25.

35. Ibid., 24–25.

that included both construction and *ground clearing*. While Barth's goal of methodologically dismantling modern theology's "anthropocentric theology" would have benefited tremendously from a more constructive Christological and pneumatological account here, nevertheless, the importance of his ground-clearing efforts should not be overlooked. Statements such as: "As with a blare of trumpets from another world it [God's righteousness] interrupts one's reflections concerning himself and his life, concerning his duties to family, calling, and country. It interrupts even the cultivation of his religious thoughts and feelings!"[36] fly in the face of core modern theological accounts of religion. Barth himself recognized that much more would need to be said to effectively deal with modern theology, and it would take time to do so.[37] In the end, though, it is these seemingly incidental clearing-statements scattered throughout this work that differentiate it from the type of modern accounts he despised.

By focusing on the reality in which God and humanity truly encounter each other within "The Righteousness of God" Barth's ideas about Christian life in fellowship with God, based upon his later comments on Christian doctrine in *CD* 4:1, were "on the right track" even early on. The idea of *encounter*, which critically differentiated God and human beings, was the basis upon which Barth began discussing concrete human existence and living in a meaningful way.

New Life "In Christ"

Between "The Righteousness of God" address given in January of 1916 and the Tambach lecture given in September of 1919 at the Conference on Religion and Social Relations, one can discern an increasing maturity in Barth's thought, as well as a greater facility in articulating that thought. Several of the implicit theological foundations found in Barth's earlier work are now made more explicit. Where he once spoke of "the will to which the conscience points is . . . the perfect will of God, . . . won only in fierce inner personal conflict," [38] he now speaks of "how unapproachably

36. Ibid., 10.

37. In a letter to Thurneysen in January of 1916, Barth remarked after reading Ritschl's history of pietism that "when the time comes to strike the great blow against the theologians, these ideas, too, will have to be considered and digested very thoroughly" (*Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, 2:121).

38. Barth, "Righteousness of God," 24.

the Divine, when it is really the Divine, veils itself from the human, to which today we would so gladly unite!"[39] His concern is the same—the right ordering of the divine-human relationship as it pertained to the life of man, the untangling of what humans "so gladly unite." However, now, Barth's language becomes even more precise as he gives expression to the objective reality of Jesus Christ and his eschatological power. These articulations are extremely significant for Barth's understanding of the doctrine of sanctification, because they become the critical basis upon which Barth begins to positively discuss renewed human existence *and* action. As far as Barth saw it, "The church has too long directed its efforts to the consideration of types of godliness," to form instead of content.[40] The new life lived in fellowship with God "revealed in Jesus Christ is not a new form of godliness," but the movement of God, "which penetrates and even passes through all our forms of worship and our experiences; it is the world of God breaking through from its self-contained holiness. . . . It is the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead. To participate in its meaning and power is to discover a new motivation."[41] In Barth's estimation, modern theology had gotten this relationship backwards. [42] It is precisely here in this fellowship between God and human beings that the power of the gospel truly captures God's love for and reconciliation of them as human righteousness is affirmed in the *futurum resurrectionis*.

"The Christian's Place in Society"

For the 1919 Tambach lecture, Barth was given the task of discussing the Christian's place *in society*. He surprised his listeners by emphasizing instead the *Christian's* place in society. The ideas generated in "The Righteousness of God" were carried forward in this work, but from a slightly different point of view. Barth was still concerned with God and "the movement originating in God, the motion which *he* lends us. . . .

39. Barth, "The Christian's Place in Society," 278.

40. Ibid., 285.

41. Ibid., 286–87.

42. "And that is the reason why the synoptic accounts of Jesus can be really understood only with Bengel's insight: *spirant resurrectionem*. The Catholic Middle Ages and the Reformation understood this in some measure. It remained for pietism, Schleiermacher, and modern Christianity to read the New Testament Gospel backwards. We must win again the mighty sense in which . . . Christ is the absolutely *new from above*... in whom humanity becomes aware of its *immediacy* to God" (ibid., 286).

Hallowed be *thy* name. *Thy* kingdom come. *Thy* will be done."[43] But he further developed the relational concept of the Christian life by incorporating the theologically specific reality of existence "in Christ." This thought was largely developed while Barth worked through the first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*, but was brought out just as significantly in relationship to this ethically concentrated piece.

The lecture is divided into five main sections: Section One addresses what it means to discuss *the Christian's* place in society, referring first and foremost to the person and work of Jesus Christ in society, and only secondarily to the impact of those "in Christ." Barth then asks what this means in relationship to the Christian's place *in society*.[44] In Section Two, he focuses on the general nature of the ethical movement in discussion. But, he says, this is the tricky part of the topic, since it is actually God himself who is the movement in history, and any attempt to describe God and "the motion which *he* lends us" directly inevitably fails. "The so-called 'religious experience' is a wholly derived, secondary, fragmentary form of the divine. Even in its highest and purest examples, it is form and not content."[45] It is just at this most crucial point, when pointing towards the work of God within society, that Barth laments that he cannot give what is needed "except a miracle should happen. . . . There is nothing to do but to paraphrase actuality in dead words."[46] Section three moves into a particular discussion of the relationship between God and the world. The Christian's main task is to view life in such a way that he acknowledges the good in the world, specifically God's YES-that which God calls good, because he sees that he himself is a part of the kingdom of God, and, therefore, the kingdom of God exists in the world (thesis). Life can be praised because there are, in this world, parables of the Kingdom of God. In Section Four, Barth states that the encouragement of the human Yes must summarily be followed by the admonishment of the human No (antithesis). While there may indeed be real value in this world, it too comes under divine judgment along with everything else. Importantly, however, Barth explains that neither the human affirmation of life nor

43. Barth, "The Christian's Place in Society," 285.

44. "So this is what I find in our theme: on the one hand a great promise, a light from above which is shed upon our situation, but on the other hand an unhappy separation, a thorough-going opposition between two dissimilar magnitudes" (Barth, "The Christian's Place," 281–82).

45. Ibid., 285.

46. Ibid.

the denial of it should become themes in their own right, as they typically do, because above all human judgment is God's judgment, His YES and NO. In Section Five, Barth carries over the thrust of that message: "The synthesis we seek is in God alone, and in God alone can we find it. If we do not find it in God, we do not find it at all."[47] The human Yes and No will only ever find real significance in God's YES and NO because the human word carries "limitation in itself." Yet, just as Barth had argued in "The Righteousness of God," human limitation and dependence ought not to be construed in such a way as to demean human existence and action; but instead in critically realistic fashion affirm what it really means to be human.

"The Christian's Place in Society" is fundamentally an attempt to discuss what happens to human life when it is encountered by God; to understand the effects of the gospel on people as they live amongst other people. This is for Barth the entryway into discussing the notion of sanctification. Barth knew as he began this address that what those in attendance really expected to hear from him was how they could "use the thought-forms of Jesus as the law for every economic, racial, national, and international order!"[48] What they expected to hear were ethical theories and plans for how *they* could transform or sanctify society around them. Instead, what they received was a sketching of a series of contrasting positions, human action taken up by, and given meaning in the action of God. The import of this argument is that for Barth the life lived in fellowship with God, the place where dogmatics directly and expressly becomes ethics, can only ever be described in the same way, by sketching the contrasting images of the movement of God in the lives of humans. As a result, any serious description of sanctification, which is really the "movement from above . . . which transcends and yet penetrates all these movements,"[49] is only comparable to the momentary view of a bird in flight. The attempt to capture the motion of God's sanctifying activity in human understanding and words can only be expressed in momentary images of "the real, the flying, bird" which results in "the painted picture-puzzle."[50] "Aside from the movement it [the painted picture] is absolutely meaningless, incomprehensible, and impossible. . . . I mean the move-

47. Ibid., 322.
48. Ibid., 279.
49. Ibid., 283.
50. Ibid., 285.

ment of God . . . whose power and import are revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."[51] Modern theological conceptions of ethics and the Christian life, Barth felt, had proceeded with the theoretical and left the movement from "above" behind. Because Barth recognized the extreme danger of focusing on the theoretical, which he thought "almost unavoidably . . . ends in the ridiculous attempt to draw the bird flying," his account of the Christian life lived in fellowship with God, frustratingly to many, began to take shape explicitly around the divine movement, recognizable, but only in faith. The objective reality of Jesus Christ, and his eschatological power, became the basis for all of Barth's discussions concerned with renewed human existence and action.

Thus Barth began his Tambach lecture with a concept that ran completely contrary to modern theology's anthropocentrism. What is the hope for society with all of its social changes and revolutions? It is *the Christian*. But, as Barth quickly emphasised, *the Christian* is none other than Jesus Christ—the Saviour!

> Here is a new element in the midst of the old, a truth in the midst of error and lies a formative life-energy within all our weak, tottering movements of thought, a unity in a time which is out of joint. The Christian: we must be agreed that we do not mean the Christians, not the multitude of the baptized, nor the chosen few who are concerned with Religion and Social Relations, nor even the cream of the noblest and most devoted Christians we might think of: the Christian is the Christ.[52]

What this means effectively is that *Christ* is the focal point for any discussion of what it means to be a Christian. It is Christ, the "image of the invisible God," the "firstborn of every creature" in us (Col 1:15) who "indicates a goal and a future."[53] Christ is the reality by which the new human disposition is formed and sustained. "The Christian is that within us which is not you yourself but Christ in us. 'Christ in us' understood in its whole Pauline depth is not a psychic condition, an affection of the mind, a mental lapse, or anything of the sort, but is a presupposition of life. 'Over us,' 'behind us,' and 'beyond us' are included in the meaning of 'in us.'"[54]

51. Ibid., 283.
52. Ibid., 273.
53. Ibid., 275.
54. Ibid., 273–74.

Discussion of renewed human existence and action, therefore, can never venture from what it means to speak about being encountered by Christ, about being "in Christ." The Christian life happens importantly and primarily in Christ; "Christ is the absolutely *new from above*; the way, the truth, and the life of *God* among men; the Son of Man, in whom humanity becomes aware of its *immediacy* to God."[55] Through the grace of God, "There is in us, over us, behind us, and beyond us a consciousness of the meaning of life, a memory of our own origin, a turning to the Lord of the universe, a critical No and a creative Yes in regard to all the content of our thought, a facing away from the old and toward the new age—whose sign and fulfilment is the cross."[56] This is the movement of God—'the real, the flying, bird" that surrounds and permeates the question: What happens to us?

It is this "in Christ-ness," Barth maintains, that guards Christians from attempting to do what they cannot do: that is, renew their own existence and action in relationship to God and the world. The objective nature of being "in Christ" guards descriptions of the Christian life, as Barth stated in the first edition to *The Epistle to the Romans*, from throwing people "back and forth" between two extremes, "exultant and depressed, believing and unbelieving, proud righteousness and absurd error, a feeling of being saved and a feeling of being abandoned or even damned!"[57] The new life of Jesus Christ is, rightly stated, the centre of all renewed human existence and action.

Equally as significant is the eschatological power of that relationship. In fact, the two cannot be separated. The eschatological power of Christ's resurrection is the power by which humans may now truly *live* "in Christ." It is the eschatological power that makes that which is impossible, the bridging of the gap between God and faithful human existence and action, possible.

> If then we appeal to this Highest Court (God), how can we help coming eventually to an understanding of ourselves in spite of all possibilities to the contrary; how can we help understanding that we *live* by the power of the resurrection, in spite of the inadequacy of our perception of it and our response to it. . . . As a matter of fact we *do* share in the resurrection movement: with or without the accompaniment of religious feelings we

55. Ibid., 286.

56. Ibid., 274.

57. Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (1919), 277.

> *are* actuated by it. . . . We are not unofficial observers. We *are* moved by God.[58]

It is the force of Barth's argument that, "the relation between God and the world is so thoroughly affected by the resurrection, and the place we have taken in Christ over against life," that adds such a unique element to his description of the Christian life. In spite of everything that seems to point to the contrary, human beings are given the promise of, and power for living the future life of the resurrection here and now. Not only are humans forgiven as they are cast upon the judgment of the divine No, but they are given new life in Christ through God's creative Yes. Not that they might build themselves up in holiness and piety through their renewed nature, or transform society by opening up the "sluices" and letting Christ pour forth. "The *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead is the power which moves both the world and us, *because* it is the appearance in our corporeality of a *totaliter aliter* constituted corporeality." Again, renewed human existence and action is not the continuation of a divinely corrected human will. It is the appearance of a totally alien holiness, one that transforms the unrighteousness of humanity from beyond and above, in and through Jesus Christ. What makes Barth's description of human existence and action unique here is his emphasis upon its eschatological nature. The reality of the *futurum resurrectionis* is the reality by which all other being and action is characterized, which means that renewed human existence and action is a reality already accomplished in Jesus Christ and known, therefore, only in faith.

Barth's eschatological characterization of reality allowed him to maintain the distinction between the divine and human and yet truly affirm renewed human existence and action despite all appearances to the contrary and devoid of any subjective misconstrual. Despite how humanity may think or act, whether they accept or reject this promise, they are "in Christ" new beings.

Barth's use of concepts such as the reality of being "in Christ" and the power of his resurrection show a definite growth in terms of theological articulation. This invariably has to do with his increasing affinity for the Reformed theologians, particularly Calvin, the "doctor of sanctification," which will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter. From Calvin Barth no doubt rediscovered the power and promise of the *futurae vitae*— the eschatological objectivity, as well as the import of concepts

58. Barth, "The Christian's Place," 296.

such as mortification and vivification, which he in turn, in this piece, applied to the ethical relations of Christians in society. Interestingly both the critical and optimistic attitudes towards society—the human yes and no—which Barth details in this work, could be viewed as abstractions of those concepts.

One of the pitfalls of adhering to an extremely objective framework of soteriology though, as Barth seems to utilize here, is the slippery slope that often allows theological content to be construed in a very static way. That is to say, the objective reality of the divine accomplishment or decree becomes lifeless; it loses its relational character. Emphasis is placed so one-sidedly upon the critically realistic divine action that all relational aspects between God and humanity become wooden and immobile. This in turn usually leads towards a tendency to fatalism, and an overwhelming emphasis on God's raw power. In the doctrine of sanctification, this type of divine one-sidedness often results in an exaggerated preoccupation with human mortification and self-denial to the exclusion of any real concept of the new life or vivification.[59]

Barth's heavy emphasis upon the objective reality of being "in Christ" and his insistence on the primacy of the eschatological reality quickly call to mind those same dangers. In the end, one must ask whether Barth's resolve to maintain a critically realistic stance engenders a type of fatalism, which in terms of the Christian life focuses upon the denial of everything human? Barth himself, perhaps in anticipation of such thoughts, asks a very similar question, "Will the creation of this new life, in which God makes us believe, consist in the last end simply in the annulment of the creaturehood in which, in contrast to the life of God, we live our life on earth?"[60] His answer, while perhaps unexpected, is significant for understanding some of the intricacies of his doctrine of sanctification.

Barth cheerfully and willingly admits that in the end the creation of the new life means *precisely* the negation of unredeemed creaturehood. He is eager to affirm the difference between the eschatological reality of Jesus Christ and present temporal human life because he sees the negation not as an attempt to limit humanity negatively, but rather to fulfil it. Continually drawing on the reality in which God and humans

59. Interestingly Barth notes in *CD* 4:2 that this was sometimes an issue for both Calvin and Kohlbrügge who tended to miss the point that mortification did not function for its own purposes but was of one accord with and for vivification. See Barth, *CD* 4:II, 577.

60. Barth, "The Christian's Place in Society," 288.

encounter each other Barth utilizes the objective reality of Christ not to crush people but to lift them up. The objective aspect of this relationship, instead of losing its relational quality, becomes the means by which God draws ever nearer to humanity. Far from becoming wooden or immobile, Barth's enthusiastic "annulment of creaturehood" actually allows faithful human existence and action because the "annulment of creaturehood" is at the same time a grounding and maintaining of creaturehood in God's own person and work—the existence of *new* life. If anything, there is an overwhelming emphasis upon human vivification in this piece as Barth once again guards human righteousness in God's own self-righteousness.

In the end Barth's resolve to emphasise the asymmetry of the divine-human encounter in this piece does not lead to a type of fatalism—a mere resignation to what has already taken place; rather, it functions more like a catalyst in which the eschatological power of Christ's resurrection brings about a great human flourishing. While Barth's view of renewed human existence and action importantly emphasises the divine judgment, God's NO, which indeed leads to nothing else accept total destruction, it does so along with the equally real and important divine YES, the creation of new life.

> The last word concerning the world of men is not Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return! but, Because I live, ye shall live also. . . . The unholy equilibrium of a constant relation between God and man is overcome. Our life wins depth and perspective. . . . We live amidst transition—a transition from death to life, from the unrighteousness of men to the righteousness of God, from the old to the new creation.[61]

New Life as Freedom

Barth was entirely convinced that modern theology, for all of its emphases on the dignity and glory of humankind and the ability to rightly discern human righteousness, had in reality done nothing more than indicate the human fall from God.

> There was a time when with Kant or, let us say, with the cheerful Fichte, people took the ethical problem to be the expression and witness of the peculiar greatness and dignity of man. They were not disturbed and embarrassed but felt an exaltation and

61. Ibid., 297.

> delight when their thought led them from things as they are to things as they ought to be, from facts to norms, from nature to history. Here was the absolute distinction between man and the animals, not to say between civilized man and the savages. Here they even thought themselves to have found the *pou sto* from which any godless, despairing, materialistic view of life might be lifted from its foundations.[62]

In considering humanity as above, or at least as set objectively over against, the moral situation, Barth stated that modern theology had found a place to lift up human achievement apart from God. The possibility of renewed or righteous human conduct was not actually a question; it was an obvious fact of life and culture. This was most clearly seen in modern theology's view of ethics. Ethics, the question of human existence and action, was not a dilemma for them, but a joy because it demonstrated the freedom of humanity. Barth writes, "people considered dogmatics a difficult and ethics a relatively easy undertaking. They regarded the Epistle to the Romans as weighted down and obscured . . . while the Sermon on the Mount seemed lucid as daylight."[63] In this sense, Barth felt that Christianity was reduced to a religious ethic, which meant that the gospel was, "reduced to a few religious and moral categories like trust in God and brotherly love."[64] As a religious ethic, the gospel message was stripped of any thought of the eschatological power of the risen Christ, which led to a complete misunderstanding of Scripture's imperative claim, and thus a misunderstanding of the divine-human relationship.

In one sense, modern theology could be likened to the builders of the tower of Babel, for whom the glory of humanity was measured by their own progress, not in and with the work of God, but in competition and opposition to him. Concerning modern theology Barth wrote, "here was yet a human culture building itself up in orderly fashion in politics, economics, and science . . . progressing steadily along its whole front, interpreted and ennobled by art, and through its morality and religion reaching well beyond itself toward yet better days."[65] And in light of the world situation in the early twentieth century, in which "the ways of European man are now proved impossible in relation to the *ethic* of

62. Barth, "The Problem of Ethics Today," 146.
63. Ibid., 147.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 145.

Christianity,"[66] Barth could clearly state, "that over against man's confidence and belief in himself, there has been written, in huge proportions and with utmost clearness, a *mene, mene, tekel*."[67] God has weighed the human kingdom in the balance and found it wanting.

Once again, Barth continued the task of expounding the reality of the divine-human encounter. Like a modern theologian, he too *was concerned* with human existence and action, but recognized that these concepts had been turned on their heads. For modern theology, in Barth's eyes, talk of human existence and action was a way of describing human self-renewal in which the "infinitely imperfect but infinitely perfectible culture" simply carried on in dignity. Barth's concern, however, was that this was not a true portrayal of reality. "We are reminded by the third chapter of Genesis that man's ability to distinguish between good and evil and his consequent greatness and dignity may indicate his fall from God as well as his ascendancy over nature."[68] Human beings deceive themselves, merely playing at being human, when they believe that their actions are truly free. Barth responded to these ideas by demonstrating that true human freedom was upheld and established only in God's own freedom and sovereignty. It was God's freedom that freed human beings from their own limitations and established them as a faithful covenant partners. The objective encounter that occurs "in Christ" frees them from that which they cannot do themselves; the eschatological power of the resurrection frees people to live in faithful obedience to God and, therefore, in loving fellowship with others.

"The Problem of Ethics Today"

In September of 1922, Barth delivered "The Problem of Ethics Today" to a gathering of ministers in Wiesbaden, Germany. Approximately two months before that lecture, Barth's long time friend Eduard Thurneysen responded to him in a letter:

> In this sense, to be sure, the handling of the ethical problem is most urgent and also it is opened up in a basic way by Romans 12 ff. Action or conduct is set in a meaningful relation of

66. Ibid., 147.

67. These words refer to the writing on the wall in Daniel 5, in which God pronounces judgment upon Belshazzar and his kingdom. See ibid., 149.

68. Ibid., 147.

> a positive kind to the action of *God*. Ethics is no longer regarded . . . as something that really ought not to exist . . . that awkwardly continues to exist as long as the *Parousia* is delayed, or . . . as long as the proper eschatological tension has not yet come into being. . . . I cannot imagine that your stronger emphasis upon the ethical problem in connection with Reformed theology is anything other than an attempt to clarify *these* relationships. . . . I would not be surprised if, alongside the first report that Karl Barth has "suddenly" now begun to take *ethics* seriously again, a second and yet more remarkable report would arrive shortly: Karl Barth is turning again even to *psychology* (until now the undisputed and depreciated hunting ground of the "experience" people): the "personality" becomes an interesting subject.[69]

As Thurneysen alludes in this letter the majority of attention paid to Barth focused on his formula, "God Himself, God alone."[70] What seemed to be overshadowed in the public eye was Barth's deep theological concern for rightly explicating the effects of the divine-human relationship in which the uniqueness of each partner was emphasised not to avoid speaking of human agency, but to speak of it faithfully. This essay, which is quite similar in style to "The Christian's Place In Society," is primarily concerned with not only the possibility of, but also the demand for, true human moral agency. This theme is taken up as Barth explores the problem of ethics, which he states, "is concerned with man's conduct, that is, his whole temporal existence."[71] For Barth, the movement of human life, meaning true human action and existence, is wholly taken up within the discussion of the divine-human relationship.

At first glance, the title and theme of this address can be quite misleading. A literal assessment conjures images of an objective appraisal of modern ethics, and while that is partly true, the lecture is much more than that. Those in attendance most likely expected Barth to theorize about the poor state of ethics in their day, maybe to offer new ethical schemes, perhaps based upon his rousing "dialectical" approach. Once again, however, Barth would not allow himself to be bound by making movements within society themes in their own right, of ridiculously attempting to "paint the bird in flight" as he had called it derisively in "The Christian's Place in Society"; and so he forced his listeners to grapple with

69. Barth, *Karl Barth-Eduard Thurneysen Briefwechsel*, 2:82–83.

70. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., 110.

71. Barth, "The Problem of Ethics Today," 136.

the ultimate question of their own existence.[72] The problem of ethics, he writes, is not the problem *posed to ethics* by us, but rather the problem which *ethics poses* to us. It is the problem of humanity's "whole temporal existence." As people search for the inner truth and meaning of their own conduct, they become aware that they are responsible beings, that there is a *good* that is superior to, and even overshadows, the "highest dignity and worth" of things as they are. This realization creates a *crisis* of existence, for there is a "must," an "ought to," which lays claim to the whole of human life. "Nothing can come of our facing the ethical question from the viewpoint of spectators—as if the question did not arise out of the very fact that we *cannot* find complete satisfaction in playing the part of spectators in matters of life and conduct, and that we are compelled to conceive ourselves as living doers."[73] However, when the question "What ought we to do?" is asked, it reveals to us that life lies under the ultimate judgment of *God's* holiness and perfection, and of our own unfaithfulness. To be asked the ethical question is, then, to be exposed to death. "For by the question, he [man] proves his peculiar connection with the One who regards him from the viewpoint of *eternity*, and so he bids an unavoidable farewell to all viewpoints peculiarly his own. . . . The problem of ethics contains the secret that man as we know him in this life is an impossibility. *This* man, in God's sight, can only perish."[74] But this "all-inclusive critical negation under which we and our world exist" is the very reality that drives people to God.

As the address begins the broad criticisms that had since been waged against Barth, that his too critical concern with God actually devalues the human situation, appear to be valid to some degree. The problem of ethics he writes, after all, becomes the "unbearable human situation," the question of humanity's annihilation. It is at this very point though, when the divine-human tension reaches its peak, when the doom of human reality seems insurmountable, that Barth gently pulls back the veil to reveal a fuller meaning of this relationship. "It is this [the negation of man] that proves that the problem of ethics, when it becomes our own, is

72. "Why is the topic assigned us, 'The Problem of Ethics Today?' . . . We are faced not with *a* problem but with *the* problem. When we speak of the problem of ethics *today*, we mean as far as possible to eliminate any time element which might separate us from and cause us to be spectators of the problem in its reality" (ibid., 142).

73. Ibid., 137.

74. Ibid., 140.

the bond that relates us to God."[75] This crisis, this boundary, which marks humans as the created ones and not God, which most certainly means destruction, is also at its very darkest point the place where a new ray of light shines in. At this place where a person must fully give himself over to the judgment of God, there *is* forgiveness and new life. And as Barth triumphantly states: "Since there is such a thing as forgiveness (which is always forgiveness of *sin*!), there is such a thing as human conduct which is justified."[76] Where a person is thrust upon the judgment of God, the boundary that distinguishes him *from* God, human existence and action also find forgiveness and new life. There the impossibility of the faithful partner becomes possible; there renewed life in fellowship with God brings freedom for participation in the divine order.

The heart of what this address captures is that God is the truly free one. "He *is* and he *remains free*: else he were not God."[77] Yet God's freedom is His ability to bring judgment *and* life, in his judgment he is free to give grace and forgiveness even to those whom are infinitely separated from him. God's freedom is freedom *for* humanity. His freedom, therefore, gives motion to all other movements, His holiness may make holy that which is not holy, and it is in this way that Barth is able to speak of actual human freedom and obedience. Essentially then, Barth states, modern theology appears to simply be a symptom of the fact that, "We are (all) tempted in Fichtean insolence to grasp for ourselves what does not belong to us."[78] In reality, autonomous human existence and action are a *fata morgana*, a mirage, and ultimately a sign of human separateness from God. But taken up within God's own freedom and holiness, and never apart from this, human existence and action are renewed, given new life—they are sanctified. In this sense, individuals are freed from the burden of fulfilling the demands of the divine-human relationship in their own strength and they are able to participate obediently in newness of life.

75. Ibid., 168.
76. Ibid., 172.
77. Ibid., 178.
78. Ibid., 177.