Foreword

That Barth's theology is, amongst other things, a moral theology is beyond contest. Earlier readings of Barth, both friendly and hostile, often failed to notice his interest in human life and action, their attention drawn to other features of his theology considered more characteristic—his christological concentration, his teaching about revelation, or his theology of grace. A quarter-century of (largely English-language) Barth scholarship has steadily built up a rather different picture, in which Barth's theology is understood to have, not an exclusive concern for divine priority, but a double theme: God's being and acts and the being and acts of the creatures whom he summons to active fellowship with himself. That the two objects of this double theme—the works of God and the works of God's creatures—are to be understood and expounded in an irreversible order, with creaturely action wholly derivative from divine action, indicates, not the redundancy of creaturely moral life, but rather its proper setting and shape.

The cogency of this presentation of Barth derives, in part, from its capacity to make sense of features of the *Church Dogmatics* which might otherwise be neglected: the ubiquity of the concept of covenant, or the long tracts of writing devoted to depiction of human life caught up in the realm of divine grace. There is, however, another formative factor in the reappraisal of Barth as moral theologian: the availability in the Barth *Gesamtausgabe* of a much extended body of material from the period around the middle of World War I to 1930. Some of this material is rescued from the obscurity of its first publication, but much of it is made up of Barth's early university lectures from Göttingen and Münster, in print for the first time. The effect of this material on the interpretation of the period of Barth's work before he embarked on the *Church Dogmatics* has been to revise a common picture of his earlier theology's dominance by an oppositional account of God and creaturely nature, accomplished by a

segregated doctrine of God and an inflamed eschatology. The Barth who emerges from the lectures in his first two professorships is already one who has found in some of the definitive texts of the early Reformed tradition a concern for life in the world as the necessary correlate of Christian teaching about God and salvation.

These two interests—Barth's deep interest in ethics, and the significance of his early work for the shaping of his lifelong theological commitments—come together in the following study of Barth's theology of sanctification, which gives the first sustained treatment of the topic in Barth's earlier theological writings, and demonstrates with some skill that what Barth has to say about sanctification indicates much about his fundamental convictions. It possesses the qualities of good interpretation of Barth: wide acquaintance with his *oeuvre*, an eye for both the large design and the details of what Barth has to say, readiness to follow Barth and to be surprised by what his texts contain. It is an exemplary interpretation of a neglected topic in a critical phase of Barth's theological and spiritual development.

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