

♪ Worship Notes ♪

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THEME: The Gospel and Worship

The Gospel: A Call to Worship

In the fall, mankind refused to give to God the worship that He alone deserves, and which man was created to give. In Paul's words, "even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (Rom 1:21). In wanting some of God's unique glory,[†] Adam and Eve robbed Him of that exclusive worship which was His due. Romans 1 makes it clear that the fall is *not* a fall into immoral attitudes or behavior—those are rather *consequences* of the fall. The fall involves a decision about God in relationship to man: "Whom are you going to worship?" was the issue in the fall.

God sent Christ to undo the effects of sin outlined in Romans 1, so that we might begin to: worship the Creator rather than the creature (cf. 1:25); exchange images and idols for "the glory of the incorruptible God" (1:23); and "honor Him as God and give thanks" (1:21). As A.W. Tozer put it:

Why did Christ come? Why was He conceived? Why was He born? Why was He crucified? Why did He rise again? Why is He now at the

[†] Satan insisted in Genesis 3:5 Eve could be "like God"—this was his lie, and the root of Lucifer's own rebellion against God, as suggested in Isaiah 11:11.

right hand of the Father?

The answer to all these questions is, "in order that He might make worshipers out of rebels; in order that He might restore us again to the place of worship we knew when we first created." (in *Worship: the Missing Jewel*)

"Whom are you going to worship?" was the issue in the fall

If the issue in the fall was robbing God of the worship He deserves, and if the work of Christ was intended to restore that worship, then the gospel is in fact a call to lay aside false gods and idols and to worship the One who made us. Though we don't often think of the gospel in those terms, that is in fact what we see in Revelation 14:6-7. John writes:

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal *gospel* to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and

people; and He said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."[‡]

The "eternal gospel" which the angel preaches to those on earth involves three intersecting com-

[‡] "In line with other New Testament passages, Revelation 14:6-7 suggests that evangelism may be viewed as a call to worship God appropriately" (David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 266).

mands or calls: to fear God, to give Him glory, and to worship Him. How closely these relate to what Romans 1 says we have taken from God!

What we see here is a *God-centered* rather than a man-centered perspective on the gospel. Yes, God loves us, and has sent His son to save us from our sins and make us His children. But that is a means toward an even greater end, and not the ultimate goal. As we see from the perspective that Romans 1 gives us on biblical history and its basic conflict, that ultimate goal is for God to be honored and glorified in worship as He alone deserves to be.

It is significant that in the very last chapter of the Bible we find a reminder of the Scriptures' central theme and focus (and, in the context of that chapter, the ultimate and final reversal of the Fall's corrupted worship): the angel replies firmly to John's misdirected reverence with the clarion call (which reverberates through all of the Bible and all of history) to **"Worship GOD!"** (Revelation 22:8-9).

Worship as the target and goal of the message of salvation is seen often in Scripture. Too often we describe the Gospel only in negative terms (being saved from God's wrath, turning from sin, escaping hell); it is certainly all these things, but also involves turning *to* something as well as *away* from something. When we receive the Gospel, we turn to God, but that necessarily involves *turning from false worship to true worship*. This is suggested by these words of Paul:

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned *to* God *from* idols to serve a living and true God. (1 Thess 1:9)

The Thessalonians rejected their former worship of idols and gave themselves and their worship to the Creator. Similarly, when the inhabitants of Lystra wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas as gods, the latter replied:

"Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn *from* these vain things *to* a living God, who

made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." (Acts 14:15)

Here we see again the themes from Romans 1—God is the Creator, the living God who alone is worthy of our worship; we are called by the "good news" (the Gospel) to turn away from "these vain things" (which in the context involved the worship of idols and of false gods (including Paul and Barnabas!). Similarly, Paul reports Jesus as saying to him at his conversion:

"I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn *from* darkness *to* light and *from* the power of Satan *to* God." (Acts 26:18)

The work of Christ (His past redemptive work and also His present priestly ministry) has won for us the inestimable privilege of drawing near to God (Hebrews 10:19-22) to enjoy His presence and to glorify Him with our worship. That direct access to God is what we lost in the Garden, and which Christ came to restore through the gospel. By the power of the gospel unto salvation (Romans 1:16), we take our proper place in the created order, even as we joyfully give God His: the highest place, the place of all honor and glory. Fanny Crosby understood this and expressed it in the refrain of her hymn "To God Be the Glory":

O come to the Father

[the blessing of the gospel: access to the Father]

through Jesus the Son;

[the means of that access]

And give Him the glory,

[the ultimate goal of the gospel: God's glory]

great things He hath done.

[the basis for our praise]

See also "False and True Worship in Romans 1" on the Articles page at www.worr.org.

QUOTABLES

The Gospel and Worship

“Foundational to the apostle’s thinking about worship is his teaching about humanity’s refusal to glorify and serve God acceptably (1:18-2:29). Here Paul reflects the OT perspective that the knowledge of God should lead to appropriate worship (*latreuein*, the cognate of *latreia*, is used in 1:25). Associated with the failure to acknowledge and glorify God is a futility of thinking and a darkening of ‘their foolish hearts’. Humanity is fundamentally impaired at the level of understanding and judgement because of the rejection of the true knowledge of God. It is significant, therefore, that Paul later links the renewing of the mind with the notion of right worship being restored through the work of Christ (12:1-2; cf. 1:28; 2:18).”

(David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993):276)

“By the mercies of God, this new covenant community has been released from the darkness and foolishness of illicit worship to serve the living God in spirit and truth. In a very real sense this is the goal of the process of redemption, just as it was in the Old Testament exodus. God brought Israel out from the bondage of Egypt that they might serve/worship him. Here, God’s mercies have brought this new humanity out from the bondage of its idolatry, legalism, guilt, fear, and the judgment of God’s wrath, to serve him in a new and living way.”

(Noel Due, *Created For Worship*, 185)

“It would appear that Paul, in describing the idolatry into which man has fallen, has deliberately chosen the terminology of the Creation story [Ro. 1:23]. . . . The language of Rom. 1:23 is not the only connexion, however, which this passage has with the early chapters of Genesis. In particular, the sequence of events outlined in Romans 1 reminds us of the story of Adam as it is told in Genesis 1–3. Of Adam it is supremely true that God manifested to him that which can be known of him (v. 19); that from the creation onwards, God’s attributes were clearly discernible to him in the things which had been made, and

that he was thus without excuse (v. 20). Adam, above and before all men, knew God, but failed to honour him as God, and grew vain in his thinking and allowed his heart to be darkened (v.20). Adam’s fall was the result of his desire to be God, to attain the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:5), so that, claiming to be wise, he in fact became a fool (v. 21). Thus he not only failed to give glory to God but, according to rabbinic tradition, himself lost the glory of God which was reflected in his face (v.23). In believing the serpent’s lie that his action would not lead to death (Gen. 3:4) he turned His back on the truth of God, and he obeyed, and thus gave his allegiance to a creature, the serpent, rather than to the Creator (v. 25). Adam, certainly, knew God’s *dikaïoma* (cf. Rom. 5:12-14); by eating the forbidden fruit he not only broke that *dikaïoma*, but also consented with the action of Eve, who had already taken the fruit (v. 32). . . . It would appear from this remarkable parallelism that Paul’s account of man’s wickedness has been deliberately stated in terms of the Biblical narrative of Adam’s fall.

(M. D. Hooker, “Adam in Romans 1” *New Testament Studies* 6: 300-301)

“It is the preaching of the gospel about Christ and his saving work that makes possible the worship described in 12:1.”

(David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993):278-79)

“Worship terminology is reintroduced at this key point in Paul’s argument [Romans 12:1] to demonstrate how the problems created by humanity’s failure to worship and serve God appropriately (Romans 1-2) have been dealt with by God himself.”

(David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993):278)

Corporate worship: “weekly practice at not being God”

(Michael Lindvall)

“The Church on the whole has been tenaciously conservative through the ages, rightly stressing the eternal and immutable Gospel over against the passing fashions of men. But the quality of eternity and immutability has often been transferred from the Gospel itself to the forms in which it is expressed and modes of worship have drawn to themselves a sacrosanctity which, although valuable and understandable, is hardly to be justified.”

(D. H. C. Read, “The Reformation of Worship,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8:1 [March 1955]:67)

“The true worship of God is to be arranged and presented in a way that is a re-presentation of the gospel of saving and sustaining grace with an expectation that people will be formed and transformed into greater Christ-likeness during the worship service.”

(Bryan Thomas Schmidt)

“[This is] is the Gospel of grace, that our Father in the gift of his Son and the gift of the Spirit, gives us what he demands—the worship of our hearts and minds—lifting us up out of ourselves to participate in the very life of the Godhead.” (James F. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in Our Contemporary Situation,” in *The Forgotten Trinity*, 5-6)

“[Worship is] man’s own act of self-dethronement in God’s presence in order that God, not man, may reign.”

(Richard de Bary, *The Gospel of Worship*, 37)

“If I were to ask you what was the greatest activity in which the people of God could ever engage; if I were to ask you what was the highest ambition that any man or woman created by God could ever have; if I were to ask you what would remain when every other activity in this world has fallen away—what would you say?”

The answer is this: it is to offer to God acceptable worship. This is why God has formed the universe and created human beings. This is why God has sent His Son to redeem a people. This is why God is sanctifying and purifying the Church of Jesus Christ and preparing them for glory. It is in order that He might have a people who will bring Him acceptable worship. And

when you focus it down to your own life, this is why God has made you. This is why God has given you a tongue and lips and a voice; this is why God has created every faculty of your being, that it might be engaged in the proper worship of Almighty God.”

(David Martyn Lloyd-Jones [sermon quoted by Eric Alexander])

“We are called to live in the light of the gospel a life that honors and glorifies God, a life in which theology (our belief in God) and doxology (our worship of God) are beautifully blended together.”

John Stott, “Worship” (at www.sbts.edu/icw)

“The gospel call is a call to worship, to turn from sin and call upon the name of the Lord.”

(Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1004)

“In writing Rom. 1:18-32 Paul had the figure of Adam in mind, and . . . in these verses he deliberately described man’s predicament in terms of the biblical narrative of Adam’s fall. Not only does the language of this section echo that of Gen. 1:20-26, but the sequence of events is reminiscent of the story of Adam in Gen. 1–3. This idea has been accepted and developed by Professor C. K. Barrett, [*From First Adam to Last*, 17-19] who points out that for Paul the fall itself is a religious or theological event, ‘a lapse from God into idolatry’, and that the moral wickedness described in Rom. 1 is the *result* of the fall. . . . Behind individual acts of wickedness lies the basic sin of man’s rebellion against God, and the ‘sins’ of which the moralist is aware are the consequence and symptom of that fundamental disobedience.”

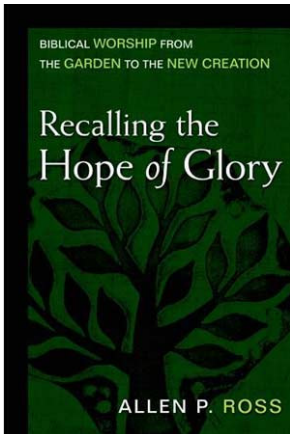
(M. D. Hooker, “A Further Note on Romans 1,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-67):181,183)

“The gospel of Jesus Christ was seen from the beginning not merely as the way by which sinners could escape judgment but the way by which, through that salvation, faulty humans could be re-humanized.”

(N. T. Wright, “[Freedom and Framework, Spirit and Truth: Recovering Biblical Worship](#),” 18)

“Worship is the enjoyment of the gospel.”

(Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 210)



Recalling the Hope of Glory

Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation

Allen P. Ross (Kregel, 2006)

This significant new work is an attempt at “a thorough study of all the biblical material [concerning worship] in sufficient detail to formulate the basic principles and patterns of worship” (64). The study spans the Scriptural revelation from Genesis to Revelation and treats worship as a reminder of the glory which man lost in the Fall and as a foretaste of its restoration and fulfillment in the future Kingdom (as the title implies).

This book is an ambitious undertaking, and is successful in many respects:

1. Ross is a renowned Old Testament scholar, and his treatment of the Old Testament material particularly is rich in interpretive detail and scholarly support. As such this book is sure to become a standard reference work.

2. The structure and layout of the book are very clear, conceptually and visually; there are excellent Subject and Scripture indices and a massive Bibliography (55 pages!) made up of twenty thematic sections.

3. The book is skillfully unified around the central theme of glory in the context of creation, sin, redemption and restoration.

4. The author shows himself to be “well-churched” along with being well-schooled, and does an admirable job of bringing out the doxological implications of the subjects and passages he expounds. There are both insightful observations about the text and incisive applications to our present situation.

However, there are some weaknesses with the book as well:

1. As has been the case with some other books on worship written by capable Old Testament scholars, Ross gives a much more thorough treatment of that part of the Scriptures than he does of the New Testament material. His exposition of John 4 is a little meager, given the importance of that passage (which contains by far the most extensive treatment of worship from the lips of Jesus Himself); Romans 1:18-25 is not recognized for its important contribution to understanding the worship focus and implications of the Fall; Romans 12:1 is skipped over quickly, in spite of its pivotal importance for the New Testament understanding of worship; Hebrews 10:19-22 (climactic to, and summarizing of, the whole book of Hebrews—the key New Testament book on worship) is not dealt with at all; the present priestly ministry of Christ is barely touched on, though it is crucial for understanding the dynamics of New Covenant worship (Heb 2:12; 8:1-2; 10:21; 2 Cor 1:20).

2. Ross sees corporate worship as primary, giving little attention to the internal, whole-life and lifestyle worship which debatably seems to be the emphasis of Jesus and the New Testament writers (John 4:21, 23-24; Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 10:31).

3. The book definitely leans towards an Episcopal/liturgical understanding of corporate worship; Ross claims that “Holy Communion” is the “center” (381, 455, 458, 468) and the most important part (504) of worship (a point which is assumed rather than demonstrated). He is also pretty consistently negative about recent developments in, and practices of, worship.

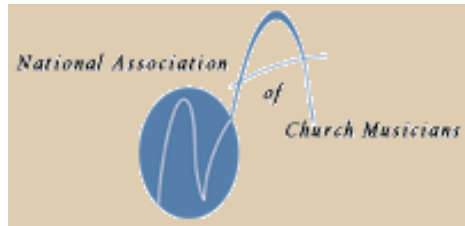
4. The bibliography and referencing are dated and incomplete: many important recent treatments of worship are not considered at all, including works by James Torrance, D. A. Carson, and John Piper, as well as most of Robert Webber’s many contributions to the field of worship studies.

5. The publisher inexplicably decided to use shortened footnotes; that means that to find the publication data for a cited article or book one must search through the twenty sections of the bibliography!

In spite of these reservations, this reviewer recommends *Recalling the Hope of Glory* as a work to be reckoned with: it is a book with a healthy, but all too uncommon, mixture of exegetical rigor, theological depth, and reflective piety.

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