

# ♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 3, Number 1 ♪ January 2008

**THEME: Worship, Creation and the Fall**

## Worship and the Fall in Romans 1

Ron Man

The Apostle Paul authored some of the most sublime doxologies to be found in Scripture; these normally arise as a visceral response to the overwhelming nature of the truths which he is led by the Holy Spirit to write about in his epistles:

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! . . . For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen! (Rom 11:33,36)*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephes 1:3)*

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephes 3:20-21)*

Another kind of doxology emerges out of the black mire of Paul's description of sinful man's downward spiral in Romans 1:18-32. There, in his explication of humanity's idolatrous reversal of the created order so that people "worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator," Paul cannot help appending, at the mention of their (and his) Creator: "*who is blessed forever. Amen*" (v. 25). It is interesting that this brief

exclamation of praise arises out of Paul's treatment of the doctrine of *sin*; in it we see Paul's passion for God's glory and his abhorrence of what sinners (of which he considered himself to be chief, 1 Tim 1:15) had perpetrated in defiance of God's rightful rule.

Paul's response of worship arises out of his conviction that the Creator is alone worthy of

worship and adoration (certainly not "the creature," 1:25; indeed he calls men "fools" in 1:22-23 for substituting images of created beings for "the glory of the incorruptible God"). Indeed, this context suggests that at the root of the Fall of man was an issue of *worship*.

Worship, in its most basic understanding, presupposes a *fundamental distinction* between the *worshiper* and the *object of worship*. Even in the most banal use of the term, e.g., where famous athletes or musicians are said to be worshiped by their fans, there is still the idea that those persons' abilities or appeal are far

superior to those of normal people. When it comes to God, of course, the chasm is infinite: God is totally unique in all of the universe. For, He *made* the universe; everything which exists besides Him owes Him its existence; only He has no beginning, no cause, no limits or limitations. In spite of man's exalted stature of being created in the image of God, there is still an infinite distance between him as creature and the one Creator. Yet man in his sin foolishly seeks to mar that distinction, to ignore that distance. This was the fundamental issue in the serpent's temptation of Eve in the garden: "you will be like God" (Gen

Romans 1 provides the key for understanding that the fall was at its root a decision about worship

3:5).<sup>+</sup> The attack was on God's total uniqueness as the Creator and Lord of all, of the fundamental distinction between Him and all of His creatures, including Eve (and Adam, and Satan). Of course, Satan also accused God of lying to Eve (Gen. 3:4) and of motives which impugned the perfection of God, when in reality the fallen creature Satan was the one who was capable of such deeds and thoughts.

So there was in the garden (and has been ever since) a presumptuous attempt to lower God to a more creaturely level, and to raise man to a more God-like level. Needless to say, the former is an affront (not to mention an impossibility) to God; and the latter is a denial of man's proper place in the created order and a refusal to acknowledge God's unique place and to respond appropriately.

This is exactly what we see in Romans 1. In verse 21 Paul states that sinful mankind "did not honor Him as God or give thanks." And this in spite of being able to observe His power and greatness in the works of nature (v. 20). Paul's phrase in v. 21, though used in the negative of what natural man steadfastly refuses to do, suggests what the appropriate response of human creatures *should* be to their Maker: they should "honor Him as God" (i.e., accord to Him the unique place which He has the Creator God rightly holds, "ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name" [Ps 96:8]) and "give thanks" for all of His good gifts.

Adam and Eve turned from honoring their Creator as uniquely God, and instead of giving thanks for all the good things which God had made and placed into their care (Gen 1:28), they desired more, even though it meant disobeying Him and attempting to usurp His unique position. Thus in Romans 1 Paul is really describing the situation surrounding the Fall, as well as the

ensuing consequences in all following generations. At the root of the problem of sin was (and is) an issue of *worship*, a failure to honor God as God and to give Him thanks.

But now we must pull back and expand our gaze to take in the totality of Paul's argument in the book of Romans. From that perspective, we see that in fact Paul is painting this dark picture of fallen man's state in Romans 1 so that the light of the gospel will shine all the more brilliantly as he develops it in the chapters to come. And indeed

we see already in Romans 1 a clear indication that that is where Paul is heading: for in the verses immediately preceding those we have looked at, he speaks of the "gospel" being "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," and that as a result one can indeed become "righteous" (1:16-17).

Paul is promising nothing less than the restoration of *worship* through Christ, the reversal of man's downward spiral of sin (1:18-32) through the power of God's redeeming love displayed in the gospel. By God's gracious saving work (which Paul will expound beginning in chapter 3), it

will indeed be possible for men and women to "honor Him as God" and to "give thanks." Because of these "mercies of God" (as Paul will summarize chapters 1—11 in 12:1), believers will be able to present their entire selves to God as a fitting and appropriate "spiritual service of worship."

And so, in one of the darkest chapters in the Scriptures, we find embedded a beautiful description of what worship truly is and should be. It is those attitudes and activities whereby we

*honor Him as God  
and  
give thanks.*

from *Viewpoint*

© 2000 Reformation and Revival Ministries  
P.O. Box 88216, Carol Stream, IL 60188  
[www.act3online.com](http://www.act3online.com)

See a more extended treatment of this subject in "False and True Worship in Romans 1" on the Articles page at [www.worr.org](http://www.worr.org).

At issue in  
the fall was  
the ques-  
tion,  
"Whom are  
you going  
to wor-  
ship?"

<sup>+</sup> Many commentators consider Isaiah 14:12-14 to be speaking of the rebellion of the created angelic being Lucifer (Satan) against God. The pinnacle of his sin is expressed in words that prefigure his tempting words to Eve in the guise of the serpent: "I will make myself like the Most High" (14:14).

## ARTICLE REVIEW

Morna D. Hooker, “Adam in Romans 1”

(*New Testament Studies* 6 [1959-60]: 297-306)

Morna D. Hooker, “A Further Note on Romans 1”

(*New Testament Studies* 13 [1966-67]: 181-83)

The verbal and conceptual links between Romans 1 and Genesis are often overlooked, but are crucial for understanding the fundamental place of worship in the fall of man. These links were convincingly demonstrated some decades ago in the above two articles. Indeed, Romans 1 may be seen as Paul’s theological commentary on Genesis 1–3; i.e., Genesis 3 tells us what *happened*, and Romans 1 tells us what it *means*. Hooker has shown that in Romans 1 Paul is not just talking about mankind in general (though that is certainly also true, as his further treatment of humanity’s sinful condition makes clear in chapters 2, 3 and 5), but about Adam and Eve in particular as well.

It would appear that Paul, in describing the idolatry into which man has fallen, has deliberately chosen the terminology of the Creation story [in Romans 1:23; Hooker goes on to show close verbal connections with Genesis 1]. . . . 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. 22). . . . 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* [righteous requirement] (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. (“Adam in Romans 1,” 300-301)

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. The link between man’s failure to glorify God and the moral wickedness which follows is underlined by Paul: three times, in vv. 24, 26 and 28, the moral “consequences” of man’s fall are introduced by the verb *paredwken* [gave them over]. . . . 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. (“A Further Note on Romans 1,” 181, 183)

## QUOTABLES

### *Worship, Creation and the Fall*

“Because Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally increase their glory through their everlasting enjoyment and adoration of each other, God is, as it were, structured to receive glory from his creation. Through his work of creation and redemption God gathers a glory to himself which collides with the ever expanding glory which Father, Son and Holy Spirit ascribe to each other in their eternal song of praise.”

(Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 212-13)

“God who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them.”

(C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 127)

“All the different ways God has chosen to display his glory in creation and redemption seem to reach their culmination in the praises of his redeemed people. God governs the world with glory precisely that he might be admired, marveled at, exalted, and praised. The climax of his happiness is the delight he takes in the echoes of his excellence in the praises of the saints.”

(John Piper, *Desiring God*, 46)

“God means for us to be stunned and awed by his work of creation. But not for its own sake. He means for us to look at his creation and say: If the mere work of his fingers (just his fingers! Psalm 8:3) is so full of wisdom and power and grandeur and majesty and beauty, what must this God be like in himself!”

(John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 94)

[on Psalm 19:1-2] “Day and night are saying one thing: God is glorious! God is glorious! God is glorious!”

(John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 86)

“The task of humans is to bring to conscious thought and expression the worship of the rest of creation. Heaven and earth are full of God’s glory, but God’s image-bearing creatures, we humans, are called to know that it is so and to put it into words of praise. . . . Creation worships God the creator, and humans bring that worship into conscious articulation.”

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

“Christian worship ‘swims in creation as a fish swims in water,’ as Aidan Kavanaugh has put it. It is permeated with the sights and sounds and smells, the tastes and touch of our material world, and in this way it offers not a disembodied message of escape but rather an encompassing experience of a world redeemed and reconciled to God.”

(John H. Erickson and Eileen W. Lindner, “Worship and Prayer in Ecumenical Formation,” *Theological Education* Vol. 34, Suppl. [1997]: 23)

“T.F. Torrance notes that humanity was created to be the priest of creation, ‘whose office it is to interpret the books of nature written by the finger of God, to unravel the universe in its marvelous patterns and symmetries, and to bring it all into orderly articulation in such a way that it fulfills its proper end as the vast theatre of glory in which the Creator is worshipped and hymned and praised by his creatures. Without man, nature is dumb, but it is man’s part to give it word: to be its mouth through which the whole universe gives voice to the glory and majesty of the living God’ [*The Ground and Grammar of Theology*, 5-6]. When we worship God, we fulfill the destiny of creation as well as the destinies of our lives.”

(Redman, Robb, *The Great Worship Awakening*, 182)

“The worship of God is man’s highest, noblest activity. It gives meaning, direction and joy to the whole of life. All God’s purposes in Creation and Redemption are fulfilled in us when, together in our worship, we are renewed in and through Christ and in the name of Christ we glorify God. Through God’s Grace we are called to voice for all people, for all creatures and for all creation, the praises of God and to realize our God-given destiny to be priests of Creation under Christ, our Great High Priest.”

(David W. Torrance, “The Word of God in Worship,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 1 [1983]:11-16)

“The divine purpose in creation was that man should lead the entire universe in offering to the Creator a worship in which all creation would find its true fulfillment and know real peace (Gen. 1:1 to 2:4). God’s intention was basically a liturgical intention. But man by his sin has led the world astray, deflecting it from its true destiny, and reducing to sighs of anguish the adoration which ought to be its life. This confusion of the world has been refuted and contested by God and what He has done in history by pursuing within it a saving process.”

(Jean-Jacques von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 69)

“God made man in His own image to be the Priest of creation, to express for all creatures the praises of God, so that through the lips of man the heavens might declare the glory of God, that we who know we are God’s creatures might worship God and in our worship gather up the worship of all creation.

“But nature fails of this purpose because of the failure of man. The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus comes to be the Priest of Creation; to do for men what man fails to do, to offer to God the worship and the praise that we have failed to offer.” □

(James B. Torrance, “The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship,” in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, 348)

“The error described in Romans 1:18ff., is not the *neglect* of worship, but the *exchange* of worship. Men and women are inveterate worshipers. Worship belongs to their essential structure. The expression of human sin is that the worship for which they were created is exchanged for idolatrous worship. They sin, not by *not* worshipping, but by worshipping wrongly. . . . The real goal and scope of redemption [is] the restoration of true worship and the destruction of the false.” (Noel Due, *Created for Worship*, 27, 29)

“Worshipping God by affirming God’s worthiness flies in the face of the Fall. In the Fall, humans got hung up on our ‘self-worth.’ We wanted the status God had. We failed to perceive our proper place in the created order, and so we threw that order out of alignment.

“In the first [book] of the Bible, Adam and Eve say to God, ‘We are worthy.’ In the last [book] of the Bible, the elders say to God, ‘You are worthy.’ God is back in God’s appropriate place, we are in ours, and the cosmos is right again. In a way, our public worship each week is an exercise in this eternal act of putting God in God’s proper place. Michael Lindvall describes worship as ‘weekly practice at not being God.’” (Nathan Bierma, [“Worshipful Service,” Perspectives June/July 2006](#))

“The fundamental problem with the human race, according to Romans 1—3, is . . . a failure of worship which leads to, but is itself deeper than, the multiple failures of human living.”

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

“The glory of creation and the glory of God are as different as the love poem and the love, the painting and the landscape, the ring and the marriage. It would be a great folly and a great tragedy if man loved his wedding band more than he loved his bride. But that is what Romans 1:19-23 says has happened. Human beings have fallen in love with the echo of God’s excellency in creation and lost the ability to hear the incomparable original shout of love.”

(John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 85)

“Adam was not content to be the Son of man he was; the tempter’s promise, You shall be as God, moved him to attempt self-aggrandizement by disobedience.

The charter of man’s existence is: Inferiority to God, superiority to all else in creation.

*Thou madest him a little lower than God. . . .  
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet (Ps. 8:5f.).*

Man’s dominion must always be subject to the over-riding dominion of God, than whom he is always ‘a little lower’; if he throws off the yoke of service to God he loses his own proper authority, with and for which he was created. It was by blurring the distinction between himself and God, by an attempt to place himself on equality with God and thus to secure that nothing should be excepted from his rule, that man fell. . . . It is from confusion of creation and Creator that idolatry springs. . . .

“The . . . fall consisted in a rejection of the knowledge of God, an idolatrous turning from the Creator to the creature. This is what [Romans] 1:18-23 says. . . . Man was surrounded by the handiwork of God, his infinitely beneficent Creator, who established him as lord over all his surroundings. But having tasted dominion he sought to be free even of God, and to extend his lordship upwards as well as outwards. He thus refused to glorify God as his lord, and to give thanks to him as the giver of all good things. This inordinate pride, the perversion of a lord-

ship that God himself had created for man, was accompanied by the loss of man’s knowledge of God, and idolatry; that is, man’s subordination to the creatures he should have ruled.

“It is clear that Paul believed that everything that could be said about Adam . . . could be said also about mankind as a whole. . . . Adam’s refusal to recognize gratefully the sovereignty of his Creator is generalized into a like refusal on the part of all men. Not only for Adam but for all, ‘Sin’s wage is death’ (Rom 6:23). Through the disobedience of the one man, the mass of men . . . were constituted sinners, and for all sin reigned in death (Rom 5:18f.; 1 Cor 15:21f., 56). . . .

“What man needs is to return to the true Creator-creature relationship for which he was made. He must abandon his arrogance, recognize the questionableness of all his deeds and thoughts, and submit himself wholly to God.” (C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology*, 16-17, 19-20)

“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 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 were first created.’”

(A. W. Tozer, “O Worship the King”)

## CHRIST REVERSES THE FALL

Through the gospel, ‘the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes’ (Rom 1:16-17), Christ reverses all the effects of the Fall seen in Romans 1. In that light, we may portray that reversal by reverently recasting 1:18-25 in the light of Christ’s redeeming work:

*For the grace of God is revealed from heaven to fallen and sinful men who have accepted the truth of the gospel, to those whom God has drawn to Himself. For now not only is the power and the majesty of God evident through what has been made, but He has also revealed His love, mercy, compassion and grace through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ His Son, so that men may be saved.*

*And now they not only know God, but they also honor Him as God and give thanks, their minds filled with thoughts of Him and their hearts filled with devotion to Him.*

*Acknowledging themselves to be fools, they became wise, and exchanged images and false objects of worship for the glory of the incorruptible God.*

*Therefore God indwelt their renewed hearts with His Spirit unto purity, so that they might present their bodies as living and holy sacrifices unto Him. For they exchanged a lie for the truth of God, and now worship and serve the Creator rather than the creature, to the glory of His name. Amen.”*

## NEW WORSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Beginning Fall 2008, The Bethlehem Institute at Bethel Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota will be offering a rigorous, two-year graduate apprenticeship program in worship studies.

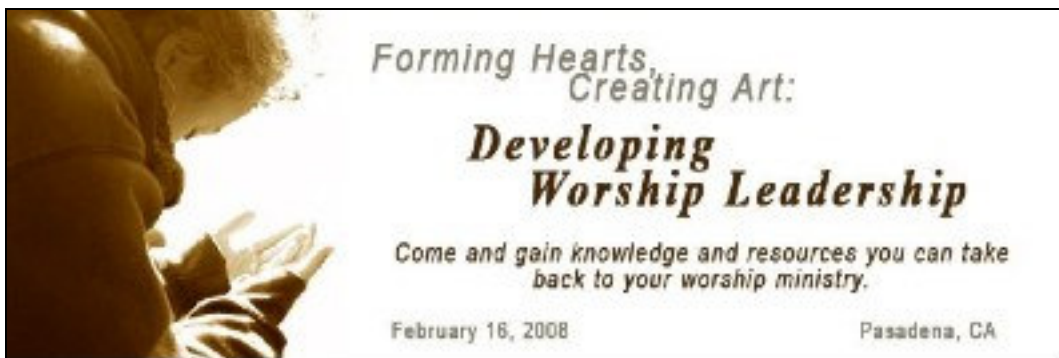
For more information, access the entire Press Release [HERE](#).

## UPCOMING WORSHIP EVENTS

### CALVIN SYMPOSIUM ON



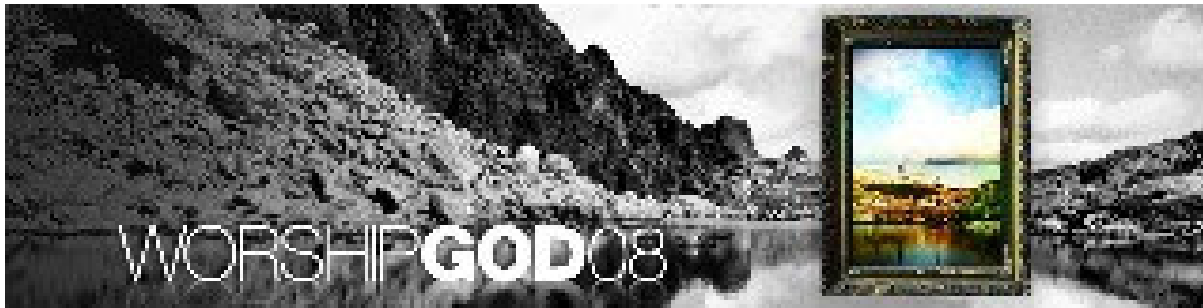
January 24-26, 2008 Grand Rapids, Michigan USA  
 sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship  
[info and registration](#)



(featuring John Rutter and Keith & Kristyn Getty)  
 info [HERE](#)



info [HERE](#)



This year's theme: "Rediscovering the Psalms"  
 July 30–August 2, 2008 Gaithersburg, Maryland  
 info [HERE](#)

## COMING NEXT MONTH: Thirsting for God

Link [HERE](#) to **WORSHIPBOOKS** to order important books on worship



**WORSHIP NOTES** is a free monthly online digest of reflections, views, news and reviews concerning biblical worship. It is produced by Ron Man as a publication of *Worship Resources*, a department of Greater Europe Mission devoted to "strengthening the body of Christ in the U.S., Europe and around the world by promoting the priority, understanding and practice of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Biblically-based worship." To subscribe, please go to [www.worr.org](http://www.worr.org) and click on "Worship Notes" at the top. There are many other free resources on the website also.