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In 1923 Adolf von Harnack, the Professor of Church History at Berlin, and his former pupil Karl Barth published in the Journal Christliche Welt an exchange of five open letters. This correspondence represents a classic statement of the two sides in a continuing theological debate about the nature of the theologian's expertise and his understanding of God. Harnack defended the established academic ideal of a 'scientific theology'—an objective study consisting primarily of historical investigation and critical reflection. Barth emphasized instead the role of revelation, grace and personal commitment in our understanding of God, arguing that to rely on the external proofs and authorities of natural theology was to empty religion of its significance and reality for the individual.

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Eberhard Jüngel

Translated by Horton Harris

The theme of this startling book is the Being of God, reconsidered in the light of Karl Barth's epoch-making work on the Trinity which made it the fundamental grammar of Christian theology affecting every aspect of doctrinal thought. In a sharp critical handling of classical and contemporary ideas Jüngel breaks through static conceptions of God to develop a radically dynamic understanding of the Being of God as Becoming, but this involves also a rethinking of the meaning of becoming itself. Short as it is, Professor Jungel's work is the most penetrating and brilliant piece of theological writing on the doctrine of God to appear for a long time. Far from being a theological imposition upon the self-revelation of God in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, this is an account of the living Being of God that arises out of the concrete realities of the passion of Christ regarded as the passion of God. The crucifixion thus emerges as the crucial point in a proper and compelling doctrine of the Trinity, while the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity is at the same time cast in a new light. The book has much to offer the New Testament scholar as well as those who are interested in contemporary theological debate. Altogether it is a work of great daring and profound insight. It is hardly surprising that Professor Jüngel's classrooms in Tübingen overflow with many hundreds of students.

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