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love, and even in his life to reflect it. But Christians have One who in His own Person reflects or reveals the Divine love truly and completely. That was a great sentence of St. Augustine's—great in its simplicity: 'It was mainly for this purpose

that Christ came, to wit, that man might know how much God loves him; and that he might learn this, to the intent that he might be enkindled to the love of Him by whom he was first loved, and might also love his neighbours.'

Leaders of Theological Thought.

Karl Barth.

BY PROFESSOR H. R. MACKINTOSH, D.D., EDINBURGH.

THE present-day movement in theology which evokes the deepest interest, alike in friend and foe, is incontestably that associated with the name of Professor Karl Barth. Especially in Germany the controversy is acute.

Barth was born at Basel in 1886 as son of the theological Professor Fritz Barth, known to a former generation as author of a useful book, *Die Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu*, 1903. He went to school in Bern, then studied in the Universities of Bern, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg (he speaks of Herrmann as 'my unforgettable teacher'). In 1908-9 he acted as assistant to Dr. Rade, editor of *Die christliche Welt*; for two years thereafter he was Vicar of the German Reformed Congregation in Geneva, and from 1911 to 1921 he held the pastoral charge of Safenwil, Canton Aargau, Switzerland. In the winter of 1921 he was called to Göttingen as Professor of Reformed Theology, and since 1925 he has occupied the Chair of Theology in Münster, Westphalia. Barth is a Swiss, and the movement led by him is often described as 'the Swiss School.' Other prominent members of it are Professor Emil Brunner of Zürich, Dr. Gogarten, and Dr. Thurneysen. But in the present short article we shall limit our attention to Barth himself.

'It always embarrasses me a little,' Barth has said, 'to hear people talk so seriously of *my theology*.' It consists, he urges, simply in a point of view. He will not attempt to rival the systematic efforts of thinkers like Ritschl or Troeltsch, but will merely insert a marginal observation, propose a corrective, utter a warning cry. The line of ancestry to which he wishes to belong goes back through Kierkegaard, Luther and Calvin, Paul, Jeremiah. The name conspicuously absent here is that of Schleiermacher. To him Barth is definitely hostile, on the ground that he conceals men's sorest troubles, part of

which is their very religion, and that he confuses God and man—in theology the unpardonable sin. Man and his universe are an enigma. 'Over against him stands God, the Impossible confronting the possible, Death life, Eternity time. The solution of the enigma, the answer to the question, the end of the existential trouble is the absolutely new event that the Impossible as such becomes the possible, death becomes life, eternity time, God man.' The theme of theology is not the deification of man but the incarnation of God. We only theologize as we speak of God. Orthodoxy had its faults, but at least it never forgot this fundamental truth; it knew, at all events in principle, what is superfluous and what is vital. We have to submit our minds, as theologians, to the essential voice of the Bible, where in His Word God reveals Himself in a final authority before which we can only kneel in the dust. 'Let God be found true, but every man a liar.' We are playing with the subject unless we fix ourselves upon the scriptural view of God as Creator and Redeemer and hear in the Bible His very accents. Others abide our question, but to God we cannot say 'Why?' Every chapter in Dogmatic, like every sermon, should bear the inscription, 'God speaks,' and *what* He speaks we discover sufficiently and exclusively in the Bible. Its truth has 'the self-evidence of the Revelation which God gives synchronously to the Biblical witnesses and to His people who receive their testimony.' They receive it by the Spirit's impulse. Theology is lost when it steps outside this 'living circle of Scripture and Spirit.'

Barth perhaps gives us less help than we might desire in distinguishing what is the voice of God from what is not. He relates the alleged Divine revelation inadequately to conscience, and takes

pleasure rather in using the strongest language to affirm that man's proper attitude in listening to God's voice is prostrate and abject. But did not true prophets in the Old Testament appeal to God's righteousness in their conflict with the false? In other words, they found and they applied an ethical test. The prophet ascribed to God the highest content of his own consciousness.¹ In the parables, e.g. that of the Prodigal Son, our Lord encourages us to do the same. This defect in Barth is connected with his absolutist view of the Old Testament, which he more than tends to equate with the New. Each part of Scripture is pure and perfect Word of God. We must study it, of course, with all the instruments of scholarship; but we have misread unless we discover in it not man's thoughts about God, but God's thoughts of man. Scripture is theocentric. 'What stands in the Bible is a new world—God! God's rule! God's glory! God's incomprehensible love! Not human history, but Divine history. Not human virtues, but the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Not human standpoints, but the standpoint of God.' Our one duty, as we read it, is to confess that God is right and we men always in the wrong. If theology accepts its simple duty of speaking out the Word of God—impossible as that duty may be for mere men—it will never be tempted to become, as Romanticism made it, nothing better than a phenomenology of the religious consciousness.

Barth's most famous book is a commentary on Romans. It exhibits not a trace of purely historical interest or philological precision; it seeks only to pierce the historical transparency and reach what is spiritual, super-historical, transcendent, to make everything present and urgent, to hear what God is saying to men to-day out of the Epistle. Barth has no use for the specifically modern sort of exegesis which, as he holds, has turned the Bible into a collection of fascinating antiquities. Whereas what makes the Bible is its exclusive interest in God—Creator and Redeemer, Beginning and End, Origin and Goal of all things. Theology must imitate Scripture here. It too must concentrate solely upon the eternal and transcendent God dimly visible through the veil of history, and if it does so, its affinity with all philosophical thought that is conscious of its own real meaning will be seen.

¹ 'The prophetic consciousness means, in fact, that human experience is real, and that the one sure key to the knowledge of God is our knowledge of man at his highest and best' (H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 29).

Theology of the right kind is never simple; how could it be, when it is the stammering despairing effort of temporal minds to declare the Everlasting? 'Barth,' says an admirer, 'strides along clad in a scientific terminology which is hard, intricate, and every way exacting, one which at first (and even in many points for long) leaves the impression of oracles and speaking with tongues.'

His theology has been called 'dialectic.' By this is meant that if the proper subject of theology is God's relation to man, this baffles direct and unambiguous description. We cannot apply the loved modern principle of 'continuity' and speak as if God were just the superlative of man, man and something more. Affirmations about God can only be made in contradictory and paradoxical terms, by contrasts which cancel each other yet make each of them its contribution to the expression of truth, by positives which are relieved by negatives that in turn have to yield place as the mind is thrown out at the infinite object. We need this broken, mobile, many-dimensional thinking, the name for which is 'dialectic,' if we are to bear witness to the truth. (No more than witness-bearing is permitted us; to utter the truth is for God alone.) Position and negation have perpetually to be related to each other. 'We can only speak of the glory of God in creation as we bring out the complete hiddenness of God for our eyes in Nature; of the image of God in man only as we give warning, once for all, that the man we know is fallen; of sin, only with the reminder that we should not know sin, were it not forgiven us; of the justification of the ungodly, only as we recall that it is the ungodly who is declared just.' There is a Yea in the Nay, there is also a Nay in the Yea, and each penetrates the other. The question is the answer, because the answer is the question.

In God's sight, Barth reiterates after Kierkegaard, we men are always in the wrong. Our culture and civilization, our morality, even our religion—all are wrong. This has a dazing effect, until we discover that by 'religion' Barth means what might perhaps better be called 'religiosity.' At all events, he would not deny that there may be religion of a right kind. Yet he uses the word polemically to denote man's seeking a way to God—religion as a human function, activity, accomplishment, which can be treated of psychologically or statistically. And this, he pronounces with vehemence, is simply another piece of 'the world,' imprisoned in the cosmic, never its conqueror. Mere religious consciousness will never lift men out of the realm of sin and death; it is the crown and

culmination of human experience, doubtless, but just for that reason the more questionable and unsatisfying. In this purely humane form it never has courage to face the terrifying fact of sin. Here is the tragedy of life, that man must be religious yet cannot be. All religion thus conceived can do is to force upon us a confession of the utter relativity of man before the absolute God. If theology is to recover health, it must cast loose from pre-occupation with this subjective phenomenon of piety and take its bearings anew from God, the Holy and Almighty. Only so can it return to the objectivity of the Bible and the Reformation. We have made a God after our own image, as Feuerbach told us eighty years ago; now we must again submit ourselves to the Divine righteousness and listen to the voice that speaks in conscience and from heaven.

Behind all this, again as with Kierkegaard, is a radically dualistic conception of the relation of God to man. There are two worlds or æons, one subject to 'the bondage of corruption,' one centred in the Living God. God is 'wholly other' than man the finite; the 'there' is strictly incommensurable with the 'here.' An infinite qualitative difference lies between God the Unconditioned, for whom our fittest category is the Impossible, and the old world of the contingent and the lost. No sort of continuity joins the new to the old, yet everything on this side reaches out its hands to the farther bank, drawn thither by an inscrutable transcendental relationship to the Absolute Being, that Point in another plane by which all else is equally produced and cancelled. The problematical nature of all existence is, as it were, a finger indicating the assured supramundane basis there must be; the questions we put to life are all of them questions put to us by Another. That utterly other world touches ours, the given world of sin, judgment, and death, only as tangent does circle, or, to employ another favourite symbol, as perpendicular descends upon base; and it comes as the extra-causal, extra-temporal transcendent factor which abolishes the given, that God may be all in all.

This primordial dualism is overcome in and by Christ. There is no way from man to God, not even through religion, as Barth defines it; all the more certainly is there a way from God to man. In Christ the new Reality dawns. He actualizes the impossible possibilities of which man in his religion had merely dreamed. But Barth is insistent that the Person he speaks of is not 'the Jesus of History.' Here is a point at which the paradoxical style in

which the new theology is couched becomes gravely infelicitous; for by totally rejecting 'the historical Jesus,' Barth does not at all mean that Jesus Christ never existed. On the contrary, in His Cross eternity has invaded time; the utterly strange yet absolutely gracious God has thereby, by sheer miracle, broken into fallen temporality, declaring His sovereign righteousness, disclosing the identity of His wrathful holiness and His pardoning compassion. But this Jesus is not accessible to mere historical or psychological inquiry. Study of the Synoptic Gospels is making this clearer every day. The historical (*i.e.* real) Jesus must always be contemplated in the light of His supra-historical relationship to God—which means that we must get back to a serious use of the idea of 'revelation.' Neither Christ's death nor His resurrection can be read simply in terms of history; in both God is invisibly and sovereignly active, reflecting the transcendent 'beyond' into the world of time. The Resurrection is the turning of the ages; from this point of view Barth can say it means the same as the Parousia. Christ marks the swerving of life from Nay to Yea, from judgment to grace, from death to life. 'Jesus Christ is *not* the keystone in the arch of *our* thought. He is *not* a supernatural miracle, in which we might undertake to believe. He is *not* the goal we should find awaiting us at the end of our conversion stories. He is not a figure in our history, to whom we can gain a "relationship." Least of all is He the object of religious and mystical experiences. In so far as He is all this to us, He is not Jesus Christ. He is God, who becomes man, the Creator of all things, who lies in the cradle as a child. But these words must be interpreted by those others: He is the Crucified, Dead, Buried, Descended into hell, who is risen from the dead.' The limits of human possibilities have been broken through, and the Divine possibility has become fact.

No passage in Barth's writings gives a stronger impression of his force and penetration than this on the supernatural character of the salvation made ours in Christ. 'The highest expression of the *totaliter aliter* announced in the Bible is the preaching of the forgiveness of sins. Now that we are on the point, I feel as if this word "forgiveness" compels our astonishment more than the raising of Lazarus. It is an inconceivably new factor in our practical reckoning. This new-constituting of the moral subject, right in the midst of moral and political reality, by a man's insertion in the order of the Divine Kingdom, and his being reckoned as God's; this sight of the

beginning of good in the very midst of evil ; this establishment of his royal freedom through the royal freedom of God ; this possibility of viewing alike what is nearest and what is farthest in the light of God, and of doing greatest and least to God's glory—man in his captive, limited, and provisional life yet simultaneously stayed on God quite exclusively, disturbed by God, and by God borne up—is that something we can deduce psychologically, or prove, or visualize ? Is it not something rather outside all history, a sheerly new thing, an absolute datum ?

To the *solī Deo gloria* there answers on the human side *sola fide*. Barth's first words—though not his last—on faith are deeply hostile to all psychological interpretation. It is the content that matters, not the emotional form. We must here ignore all inner processes, all subjective experience, and think rather of a transcendently Divine event that occurs in the believer. So far can Barth drive this, that he declares faith, from the psychological point of view, to be a sheer self-emptying. Faith is a vacuum, to which the Eternal gives itself as content. Without dwelling on obvious and reasonable objections to this (though it is a point at which Barth has essential mysticism, which he does not love, on his side), we may at least say that it is difficult to apprehend the notion of a faith which is the *unexperienced* attention to God's judgment and grace, and at the same time a bowing *with fear and trembling* under the condemnation and acceptance spoken in Christ. It is one thing to say that faith is spiritual and cannot be psychically localized ; it is quite another to deny it all psychical character, as though 'grace' could not be sovereignly present in mental process. There are passages in Barth which go very near suggesting that when we believe savingly, it is not we who believe at all, but Christ in us.

The Church, in Barth's view of it, is as equivocal a fact as religion itself. The institution we know belongs, like all earthly things, to the present age, the æon of flesh and sin, and is no more than a more or less perfected organization which exists to advance certain great human interests. Hence, like the world, it stands in absolute antithesis to God ; so far from being the Kingdom of God, it is the Tower of Babel. Not that the sect is worthier—on the contrary, 'Better with the Church in hell than with Pietists of higher or lower type in a heaven—which does not exist !' There is no evading the truth that the more 'efficient' and 'up to date' the Church becomes, the more it is the object of Divine judgment and rejection. If this means

that in proportion as the Church comes to be complacent, galvanized, or self-deifying, it has lost touch with the purposes for which Christ gathered round Him a fellowship of faith and love ; if it means that men as such, however much they 'get together,' cannot of themselves heal the hurt of even one soul, but that God alone can save and bless, we shall all agree, though we may ask whether, in asserting so solemn but also so patent a truth, there was need for wild and chaotic words. Even the actual Church, with all its faults, may be entitled to more credit and consideration than it receives at these hands. It was no shallow twentieth-century propagandist but John Calvin himself who spoke of it thus : 'Let us learn by the mere name of mother how profitable, indeed how necessary, is the knowledge of her ; since there is no other entrance into life unless she herself conceive us in her womb, unless she bear us, unless she foster us at her breast, unless she guard us under her care and government, until we put off this mortal flesh, and become like the angels.' Barth cannot escape from this difficulty by pointing to the perfectly familiar distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. If the Church, as Barth himself proceeds to urge, is the *communio sanctorum*, the home of penitence, we may well ask whether this *communio* has not always taken social forms and does not, as a fact, confront us either in the actual Church as we know it, or nowhere at all. There is surely some middle path between putting the actual Church in place of God and denying it every kind of spiritual value. May we not all unite in saying that the Church, like the family, is God's potential instrument for the sovereign ends of grace ?

No Barthian, I imagine, will ever admit that his views can be stated by an outsider without caricature, but it is to be hoped that in the foregoing account some approach to justice has been made. Barth is not simple ; but he inquires pointedly whether life is simple, and whether it was to be anticipated that we men should succeed in affirming the final truths of God otherwise than in the language of explosive paradox. He rightly rejects the plea that Christian men would do better to keep to practical religious tasks and leave theology alone. If you have to *preach*, must you not clarify your thought of what you stand for, against Rome, against secularism, against all theology that centres in man or the Ego ? And the best starting-point is that of universal doubt concerning all previous systems. 'He who wishes to be sure, must first have become absolutely unsure.'

In reading Barth we ought constantly to say to ourselves—*respice finem*. Take his first iconoclastic utterances with a pinch of salt; wait till he has concluded his argument before you pronounce a verdict. He may begin with shattering negatives, but it is ten to one he *knows* they are exaggerations and has indulged in them in order to rouse the complacent and shake them into real thinking. This dialectic procedure is not so far convincing as a natural mode of reaching the ultimate implications of the Christian gospel, and may only result in putting a differently constructed logic in place of the Hegelian; but it has an interest and austerity of its own. The theology of Barth, whatever else, is the theology of a great, a volcanic, soul, that has trembled at the Word of God. With a passionate and prophetic intensity, he is seeking to draw the Christian mind of his generation back to the vast truth that in the Bible, interpreted by the Spirit, God has spoken to the world, and spoken once for all. There is an objective revelation, which is as much above our jurisdiction as the stars in the sky. We must question all human formations, whether inward or outward; we must put them at

the bar, under the judgment of the Lord of heaven and earth. This is, above all, true of theologies—and Barth, as he tells us explicitly, would not exempt his own. In theology we must think our very best—that is our duty. But we must never forget how the end of all theologies is that every mouth is stopped before God.

Barth is important and memorable, if not for his solutions, at least for the cardinal questions he compels us to encounter. And he does compel us. He thrusts upon us those terrible live problems that are rampant in the world. So far he seems to have spoken at least as much from the standpoint of the 'anxious inquirer' as from that of the full and characteristic Christian faith which animates Ro 8. Over much of his writing we might place the motto: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Only in the closing chapter, as it were, does he turn to expound that deeper word: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' But this distribution of accent may yet change, and if it changes, Barth will prove an even greater and more revolutionary Christian force than at this hour.

Literature.

THE FAITH THAT REBELS.

It is not so long ago that the late Sir Henry Jones expounded his philosophical creed under the phrase, 'A Faith that Enquires.' The title of Principal D. S. Cairns's new book appears to have been modelled on that phrase. But it is a very different type of exposition that is here offered. *The Faith that Rebels* (S.C.M.; 8s. 6d. net) is the faith of Jesus Himself. It is true, says Dr. Cairns, that Jesus lived and worked in the spirit of the prayer, 'Thy will be done,' but His attitude to the world's evil was not one of acquiescence but of opposition, and in this He was conscious of aligning Himself with the Divine will. And, further, by the exercise of a rebellious, as distinguished from an acquiescent, faith—as in His miracles—He claimed to have power given Him from on high to overcome pain, disease, and death.

It is, in the main, a re-examination of the miracles of Jesus that Dr. Cairns offers in this volume. The point he would emphasize is that these are represented in the Gospels as Divine answers to

the prayers of a faith that rebelled against evil as being alien to the Kingdom of God; and it is suggested that inasmuch as Jesus wrought miracles by His human faith in God, and not in virtue of His possession of metaphysical Deity, the power of working miracles passed from Him to those who in the early days caught the secret of His faith, and there is no insuperable reason why such power should not be exercised in our modern world.

This way of approach to the miracles of Jesus is not the way of the older Christian apologetic. The miracles are not to be regarded as mere adjuncts to the Christian revelation, as being 'evidences' of its truth; they are affirmed to be integral parts of it. But while many would endorse Dr. Cairns's criticisms of the 'traditional' or evidential theory of miracle, and admit the force also of his criticisms of the 'modernist' view (which rejects miracle in the name of science and the 'closed system' of Nature), they would hesitate to accept the view of miracle here expounded and defended. Apart altogether from