THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KARL BARTH

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TO MY WIFE

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FOREWORD

THIS book is an attempt to do for English readers what Karl Barth himself has warned us not to attempt, and therefore he must be relieved of any responsibility for the result. He disclaims that he has a standpoint. All we can look for, he says, "is an instant in a movement" comparable to "the momentary view of a bird in flight." Apart from the movement, it is meaningless. Any attempt, says Barth, *to draw the bird flying* must prove a ridiculous picture. Almost inevitably it ends in making the movement, a theme in itself, a thing in itself, which is what he chiefly desires to avoid. He is concerned lest what has been done so far should be regarded as a finished product which may be turned to practical use, whereas so far it is only *prolegomena*—beginnings—which we have before us.

This so-called "Barthian" movement is not a movement which Barth and others have originated, but a movement originated, they believe, in God, Who lends it motion. Whither it may lead no one can tell. If it be true that "he goes farthest who does not know whither he is going," Barth may yet go very far. It is a movement, he believes, from above, a move-

ment from a third dimension, into which without any choice of his own he has been swept, a movement which transcends yet penetrates other movements, a movement whose power and import is revealed in the new world of God which has broken through in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Barth feels himself moved by God not in the first place to ask or answer practical questions, such as "What ought I to do?" but to ask and enquire and follow attentively what is being done by God. His task is a task of priestly stirring of the hope and need by means of which the way to the solution, which is in God, may be made most clear to us. "There is only one solution, and that is in God Himself." The "Barthian" movement is an attempt to recollect, what is so often forgotten, God's Revelation and our own faith; to discover "the Archimedean point" from which the soul and society is moved; to direct our vision to the *life* that conquers death in Christ. It is a demand for a new approach in God to the whole of life, to think out things afresh in God, and proceed from "thought to action." It is a movement from Life to life. What is presented here is, we fear, just such an attempt to draw the bird flying, and therefore we warn our readers not to expect "a real flying bird," but only a picture, but not, we trust, too much of a puzzle-picture.

The following extract from a private letter from Professor Barth to me, which he has given me liberty to print, will indicate how he himself views an attempt to discuss the "practical" value of his message for us in this country:

"If it should be my task to speak myself directly to the English and Scottish theologians (and I don't pretend in the least that I know this theological public accurately), then I would, perhaps, before everything ask that they should not so quickly raise the question, 'what practical use now can I make of this?' On the contrary, they should rather themselves pursue reflection upon the problems with a certain quietness and love. They should resolve to undertake very earnest theological work. The 'practical,' and the methods of 'practical' work would then, either in this generation or in the next, arise of their own accord out of it. It is more necessary at the present time for the theologians, and especially for the theologians who are in the ministry, that they should be for once thoroughly disturbed and made dissatisfied with their practice than that they should quickly go over from one fine smooth-going practice to another. That is my own situation, and into this situation I should like to transplant also those in Germany who are willing to listen to me; not into the situation of a new security, but into one of new

questioning and seeking. I am afraid that if anybody were to approach me with the question, 'What difference would this make to my preaching?' and only wanted to get from me a plain, round answer, he would not at all understand what I should say."

The reception of that letter has probably resulted in making this book somewhat less "practical" than was my first intention, but I trust, it will be more in line with the way in which Professor Barth would wish his work to be represented.

I have called it "The Significance of Karl Barth," not forgetting, what Barth himself has said, that "the new from above is at the same time the oldest thing in existence, forgotten and buried."

To my friends, the Rev. Norman W. Porteous, B.D., who has studied under Barth in Germany, and who has read this book in manuscript and in proof, and given me many helpful suggestions and criticisms; and to the Rev. James Cosh, B.D., who has also made me his debtor by his careful corrections, I wish to express my warmest thanks.

Dundee,
February, 1931.

JOHN MCCONNACHIE.

CHAPTER I

KARL BARTH'S INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

THE most interesting event in the post-war religious world has been the phenomenal suddenness with which the word of Karl Barth has captured the ear of Europe, and transformed within a few years the whole outlook of Continental theology, in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, and elsewhere. In many Continental pulpits and professorial chairs the theology of Barth is already finding voice. Papers are being issued in different countries to spread his teaching. More than half the theological students in Germany, it is said, are his disciples. Even where the word of Barth has encountered doubt and criticism it has always met with respect, and with a certain longing and disappointment, a witness to the fact that there is a deep sense of need, a vacuum, in the Protestant Church, calling out for a new presentation of the Christian Revelation. No less an authority than the philosopher, Count Keyserling, has expressed the view that

Protestantism finds itself at the moment in such danger of life that only a radical cure, in the true sense of the word, can waken it to life. The radical reformers who, he believes, at the moment alone have the fate of Protestantism, as a form of religion, in their hands are Friedrich Gogarten and Karl Barth.

A like sense of something wanting is being felt among ourselves. A deep impression was created at a recent meeting of the Church of Scotland General Assembly, in Edinburgh, by an address of Professor A. A. Bowman, D.Litt., of Glasgow University, in which, referring to the influence of Karl Barth in Germany, he said, " Christianity had ceased to have a message for the mind, and religion was anything one liked to make it." There was " little in our Protestant Service to suggest the awfulness of the Divine Presence. The fear of God was the least of all fears."

It would have been surprising if such a world-shaking event as the War had not set up some disturbance in men's thoughts about God and the world. The self-assurance of Western civilisation was rudely shaken to its lowest strata, and nowhere more than in the region of theology.

For over a hundred years before the War,

theology had been in covenant with modern thought. Herder, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel were the fathers of this peace-pact, while the writings of Strauss and Feuerbach raised the question whether the pact was not more apparent than real. Religion put forth all its efforts to permeate the life and thought of the time with Christian ideas. The doctrine of Evolution was adopted and baptized in the Christian Faith. But in all there was the danger lest that which was best and most characteristic in Christianity, its supernatural side, should be lost. In the endeavour to protect Christianity from this danger, the school of Ritschl, and particularly W. Herrmann, emphasised the independence of Christian experience, and sought from this point to establish the character of Christianity as a Revelation. The one sure key to the knowledge of God, they argued, was the knowledge of man at his best. The result was that man became the centre and measure of all things. Theology came under the influence of an idealistic philosophy out of which emerged the so-called "liberal" school, with its "Jesus of History" and its optimistic idealism, to which it gave the name of "the Kingdom of God." Historical research sought more and more to

treat Biblical Religion and Christianity as fundamentally historical appearances. The category of Revelation fell away, and Christianity stood forth as a creation of human history among the other great world religions.

The question naturally arose, how can Christianity justify its claim to absolute supernatural truth? Psychology now came into the field, and men hoped for an answer, by a deeper study of the soul, through the researches of William James and others into the psychology of religion. Religion was shown to be, not a creation of the human mind by a rational process, but an uprush from a subliminal region. But to the question of truth, psychology had no answer, and liberal theology slid ever deeper into the swamp of subjectivity and relativism. With all this preoccupation with man, and man's soul, and the attempt to harmonise Christianity with the modern mind, and provide the modern mind with a religion which it was willing to accept, the objective content of the Christian Faith slowly disintegrated, and lost its absolute value.

Voices of protest began to be raised. A revolt was clearly coming, but it was precipitated by the World War, out of the fires of which the Theology of Crisis, so named in part because

of the note of judgment (*crisis*) that sounds through it, has emerged. One of its supporters has told us how as he stood on the Western Front his whole former conception of God and of the world crumbled to pieces. For him everything was over with the world and its so-called civilisation. He saw nothing but transiency, destruction, and death. Everything that had made any claim to be anything, culture, science, art, morality, the whole world of man, stood under judgment. Great and mighty only was the terrible, unsearchable God. If there was anything that had any worth, it was the world of God and Eternity.

Such was the world situation out of which the New Theology arose, and that it has learned some spiritual lessons as a result of the War, and bears some marks of it, need be no condemnation.

What has won for it an instant hearing has been its earnestness, almost its austerity, and its union of intellectual and spiritual power, bound up with a deep knowledge of the modern soul and its sickness. It has not been spun in academic ease but hammered out, like all vital theologies, to meet the needs of the time, largely by young men in the active ministry, to whom

it has been a matter of life and death. The need and distress of the Church, especially, has been the driving power, and from the beginning this new theology has been developed in close and intimate connection with the pulpit. It does not profess to offer a complete scientific system of theology, but to be a *theologia viatoris*, a theology for the pilgrim. "We are not living," says Barth, "in a classical period of theology. We stand between the ages" (T.K., p. 100).

To understand this movement it is necessary to follow the intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage of Karl Barth himself towards this new theology.

Karl Barth was born in Bâle in 1886, the son of Fritz Barth, afterwards Professor of the New Testament in the University of Berne. He spent his youth in Berne, and was educated first at the Gymnasium, and later matriculated as a student of theology. From there he pursued his studies at German Universities in Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg. But it was Adolf Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann who exercised in these years a decisive influence upon him, the deepest influence being that of Herrmann. He joined, as he says, the little caravan of Swiss

students who year after year made their pilgrimage to Marburg, and for a *semester* sat at the feet of his "unforgettable teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann," through whose class room "there blew the wind of freedom" (T.K., p. 279). He cannot deny, he says, that with the years he has become a somewhat strange disciple of Herrmann, but it was Herrmann who led him to think independently in theology. Herrmann had something to say to him that was fundamental, and following out its consequences, he has been compelled to say everything quite differently, and even to treat the foundation differently. But Herrmann it was who showed him the way. Herrmann's chief lesson was that he should hear "of himself," and speak "of himself." In a deeply interesting chapter (T.K., p. 240 f.), he speaks of his old master, whose picture has an honoured place on his walls, with great reverence, and discusses his teaching with sympathy and understanding. "Herrmann was the theological teacher of my student life." Herrmann's rejection of intellectualism, his repeated insistence that Revelation was not doctrine, and faith not the acceptance of truth, that everything depended on experience, that the authority of the Bible rested on

experience and only on experience, that beyond that there was no authority, he accepted without question. Yet an article which he wrote in 1909, in his 23rd year, while still a student in Marburg, and which caused a shock to less consistent friends of Herrmann (T.K. p. 279), indicates that his mind was not at rest. The hesitation of many young theologians to enter the ministry he put down in this article to the burden which the religious individualism and the historical relativity of modern theology laid on the shoulders of candidates for the Church. That showed already the point of disturbance in his mind. However, he went forward to the ministry, if with some misgivings, accepting the theology he had been taught, and with "the religious individualism" of Herrmann and "the historical relativity" of Harnack securely "packed away in his theological ruck-sack" he returned to Switzerland and proceeded to graft them on to the principles of the Reformed Church to which he belonged. He became assistant minister in the German Reformed congregation in Geneva, and five minutes before he first ascended the pulpit the post brought him the newly issued 4th edition of Herrmann's *Ethics* as a gift from the author,

which he took to be a consecration for all future time (T.K. p. 241). Although later he was to travel far from the old master, signals of affection passed between them to the end, the last being a greeting and dedication, in 1918, with the laconic words, "Nevertheless, with best greetings, from W. Herrmann" (T.K. p. 241).

It was when he became pastor in Safenvil, a country parish in the Canton of Aargau, and when he was brought up against the practical problems of the pulpit, that Barth began to discover the inadequacy of his theology. With all his acquired possessions he was not master of the difficult question, "What shall I preach?" He has told us himself how his own theology was born in agony when as a preacher he sought a message for his people, and how we shall best understand it if we hear through it all the minister's question, "What is preaching?" (W.G. p. 100).

During the next eight years, from 1911 to 1918, the most formative years of his life, years of storm and stress, Barth made the acquaintance of three worlds: (1) *The World of the Bible.* What a strange new world he found there he has himself told us (W.G. p. 28). Before his open Bible he was forced ever more into the

position of one who is called to listen and give heed; and all his acquired ideas of God, and the world, and himself, were put to the test. His well-meant "I will preach" was transformed into the anxious "Can I, dare I preach?" It was now that his friend and neighbour in Aargau, Edward Thurneysen, made him aware of the attitude of the men of the Bible, with their seeing of the invisible and hearing of the unheard (W.G. p. 64). In the Prophets and Apostles he observed men who were lifted high above the ecclesiastical life around them. Here was no pursuit of religious experiences, no standing with God on terms of easy familiarity, but deep reverence and a consciousness which never left them of the endless distance between the Creator and the Creature, between the sinner and the Holy God. Barth took note of the sudden stopping, looking up, and tense attention of the people of the Bible, and found himself more and more forced into the attitude of a listening man. He noted, too, the sudden assault of the Word of God on man, and on all that comes from man. In this world of the Bible, no one doubted the irremovable contrast between time and eternity, life and death. All confessed themselves as wanderers between two

worlds. There was none who did not look up. Their words and works had but one purpose —to give God the glory. Here, in the world of the Bible, Barth found the men who had heard the Word of God and whom God had taken hold of, and who had abandoned the great godlessness of the attempt to make themselves like God. He learned himself the trembling of a Jeremiah—the prophet of prophets to Barth —before the task of being a sower of the Word. In the light of the Bible he saw his own position, out of which he must speak, the position of one who, like Abraham, finds himself thrown upon the grace of God, in which alone he can find standing ground. He was himself, he says, "surprised by the truth as by an armed man," after he became a minister (W.G. p. 102), taken hold of by the Holy God and pressed to the wall until he cried out, "Thou, God, art God alone." He felt how hard it went with him in this Divine Assault. But then he was made aware of the inexplicable wonder before which all psychological and historical attempts to explain must halt, the absolute wonder of the free grace of the election of God. The man who comes into this shattering experience and learns that God is God in a sense which he has not known

before does not come forth again. He remains a man on whom God has laid His hand.

Barth has told us that it was in St. Paul that he first found rest (W.G. p. 62), and thus he was led in the next years to give himself to a study of the Pauline Epistles, and especially "Romans," begun in the first instance, to help him to understand his own mind. "This man evidently sees and hears something which is above everything," he says of Paul, "which is absolutely beyond the range of my observation and the measure of my thought." Doing now what the men of the Bible taught him to do, stopping and looking up, he obtained in God that wonderful glimpse of the Eternal in which all that is temporal and merely human stands forth in a moment *sub specie mortis*—in the light of death and judgment. He saw, to quote Carlyle, "death and eternity glaring in," and that glimpse of the Eternal, that "moment" of judgment which came to Barth as he watched the men of the Bible, became the germ of the Theology of Crisis. After he had gone through all the theological and philosophical schools, he had come no step nearer to real truth. With all his knowledge and experience, and all the power of his own reason, he had never succeeded

in reaching finality. Now he gave up the impossible attempt to throw a bridge from man to God, and thankfully accepted the bridge which God had laid for men in Jesus Christ. A man who has been struck by the lightning of the Biblical world has discovered the vanity of all attempts to know God, and has learned that his salvation depends alone on the Revelation of God to him.

It is to this experience that we are to trace the reverence, the humility, the respect before God, so perceptible in Barth. The Bible, he reminds us, has a single word for this attitude; it is the word "witness." Witness is ever the finger that points beyond itself to the one for whom it witnesses (K.S.G. p. 150). Barth became now and has remained, first and foremost, a Witness, a pointing Finger to God, and to His Revelation. Herrmann had taught him that he had nothing to say except what he had to say "of himself." Now he knew differently. Herrmann had taught him to find in the Bible "the pious thoughts of others" (T.K. p. 281). Now he knew that what we have in the Bible is not what men think of God, but what God thinks of men, not how we find a way to Him, but how He has sought and found

a way to us. He had found the Word of God in the Bible (W.G. p. 43), and with it an objective authority which Herrmann, with the best will, could never find (T.K. p. 228).

(2) *The World of his Day.* During these years Barth took up the study of another world, the world of his day—the world, and the Church, and religion. With the spectacles of the men of the Bible he now read, as with new eyes, the modern radical writers such as Kierkegaard, Dostojewski, Nietzsche, Overbeck, etc., and became himself for a time radical and critical. He found in the pictures which they sketched, in the criticisms which they uttered, the same view-point which the men of the Bible had: the view-point from which all that is human must be judged. As these writers deeply coloured the mind of Barth during those formative years we must look at their influence in some detail. He admired, he tells us, "the dialectic courage of Kierkegaard, the Hunger for Eternity of Dostojewski, the reverence of Overbeck, the hope of Blumhardt."

(*a*) *The Dialectic Courage of Kierkegaard.* The writer who took the deepest hold on Barth was Sören Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, who in a similar time of dissolution (1848) gave forth

ideas from which Barth and his disciples have learned many things. Kierkegaard, who is recognised to-day as the most original mind which Denmark has ever produced, suffered the usual fate of the prophet in being despised and rejected of men in his own day; distrusted by the religious section, and mocked at by the crowd. He studied for the ministry, but hesitations and misgivings prevented him from taking orders. Of a melancholy temperament from childhood, inherited from his father, he had long been troubled with Pilate's question "What is truth?" He became convinced that the conventional Christianity of his day did not possess the truth as it is in Jesus, and he conceived it as his heaven-sent task to reveal the true character of Christianity, over against the travesty of it represented in the Church, and to do so in the sufferings of his own life. People professed and called themselves Christians, but they were "Christians, just as Jews were Jews, by birth." Christianity had become too comfortable, and far too anxious to wipe away tears even of those who had none. Religion had lost the power to suffer. It was soft and no longer appealed to virile men. It preached peace without the sword.

In a series of brilliant books Kierkegaard set forth to teach his age what true Christianity was. His message, he said, was to be " as the sound of a flight of wild birds over the heads of the tame of the same species." While he was a brilliant dialectician, his thought seldom functioned in cool dialectic, but was by nature " existential," to use his own word, expressive of his whole personality. Yet he had a dialectic of his own to which he attached high value as a means of bringing out absolute distinctions, where such existed, between things which men slurred over in their efforts at superficial reconciliation—such as God and the world. This dialectic found expression in the title of his book, *Either—Or.* Christianity had been appropriated by philosophy and become part of the Hegelian system, which sought harmony and unity everywhere, rejoicing in the formula of " both—and." Theology, he said, sat rouged at the window courting the favour of philosophy, offering to sell its beauty to it. Aided and abetted by the Church, Hegel was making a "metaphysical attempt upon the life of morality." All this was a caricature of the Gospel, and robbed it of its awfulness and glory.

Religion for Kierkegaard is not a system of

doctrine requiring merely to be believed or defended, but a fact making a joyous demand upon the life. It is a passionate, personal, inward thing. "Truth is subjectivity, and subjectivity is truth." "Only the truth that edifies is truth to me." He emphasises that religion is a thing of the "individual" and begins in a personal choice, a decision in an "existential" moment. Kierkegaard had no patience with the prevailing tasteful explanations that took off the sharp edge of the hard sayings of the Gospel. Christ was an offence, a stumbling-block. "Take the possibility of offence away," he said, in words which Barth quotes with approval, "and you take the whole of Christianity away. It becomes an easy superficial thing which neither wounds nor heals deeply enough, the false discovery of the merely human sympathy which forgets the endless qualitative distinction between God and man" (*Rom.* p. 73). The attempt of philosophy to bridge the gulf between man and God was a betrayal. The gulf is unbridgable. God the unsearchable is not man. God is God, and world is world. Between time and eternity, finite and infinite, is a great gulf fixed. To think of God as but the superlative of man is folly. We are always in the wrong in relation

to God. Sin is a state of despair, the fatal disease which true Christianity alone can cure. Man is a synthesis of eternity and time, and therefore a problem and a paradox. But the paradox of paradoxes is the Incarnation, in which "the Word becomes flesh," uniting in Himself two elements which repel each other, the divine and the human. Jesus Christ passes incognito through the world. For the appearance of God in time-relations is a paradox for human reason, to be grasped only in an impassioned faith. The Christian cannot understand, "though he beat his brow till the blood comes," yet he must believe. Abraham, who "in the power of the absurd clung to the certitude that he would receive Isaac back again," is the model of all believers. Faith is irrational and incomprehensible. It also is a paradox. A man can only become a Christian by "a leap of despair." Trusting God is "to be alone in a great sea, treading water with 70,000 fathoms under one." It never is a possession, but always a risk. In time man reaches no more than a fighting certainty. Yet with persistent faithfulness he must pursue his chosen course of life, which must be a life of constant "repetition," to use another favourite idea of Kierkegaard's. This

life must also be a life of love to one's neighbour, for "Thou shalt love" is the absolute demand of Christianity. The Christian life is a life of high demand. "The Christian religion has been tried for eighteen centuries; the religion of Christ remains to be tried." "When Christ preaches Christianity no man can endure to be a Christian. When an apostle proclaims it, we men begin to take part. But when a chattering goat proclaims it, we are all Christians by millions."

Because of its travesty, Kierkegaard attacked the Christianity of the Church with every weapon in his armoury, believing that he was called of God to show his age "what it is to be a Christian." He lost friends, means, health, but all was part of his "offering." For the Christian life involves suffering. Reconciliation with Christ can only be had through a personal appropriation of Him in His sufferings, by "becoming contemporary with Him in His Spirit."

Kierkegaard died in middle life worn out with controversy and sorrow and with scarcely a friend, refusing at the last the Communion of his Church, and was for long neglected. But in the beginning of this century he was

rediscovered and captured the minds of the younger men in Germany. In the mind of Barth especially, the views of Kierkegaard found a ready host. With the same theological and philosophical starting-point, the same personalistic view on theological and philosophical questions, the same strong opposition to all abstract thinking about God, the same central position given to the category of the "individual," the same view about the "offence" which the Christian truth necessarily excites, the same "dialectic courage" and love of paradox, these two sympathetic personalities bear a striking resemblance.

But in all other respects they are different. Kierkegaard, delicate, low-spirited, proud, supersensitive and highly strung, disappointed in youth by a broken engagement, hurt by the attack of a comic paper and by the use of a single word by a speaker, not made for controversy yet forcing himself to it, with keen irony but with little humour, lived a lonely, misunderstood, and in the end embittered life, and was driven at last to exaggerations which defeated his message.

Barth has a healthy mind in a healthy body, and a happy home life, and many friends. He

encounters much opposition, but he loves the trumpet call to battle, and never gets "rattled," but is quiet and patient with his opponents, yet never gives in. His humility and his humour are his saving qualities.

The frequent quotations from Nietzsche, who was a sort of pagan Kierkegaard (Dionysius-Nietzsche he calls him), show that Barth felt the attraction also of this radical prophet with his attacks on civilisation, the Church, and society, but he was too Promethean, too filled with *hybris*, to have much appeal to him. Far deeper was the influence on Barth of the great Russian, Dostojewski. His friend Dr. Thurneysen, in a brochure entitled "Dostojewski," has made clear to us how deep that influence was.

(*b*) *The "Hunger for Eternity of Dostojewski."* If Kierkegaard's message was to be as the sound of the flight of wild birds over the heads of the tame of the same species, still more do we feel this challenge, when from the tameness of secure humanity we pass into the primeval forest of Dostojewski, beyond Good and Evil, beyond State and School, and Church and Family. Without knowing Kierkegaard, this great Russian shares with him the same

distrust of the Church, and of organised Christianity, of which his novels contain a terrible indictment. The Church has taken the burden from man which he ought to bear, and given him sermons, and promises, and "children's happiness" at the price of freedom. It leads him no more into the depths, where he can only cry out for God. Dostojewski sees sin as a rebellion against God, and this rebellion he observes in the great and positive tasks of men. In all the proud towers of Babylon which men build he sees them yielding to the voice of the tempter, "ye shall be as gods," seeking "an eternal life on this side," and striving to establish themselves in the world and do without God. Therefore his deep distrust of culture and society.

But while Dostojewski saw the end of man, the end of all his ways, he saw "the awful rose of dawn." Not downfall, not the laughter of the devil, but the incomprehensible, victorious word Resurrection is the last word of his romances. In the old man that ceases to be, a new man arises who was always hidden in him. Out of prisons arise victorious words, on pale emaciated faces there lies the morning flush of a new future. For "only where there

are graves are there resurrections" (Nietzsche). Dostojewski beholds a terrible crisis breaking in upon the world, but turning to salvation. What is impossible for man is possible for God. Over the dark gulf of humanity there shines the new light of forgiveness. In death there is new birth. This deep knowledge is found in "the moment of death." Always the dying have wisdom. The living seek the meaning of life in their infatuations. The dying become wise.

Dostojewski owed his knowledge to Socratic wisdom. He was full of questions. "I ask after every step of the way" he makes a favourite character say, revealing his own soul. His wisdom, like that of Kierkegaard, was found in the dialectic of question and answer. Because man had been a problem to himself, therefore he so deeply understood him. But, still more, he owed his knowledge to the Bible. His "Hosianna," he says, "had gone through the great purgatorial fire of doubt." He knows that for man there is no bridge to God, but from God to man—perhaps? In this question there opens the last possibility of entering the eternal kingdom of life: the possibility of Resurrection, but it is no possibility of man. So he lets a girl read to a

murderer in a night of confession and humiliation the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

All souls are sick in Dostojewski's books as with some secret wound, sick with the problems of life which they cannot answer, until in their sickness they are driven to find the last answer. Seekers, they themselves are sought and found. The "arrows of longing from another shore" (Nietzsche) are already seen of Him, of the Unknown God. The central thought of Dostojewski is—God. The question of God is the question of all his works. There is no step that leads from man to God. For God would not be God if man could become God. But there rises the hope that the solution will come out of God's hands. God will triumph. Love is the great gift of God. The Kingdom of God is strongly coming. "Become as little children." "Look to Resurrection, to the solution of God." In the story of the "Idiot" (the epileptic who fits so awkwardly into life, who appears a simple fool, yet who makes the wise to think, who seems to walk in an incognito, who disturbs conventionality, whose best friends are little children, who is so lonely, who raises so

many questions and suggests so many hidden secrets, who exhibits the strangely unearthly light of forgiveness) Dostojewski, on his own testimony, uses this figure to point to Jesus Christ. Yet the daring to make Christ pass through society as an idiot, a simpleton, a child, comes very near to the last insight of the Bible (W.G. p. 315). We shall later see the enduring impression Dostojewski made on Barth's outlook.

(*c*) *The Reverence of Overbeck.* The next of his radical masters Barth found in Franz Overbeck, spoken of as the "sceptical" Church historian of Bâle. But was he a sceptic, Barth asks, or was he an enthusiast? At any rate, Barth frequently refers to him. What he admired in him was his "reverence" for truth and his "violent dislike of illusions" (*Rom.* p. 61). It was Overbeck who first seems to have led Barth to a determination to find another basis for faith than history, and to develop the idea of what he calls *Urgeschichte*, borrowing the word from Overbeck, but giving it a theological meaning. According to Overbeck, two points, both, at one and the same time, starting-points and end-points, characterise the being of man and of humanity. There is *Urgeschichte*,

the supertemporal, unsearchable, incomparable world, out of which man has come on to the plane of temporal history. And there is Death, which bounds man's life at the other end, in what, for us, lies the unknown world which we go to meet. What lies between these "last things" is the world which we know, our world. All that we call "historical" is of this world, subject to time, and is bounded and relative.

Now, says Overbeck, "to place Christianity under the idea of the historical, to concede that it has become historical, is to agree that Christianity is of this world, and that like all life it has only lived in the world in order to die." For if Christianity is a realisation in history, it must be subject to the coming and going, youth and age, progress and degeneration of all temporal things. Overbeck puts inexorably before us the dilemma. "If Christianity, then not history. If history, then not Christianity." "The proposal," he says, "to plant Christianity purely on history intimates only the dawn of the time when Christianity will come to an end, and will have to be taken leave of." The one possible place for Christianity, he says, is not in history but in the

supertemporal, superhistorical, in *Urgeschichte*. Overbeck raised disturbing questions in Barth's mind and led him to decisions regarding history and the basis of Christianity for which he has to contend down to the present day. Overbeck, like Dostojewski, has also much to say about "the wisdom of death." Death must have a transcendent origin. Does death serve as an 'iron broom' to sweep away lies and deceit which burden our earthly life? then there must be ascribed to it a positive, creative, fruitful meaning. For death creates as well as destroys.

The solemnity of Barth's frequent references to death probably also derives from Overbeck (W.G. p. 77). "The man," he says, "who spoke so feelingly of death must have had a fruitful, living, original idea."

(*d*) *The Hope of Blumhardt.* Side by side with the "sceptical" Overbeck, Barth sets among his masters the forward-looking Pastor Blumhardt of Bad Boll, who sent forth a greeting "to all who are willing to wait for the Kingdom of God," a man whom Barth (or Thurneysen) describes as "a priest-like man," a man who "always went forth from God" to cure the sins and troubles of the world, and who

had but one word "Only Thou, God, canst help, Thou alone," a man who at the same time "waited and hasted" for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Blumhardts, father and son, are associated with the wonder of driving out spirits, hearing of prayer, the awakening of souls, the note of victory. "Jesus is Conqueror." That Barth's theology has the outspoken character of a "Theology of Hope" he owes in part to Blumhardt.

(3) *The World of Luther and Calvin.* The third world into which Barth entered in these decisive years, and in which he has dwelt ever since, was the world of the Reformers. He made a deep study of the works of Luther, and learned also what he calls "the inexorableness" of Calvin.

Another influence that was considerable for a time was that of Hermann Kutter, a pastor in Zürich, who had been so taken hold of by the social problems of the day that, after much conflict, he had come to the view that the Church by her unbelief and conformity with the world had forsaken her task, the Gospel of the Living God. For a time Barth, under his leading, became an enthusiastic Socialist. "Thy

kingdom come" became the delivering word, not the inner kingdom of the soul, but the Kingdom of God on earth, on an earth renewed by God's Spirit. God worked in the social democracy, in spite of its hostility to the Church, nay the hostility of the Church was willed by God, because the Church had betrayed the Gospel of the Kingdom, which included social righteousness on earth. But the War brought him the shattering knowledge what a poor protection Socialism was against Nationalism. The contrast of "War Time and God's Time," on which he spoke in Bâle in 1915, was keenly felt by him and his friends. The Church and theology appeared to him then, as he expressed it, to be "painted khaki," and to be the protectress of a brutal worldliness. Already we hear the young Barth uttering the word caught from Kierkegaard and so often repeated since, "God is God, and world is world." Not only the Church but Socialism fell under judgment, and gradually he withdrew from it, though his sympathies are still democratic; and sank his mind in a deeper study of the Epistles of St. Paul, especially "Romans." The Epistle to the Romans was a favourite book with all the Reformers. The first

commentary which Calvin published was also on "Romans," in 1540, which no doubt influenced Barth as to where to begin. In 1917 he and Thurneysen issued a volume of sermons jointly, entitled: *Suchet Gott so werdet Ihr leben* ("Seek God and ye shall live"), in which they speak of themselves as men who are made restless by the great hiddenness of God, and who rejoice in His still greater readiness to break through all bonds. Of this unrest and this joy they will speak—two tap-roots of the New Theology.

This book, which has been reissued, contained in its first edition, "The Strange New World within the Bible" (later published in "The Word of God and the Word of Man"), which gave some indication of what was coming.

CHAPTER II

"A BOMB ON THE PLAYGROUND OF THE THEOLOGIANS"

In August, 1918, that "apocalyptic year," as he calls it, when the War was approaching its end, Barth issued the first edition of his *Römerbrief*, a book of which a Roman Catholic theologian, Dr. Karl Adam, said that "it fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians." It certainly was found to contain high explosive, for it created an extraordinary commotion in both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic camps. It was quite unlike any modern commentary, less a commentary than a pouring forth of the mind of Barth in a flow of hot lava on the whole Christian Revelation. It was written, he says himself, "with the joy of a discoverer." The powerful voice of St. Paul was new to him and it must be, he feels, new to others. He knows that much is still unheard and undiscovered by him; this is no more than a preliminary study and a request for fellow-workers in the search after the message of the Bible.

While he has taken into consideration the difference between now and then, here and there, and while the historical-critical method of Bible study is given its rights, his whole attention, he says, has been directed to see through the historical into the spirit of the Bible, which is eternal spirit. What has been once earnest is still earnest to-day; our questions are the questions of St. Paul, and the answers of St. Paul are our answers (Pref. 1st ed.). Scarcely was the book published—the first issue ran only to 1,000 copies—when Barth set himself to the preparation of a second edition, which appeared three years later, in September, 1921, as a new book, in which "not one stone was left standing upon another." The first edition had done its service, he says, now it can disappear. Four things have led him to adopt a new front: (*a*) further occupation with Paul, (*b*) the challenge of that "remarkable and singularly pious man Overbeck," (*c*) better instruction in the ideas of Kant and Plato, and increased attention to the contribution of Kierkegaard and Dostojewski to the understanding of the New Testament, and (*d*) the following up of the reception of his first edition in praise and criticism. It had been a

joy to him also to know that there were lay friends who had understood the book better than many theologians.

He issues this second edition as nothing other than a piece of conversation of a theologian with theologians. He defends himself against the charge of being an enemy of historical criticism. He accepts its results, he says, but is astonished at the modesty of its claims, merely to determine the meaning of the text. By real understanding of the text he means the intuitive sureness of Luther in his expositions, or the systematic exegesis of Calvin. How energetically Calvin goes to work, he says, after he has determined "what stands there," until the walls between the first and the sixteenth century become transparent, till Paul speaks there and the man of the sixteenth century speaks here (*Rom.* xi).

At the time when he produced his *Romans*—he was then thirty-two—Barth's mind was dominated by the thought of crisis, due in part to the shadow of the War. He beheld as in a prophetic vision the world confronted with the great "Either-Or" of God, and set under judgment. We are well-nigh bewildered by the attack which he makes on all things

human, on human history, human civilisation even in its highest developments, on religion, on the Church, on all the activities of man, his achievements and triumphs, even his loftiest spiritual achievements. They are all, in the language of Dostojewski, so many Towers of Babylon of man's building, and worthless in God's sight. At this stage Barth tended to over-emphasise the negative side of the picture and exposed himself to the charge of ethical pessimism. The views of Kierkegaard, especially, had for the time being acquired a mastery over his mind. Kierkegaard's sombre message of the absolute contrast between God and man, a dualism defying all efforts of the reason to resolve, his extreme individualism, his fierce criticism of the Church and of civilisation, found a loud echo in the heart of Barth. He was stirred to the depths by the War, observing the all too manifest failure of evolutionary progress, and in revolt against a religion that took man and the perishable order of things as its centre. He beheld over against man's efforts and his belief in himself a *Mene, Mene, Tekel*, written in letters of fire.

In this strange commentary, an erratic block among commentaries, solitary, old-fashioned

among its contemporaries, modelled on the commentaries of Calvin, Barth disposes the material of the epistle under such heads as "The Night," "The Voice of History," "The Approaching Day," "The Need of the Church," "The Guilt of the Church," "The Great Disorder." Of that which fills the ordinary commentary there is scarcely a trace. The whole terminology is changed. Instead of law, we read religion; instead of Israel, Church; instead of Jew, man of God; instead of Greek, man of the world. Barth sets himself with a vengeance to make the walls between the first century and the twentieth fall away, so that what Paul says there becomes a Word of God for us here. The numerous quotations from his radical masters, Kierkegaard, Dostojewski, etc., especially on religion and on the Church, show how Barth's mind was travelling. He was a herald of revolt.

He had now, to his great regret, been compelled to break away from "his esteemed teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann," as being the only step left him to take, and with that he broke with the whole "liberal" theology based on history and experience in which he had been trained for so many years (*Dg.* p. vi). The

attempt to build a theology on the religious data supplied by human experience he now saw to be *hybris*. There was no way from here to there, from man to God, neither the way of thought, nor morals, nor religion. All religious efforts to reach God were vain, all such attempts were sheer 'titanism.'

Religion, as Barth pictures it in *Romans* (as distinguished from Revelation), is the attempt to find a direct way to God, an attempt that must ever fail. For so little is religion the mediator between man and God, it is much more the place where the cleft between man and God comes into full view. The highest achievement of humanity, religion is also the supreme expression of the problematic and the questionable. It is not the place where the health but the place where the disease of man becomes known, not where the harmony but where the disharmony of all things comes to expression. Religion is anything but harmony with itself, or with the Eternal, religion is often the abyss and the horror. It is the place where demons are seen. Barth reminds us that it was against the religion of their day that the Old Testament prophets contended, that Christ Himself and St. Paul and Luther contended.

Man has ever been tempted to make a god of his religion and to allow it to come between him and the true and living God. Religion is thus the culmination of man's rebellion against God, the sin against the first commandment. It is the attempt of man to make a god in his own image, and in the end to make a god of himself. The meaning of religion is death. By no human means, not even by means of our religious consciousness, do we escape out of the sphere of sin and death. Religious feeling only differs in degree from moral or æsthetic feeling, it is smoke alongside other smoke rising above the plains of humanity, but in spite of all its intensity and colour, it is never the consuming fire of God (*Rom.* pp. 240–241).

Religion, then, can never be an end in itself. It must always be conscious that it belongs to this side—that it can be nothing else than a "witness"—a pointing finger, to use a favourite phrase of Barth's—to that which lies beyond it.

To understand this apparently paradoxical attack on Religion, we must realise that what Barth has particularly in mind is the romantic, pietistic conception of religion, the word being used exclusively of its subjective and human

side. In using it in this sense, as Protestant theology has done since Schleiermacher, Barth sees a betrayal of theology, in so far as everything is based on subjective experience, instead of on the objective, that is, on God. He clearly distinguishes this view of religion from the Bible view in which he finds a quite surprising line of faithfulness, of waiting, of patience (W.G. p. 69). Biblical piety is conscious of its relativity; it is in its nature humility, fear of the Lord. It lives altogether from its object and by its object, whereas the root evil of modern religion is the proud attempt to ground faith on its own psychological experiences instead of on God. But when religion escapes from the ban under which Schleiermacher brought it and is again understood objectively with the Reformers, when it concentrates itself on its theme, which is not man, but God, it receives its true, that is, its relative significance as "witness," and becomes, like the pointing finger of John the Baptist on Grünewald's Isenheim altar picture (in which Barth sometimes says he has found all his theology), as the hand which points to Christ. We shall later see how Barth, in his doctrine of justification by faith, takes back, as it were, man's

religion as also justified and sanctified by faith and accepted by God as obedience (*v.* p. 208).

Along similar lines Barth assails the Church in his *Romans*. Of the "Church of Jacob," the invisible Church, the fellowship of believers, he has, of course, no criticism. But this Church nowhere comes to sight. God alone knows it. The institution which we know, the "Church of Esau," belongs to the things of this age. It stands bound with a clamp of iron to the world, and to men, and is only relatively different from them. Its object is "to give God the glory," but its temptation ever is to seek glory and power for itself, to offer men "religion" instead of giving them God, to turn the divine to a thing, and to call the people to stand still before holy things, rather than before the Holy God. The Church in its visible form is entirely given up to the judgment under which the whole "horizontal" world lies. It has sought to possess God, to canalise the grace of God, to turn revelation from the eternal to the temporal, to capture the lightning of heaven to heat its own domestic stove. "This is the sin and judgment of the Church, the effort which it makes in place of the righteousness of God to set its own righteousness,

to complete God's work itself through the dynamite of its own word and power, to bring about the kingdom of God through the aesthetic cleverness of its own worship." The Church, like religion, is also to be judged because of its *hybris*—its pride—because it seeks itself to build the kingdom of God, and claims a place for itself in the forecourts. With all its religious, liturgical, human possibilities, the " Church of Esau " is given over to destruction. The Gospel is the dissolution of the Church, as the Church is the dissolution of the Gospel (*Rom.* p. 317).

So the Church, as little as religion, can be an end in itself. Ought it, then, to be dispensed with? No. It is the place where the sickness of man in relation to God comes to expression in ever new forms. It ought to be the place also in which the Healer comes to lay His hand on the sickness. Barth will allow therefore a place for the Church, as the Church of the Word, as the Reformers did, where the real need of life is brought into contact with the answering divine Revelation, until between the two poles the light begins to flash. But in the middle of this Church nothing else must stand but the blessed, terrifying theme of the

Righteousness of God. The purpose of Barth's anti-Church polemic, as of his anti-Religion polemic, is to make men aware that no salvation is possible save through the healing of God alone. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Barth has modified his views considerably since those days of " storm and stress " in which this bomb fell on the playground of the theologians. In the latest edition he says that he cannot get rid of the thought how much, on the basis of further work, needs now to be said differently. But he cannot, he says, begin with patchwork and must wait for the day when he can do the whole work over again. So perhaps once more he may leave " not one stone upon another." But already, in his *Romans*, we observe three characteristics of Barth's theology which persist through all his later work.

(*a*) His distrust of what he calls " historism," and of all constructions of Christianity that seek their basis for faith in historical events. Christianity is thereby invested for him with all the uncertainty and relativity which attach to historical knowledge. From his *Romans* days he has been striving to discover the " fixed point," the true, firm basis for faith, which, he

believes, is to be found in the Word of God.

(*b*) His even greater distrust of what he calls "psychologism," which treats all religious experiences alike, the deepest perhaps being those of Christianity, and ends by disintegrating all objective truth. No wonder, he says, that men have lost the power of objective seeing and cannot find their way to God when they are always looking into themselves, and studying the mechanism of the apparatus and its historical origin and never getting beyond themselves.

(*c*) is repudiation of a rational orthodoxy which claims a knowledge of God side by side with other facts of knowledge, and seeks to prove the Christian Faith by argument, as if God could be an "object" of knowledge, and not a personal question. God is ever Subject and can only be known through Himself.

So great was the stir produced by the appearance of his *Romans* that for Barth the quiet days in the *Pfarrhaus* of Safenvil, where he had written it, were soon at an end. Already, before the second edition appeared, he had received a call (1920) to be Professor of Reformed Theology in Göttingen. In 1925 he was called as Ord. Professor of Theology to Münster, in Westphalia, and now he has moved to Bonn

(1930) to occupy the chair of Systematic Theology once filled by Richard Rothe. When he came to Bonn there were some 180 theological students. In the first *semester* the numbers mounted to 350, drawn from all parts of Germany, as well as Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, and Britain. For Barth has drawing power. Men are captured by his thoughts, as well as by his personality.

During the last nine years he has been developing, his theological thinking becoming ever richer. He has also moved more decidedly towards the positive, and approached nearer to the position of the Reformed Theology, particularly in his attitude to the Church and the Sacraments. The outspoken individualism of his earlier writing is becoming less marked, and more and more the Church stands behind his theology. The Church has now become to him an authority that stands above the individual, and to which the knowledge of the Faith must be referred. Many things formerly in the foreground of his mind have dropped into the background and others have come forward. While the strong influence of Kierkegaard still lives forward in him, and he directs his students to his books, the

Reformers have now a more commanding place. His healthy objective mind reacted against the subjectivity, the extreme individualism, and a certain neurotic strain, in the great Danish theologian, and he has moved farther and farther away from him. Probably his terminology now makes the likeness seem greater than it actually is. He is still midway in his development, and no doubt will yet deal with aspects of truth which so far he is felt to have neglected. He follows truth where he sees it, does not worry overmuch about charges of inconsistency or trouble to deny them, and fears the systematiser. He remarked to some one that "he was like a cruiser going full steam ahead into action, with the enemy's shells dropping harmlessly behind." In *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie* (1924), the first volume to be translated, with the title "The Word of God and the Word of Man," and in a second and larger series of addresses, *Die Theologie und die Kirche* (1928), we can trace the growth of his thinking. In an address on the "Need of Christian Preaching," given in 1922 (W.G. p. 98), he disclaims the wish to form a new "school" of theology in rivalry with any other school; all he proposes to do is to provide a marginal

note, which will be a corrective, a "pinch of spice" in the food, to use a phrase of Kierkegaard. But he has been carried, in this new movement, beyond that first intention, and is now aware that he is in the position, will he, nill he, of being a leader, if not the leader, of a new school of theology, with the responsibility which that entails.

To the regret of many, Barth, since he became a professor, has put off the polemical style for the more sober tone of the teacher, and expresses himself more cautiously and scientifically. He is now engaged on a *Dogmatik* which will run to several volumes, entitled "The Teaching of the Word of God," in which with bold hand he sets out to rear a whole dogmatic theology on the Word of God as preached in the Church. Theology, to Barth, is the doctrine of the truth of God as it is proclaimed in the Church. Without the Church there is no theology. "Theology is only possible as the theology of the God Who is preached, the God Whom we have not to seek but Who has given Himself and still gives Himself to us to be found, Who has revealed and still reveals Himself" (Z.Z. 1924: 4 p. 311). Barth came himself to thinking out the

problem through the question of the living presentation of the Word; it was this need in the region of practical theology that was his own starting-point, and we shall make it also ours, in seeking to arrive at an estimate of his work.

In the first volume which has been published, *Dogmatik I* (1927), he makes an apology that his "marginal note" should have become a theology; he is conscious that there will appear a change of style, and expects that some of his friends will be disappointed that the "spring-time" of the "Reformed Message" should in six years have become a doubtful scholastic "autumn." Looking back on the way he has travelled, he compares himself to a man who, climbing up a dark church tower at night, unthinkingly lays hold upon the bell-rope, instead of the guiding-rope, and to his horror hears the great church bell peal forth. He had not wished it and does not wish to repeat the experience. He was and is, he says, "an ordinary theologian," and feels neither justified nor obliged to don the garb of the prophet. So in place of the fire, the attack, the polemic of his earlier writing, we have for the most part a calm and careful and measured statement of

Christian doctrine. Does it mean that a quietness has begun to announce itself in this anxious enquirer as he sets himself to his life-task of restating the doctrine of the Word of God for to-day? Shall we compare the course of Barth's thinking to one of his Alpine streams which has for a time gone thundering on between narrow rocks with force and fury, but which now begins to issue out into the sunlight and have more of the peace of God in it?

In this New Theology, as it has become, we are dealing with something more than a tendency in theology; what we have before us is a great spiritual movement, not a one-man movement, but a steadily increasing co-operative movement, into which more and more men feel themselves being drawn. Barth's appeal, in the first issue of his *Romans*, for fellow-workers like-minded with himself brought an immediate response, and though it is little more than twelve years ago, there is now a great multitude in many countries who are in sympathy with this new orientation of theology. The literature which the movement has called forth is immense, and is daily increasing in volume. Much of the best writing has appeared first in

the theological magazine of the "school," which is issued every second month, entitled *Zwischen den Zeiten* ("Between the Ages"), edited by Barth, Gogarten and Thurneysen.

The spear-head of the movement is Barth himself, a man of impressive personality, volcanic energy, with a keen dialectic mind, a reverent uplook, and a delightful sense of humour. He says ruefully that he is punished for the success of his books by the existence of regular "Barthians," and he doubts whether there is as much joy in heaven as there is on earth over the progress of the "Barthian" school. He refuses to be called a "dynamic personality"; that, however, he is, but the *dynamis* is of God. To sit in his class-room, as the writer has done, and see and hear him among the students who hang upon his lips, to be with him in the more intimate surroundings of his *seminars* and at the open evenings in his own home, where he lets himself go, is to recognise that he is not only a great theological teacher, but one of the spiritual forces of the day. He is not a professor of the ordinary type, but rather a preacher turned professor without ceasing to be a preacher; he lives in his own day and feels the burden of it.

Closest to Barth stands Dr. Edward Thurneysen, formerly a country minister with him in Aargau, where they faced their problems together. He is Barth's spiritual brother. So close has been their sympathy of mind, that they have issued jointly two volumes of sermons without indicating the authors of the separate sermons. Thurneysen is now pastor of the Münster in Bâle, and in his writings has occupied himself chiefly with the practical problems of the ministry, with the exception of his brochures on Dostojewski and Blumhardt. He has the preacher's gift of clear exposition and apt illustration.

Closely associated also with Barth in his views, more "Barthian" than Barth himself in some respects, is the North German Lutheran, Dr. Friedrich Gogarten, a pastor at Dorndorf, and also a tutor in Jena; a man of great intellectual capacity and of incisive speech. He has written on such questions as "Culture and Religion," "The Protestant Man," "The Question of Authority," "The Religious Crisis." He differs from Barth in his strong interest in anthropology, deriving from his Lutheran heritage.

Standing near to Barth also, if not so near

as the other two, is Dr. Emil Brunner, now Professor of Theology in Zürich, who possesses a mind of uncommon clarity and analytic power. He shares Barth's attitude as a critic of the whole modern movement in theology, and goes farther than Barth is prepared to go in his criticism of Schleiermacher, though he began as an adherent. Like Barth, he is a fighter and maintains even against Barth the plea for a polemical theology. If Dogmatic is the first task of theology, he says, Polemic is the second (Z.Z. 1929 : 3 p. 254). Brunner is the man of sharp contrasts, of the decisive " Either-Or." If he has a fault, he sees things too much in sharp contrasts of black and white ; and his systematic mind is too ready to run the movement into fixed and definite moulds. He lacks the patience of Barth.

These and other like-minded workers maintain their independence and criticise each other freely by word and pen in the most friendly spirit. There is no wish to pass a flattening iron over the movement, and produce a dead uniformity. Even if divergences were later to appear, they would only be taken as signs of continued life.

But without forgetting that there are others,

we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of the New Movement, as it appears in Barth.

The Barthian Criticism. Like most new movements, this movement began as a *Criticism*, in which Barth, in his *Romans*, threw down a challenge to his teachers, which exploded like a bomb. When one remembers the position of Schleiermacher during the last hundred years as the acknowledged father of modern theology, the audacity of Barth and his group is undeniable. For they direct their main attack against the whole historical, psychological, relative conception of the Bible and Christianity which was the pride of the theological work of last century. Schleiermacher was the fountain-head of that romantic movement, which made religious experience the starting-point of theology, and the only worthy subject of theological consideration. More and more, under this influence, the absolute gave way to the relative, the objective to the subjective, theology weakened to an anthropology, and to a mere phenomenology of the religious consciousness. A straight line leads from Schleiermacher to the latest religious psychology of to-day, and many who have never heard the name of Schleiermacher think in his terms. The whole modern

movement in religious education, the teaching of the American psychologists like William James, Starbuck, Coe and King, catchwords like "Not doctrine, but life," "Religion is caught and not taught," all derive from Schleiermacher. Barth is too big a man not to recognise the outstanding greatness of Schleiermacher, and he does justice to his work as an apologist and a teacher of ethics. But he comes boldly into the field against him as a theologian, challenging in his romantic subjectivity the whole modern tendency in theology. "With all due respect to the genius of Schleiermacher," he says, "I cannot consider him a good teacher in the realm of theology, because, so far as I can see, he is disastrously dim-sighted in regard to the fact that man as man is not only in need, but beyond all hope of saving himself; that the whole so-called religion, and not least the Christian religion, shares in this need, and that one cannot speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice" (W.G. p. 195). Schleiermacher and his followers, down to the present day, have sought for God in religious experience, and have looked to discover the basis of faith in some religious *a priori* peculiar to humanity. Man, they say, is

capable of rising to God. *Finitum capax infiniti.*

The root failure of this theology, according to Barth, is that men have gone forth from man, and his measurements, and from there have looked at God, as if man was in his right of existence the fixed quantity and God the doubtful X, instead of looking from God, or rather from the Word of God, at man. They have imagined that they have made great religious progress by a direct speaking about God, whereas they have remained speaking about men, even if about good men. This does not mean that Barth ignores the subjective side of religion, and has no place for an anthropology. On the contrary, he never speaks of God without at the same time speaking about man. "He who speaks of God speaks also of the one to whom He reveals Himself and whom He makes to be a believer." When Barth contends against the over-valuation of "experience" we must not misunderstand him. We cannot dispense with either the word or the thing. No truth can mean anything to us so long as it is outside of us. It must be experienced. Bare unappropriated truth is worthless. Barth would agree with Kierkegaard, "Only the truth that edifies is truth for

thee." What Barth fights against is the making of something human and psychical the basis and starting-point of faith in God. To this doctrine of Schleiermacher, the making of man and his religious experience the centre and starting-point for faith in place of God, Barth traces most of the present unhappy features of Religion and of the Church.

(1) *Religion.* Religion, says Barth, is a great reality of the human soul resting on the reverence of man before a "Quite Other," an Unknown, whom on the ground of experience he believes to be superior and helpful in contrast to himself and all which he has known of (*Dg.* p. 382). Barth follows Gœthe and Otto in defining religion as "reverence." Explained historically, psychologically, or theologically, Religion is an "event," grounded in a possibility of the human soul. Man, says Barth, is capable of this striving, he can be pious, he can be religious (*Dg.* p. 305). Religion is the point where the human possibilities come near to the divine light. But is this capacity identical with the subjective possibility of Revelation, is the correlative to the Word of God to be sought in the reality of Religion? That the two are one and the same is the teaching of Schleiermacher

and of all, down to Otto, who have followed in his steps.

Here Barth makes his great assertion, on which his whole teaching hinges, that the two are not one and the same. Religion is not the subjective possibility of Revelation. *Religion* is one thing, *Revelation* is quite another thing.

Religion is man's attempt, historical as well as individual, to find God from this side, an attempt that can never succeed, for man's religion, even to its loftiest efforts, is but a broken column. That a man can be religious and conceive thoughts about God is not to be undervalued, but this lies on quite another plane from knowledge of the personal God, Who is known only when He gives Himself to be known. Religion is the movement of man towards God. Revelation is the movement of God towards man. It is not just a species of the genus, religion, but something quite different, it is an event from the side of God. The distinctive feature of the Christian Revelation, as compared with other religions, is that it is an event, "once for all" (Heb. x. 10). In other words, it is a historical Revelation. In Jesus Christ, as He has entered into history, and at a quite definite point in this history, where only

He is to be found, God has revealed Himself. The general history of religion is full of what Barth calls "myths" (*Dg.* p. 272), reports of divine revelations as having happened to men. The feature of the "myth" is that it has no exclusive character. What the "myth" reports as a fact can always happen again, it lacks the characteristic of "once-for-all-ness" which belongs to Christianity. All other revelations, so-called, bear this occasional, fragmentary and repeatable character, but God has entered human history, "once for all," in the "never-to-be-repeated event," Jesus Christ.

The theology which springs from Schleiermacher, which means all liberal and some positive theology, fails, says Barth, to distinguish between Revelation in its "once-for-all-ness" and Religion, and treats Christianity merely as one, albeit the highest, of the monotheistic religions. It exalts a mysticism which claims to throw a bridge out of time into eternity, and provide a transition from man to God. It presupposes a "continuation in the human soul" with God, indeed that God is the deepest and last ground of the man himself, contradicting, says Barth, Paul's word (1 Cor. ii. 9). It blurs the gulf which separates man from God,

minimising evil and causing the present decline in the sense of sin. The " Schleiermacher man," says Barth, " stands from the outset and continually before God. He does not need to hear, he has already heard." He does not need God in order to come to God. No fatal adjusting requires to be made, no mischief to be remedied. Man possesses the Divine. If that is called Religion, then it belongs to quite another world from Revelation. With faith, with grace, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it has nothing to do (*Dg.* p. 308).

All this type of theology evacuates the objective content of the Christian Revelation, making Christian doctrine a product of the religious mind, and basing the Word of God on faith, instead of faith upon the Word of God. Even if it uses the word " revelation," as it does, it uses it in an entirely different sense from its use in the Scriptures. It substitutes for the Bible doctrine of the Kingdom of God, which God brings, the idea of evolutionary progress, which man brings about ; and allies the Christian Revelation with idealistic philosophy and other monistic theories. It eliminates all eschatology as " Jewish old clothes." It has led to the present apotheosis of history and psychology.

It makes Jesus Christ a mere figure of history, a hero, prophet, religious genius, a *homo religiosus*, Who has supremely achieved because He was uniquely endowed; it sets Him in a historical sequence with other founders of religions even if at their head. It takes away the "offence," the *scandalon* of Christianity, and makes it only "a holy music which accompanies man on his journey." Barth quotes with approval the words of Kierkegaard, "Take the possibility of 'offence' away so that Christianity becomes a direct communication, and the whole of Christianity is done away with. It becomes a light superficial thing which neither wounds nor heals deeply enough, the false invention of a merely human sympathy which forgets the endless qualitative distinction between God and man."

What theology since Schleiermacher has regarded as the most important subject, the description of the religious man and his piety, the Reformers, says Barth, did not regard as important at all, their eyes were set immovably upon God and His works.

(*b*) *The Church.* Coming to the Church, Barth counts Schleiermacher as the Father of the New Protestantism, a subjective and indivi-

dualistic Protestantism more or less divorced from the Church and so far from what he conceives to be the teaching of the Reformers that, if he were persuaded this were a true interpretation of Luther and Calvin, he would himself rather be a Roman Catholic (T.K. p. 339).

Barth is growingly occupied with the thought of the Church and its doctrinal teaching, and allows it a much more important place than he did in the days when, in his *Romans*, he described the organised Church as the " Church of Esau." But his Yes came through a No, and the critical side remains. He is profoundly concerned over the present state of the Protestant Church, which, in his opinion, has compromised itself with the world, and with human culture, or civilisation, has allowed itself to be modernised and secularised, and has succumbed to the sophistries of humanitarianism and idealism. He blames the influence of Schleiermacher for subordinating Christianity to culture. In so far as the Church surrenders herself to human culture she is unfaithful, for by the Word of God human culture is to be judged. In no work of human culture does the Kingdom of God break in, yet in many of its forms we may see that it is near. Barth is no foe to culture. Church and

civilisation, he says, can never be one, yet can never be separated (T.K. p. 336). But the Church as the guardian of the Word of God, before whose tribunal all things come, must maintain its independence. Protestantism, he recalls to us, protested not against but for the Church. But the newer Protestantism, with its philosophic idealism, relativism, and complacency, "has lost," he says, "the substance, and therefore the power of renewal of a Church" (T.K. p. 349). "*Quousque tandem?*" he cried in a recent number of *Zwischen den Zeiten*, in a hot protest, which brought down a storm upon his head, against what he calls "the Catalinarian conspiracy against the 'substance' of the Evangelical Church," more dangerous than all that Catholics, Jews, Free-thinkers or Soviet atheism can do against it (Z.Z. 1930 : i p. 1).

We can understand therefore why Barth when writing of his spiritual ancestry, that it runs back through Kierkegaard to Luther and Calvin, and so to Paul and Jeremiah, adds significantly, "it does *not include Schleiermacher*" (W.G. p. 195).

CHAPTER III

THE NEW TERMINOLOGY

BARTH does not set out to provide us with an easy and simple theology, but he forestalls reproach by telling us that the life of man in every relation is difficult, and that all pseudo-simplicities miss the truth. But if we begin by understanding the terminology, for every theology has its own terminology, we shall find a way in through what seems a strange, tangled forest to the central teaching of Karl Barth. Our concern is therefore with the way in.

(1) *Crisis*. The ruling conception of this new theology is *Crisis* (judgment), and whatever be the different shades of meaning in which the word is used, whether in its primary sense of "judgment," or in the secondary meaning of "turning-point," as in the crisis of a sickness, it means that we have to do with a theology that is in deadly earnest. It arose, as we have seen, out of the crisis of the War and the crisis in Europe induced by the War, in which the disintegrating forces at work in life and thought had reached a decisive point which must issue

either in new life or in death. It has its name in part because with tremendous force, and almost ruthlessness, it sets this Age, the whole sum of natural appearances, including man, in all the possibilities of his development, up to his highest attainments, under judgment.

It arose particularly as a Protestant Theology from a deep sense that Protestantism was in "a narrow pass," experiencing a critical hour in its history, in which it must either find its way out to its true nature, as at the Reformation, or perish. The Roman Catholic Church noted this fact from the beginning; a well known Jesuit, Erich Przywara, describing it as a "genuine rebirth of Protestantism." It arose also as a protest against all modernist theology which had become dominated by the ideas of Evolution and Idealism. It teaches that Christianity is not a force which rolls on, gathering strength as it goes, nor is it a holy music that accompanies us on our way, its reality is "offence," conflict and crisis. It begins in a "crisis" in the individual heart, in which a man finds himself in the here and now of his existence face to face with God Who confronts him, not with the "both-and" of a philosophy that makes no personal demand, but with the "either-or" of moral decision.

(2) *Existential Thinking.* Probably the best way in to an understanding of Barth is to grasp what he means by "existential thinking," an idea which he took over from Kierkegaard, and which is basic to his theology. He uses "existence" (*ex-sistere*—stepping forth into activity of this or that moment) always as descriptive of the real world of personal life. "Existential thinking" on the subjective side, and the Word of God on the objective side, might be described as the two poles of the Theology of Crisis. But what is existential thinking? We shall understand it if we begin by asking what is non-existential thinking? The mathematician or the scientist thinks non-existentially. He is a spectator, registering facts or forces in a cold, objective, disinterested manner. His work demands no personal decision. So also with the philosopher dealing with the totality of things. But when it comes to personal life, in which a man's very existence is involved, he can be no longer a spectator, he becomes an actor. A question is addressed to him which a man answers as with his life. If he does not seek passionately and personally, as with the passion of a drowning man, he does not seek at all. This is existential thinking. It is

thinking grounded in our actual concrete situation, or better in *my* actual concrete situation as a man, in which I am personally involved. When we think religiously, we must think existentially, if we would think truly. And existential acting, acting at the moment of decision to which our existence is mysteriously bound, is linked up with existential thinking (*Dg.* p. 111). In one of his own sermons Barth shows us Jesus bringing a man to the " existential moment." When Nicodemus comes to Jesus the shrewd old counsellor has no other intention than a cautious, tolerant, religious talk from bank to bank of a stream, as it were. " Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher . . . " " You are a man who interests me. I should like to hear what you have got to say." The spectator! Must not Jesus be glad when one of the " Masters in Israel " comes thus far? "Verily, except a man be born again. . . " says Jesus, in His very first word. And Nicodemus finds himself face to face with something incomprehensible, something he cannot fathom. There is then to be no measured talk from bank to bank, where each will maintain his own view. He discovers himself suddenly in the middle of the stream, struggling as for dear life like a drowning

man. The ground has gone completely from under his feet. He stutters: "How can these things be?" That is existential thinking (K.S.G. p. 96).

In Barth's view, sin has been the means of shutting many ways of approach to God, rendering a man both bound and blind, enslaved in will, and blind from his birth (John ix. 1), with only the existential way of faith and obedience open to God. Barth himself is always at the "existential" standpoint, where man's "I" is confronted by the Divine "Thou," and the religious interest is keen. In philosophy and metaphysics, on the other hand, man is the spectator, without himself being put to the test. Barth's objection to idealistic philosophy is that it makes no demand and calls for no decision from the individual. He is determined that his theology shall not become subordinated to philosophy, and he has carried his warfare into the camp of the philosophers. Theology and philosophy, he says, move within the same field, they both deal with the end-poles of human thought, Truth and Reality, but, while the division between the two seems narrow, it is a deep gulf. Theology needs to be ever on the watch lest it be swallowed up of philosophy, as in the

presence of Pharaoh Aaron's rod swallowed those of the Egyptian magicians (Exod. vii. 12). Between theology and a philosophy which keeps to its own field, says Barth, there can be a well-disposed neutrality, and even a helpful co-operation, but there must be war to the knife with any philosophy, under whatever guise, that seeks to be a theosophy (Z.Z. 1929 : 4 : p. 341). He admits that everyone must come to the Bible wearing philosophical spectacles of some kind, otherwise he would see nothing (*Dg.* p. 403). Luther and Calvin also had their philosophy. He himself looked back to Plato. But he disclaims that his theology, as has been asserted by Dr. Haitjema of Groningen, depends on any particular theory of knowledge. His own mind, like Pascal's, with whom he has so much in common, is mathematical rather than philosophical. He is fond of speaking of planes, and lines, and points, and tangents, and likes to demonstrate his ideas diagrammatically. His mind, we imagine, would be very much at home with a mind like that of Sir James Jeans.

(3) *Dialectic Theology.* There are three possible ways, says Barth, of pursuing an answer to the question of the Truth, or Word of God. He sets aside the dogmatic way (*via dogmatica*),

which the Church has followed; its weakness consisting in the attempt to express the contents of Revelation in too direct and concrete a form, as if these were "objects" to be grasped by our understanding. Such a way lacks the reserve that is due to the transcendent majesty of God. He sets aside the critical way (*via negativa*), beloved of the mystics because its final conclusion is an Abyss, a Darkness, a No, and one cannot so speak of God. He chooses the *dialectic way* (*via dialectica*), as being the best way, and in some respects the only way, for seeking out the great answer. It presupposes the Yea of the dogmatic and the Nay of the critical, and finds truth to lie beyond Yea and Nay. Dialectic thinking, thinking in question and answer, so that the answer contains always again a question, is, according to Barth, the only thinking open to us in dealing with the relation of God and man. The relation from our side must always be a dialogue, a conflict. We cannot state it in clear unambiguous language, for we "know only in part." Because of the contradiction in man, on which the Word of God strikes and gets broken as in a prism, we can only witness to Him in this fragmentary, dialectic manner. Instead of thinking in a

straight line, we are forced to think in pairs of ideas, grace and judgment, forgiveness and penalty. Only on this knife-edge Alpine ridge, says Barth, using one of his favourite Swiss similes, can a man go; he cannot stand, lest he fall down to right or left. If we speak of the glory of God in creation, we must keep in mind at the same time the *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden God, Who is in no wise manifest in nature as our eyes see it. If we speak of death we must keep in mind the majesty of quite another life which meets us beyond the frontier. If we speak of man as made in the image of God we must not forget that man as we know him is a fallen creature. We are not to think of the Yes and the No balanced over against each other in a condition of equilibrium, each, as it were, in its own right. The Yea is always primary. But the truth lies ultimately neither in the Yes nor in the No, but in the beyond where both Yes and No take their rise. The synthesis is with God, Who alone can speak the one undialectic word, the Amen, beyond which there is no going. To Barth this method, in which he claims to be following in the steps of Paul, Luther, Calvin and Kierkegaard, has the advantage of preventing any theology, including

his own, from claiming to have an absolute knowledge of God. He is concerned to protect the transcendent against any direct human attempt to express it in cut and dry formulæ. Barth has no thought of storming heaven by dialectic. There is no way from man to God, not even a *via dialectica*, and if the possibility that God Himself should begin to speak were not present, our dialectic would lead to nothing. On none of these three ways is God to be found, unless the living Truth Himself reveals Himself. But the possibility that God Himself will speak is no part of the dialectic way. It arises at the point where the way comes to an end. To utter truth is for God alone (W.G. p. 211). It will be seen that the reproach sometimes made against Barth that he has reintroduced a quasi-philosophical Hegelian dialectic into theology is quite without foundation. As a matter of fact he shares with Kierkegaard a strong dislike of the Hegelian dialectic, which goes smoothly forward, ironing out life's contradictions with its too easy method.

(4) *The Individual.* The emphasis on the "individual" which Barth took over also from his Danish master runs all through his teaching. The correlative of the Truth, of the Word of God, he says, is man, but always in the concrete

form, "Thou art the man." The hearing of the Word of God is an act of the individual in which in freedom of conscience he decides regarding the truth that concerns him. It is "my" act of decision. "I" am put to the test. "I" am responsible, because the truth has been told to me, to tell it to "myself." This is the subjective condition of the hearing of the Word of God, corresponding to the objective condition, the authority of the Church. The battle between faith and unbelief, between obedience and disobedience, is fought out always in the individual heart. A man may be a member of a family, a Church, a State, but in relation to God he stands alone. Faith is ever a solitary thing. "The relation of *this* God to *this* man, the relation of *this* man to *this* God is for me," says Barth, "the theme of the Bible and the sum of philosophy in one" (*Dg.* p. 399; *Rom.* p. xiii). Barth's starting point, therefore, also in thinking through the theological problem, is that all knowledge must be brought back to the individual that fears God. Without the believing theologian there can be no theology. All theology is and must be a *theologia viatoris*. The pride of modern theology was that it claimed to be a "science." But it was beggar's pride,

for it was bought by dispensing with real theology. Philosophy is philosophy. But theology can only become theology under the presupposition of the gracious wonder of God.

(5) *The Two Ages.* Two Ages, says Barth, following the New Testament teaching, a passing Age (*aion houtos*), and a coming Age (*aion mellon*), stand over against each other. There is the known world of things and men, the world of nature and history, bound in place and time, the world of *Eros*, or urge, of transiency and death. And there is the coming Age, the world of God and Eternity. The New Age stands in no connection with the Old, for Eternity is not the prolongation of time. Endlessly prolonged, time would still be time. Eternity is the Quite Other, the Unknown, which in Jesus Christ has broken into our world. The New Age is here. It is pressing in. The Kingdom of God, which Barth always thinks of eschatologically, is come nigh. The world goes, the Kingdom comes, undermining the world from within. We live *Zwischen den Zeiten* ("Between the Ages") which accounts for the strain and tension of faith. "If I have a system," writes Barth, in introducing the second edition of his *Romans*, "it consists in this, that to the best of my ability,

I always keep in mind what Kierkegaard has called "the infinite qualitative distinction" between time and eternity, alike in its negative and positive meaning. God is in heaven, and thou art on earth." This distinction has deeply influenced the whole Barthian movement, and may be said to be one of its most characteristic features. In his earlier writing, Barth, when still strongly under the sway of Kierkegaard, did not always keep distinct his ideas of creatureliness, temporality and sinfulness, but as his mind cleared, it became evident to him that the "infinite qualitative distinction" was not, as it was to Kierkegaard, the metaphysical difference between time and eternity, it was the barrier due to sin. Barth's dualism, therefore, is not a metaphysical but a moral dualism.

Most of the difficulties which beginners experience in understanding Barth gather round his eschatological teaching of the two Ages. Barth thinks of time, not in terms of days and years, chronologically, but dogmatically. It is the transient medium in which we find ourselves, and through which we are passing. We have come forth from beyond history (*Urgeschichte*), our origin can only be explained supertemporally, and we are pilgrims on the road to Death, but

pilgrims of Hope and heirs of the Promise. We are thus wanderers between two worlds, "between the times," or between time and eternity in what we call "history," which literally means "enquiry," or "question." Isaac Watts speaks of

> "Time, like an ever-rolling stream
> Bears all its sons away—"

But, in truth, it is not time that is in movement, but man, who has been in God, and will be in God, an exile of eternity, who dies and lives, falls and stands. All this we shall grasp better when we come to Barth's teaching on the three "orders" in which man lives. To Barth time is not eternity, and eternity is not time, but eternity is, as it were, the hidden, other side of time. Time is empty, impoverished eternity. Eternity is time that is filled. In the life of the individual there may be long intervals which can only be described as empty times, times of sleep. And then, perhaps, there comes a year, or an hour, when things grow earnest, when some crisis comes. It means that eternity is flooding into time, as a mountain freshet after a storm floods the dry bed of a stream. In history also there are long periods which

have no colour, no character, in which the peoples seem to sleep. And then there comes a decade, or it may be only a year, when doors open, and great hopes come alive, and new solutions become possible. It is eternity flooding into time. The Bible recognises such times and seasons. God's activity is not like some gigantic roller which passes on, making all times alike. On the contrary, there are times of emptiness, and times of flood. Thus we understand how it is said than when Jesus came, it was "the fulness of the time" (*pleroma*) (Gal. iv. 4). Time was flooded with eternity, until it could hold no more.

Here, then, is the problem and meaning of our being, as mortals, that we are in time and we are in eternity; indeed we are a synthesis of time and eternity. But the two are not to be equated. Eternity is that out of which time has come, and out of which we have come forth into time. Eternity is the home that calls us, time is the present station which we have reached, and which we are leaving. So eternity has the greater claim upon us. Eternity is above, time is underneath. Therefore the light of eternity falls continually into time, while time itself has no light of its own. As we

pursue our strange pilgrimage, as heirs of the Promise, there break upon us beams of the strange new world, the coming world, and a voice speaks to us which we know to be the voice of God. And when that Word comes home to us in an existential moment, removing the contradiction in which we stand towards the unknown God, and the contradiction within ourselves, time has nothing more to give us. So far as we are concerned we have reached the End of History, the purpose of our human existence. We have found God, or rather we have been found of God. Time and History therefore are for Barth finite and relative, fulfilling an Eternal Purpose.

(6) *The Moment.* Another phrase of Barth's, taken also from Kierkegaard, is that of "the Moment." He defines the "Moment" as "the point in which time and eternity touch." Kierkegaard had his own "Moment" of decisive meaning, and Barth had also his "Moment" when he glimpsed the Eternal, and it has a definite place in his theology. We may say that we can hear, see, experience God in every moment. No! says Barth, we live in time, we are immersed in time, but only at intervals does the Eternal, which is qualitatively different,

break through, and the " moment " makes us for ever different.

This " moment " between the times is itself no time. It is eternity breaking in. Every moment in time can thus be filled with eternity and become an " eternal moment," the Now, in which past and future stand still. Each of us carries the secret of revelation in us, each of us can have this experience (*Rom.* p. 481). But not every moment is this moment. We stand " between the times," between the revelations that have happened, waiting for the " existential " moment, the Parousia, the appearance of Christ. In his *Romans*, Barth has little patience with those who look for a Parousia in time, what he calls the expectation of a " crude theatrical spectacle." " Will this talk of a delayed Parousia never cease? " he asks. With the nineteen centuries of Christian history that have elapsed, the Parousia has as little to do as with the weeks and months when the Epistle to the Romans lay in Phœbe's baggage between Corinth and Rome. The Parousia is no chronological event. It has no relation to any historical or cosmical catastrophe. It is eternal truth, which can only be expressed in parable, and which we have weakened to a temporal reality. If we were really awake, he

says, and took thought, we should be terrified by the fact that, whether we will or not, we actually stand, in every temporal moment, on the border of all time. We would then take the Parousia expectation earnestly (*Rom.* p. 485).

But in the next book in which Barth speaks of the Parousia, we seem to note a change coming over his thought. The Parousia is " the arrival, nay the Presence of the hidden Christ, and His Victory." It is " the Fulfilment of that which in time is always to be grasped only as Promise " (*Auf.* p. 87).

Barth's interest in this subject has been awake from the beginning of his theological activity. A theology which does not consider the End, that is, the beginning of the new world, is not theology. For the present condition of the world is only an episode, a transition. The man of faith must be a man of hope looking for the completion of the Redemption which has only begun in this finite sphere of space and time. The " Last Things," Resurrection, Parousia or Second Coming of Christ, World Renewal, must not remain in the background. Yet the shy intimations of them in the Scriptures are only hints which do not bring us near to the actual mysteries themselves ; and our human ideas of

the end of history and of the new world do not count for much.

We seem able to trace a gradual deepening of Barth's conception of the Parousia. At first, in *Romans*, the Parousia is the "brink" on which the individual ever stands. Then in *Die Auferstehung der Toten* it becomes "the arrival, nay the presence of the hidden Christ, and His Victory," the abolition of Death, the *final* appearance on the surface of the same subterranean stream which first became perceptible in time on Easter morning. In later utterances, under the growing power of the conception of the "Promise," and also of the place of the Church, he speaks more definitely of the "Returning Christ" (T.K. p. 391).

What precisely his present position is we are unable to say. We imagine that it is one of those themes regarding which he feels that he is not yet clear. But it seems obvious that his thinking is in the direction of giving to the Parousia a more commanding place.

In reading *The Mysterious Universe* we have been struck by the similarity between the thinking of Barth and that of Sir James Jeans, though of course the one writes as a theologian and the other as a scientist. When Jeans says that, in

terms of Plato's simile, " we are still imprisoned in a cave with our backs to the light, and can only watch the shadows on the wall," Barth agrees. But to him eternity is the meaning and fulfilment of time. As the shadow witnesses to the existence and reality of the sun, so the shadowy transiency of time witnesses to the eternal Presence of God. When Jeans, quoting Plato, says that " time and space, which form the setting for thought and life, are finite things which a Creator working outside time and space has created for a temporary purpose," that also is Barth's teaching. He also thinks of time as a finite medium lying between two eternities. Only to him, God, the *Deus Revelatus*, is " the eternal beginning and the eternal end," while the present, the medium in which we live, is transitional in character (W.G. p. 313). When Jeans suggests that " time from its beginning to its end is spread out before us in the picture, that we are in contact with only one instant, just as the bicycle wheel is in contact with only one point of the road," that also is Barth's teaching. It is not time that passes, but we who pass through time. Events do not happen, we merely come across them as they await us in the way. Barth and Jeans have plainly been in the same school

of Plato. Further, when Jeans quoting a writer, suggests that " the element of surprise is sufficient warrant for external reality," he is moving unconsciously into the eschatological world of Barth (*The Mysterious Universe*, p. 139). There is thus no conflict between this New Theology and the latest findings of science. But Barth the Witness, and Jeans the Scientist, can never meet. Barth begins on a level, the plane of Revelation, to which Jeans as a scientist can never rise. Science and Revelation cannot come into conflict because they move on planes which do not meet. They must have, of course, an ultimate meeting, but it is in God.

CHAPTER IV

BARTH AS A WITNESS TO THE WORD OF GOD

BARTH has been hailed as a prophet, and there is a bold prophetic note in his speech which commands attention. But he declines to be called a prophet, he has nothing to say "of himself," no "revelation" of his own to bring; he is a "witness" to the Word of God, a pointing finger, and will accept no other name. "As those who have received the Spirit of God we know what has been given us by God in Christ. As such, and to such, we also speak" (*Auf.* p. 10). But "witness" is not inconsistent in his view with a scientific treatment of his subject, and he makes a rigorous demand on the intelligence of his readers. With his thought-forms and complex dialectic speech, for his mind seems naturally to pursue truth through dialectic, he is not a witness easy to follow, but in all the weight of words which bear down upon us we hear ever again the name, God. "Our concern is God, the movement originating in God." The only hope is that man shall get back to God, shall begin from Him, and not from himself.

All theology and religion must start from God. "Experience is only a *reference* to the Original, to God." "God is God, and as such must be given His right name," with which call Barth has raised again the question of God in the Church. "We are concerned not about this or that, not about 'things,' even if it be 'the last things,' but about the understanding of these three words *apo tou theou* (from God)" (*Auf.* p. 10).

It is a hopeful sign that this deeply humble Christian Teacher, doing all "to the Glory of God," refusing to be anything but a witness to the Word of God, yet bold to speak the Word without fear, is compelling men again to listen to the Word of a God Who speaks, and is putting a new sense of authority on the lips of preachers.

For God's Word Barth goes to the Scriptures. He takes his stand on Calvin's central doctrine of the Word of God. "We do not seek God anywhere else than in His Word, we do not think of Him save with His Word, we speak nothing of Him save through His Word." But there are different degrees of directness in which the Word reaches us.

(1) The Word of God meets us first, says Barth, in Christian preaching, the speaking of

Christians to Christians (*Dg.* p. 47). The distinctive feature of Christian speech is that it contains God's Word. It is responsible speech, speech worthy of being believed; it is God's Word in the husk of man's word. But it is not a speaking from heaven, but shares in the transiency of all human work (*Dg.* p. 366). While the preacher ventures to speak of God, it is a venture that is impossible, something that he must do, and yet cannot do. Barth's conception of Christian preaching is that of a *kerygma*, the message of a herald who speaks to us because he is commanded, and what he is commanded (*Dg.* p. 22).

(2) The Word of God meets us secondly and less indirectly in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (*Dg.* p. 334). The Scriptures constitute for Barth a human document, like any other, a collection of ancient literature, and as such they are the object of historical criticism, the "right" and "necessity" of which Barth acknowledges. The historian sees and knows in them only human words. They can lay no *a priori* claim to special consideration. Barth is not a Fundamentalist, sounding the retreat from the field of historical criticism to the old defences of orthodoxy. Those

who think of him as an obscurantist or reactionary have not begun to understand him. He rejects any doctrine of verbal inspiration or inerrancy which would make the Bible a work of heavenly dictation in place of a "witness" conditioned by men. It is human words we hear, not God Himself, but human words about God coming to us through sinful men to whom God has spoken. There must therefore be the possibility of error, the possibility that the human reaction or response was mistaken. But Barth believes that "the Word" can be found in the words. Scripture is the Word of God in so far as it is witness to Revelation. There is much, of course, in the Bible—history, religion, morality—which is not Revelation. Revelation and Scripture are not one and the same. "We know that the Bible is one thing, Revelation another." But Barth holds that in the Bible we have the dogmatic norm for faith, a *regula fidei*, which is all we need in order to hear the Word of God. He accepts the Reformed "Scripture principle" that in the Scriptures is to be found "the only rule of faith and life" for the Christian, but regards it as the one serious necessity for Reformed Theology to study towards a new conception

of the " Scripture principle." The books of the Bible are not the Word of God because they are in the Canon, they are in the Canon because the Church acknowledges that they contain the Word of God. In acknowledging the Bible to be the Word of God, we are acknowledging the concrete authority of the Christian Church. Barth would not deny to the Church the right to make changes in the Canon, if it was assured that it had the leading of the Spirit. This does not mean that the Holy Scriptures must be for each believer the only well of Christian stimulus. Some may find more accessible and intelligible witnesses elsewhere, so long as they understand that in addition to these more directly stimulating writers there are witnesses in another sense—first-hand witnesses—by whose witness the credibility and authority of their closer favourites are to be measured. It is law, the law of the Church, and not the experience of some particular person, that determines the priority of the words of prophets and apostles to all other words (*Dg.* p. 342).

The Word of God contained in the Bible is one Word, one Revelation. The same God who spoke to Abraham spoke to Paul, and spoke the same Word. There is unity in the

Word of God, says Barth. He criticises those who would drive a wedge between the Old Testament and the New, Law and Gospel, which belong together, and thus make the Bible fall apart into two different worlds. Jesus did not so read the Old Testament. Barth regards the difference between the two Testaments as relative, compared with their unity. The difference between Prophets and Apostles is "the fluid difference between Promise and Present, Law and Gospel, which are not only both of God but both of grace, indissolubly connected. Incomparably more important than the difference of the witness is the unity" (*Dg.* p. 341). Both Old Testament and New are grouped round the central figure of Jesus Christ. "Christ's light is no other than the light of the Old Testament, the light of all religious history, and history of truth" (*Rom.* p. 93). Barth does not deny a measure of development in the religious experience of the Bible witnesses, but he distinguishes the relative sphere in which it operates from that of the Absolute in which God dwells. While historically considered the religion of the Bible witnesses may develop, differentiate, and drop away, while the single reader, using his understanding, may distinguish between the

middle of the Bible and its margins, between what in his view has the Spirit of Christ and what has not, the distinctions which proceed from such considerations must not have a principal character. Every part of the Scripture is itself complete Word of God and can by the accession of the rest be made clearer, which it is, but not more complete (*Dg.* p. 340).

We have here one of Barth's most challenging and challenged positions, his rejection of the developmental theory of Revelation which has come to be widely accepted and which has appeared greatly to ease many Old Testament problems. The writer has discussed this question personally with Barth. He will not allow any consideration to the idea that God submitted Israel to a gradual education, imparting truth as she was able to receive it. If we argue with him that Revelation came gradually like the rising of the sun, he will tell us that then we must equally be prepared for it to sink like the setting sun. He rejects 'progressive' Revelation :

(*a*) Because it involves the transcendence of God in the time-process and in the process of natural law, and makes Divine Revelation a relative and natural thing. But while history is a predicate of Revelation, Revelation is not a

predicate of history. History is the sphere of the relative, Revelation of the Absolute. "If God does not reveal Himself altogether, He does not reveal Himself at all . . . God is altogether in His Revelation."

(*b*) Because it imposes on the Bible a doctrine which is foreign to it. There is no such thing as evolution, not even saltatory evolution, in the Old Testament. It is not an *evolutio* but an *ingressio* which we find there, a breaking into the world of something beyond, something new and other. The Old Testament is eschatological through and through. It is dominated by the idea that God is the Lord, Who comes down in condescending mercy to His sinful children in order to save them. Of the optimistic evolutionary idea of progress by which evil gradually becomes less and the good more, the Old Testament knows nothing. It moves through conflict, rejection, judgment, to fresh creation. "From the view-point of ordered development," says Barth, "it is quite incomprehensible, as every religious teacher worth his salt knows too well" (W.G. p. 72).

With the word "eschatology" we have expressed what distinguishes the world of the Bible from the modern world view. The idea

that fills the prophets as well as the New Testament is that of the Coming God, the Coming Kingdom. The Bible from beginning to end is eschatological. It lives ever on the brink of things to come by some break into history, and its ruling idea is far removed from any modern conception of ordered progress.

(3) The Word of God comes to us thirdly and directly in the *Deus Dixit*, the Word of God spoken to prophets and apostles, in its immediate original form, the actual Word of God without the medium of Scripture, without the service of the Church, the Word spoken in history, but on the border of history, to which Barth gives the designation—*Urgeschichte*. This *Deus Dixit*, of which we have the witness in the Scriptures, is what makes Scripture to be the Word of God. It is the living Hand that holds the Canon and points the Way, and sets men forward on the march.

It is important to understand what Barth means by *Urgeschichte*, an un-translatable word. While he took over the word from Overbeck he gave it a theological significance as describing the peculiar relation of Revelation to History. He means first, that

(*a*) *Revelation is History*. It is an event in

time, which takes its place in the order of temporal events. It does not belong to that super-temporal sphere in which God is God, but is a Word of God that takes place in the here and now. Barth avoids the word *Übergeschichte*, "over-history"; because it might introduce the idea that Revelation takes place in the sphere of Eternal history—the sphere of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which is *Urgeschichte*, is more than Eternal History paradoxical as it may sound. God "once for all" took unto Himself flesh, became a man in time, and has met us here. That is Revelation. It is also History. Together it constitutes *Urgeschichte*, which we might translate best as "Revelation-History."

(*b*) *But History is not Revelation.* It is not merely something or someone who meets us in Revelation, it is God. And while we can say "Revelation is History," we cannot reverse it and say "History is Revelation." God acts in history, but history is not therefore the revealing activity of God. History is not the Word of God. No history is. The Word of God, even in so far as it is historical event, is only to be known through itself. The Word of God is Subject, or it is not the Word of God.

But when "the Spirit bloweth", then the Word of God becomes history. *Urgeschichte*, or Revelation-History, is the acting and speaking of God in person, in history, *Dei loquentis persona*, speaking to and acting upon, not man in general, but this man and that man, speaking in the historical there and then, to us in the historical here and now. *Urgeschichte* is a historical event which is not merely historical event, but has God's Word in it for us. As such it is a miracle, and as a miracle is distinct from other historical events.

It follows, then, that while Revelation is to be found in history, History in general is not Revelation. Revelation is in the *Urgeschichte*. But even in the *Urgeschichte*, it is not found in such a way that the historical event is Revelation as such, abstracted from the speaking God. God cannot be separated from His Word.

Urgeschichte is the archetype and meaning of all history, but not in the sense that all history has this meaning. Not every time is Revelation-time. The relation of all history to Revelation-history is that of circumference to centre, prophecy to fulfilment. *Urgeschichte* has no historical continuity. It is history, but it works directly as the Word of God on men, in the

nearest and the farthest time. It is not eternal history, because it is a point in temporal history. It is more than temporal history because it is not bound in the irreversible sequence of temporal events (*Dg.* p. 230).

The supreme illustration of *Urgeschichte* is the Incarnation. "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was made flesh." That is Revelation-History breaking into time. As other examples, Barth would quote the Death and Resurrection of our Lord.

But even in the prophets and apostles, it is not the divine Word itself which we hear, but the witness of a prophet or apostle, a word concerning the Word, and not the perfect Divine Word itself. There may be errors in the prophet due to his imperfect reception. For while the Word of God speaks to him, he first speaks the Word to himself before he utters it to others. It meets and strikes him in his opposition, and becomes itself an 'offence.' So we come at last to the one perfect Word.

(4) The Word of God, in its perfect form, is Jesus Christ. He is God's personal Word, which does not need a prophet as an instrument, but is present in *persona*, in the Word made flesh. Here Truth and Actuality meet. The

Word (Eternal Truth) is made flesh (Actuality). The one Revelation which is without reservation or limitation is Jesus Christ, God's Son, because the truth in Him is not broken or deflected by any contradiction or sin in His nature. In Him the pure world of God has broken through into the profane sphere.

In Jesus Christ two worlds, as it were, meet and intersect, two planes, the one known and the other unknown. The one world, the known, is that which has been created by God but is fallen from its original union with God, and is therefore a world in need of redemption, the world of the flesh, of men and things. This world is intersected by another, striking vertically down on the horizontal, the unknown world of the Father, the world of the original creation. The point at which these two planes meet, and where each is to be seen, is Jesus Christ. The years 1–30 A.D. were years of Revelation in which the new divine meaning of all time is seen. "Jesus Christ our Lord . . . . made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (*Rom.* i. 3). That indicates the point of the break-through between the known and the unknown worlds, the point at which time and eternity became visible. But this same Jesus

was installed as the Son of God with power, in that He was raised from the dead (*Rom.* i. 4). This installation is the true meaning of Jesus. He is not to be explained historically, as a human personality, appearing in time and place, but is only to be understood by the World of the Father, of which inside our historical perception we know nothing. Jesus the Christ is the supertemporal, superhistorical Revelation of the loving, redeeming Will of the Father. He is the absolutely new from above; the way, the truth, and the life of God among men. In that strange new, unhistorical, impossible World which has broken through from another dimension, in Jesus Christ, we are to see the perfect Revelation of God.

It is to the *Urgeschichte*, the special moments of Revelation-History in the life of our Lord, to which Barth turns especially to find the Word of God.

This strange new world of the Father was for ever breaking through the veil of our Lord's earthly tabernacle, in His miracles for example, which, says Barth, "signalise the unhistorical, impossible, the good time that is coming." But in two moments especially of Revelation-History does the Divine Word confront us, in

the Incarnation and Virgin Birth and in the Resurrection.

1. *The Incarnation and Virgin Birth.* Barth's method of building his *Dogmatik* on the Word of God, as preached in the Church, compels him always to begin from the Church's doctrine. Thus, in dealing with God, he starts, as we shall see, from the Trinity. So he begins also, with the doctrine of the Person of Christ (*Dg.* p. 254).

This problem, which was the subject of fierce controversy in the fifth century and divided Lutherans and Calvinists at the Reformation, has not of late been much discussed, not because men have felt that it was solved, but rather because they have felt it to be insoluble, containing as it does two imperfectly known factors, the Divine and the human. The one agreement of recent years has been the determination to maintain at all costs, even at the cost of sacrificing His Deity, the unity of Christ's Person. Barth's strongly held Reformed view of *finitum non capax infiniti* over against the Lutheran *finitum capax infiniti*, brings with it the corollary that had Jesus been a finite human person He also would have been " incapable of the Divine." Barth's severely logical mind forces him back on the Reformation doctrine that, in Jesus, the

Logos took to Himself our human nature, our human guilt and pain, uniting Himself with human existence in time, concealing His Godhead, and descending into a sphere in which He did not belong. It was not a "kenosis," in the sense of a "self-emptying," but a taking up of the flesh into Himself. "That which He was before, He did not cease to be, and He was made what He was not" (Bengel).

Barth stands firm by the complete humanity of our Lord. Everything that was true of every man, of man as such, was true of the Son of God made flesh. Had He not been completely human, He would not have been to us God's Word; for only in our nature as man could the Son of God reveal Himself to us, and reconcile us. In so far as He was a creature, Jesus was one with us. He ate and drank, lived and died, as we do. But in so far as we are sinners, Jesus was not one with us. Sin does not reside in our creaturehood, for man as a creature was made in the image of God. Sin resides in that part of our nature which we designate as the "person" or the "ego" as distinct from the personality. In that part of Christ's Person, whose depths no eye can penetrate, called the "ego," dwelt the Divine Word or Logos.

Thus Christ, although finite, was *capax infiniti* (*Dg.* p. 269).

It was necessary that Christ should have human creaturehood if He was to be a Revealer and Reconciler, otherwise the Second Adam would not have been true man. This human creaturehood He received from His mother. But it was necessary also that the Second Adam, the God-Man, who "to the fight and to the rescue came," should not be a sinful "Person," but should become incarnate in conformity with the Divine Image. Therefore, as at the first Creation God spoke, making a world out of nothing, so in the New Creation, by the power of the Divine Word, that holy thing took life in the Virgin's womb. There is meaning, says Barth, in that old tradition which represents the organ of the miraculous conception as the "ear" of Mary into which the Divine Word was whispered. But the wonder of this act of God the Holy Ghost escapes all explanation. For one to bring in physical explanations, says Barth, shows that he has not understood its meaning. In the Church doctrine of the Virgin Birth with which the human life of Jesus began, as in the Resurrection with which it closed, Barth sees a wonder of Revelation, at once revealing and

concealing. The one wonder is the basis of the other, and only through the one can the other be understood. Only within the boundary of Virgin Birth and Resurrection can this human life be explained whose reality is God Himself.

2. *The Resurrection.* But it is in the Resurrection supremely that Barth sees the strange new world of grace breaking in from another dimension upon the world of the flesh. The Cross is the No of God on human sin. The Resurrection is God's Yes, which can only be heard and understood by the soul which has accepted the No. But in accepting the No we are sure of God's redeeming Yes. In being ready to die we are given the new life of the Resurrection. In the word "Resurrection" lies for Barth the whole of Christianity. The Resurrection is the supreme Revelation, the coming through of God to us from the other side, the new world of which we can only say that it is *totaliter aliter.*

In his own preaching Barth's heart kindles when he comes to speak of the Resurrection. As a Witness to the Word of God, he points men to the Resurrection, and to what it implies. Resurrection, he says, is the word that of all words in the Bible speaks to us most strongly

and unambiguously. God is not a thought, God is not a word, nor a sentiment. God is the great, the true, the living One Who waits to meet us at that point where all our thoughts about Him leave off. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the event in the New Testament which throws itself in the path of all our thinking. Halt! it says. You stand before something which you cannot comprehend. Whoever could have thought that out? You stand before God Himself. You have all sorts of thoughts about God, but here you see God is "Other," is mightier than you are able to think. Now you must in future, when you think of God, take account of this impossible, this incomprehensible thing, this power unknown before, this new world that has come through the door. It consists in this that God Himself has come through as Conqueror (K.S.G., p. 148).

The Resurrection for Barth is the act of God "which no eye hath seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart . . . ," the wonder of wonders. It is neither outward nor inward, neither subjective nor objective, neither spiritual nor flatly historical. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" the truth of God upon the

horizontal plane? It is *Urgeschichte*, Revelation-History—and as such falls under the category of Revelation.

Considered as history, the empty grave takes its place among all other doubtful earthly things, for it is not a fact which the historian—*qua* historian—can either affirm or deny. Hope or fear, faith or scepticism, is alike possible beside the empty grave. But we do not base our faith in the Resurrection on an empty grave, but on a risen and living Lord; two facts which are *toto caelo* different (*Auf.* p. 76).

But does then Barth believe in the Jesus of History? Does he believe in the fact of the Virgin Birth and the fact of the Resurrection? So often has he been asked that question that when someone in my presence asked it he shrugged his shoulders with a weary smile. He does believe in the Jesus of History, but for him the Jesus of History is—the Jesus of History. He does believe in the fact of the Virgin Birth. He does believe in the fact of the Resurrection. But in so far as they are historical events, they can only be perceived as historical events. They can never be matter for faith. The knowledge of the historical facts of our Lord's life is no sufficient ground for a know-

ledge of Christ. If the life and death of Jesus be considered merely as an event in history, the historian is able to contribute little more than a trivial judgment. He can only see the human incognito of Jesus, the real Christ is not visible to the historian's eye. Historical science simply cannot cope with Revelation. Historical judgment can be passed on Jesus as a hero, a prophet, a religious Founder, but not on Him as a Son of God. Once we come to the meaning of Christ for faith, historical science is irrelevant. It cannot disprove, and no more can it prove. It knows only a Christ " after the flesh." To see the Revelation of God in Christ is the gracious privilege of faith. Only the believer knows the Christ " after the Spirit." The Jesus of History is valueless and meaningless for faith until He is confessed as the living Christ. Historically considered indeed, He constitutes an insoluble problem, a Paradox, a *Scandalon*, but in the light of Revelation He is seen to be the Word of God and the meaning of all history.

The recent volume entitled *The Historic Jesus*, by James Mackinnon, D.D., Em. Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Edinburgh, provides a good illustration. He writes as a historian of Jesus, as he has already written of Luther.

He will give us " the real Jesus." The tragedy of the historic Jesus, he says, is " that He was in advance of His age." He was " the greatest of Utopians," but out of this divine Utopia " was evolved the Church." We cannot afford to ignore " this arresting personality " in whom " God reveals Himself as in no other." He is " the highest product in the spiritual realm," but " His human existence is that of ourselves."

As this massive book is intended to relate what the historian sees, it may be accepted as the report of a historian. But in so far as it seeks to interpret Jesus Christ,' it is a book " born out of due time." The obituary of this so-called " historic Jesus " was written twenty-five years ago by A. Schweitzer, and no New Testament scholar in the first rank has since attempted to compose a life of the " historic Jesus." " This Jesus," said Schweitzer, " never existed." That verdict stands. The liberal picture of Jesus is for ever destroyed.

It is not too much to say that while " liberal theology " has given us a Jesus of History Who wins us by the beauty and wisdom of His words, and the large-hearted charity of His works and the selfless devotion of His life and death, it has lost to us the God-Man, the second Person of

the Trinity. The Christ Whom Barth gives us is the Christ of Faith, the Christ of Paul and John, the Christ of Nicæa, the God-Man.

But we do not lose thereby the human Jesus. Once we have found the Divine Word in Him, all the details of His earthly life, His personality, His parables, His brotherly love and forgiveness, none of which shine by their own light, are lit up and understood and become doubly precious. Barth's vignettes from the life and teaching of Jesus show how deeply he understands Him. In the *life* of Jesus we see what complete obedience to the Will of God is (W.G. p. 307). Even Dörries, one of Barth's most hostile Lutheran critics, writes: "It is always a pleasure to read what Barth has to say about Jesus Christ."

Barth and the Bible. But while Barth, as witness to the Word of God, thus restores the Bible to its central place, as the Word, he does not propose to set up any bibliolatry, but seeks to conserve the truth that was in the old view, while allowing to the modern view its right and place. There is in the Bible, he says, no static, traditional Word of God, abstracted from the acting Person of God. God is always the speaking Subject, not the object of Revelation.

We cannot objectify the Word of God. It does not lie in a book as an abiding possession for any one to take, it only becomes the Word of God as it finds us in the existential moment. The Word of God is always an event, in which God breaks through the wall of our personality in an "eternal moment," and calls, commands, blesses us as individuals. The Word of God can be heard of us only when we cease to be spectators and become actors. We cannot possess the Word of God. In every moment we must wrestle for it, like Jacob with the Angel, saying "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The Word of God is entirely independent of us, and not in any sense a projection of ourselves. It is never a Word uttered in a vacuum, but a Word addressed to you and me, the Word of a "Thou" to an "I." It is a Word that is "quick, powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword," but it is only when it pierces us that we know it. The whole Bible is never to any individual the Word of God, perhaps only a small part of it is, and now one part and now another (*Dg.* p. 340).

But how, save in human experience, can we know the Word of God? "We know the Word of God," says Barth, "not through our-

selves, and in ourselves, but we know it through God, and in God, or to put it in another way, we are known in it. Our knowing of God here and now is our being known of God." (Gal. iv. 9). "This paradox," says Barth, "Paul could not escape, neither can we" (*Dg.* p. 103). He does not dispute that this theory of knowledge has the appearance of a begging of the question (*petitio principii*). But in face of much criticism on this point he stands his ground (Z.Z. 1929: 6, p. 561). "To the question 'How do you know the Word of God?' I answer, so and in this that I have known it before I recognised it, so and in this, that God has spoken it to me" (*Dg.* p. 106).

Revelation, not in the sense of a certain number of mysteries until now unknown to human reason being revealed, but in the Biblical sense that God reveals Himself in His Word, is become to-day, Barth believes, a lost category. The modernist method of viewing the Bible is that it contains "abiding messages" placed in a "transient setting" which the preacher is to "decode" from its outworn phraseology for the benefit of his hearers (Fosdick). But when each preacher may select from the Scriptures what suits him, judging each passage by his

own notion of what is "abiding," they are stripped of all authority to command men's confidence and to compel obedience. They may still inspire respect, but as Lippmann in his *A Preface to Morals* rightly says, "they are disarmed" (p. 48), and the Word can never come upon a man as it did on Barth himself "as an armed man." We shall need, says Barth, to "think through the category of Revelation again and learn again to read the Bible, both Old and New Testament from that view-point" (W.G. p. 250).

What Barth, as a Witness for God, is trying to do may be summed up as an attempt to "think through again the category of Revelation." (*a*) In the first place, as we have seen, he distinguishes Revelation and Religion. It cannot be an absolute distinction of course; man could not seek God unless God already had sought him, but it secures that uniqueness to the Christian Revelation which sets it in a place by itself, and not as the highest in a gradation of the great world religions. It recovers that most effective of all motives for Foreign Missions, the absoluteness of Christianity, which has been so greatly lost.

(*b*) In the second place, he distinguishes,

as we have seen, between Revelation and History. History is not, as so often represented, God's story. God is not working His purpose out in history, but through history. History is not the evolution of salvation, it is the evolution of a sinful race needing and obtaining salvation. Barth makes the important distinction, as we have seen, that while "Revelation is History" we cannot turn the phrase round and say that "History is Revelation" (*Dg.* p. 232). God does not reveal Himself in the Bible sense in history, not even in Jewish history. He reveals Himself at special times, in special events, to special individuals, and in His own special Word. The men of the Bible are not religious geniuses thrown up in the course of Jewish history, whose message has become the common property of mankind. They are men called of God for no other reason than that it is His will, and their word cannot be separated from their person. Revelation, therefore, comes into history, but is not of it. History is from beneath, Revelation from above. Revelation precedes history, determines history, is manifest in history, but is distinct from history. Revelation means that God reveals Himself.

The pursuit of the last two generations has

been to find some basis for faith in scientifically ascertained facts of our Lord's life. Ritschl sought for his theology such a footing in history. God was the God of History. There could be no clearer Revelation than History. "The foundations of faith are to be laid in the recorded facts of our Lord's career as man," says Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, "and anything else would be to start building from the roof" (*The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 232). Herrmann also maintains that God turns towards man in the objective facts of the life of Jesus. But already Herrmann begins to have doubts and declines to base our faith ultimately on historical records, which must needs be fallible, but bases it instead on what he calls "laying hold of the inner life of Jesus." So Herrmann admits that the objective facts cannot bear the weight to be put upon them; all depends on a certain religious experience which is induced by the record, and which is to guarantee the truth of the story.

Barth asserts roundly that nothing stable is to be found in history, nothing that can ground faith. "It is a most fatal ambiguity," he holds, "when one says that faith is grounded on history. In history itself, so far as the eye can

see, is nothing that can be the basis of faith. Only Revelation can be that" (*Dg.* p. 270). No episode in history, however well authenticated, can serve as the really ultimate foundation of faith, for such a foundation needs to have an absoluteness, a certainty, a finality, which no history in the nature of things can possess. History is the sphere of the relative and the contingent. Even God would cease to be God if He were to allow Himself to be entangled in the time process, His Revelation would cease to be absolute. Barth's interest is in securing something stable, the "Archimedean point." And in the Word of God breaking through into time and history, and especially in the Word made flesh, Barth believes that he secures a basis above the contingencies of history, as well as beyond the subjectivity of religious experience. He will deliver the Christian Revelation from "historism" and "psychologism" and secure its absolute value.

Therefore he will not allow that the human Jesus of History is the Divine Revelation. Jesus as a historical personality whose human life had a beginning and an end, whose human body carried in it the seeds of decay, who if He had not died on the Cross would have

passed on in the common march of dust, shares in the questionableness of all that is historical. He cannot be the saving Revelation of God. Barth, therefore, in a sense, accepts the challenge of Dr. Mackintosh and "starts building from the roof." He bases faith on the Word of God, on the Word of Divine Revelation. For a definition of Revelation, he goes to Luther. "I do not know it and I do not understand it, but sounding from above, and ringing in my ears, I hear what is beyond the thought of man" (W.G. p. 179). It is the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit" which gives Barth the assurance that this is the Word of God. He is true to the doctrine of the Reformers. The Spirit is to him the correlative of the Word, the activity of God on the subjective side in the "event" of Revelation.

The Spirit and the Word. Under what conditions, asks Barth, can a man, without ceasing to be a man, become a receiver of the Word of God, while yet in his distance and alienation he has no perception or capacity for it? How can the far God be brought near? For man lives in opposition to the truth. His answer is "through the Holy Spirit." The knowledge committed to man through Scripture

is made his own through the Holy Spirit (*Dg.* p. 284).

The Holy Spirit opens the life of man to the Word of God, and makes him capable of receiving it. The Holy Spirit can take a defective bit of human nature, worthy of being cast away, and make it an object of His Revelation. This knowledge of the Word of God through the Spirit is always an "event," a breaking through of the wall of personality, ever again repeated. While the Word of God is one Word, ever complete, never partial, never imparted by degrees or stages, it reaches us brokenly, dialectically, "in part," to be partially comprehended, or it may be misapprehended, in the moment of crisis, by reason of sin. Through the Spirit the human word becomes in the "existential" moment the Word of God to us. Through the Spirit does the Revelation received from witnesses become witness for us. Through the Spirit also does Jesus of Nazareth become Jesus Christ, the Word of God to us (*Dg.* p. 358).

But man in this relation must know himself as poor and naked, *non capax infiniti.* For only the lost sheep will be sought of the Shepherd. In his doctrine of the Spirit Barth insists with

vigour that the door is closed between God and man, and by no "synergism" or co-operation on man's part can he secure his own salvation. The Spirit of God is Holy Spirit, it is not the same as the spirit of man, and there must be no talk of blotting out the boundaries between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. The teaching of Augustine that sin was just a wound, a disturbance, within the continuity of God and man, on which the whole Roman Catholic piety and all modernist Pelagian and semi-Pelagian religion are based, Barth declares to be "poison and destruction for the Church." Out of it, all our righteousness of works, morality, mysticism, all our human efforts after holiness, have come. "So a man may be healed," says Barth, "but so a man cannot be raised from the dead." Sin is not to be put away by "an inspiration of goodwill." Neither our good-will, nor our religious desires, nor our moral earnestness, nor any creative act of man can raise the dead. That only an act of God can do.

Again, the Spirit of God, says Barth, is not to be conceived as something that flows into a man as a "stream of life" or healing, or as a fountain of life in which one can bathe, nor

must it be thought of as something that overwhelms a man like a shower of hail or an earthquake. It must be a *meeting* between God and man, a free and not a static relationship, a dialogue of question and answer, giving and taking, in which not only the quantitative but the qualitative distinction between God and man is maintained. God is not an "It" but a "He." It must be a fight of Jacob with the Angel. Like Jacob, we may be lamed in the conflict, but the Spirit makes the Word to be light to blind eyes. The sun rose upon Jacob as he passed over Penuel.

In his last book (H.G. 1930) Barth, along with his philosopher brother, Henry, has given us his teaching on the Holy Spirit. Employing his three-fold division, which we shall meet again, of God as Creator, God as Reconciler, and God as Redeemer, he has treated the Spirit thus :

(*a*) *The Holy Spirit as Creator Spirit*, giving actuality to the *imago Dei*, the divine image that is buried, lost, and forgotten in man, and which can only be restored as a gift of God's free grace, as of one from the dead. Those who quote the Parable of the Prodigal Son against Barth in this connection usually forget

that the parable ends with the words: "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

(*b*) *The Holy Spirit as Reconciler*, as the Spirit of Grace contending with man's enmity to grace, and his righteousness of works, striving with man whose sin cannot be thought away or put away by any activity of his, but only by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

(*c*) *The Holy Spirit as Redeemer*, present to man in God's Revelation, as the Spirit of Promise, by which he can lay hold on the promise of the "new creature" and the "sonship of God."

The Word and the Sacraments. Just as Barth brings the Word into vital relationship with the Holy Spirit, so also he brings it into vital relationship with the Church and with the Sacraments. The Reformed Church is "the Church of the Word." It placed the Word where in the Roman Catholic Church stood the altar and the Mass, in the centre and heart of Christian worship. "The Word alone can do it," said the Reformers. There is nothing more worshipful, says Barth, nothing more redemptive, than the speaking and hearing of the Word of God in its true original power.

If the Word pierces as a sword, and becomes for the hearer a living Word demanding a life, and if the Word is obeyed, it becomes literally the "crux" of the service.

As the place where the Word of God is proclaimed, Barth regards the Church (and the conviction has been steadily growing on him) as indispensable in this present Age. It is "the place and means," the accessible place, and the available means, of the Grace of God, which is believed in the Church, and through the Church (T.K. p. 296). The need and crisis of the present age and world is the ignorance of man as to how to come to God. The Christian Church is the place of this crisis, as Barth early recognised, but to him it is now a true Church and a necessary Church, because it has an answer to man's question and need. In the Christian Church one does not speak from this side outwards about God—human words, human thoughts about God—but one speaks from God's side outwards, the Word of God Himself, as spoken to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the disclosing of the whole impossibility of man to speak from man outwards about God, but with that, the disclosing also of this other impossibility, that God

Himself should speak to man. The Church therefore is the place where the Word of God is legitimately preached, and where God Himself comes to men in Jesus Christ. It is the place where the last truth about the meaning of life is made ours in Christ Jesus. Here is the great "mystery" of the Church. In the word of man, the great incognito, the Word of God, is declared. In the visible Church, in all its questionableness, the glorious Invisible Church is hidden. The "mystery" of the Church is the fellowship with Jesus Christ. It is a "Church of Sinners," the fellowship of sinful men who live by the Word of God in faith and obedience, it is the "Church of the Mercy of God" (T.K. p. 358). The purpose of this Church in the world is to "give God the glory." This means that the Church must be willing to give up its life and withdraw, and be no power or factor in the world. God alone can save. *Sola Gratia.*

To the Sacraments, also, Barth ascribes an important place in the Church. The Sacrament is also a Word, a *verbum visibile*, and like the Word of God, it becomes an "event," a crisis, over which man has no control, but in which he is controlled. The Sacrament proclaims

to us in our blindness the Grace of God, and emphasises the witness of the Word in the witness of this "event," in which the Exalted Christ speaks to us, of His free grace. The Sacrament is therefore the Word of God in a "sign" or "symbol," and a very solemn and unique symbol. "The Sacrament is certainly symbol, but how can one name it in one breath with other symbols, or wish to explain it by them, if one considers even for a moment Whose symbol it is?" It implies, says Barth, a spiritual presence, the presence of God, through His Spirit, in the "event" of Revelation, as distinct from any physical or psychical presence. It implies also a real or virtual presence, a presence and act of God, in which justification and sanctification take place in secret but in reality. The Sacrament is therefore the bearer and the activity of Jesus Christ. Barth is a Sacramentalist, but not a Sacramentarian. "What gives life is the Spirit, flesh is of no avail at all" (John vi. 63). (Z.Z. 1929: 5: p. 427).

Barth reverts frequently to Baptism, in which he finds "an Archimedean point" from which men may dare to reckon that they are Christians, that they are called to Christian knowledge and

activity, and have a share also in the Christian hope. If he is asked, he says, how he knows that he is engaged in the fight of faith and not in the fight of a Don Quixote, he will point to his baptism. Baptism is not itself the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, but it is the confirmation by which he dares to trust his trust, the voice of his existential consciousness, against so much that might be said, that the fight to which he is committed is the good fight of faith, and not the fight of a Don Quixote (*Dg.* p. 299).

CHAPTER V

BARTH AS A THEOLOGIAN OF THE WORD OF GOD

BARTH has told us that he is an "ordinary theologian," and as a theologian we must seek to understand him. In a recent important article on "Theology and the Man of to-day" (Z.Z. 1930: 5 : p. 374), he has opened his mind to us, and we must consider what he says.

Theology, he says, is a task of the whole Church; its needs and temptations are the needs and temptations of the whole Church, for Theology and Church belong together. It is as the Church reflects upon the Word of God that theology arises; it is not the foundation, but it is the function of the Church.

Theology is the critical self-reflection of the Church as it measures its preaching by the standard of the Word of God. It lives from something heard that must ever be heard again, from something spoken that must ever be spoken again. It lives from the living Word of God, and only in so far as it lives by the Word of God, is it theology. In the measure

in which it bases on historical, psychological, philosophical grounds or justifications, it ceases to be theology. Theology is not timeless, but is for the time. It is truth for time to come, because it is has been truth for times past, and it dares to reckon that God *will* speak, because it acknowledges that He *has* spoken.

Theology is the Science of Faith. To the question how human thought comes to reckon on a Word of God, the answer must be "Alone through faith."

The theologian is not in a superior position to the historian because of any secret knowledge which he possesses. History as such is no more dumb and no more vocal to the one than to the other. He can only say that at certain places, as for example in the literature of the New Testament, the facts of history are to him also witnesses of the Word of God. He does not possess any special psychology to enable him to test the facts of the life of the soul, and he knows of no special organ of the divine. But when theology sees God and man in relation to one another it conceives God as capable of finding a way where so far as man is concerned there is none.

As regards philosophy also, theology can

surprise it with no abstractions or constructions which it would be unable without the presuppositions of faith and the Word to arrive at, if it has not long ago arrived at them.

In point of fact, theology has in the land of science "no continuing city," no finally defined territory. The demand made on the theologian is the daring of an obedience, pure and simple, and naked of all guarantee or certainty. He must at every moment reckon with the possibility that his theology will be understood psychologically, philosophically, historically, which means that it will be misunderstood.

Is it possible then to have a theology? Three answers, says Barth, are offered.

(1) The first answer is No. It puts it away as an impossibility. It is the most primitive way, and it is being followed to-day in Soviet Russia. But not there only. Barth as a theologian would seem to feel more kinship with the wild anti-theological rebellion of Russia than with the lukewarm tolerance with which theology is treated at home, or the peaceful, painless death (*euthanasia*) which it is suffering "at the hands of the well-behaved godlessness of the so-called Humanism of North America."

(2) A second way of treating theology,

says Barth, is to render it completely harmless by turning its trumpet-call to a parley, breaking off its sharp points more or less thoroughly, and taming and domesticating it. Revelation now becomes "the crowning point of the history of Religion, and of history in general," a special flash of a light that is already in existence, of which it can always be said that "it burns nowhere with greater dignity and beauty than in the pages of the New Testament"! Doctrine then becomes an expression of religious conviction. Theology is made completely harmless. This is the solution of "liberal theology." "The attempt is so human that it is no wonder that it has pursued theology through her whole history like a shadow." This domesticated theology (one recalls Kierkegaard's figure of the tame fowls), pressed down to the *niveau* of a free-pious or pious-free world, has its reward in that it rouses no anger, but perhaps also therein also lies its punishment, that no one any more has any respect for it.

(3) The third possibility of dealing with theology, says Barth, is the boldest and most dangerous, and is reached when the relative harmlessness of atheism and liberalism is left behind. It consists in this, that one reacts in

no way with distaste or with any attempt to alter the riddle of theology, but feels quite adequate to the situation. One knows what to do with it. One approves of it, takes hold of it as it is, and proceeds to treat it as the necessary requisite for a satisfying conception of the world, and of the true art of life. Just as, if one had the necessary self-confidence, one might jump upon the back of a wild galloping horse instead of avoiding it, or trying to soften it with kindly words, and so become its rider and master. This way of dealing with the problem is no other than the Roman Catholic way, the way of Thomas Aquinas, though one could find many Protestant analogies down to the latest Protestant theology.

The method is to proceed to buttress and consolidate our position at every point, and leave no loophole for attack. Shall we not call in the aid of Metaphysic? Of Apologetics? Of Eristic? Of Anthropology? Of the Doctrine of History? Of Authority? So that besides having a leg to stand on, we have a leg to play with! All this will secure our very much desired consolidation. Faith does not need any more to be a risk, a venture, it becomes a *habitus*, an attitude alongside others. The

relation between Christ and His Church is no more an event, it becomes a state, a historically continuing relationship.

Theology would thus have its definite place beside philosophy, and psychology, science and history. It would be no "stranger" among the sciences. One could know clearly where it began and where it ended. And it could now move in a free territory with the same assurance as the other sciences. In regard to this perilous possibility, we face, says Barth, a dangerous hour. For if all signs do not deceive us, the man of to-day, very much in ignorance of what he is doing, is on the point of becoming tired of atheistic rebellion, and of the deplorableness of the new Protestantism, and of rediscovering nothing less than his Roman Catholic heart. The cry for a "natural" theology is already heard at all ends and corners, and the work of laying a new foundation is also in full swing at all ends and corners, and in the most diverse forms.

Why is this possibility a danger, even the most dangerous of all? Because the secret of this desire after consolidation, no less than the other two possibilities of dealing with theology which we have looked at, displays the

"offence" which we inevitably take at the free majestic Word of God. Only the "offence" is here neatly taken hold of at its unoffensive point and the whole drawn into the frame of humanism.

Barth's bold conclusion is that the theologian should reject all three possibilities. There is no safe place for theology. Theology, as a true "science of faith," must remain insecure, a stranger in the territory of other sciences, without a field of its own (*v.* p. 288).

It is not our purpose to make any attempt at a scientific estimate of Barth's own contribution to theology. For one thing, his contribution is not yet by any means complete—he is, as he says, still too little complete within himself; and for another, it would demand an entirely different treatment. But one might say, in a word, that the task which Barth has proposed to himself as a theologian is to bring theology back to its *theos* and His *logos*; to God, and to His Word. But while we use the word "back," we do so with caution, lest we should convey the idea that there is anything reactionary or obscurantist in Barth's teaching, anything of the nature of a retreat to what seems a more secure position. "Retreat" is

about the last word we should use either about Barth himself or his teaching. But he is concerned to deliver Protestantism from its "prison-house." The great misery of Protestantism began, he says, when Doctrine parted from its life-giving source and hardened into Orthodoxy; when Christian experience, confusing itself with its origin, took refuge in Pietism; when truth, no longer understood, and no longer understandable, shrivelled into the moral and sentimental maxims of Rationalism (The Enlightenment); when finally even Christian experience was reduced to be the highest expression of a religious instinct common to all men. These are the four corner pillars, says Barth, of the prison in which we all are living, the roof of which is the denial of Revelation, shutting off from us the sight of heaven (W.G. p. 247).

(1) First, he wishes to bring back to the Church *the lost wonder of God.* The Church, he says, has lost the wonder of God, and has been seeking to eke out an increasingly difficult and miserable existence by asserting the wonder of the world, the miracle of history, and of the inner life. The biggest thing which Barth has done is that he has once more given to the thought of God its greatness, its tremendous

power, its overwhelming earnestness, that he has set the sentence "God is God" once again in the middle point of theology and of religious life. The strength of his whole theology, so far as it has been expressed, lies in his doctrine of God in His Word; it is the all-ruling middle point, as well as starting point of his whole message; God as revealed in Jesus Christ. "All my thoughts," he says, "circle round one point, which in the New Testament is called Jesus Christ." He will have theology again take hold of the fact that in the Bible we have a Revelation of God Himself, of which the prophets and apostles are witnesses. God Himself has done something, and that a new thing, a miracle. This to Barth is the central Biblical truth, and this is what he means by the Word, or Revelation of God.

Not for long has anyone written with such power of the majesty and transcendence of God. His words are the words of a man who "has trembled at the Word of the Lord." Behind his thought of God must lie some tremendous, almost annihilating experience. He cannot leave off speaking about God. God is ever transcendent to man, new, strange, never in man's possession, never in his sphere. He is

the "Altogether Other," the "Absolute Halt," the "Absolute Forward," the Yea and the Nay, the living God. Barth stands with Luther and Pascal on the unknowableness of God apart from God's own self-disclosure. He greatly dislikes the familiar hand-shaking terms on which so many seem to be with God. Fear, humility, obedience, should be our attitude to the Sovereign God before Whom we can never stand "save as bowed men." Barth will set again the absolute transcendent God in the centre of the Preacher's thinking. If he does not tell us all the truth, he tells us ever again the central truth. He calls the Preacher away from an anthropomorphic, anthropocentric, utilitarian theology to theocentric theology, in which the believer is "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

Barth offers no proof of God, nor is there any. Only God can speak of God. He has no place for Apologetics in his scheme of thought. Theology, he says, must return from fear to courage, and bring all truth to the bar of God's Word. There is no knowledge of God without the Word which God Himself speaks. *Finitum non capax infiniti.* Barth begins, therefore, from God, or rather from

God as found in His Word (*Dg.* p. 112). Thus, in place of the witness of experience, he asserts the *Deus Dixit* of the prophets and apostles as the only starting point for theology. There is a God Who speaks. "The Word reveals Himself in hiddenness, and hides Himself in Revelation." God is the hidden God, the *Deus Absconditus* of Luther, Who becomes the *Deus Revelatus* in Christ, but is hidden also in the human incognito of the historical Jesus, which alone is visible to the historian's eye. To see the Revelation of God in Christ is given only to the eye of faith.

In his Doctrine of God, Barth, following out his principle of starting always from the Word of God as preached, in his Dogmatics, begins from the Doctrine of the Trinity, in which he sees the subject, predicate, and object of the *Deus Dixit*, God the Revealer (Father); God the Revelation (Son); and God the Revealed (Holy Spirit). For Barth the Trinity is the great safeguard that God is never passive in the matter of knowledge. He is always the acting Subject, and can never be merely an object of knowledge. We cannot master Him, cannot come behind Him, cannot know Him, except in so far as He gives Himself to be

known. He will not allow Himself to be turned into an Object of knowledge. The Doctrine of the Trinity is the acknowledgment of this mystery. The confession that God is too wonderful, too high (Ps. 139, 6), has formulated the doctrine. It does not seek to force a way into the mystery of the Godhead, as is often alleged, it rather bids "halt" to human thought (*Dg.* p. 171).

Barth denies that there is any continuity of the human spirit with the Spirit of God in the sense of Schleiermacher. The spirit of man, as we have seen, is not the Spirit of God. God is the "Altogether Other." His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways His ways. Man by his sin has closed the door, which only God can open from the other side.

It will be observed that Barth abandons the old way of natural theology of mounting "from nature up to nature's God" by way of natural religion. There is no continuity of the human soul with God. They move on different planes or levels. If the two are to meet, it must be by God coming down to man's level, for man of himself cannot rise to God's. The two worlds of God and man can only be connected by grace.

Here Barth parts company with Augustine and Roman Catholic theologians in their doctrine of an *analogia entis*, their belief in the possibility of a knowledge of God resting on the likeness between the world and the Creator, a sort of *preambulum fidei*, apart from Revelation. Roman Catholic theology believes also in God as the "Quite Other," but it leaves the door between God and man ajar, with the possibility of some exchange of divine and human powers. The supernatural builds on nature. No, says Barth, it does not. The new world is not a continuation of the old world. The new man is not merely a better man but a different man. The new life is not an improved edition of the old life but an incomparably new thing. Between man and God the door is closed, except in grace. It is the decisive difference between Barth and Roman Catholic Theology, as Professor Karl Adam, the eminent Romanist theologian has admitted. At this point we see an abiding influence of Kierkegaard, except that for Kierkegaard's metaphysical contrast between Creator and Creature Barth substitutes the separation due to sin. As Gogarten, who is deeply concerned that the New Theology should not plunge into the gloomy grave of all ruling

theologies, the identification of God and man, says emphatically, "the radical separation between God and man is nothing other than the separation of sin." This thought goes through the whole Barthian theology, and is perhaps its most challenging aspect, running, as it does, clean counter to all modernist and even most positive views. For if Roman Catholic theology leaves the door ajar between man and God, modernism flings it wide open. "It is in our values," says Professor John Baillie, in his *The Interpretation of Religion,* one of the ablest expositions of the modernist position, "that we find God revealed. Not in the procession of the stars, nor in the flight of birds . . . but in 'the milk of human kindness' is the character of God made plain, and His will made known" (p. 461). His conclusion is "that it is in man that God reveals Himself most fully and that the most veridical clue to His mind and will are to be found; in man, moreover, at his manliest and best" (p. 460). Barth and Baillie here face each other across a gulf over which no bridge leads. For Barth insists that there is no continuity between man and God, no continuity between the activity of God and our activity, even when our activity is the best and

highest. It remains our activity. Man remains man, and God remains God.

"There are no blood vessels," says Barth, "through which the life of God overflows into our life" (C.L. p. 38). He opposes strongly the doctrine of Divine Immanence, which assumes that there is a part of the soul in which the Deity dwells, for if this were so, man would need no Redeemer. He believes that a fatal sickness has overtaken "liberal" theology through over-emphasis on the Divine Immanence.

This doctrine of God and of His relation to the world has naturally met with much criticism. It is held that Barth puts God out of His world, that he verges on Deism, and "presents God working too remotely, and almost too causally" (Hoyle: *The Teaching of Karl Barth*, p. 256); above all that he contradicts the great doctrine of the Fatherhood of God as taught by Jesus. In meeting this criticism, Barth would remind us how frequently this same idea occurs in the Scriptures. "To whom then will ye liken Me or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Is. 40, 25); "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that

love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9: a favourite text); God dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16). Barth has no thought of contradicting the great doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. "Not the Creator has Jesus revealed as the Father, but the Father as the Creator, the principle of all Fatherliness in heaven and on earth" (*Dg.* p. 178). And if he uses the word less frequently than we should look for, it is because he lives in a day when the great word 'Father' has been cheapened by misuse (*Dg.* p. 181). It is true, of course, that Barth has no place for the nature Pantheism of a Wordsworth, to whom God is

"A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

His view of God and the world rules that out. But he insists that "we live in God's world, the world is God's world, created by Him, maintained, governed by Him." "Dead were God Himself," he exclaims, "if He moved His world only from the outside; if He were a 'thing in Himself,' and not the One in all, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, the beginning and the ending" (W.G. p. 291).

God has not forsaken His sinful world or left Himself without a witness in it. In the divine image in man, the *imago Dei*, so defaced by sin as to be well-nigh lost, man bears in his nature a divine recollection which can be restored. Man has not ceased to be man, *homo peccator* is still *homo*. But even this image is not something assured, on which we can rest, but a something that may happen, a promise rather than a fulfilment, a *dandum* rather than a *datum* (something to be given, rather than something given) (H.G. p. 50; T.K. p. 375). So there is a continuity between man and God after all, but it stands in the gift of God. What saves the dualism of God and the world from hopeless alienation is that God is Creator, as well as Redeemer. It is the same God that "saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good" (Gen. i. 31), "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 13). The Prodigal was once in the Father's House, and yet may "come to himself" in the "crisis" of repentance, and return home to his Father.

So Barth's last word about God is not "draw not nigh hither," but "God so loved the

world." His last word about the world is not "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return," but "Because I live, ye shall live also" (W.G. p. 297).

(2) Barth wishes to bring back to the Church *the lost sense of sin.* In a world ruled by rationalism, and by evolutionary and idealistic theories, sin has lost the deeper meaning which it had in the Christian doctrine of the Fall, and has become merely a "not yet." The reason for Barth's attack on philosophy, especially on idealistic philosophy, and on theology ruled by philosophy, is because he attributes to it the modern decline in the sense of sin. Sin can have no reality except on a dualistic view of man's relation to God, whereas the whole recent tendency in philosophy has been monistic. And where sin has no reality, grace has also no reality. In a terrific chapter on the fifth chapter of Romans, Barth lays the basis of his Doctrine of Grace in the fact of man's sin. Sin is the fundamental determination of man as we know him, and as we know ourselves; of man who is not a sinner we have no knowledge. Sin is a Power, the power of a Sovereign, the power under which the world and man are placed, for "the world is man's fellow prisoner." Sin is

a theft from God. The temptation, "ye shall be as gods," and the grasping after the fruits of the tree of knowledge repeats itself all through history. The actual story of the Fall in Genesis is a "myth" which comes to us out of the unhistorical background of the ancient world. The entrance of sin into the world through Adam can have been no such historical or physical event, in any sense. But in the light of the Word of God it is a "myth" which has eternal meaning. Adam does not exist on the surface of history or psychology, but, as the first Adam who is the shadow of the Second Adam, he exists as "the backward movement" of the race which in Christ, the Second Adam, goes victoriously forward, in the turning of man and his world from fall to righteousness, from death to life, from old to new. In the first Adam we see the timeless, transcendent, disposition of the human world, which, with the first man who found himself in the world, showed itself active. Only in so far as the first man did first what we all do may the shadow which lies on us all bear his name.

Sin to Barth is therefore bound up with the Fall of Man. It is not a fall, nor a series of falls, in the life of man, but the Fall with which

his life as man began, the mystery of which, to Barth, is a mystery of predestination (*Rom.* p. 150). Sin closed the door, and therefore: *finitum non capax infiniti.* Sin is a power in the world before it becomes the will and disposition of this man or that. In the Sphinx of past history, in the wonder and horror of civilisation, in social need, in sickness and death, and in the enigma of human nature it makes itself known.

Kant proposed to ground the conception of moral personality on the free autonomous will, a will that has the idea of the good, and makes it its own. But "we know," says Barth, "that no such *moral* personality has ever stepped into *our* world . . . no such man has ever lived or will ever live." There is a bondage which prevents the human will from achieving the good, the enslaved will itself. Barth thus adheres to the Lutheran doctrine of the *servum arbitrium* (the enslaved will). His theology is a *theologia peccatorum.* Man's will is and remains unfree. Man lives and will live a sinner to the end of his days, under the effect of the Fall. Humanity is a broken humanity, without power of self-redemption, or self-repair.

This doctrine underlies Barth's theology, and

condemns all redemptive efforts that seek to start from man's side as useless, and all doctrines of monism and idealism as untrue. That sin has separated man from God, and planted a dualism at the heart of our human world, Barth maintains, is fundamental to true Christian doctrine. This sin is a revolt against God, which culminates in man's pride. Its effects go beyond man, it affects the universe. And on it is pronounced the Everlasting No of God. We need not pause to point out the challenge Barth flings out to all modernist theories of sin.

But this separation of God and man cannot be final, for then God would not be God. There must be a way back for man, for God is not only our Goal, but our Home from which we have gone out. Man as man, says Barth, is in the far country, a *homo viator*, he is not at home with God, and therefore not at home at all. He dreams the dream of his own divine likeness, and knows that the dream is no dream, but hidden and lost truth. The world to come is at once strange, and, home. Man opens his eyes and finds himself bound in the problematic condition 'twixt angel and animal, which we call humanity. He thinks the thoughts of

God, of Eternity, of the Absolute, and knows that he is only a thing; he would fain sit down, yet must always go farther. He has no abiding place, among angels or animals, neither in soul nor in body, neither in time nor in eternity, neither in self nor in non-self. This contradiction is the far country. His very existence is put in question.

God's Word is the answer to the question and quest of man. "It is the Word out of the Homeland to the *homo viator*, which says to him that the home stands open. It is God Himself who goes after the man who is far from Him, and draws nigh to him (*Dg.* p. 75).

God is beyond the contradiction in which we find ourselves. He is the Creator at the beginning, and the Redeemer at the end, and as both He is the Lord of a peace which we do not possess. Man can only ask, but with that he shows that God has addressed him. For the source even of our sense of problem is in God. "Thou wouldst not seek Me, hadst thou not already found Me." The solution also of our problem is only to be found in God. Man of himself cannot find the way home. The Word of God brings back to man the memory of his eternity. It reminds him not of

something unknown, but of something known which he has forgotten, and must again discover and learn anew. For obliterated, disfigured, forgotten, and unknown (with no man is it otherwise), it is still God's image which we carry and from which we cannot get away. Man is "sick unto death," but the Holy Spirit the Creator turns his sickness to homesickness, his dream to reality, his despair to "comforted despair," so that he can "come to himself" and come to the Father. The restoration of man's true memory of home is a gift of faith alone. *Sola fide* (K.S.G. p. 171: *Dg.* p. 67: Z.Z. 1930: 5: p. 394).

(3) Barth wishes to bring back to the Church *the lost doctrine of Divine Reconciliation.* A Salvation that depends on one's own faith, or experience, or behaviourism, or ethical betterment, that makes of the Mediator a religious hero, and of God's forgiveness a subjective value, such as modernism preaches, is not what the New Testament means by salvation. "Something quite fundamental," says Lippmann, in *A Preface to Morals*, "at least something which has hitherto been quite fundamental is left out. That something is the most abiding of all the experiences of religion, namely, the conviction

that the religion comes from God." Barth seeks to bring back to the Church the lost or greatly lost Gospel in which God the Saviour takes the initiative and does something for the sake of men. He knows the currents of the day that are against him, in Europe and in America, and strikes out against them, boldly challenging the views and systems which, in his opinion, darken the truth of God. The Gospel is not a religious message, but the Good News of God; the altogether new and unheard of truth of God; a Good News of Salvation; telling the sinner that when man comes to an end, God begins. It is not a communication of religious experience, even of the highest experience of man, but the proclamation of a Word of God, a Word that is ever heard anew, and ever spoken anew. It is not a message of how man becomes God, but a message of how God becomes man. It is a Gospel of Miracle, especially the Miracle of Forgiveness, "the highest expression of the *totaliter aliter*—the completely other—which the Bible utters" (W.G. p. 92). It is a Gospel of Hope, based, not on the gradual betterment of society, by any process of evolution, but on God's will to save through Christ, the Hope which has the

assurance that the Divine World will come, because it is already here.

(*a*) First of all it is a Gospel *resting on a great Sacrifice*. For Barth this strange new world of light and miracle has broken upon us in what we have come to know as Revelation-History, *Urgeschichte*, particularly in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, considered not on their historical side, but in their relation to the transcendent unknown God. It is in the light of these events, according to Barth, that the whole Gospel story must be read. Apart from them, the historical Jesus is a problem, a paradox, a *scandalon*, a great Incognito. The Synoptic accounts of Him are completely unintelligible without Bengel's interpretation—*spirant resurrectionem*. Not a line of the Synoptics is to be understood without the Cross (*Rom.* p. 136). Even the Cross, looked at from a human and historical standpoint, appears as one of those offerings of the life, as of a mother at the birth of a child, or of a doctor or missionary, or a soldier in his calling, which interest us as much or as little as any other historical event. But bring the event into relation with the unknown God, and it becomes a communication of God to men concerning

Himself, and His relation to us—a Word of God—the last word on man. So with the Resurrection. Look at it as an historical fact—as something which took place before the gates of Jerusalem—and it is open to all sorts of hypotheses, subjective and objective. But place it in the category of Revelation, as an act of God, and the Resurrection becomes a great wonder, the miracle "direct from above," the breaking through of the new world out of the unknown dimension—into the known world (*Auf.* pp. 34 and 86). In seeking an interpretation of the Cross and Resurrection, in their relation to Redemption, Barth calls in the use of his dialectic. For this great divine truth can only reach us sinful men brokenly. The Cross, in its suffering, hostility, death, is the No of God on human sin. On the Cross Christ places Himself beside sinners and shares their despair. The cry "My God, My God," indicates that every human possibility has come to an end. It marks the death of human thinking and reckoning, of human hope, of human ethic and religion. Nothing remains in this utter bankruptcy except a new possibility, which is God's possibility. That new incredible possibility is the Resurrection, which in

its life and power and glory, is the Yes of God, pronounced on those who accept the Divine judgment. The Resurrection is not only God's miracle done on Christ, but God's miracle done on us. "The subject of the Bible," says Barth, "is the Resurrection. All Bible questions from all sides lead to this subject. . . . The Bible without that absolute wonder would not be the Bible."

Barth does not profess to understand the Atonement. It is not accessible to our human cognition. We see it, as we see the Resurrection, only from the under side, the upper side is unsearchable. The Cross is the expression of the absolute contradiction, the final conflict between this world and the other, a world that kills the Prince of Life. It is the collision of light and darkness, which crash together in the Cross and make it the great crisis or judgment hour of history, in which we see the expression of God's judgment on sin, on the one hand, and the expression of His grace on the other. The Cross is at once a throne of judgment and of grace. But it is a great deep where all our thoughts are drowned. We have here to deal with the hidden God Who even in the Revelation of Christ is veiling Himself, while He

reveals Himself. God has set Christ forth as an *hilasterion* ("Propitiation") in our world, that is, as the place which, like the Mercy-Seat of the Old Covenant, declares the hiddenness and at the same time the saving presence of God, as the place in history from which the Word of God, the word of His Righteousness, can best be understood (*Rom.* p. 79).

That is the Divine Reconciliation, the open and yet hidden paradoxical reality of the Sovereign God, in judgment and in grace. *Soli Deo gloria.*

All we are given to know is "that in the sacrifice of Christ, the sacrifice demanded of us is made once and for all, that we ourselves are sacrificed with Christ, and that we therefore have no more sacrifices to bring." This, which Overbeck called "the wisdom of death," is at the same time the most comprehensive wisdom of life (W.G. p. 84).

(*b*) Further, it is the Gospel *of a living Christ of Faith.*

The last insight into the Revelation of God in Christ, says Barth, is to be found in Pentecost.

The preoccupation of our time has been with the historical Jesus. All our "Lives of Christ,"

so-called, have sought to make the historical Jesus vividly real and present to the mind by studies of ancient life and manners of the East in our Lord's day, which archaeology has made possible for us. But to our surprise the more our historians and archaeologists have laboured to bring Jesus near, by these means, the more they have seemed to push Him back into a past that is no more. This has been the bitter disappointment of our generation.

All this was brought home to Barth in his early studies. He came to see that the "liberal" Jesus of history was a creation of our age, and not the Christ of the New Testament. The so-called Jesus of History, who moves on the surface of history and psychology, is, like all that is historical, liable to decay, and shares in the uncertainty of all historical things. The Christ of Revelation is not a figure of our history, not even the corner-stone of the house of humanity. He is God Who became man, the Creator of all things Who lies in a cradle. Even if we have known Christ "after the flesh," after His historical and psychological character, so now we must know Him no more (2 Cor. v. 16). It is only as a contemporary, as a Christ "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," that Christ

can come to us. No man will leave all to follow Him who has not heard His voice speaking, not in the unintelligible dialect of Palestine, but in the tongue to which he was born. This is the miracle of Pentecost. The Parthians and Medes and Elamites, who had come from afar, who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, heard in their own language the wonderful works of God. Christ was in their midst. We also come from afar, we were not present when Jesus lived and died and rose again, we speak a different language, and have quite other manners and customs. When we think of the Jesus of History we feel that He is far away from us, and an immense cleft lies between. But it is with us as with the Medes and Parthians. Jesus has not merely been. Pentecost tells us that He is. He stands in the midst. The Eternal has appeared in the accidental. The thousandfold differences in the views of the world and life sink into insignificance before Him. Around Him time is still, as a circle round its centre. In olden times groups of actors would pass from village to village and act "the Dance of Death." Death stood in the midst, and round him gathered all types and ages of life. To each one he spoke of sin, of fate, of death and

transitoriness. And each one understood him in his own language, the peasant, the beggar, the man of the world, the little child. In the Bible we have another picture of suffering, sinful men standing round not the figure of Death but the Prince of Life. And we, the distant ones, the Medes and Elamites, are given to hear, each in his own language, the Prince of Life as He tells not of sin but of pardon, not of fate but of love, not of Death but of Life (K.S.G. p. 162).

(4) Barth wishes to bring back to the Church *the lost doctrine of the Kingdom of God.* In modern liberal as well as positive theology the Kingdom of God has been given a meaning quite contrary to that which it has in the New Testament. The New Testament writers lived "on the brink," in expectation of something that might come at any moment. St. Paul had a clear sense of a brink, a crisis, a "glory that should be revealed," a life that threatened "to swallow up mortality." To this eschatological living, "living dangerously," living on the brink not of death but of life, new life, the New Testament gives the name of the "Kingdom of God." "The Kingdom of God," says Barth, "is the kingdom which begins just beyond the Cross, beyond all human possibilities" (*Rom.* p. 136).

It is always used in the New Testament in this eschatological sense. Even when, in the Fourth Gospel, the word "eternal life" is substituted for it, the eschatological idea remains. "If thou knewest . . ." says Christ to the Samaritan woman. She stood on the "brink of life" and did not know. But we have substituted for this eschatological sense the meaning of "bettering the world," and have called it "bringing in the Kingdom of God," and have come to believe that the Kingdom of God is something which we can bring about by our own efforts, instead of something that God alone can bring. This, says Barth, is the falsehood that underlies so much Church activity. The Kingdom of God is not something that comes by evolution or idealistic optimism. Idealism knows no "brink," no unrest, no threat of a new life breaking in. The Kingdom is an *ingressio*, a breaking into the world of something beyond and foreign to it. It is a putting of a foreign thing—a leaven—as Christ said, into the meal. It is not a continuous growth on the horizontal plane, but a descent "direct from above," as Barth says, upon the horizontal. We may speak of an extension of the Christian community, but we cannot speak of an evolution of the Kingdom of

God. The basic theme of the New Testament, says Barth, is this eschatological conception of the Kingdom of God, this expectation of a new creation, this assurance that God will come and put an end to the disorder of a world which man cannot put right. God has not only announced that He will come. He has already begun, hiddenly, in Jesus Christ, to make an end of sin, death, evil, not by improvement, but by re-creation. Where Christ is, there is the Kingdom, and the tension of living "between the Ages." The coming of the Kingdom is a matter of faith, and hope, and prayer, and waiting. We cannot command the Kingdom. The Divine is not at hand in some storehouse from which we can draw at will. We can compel much but we cannot compel God. "The Kingdom cometh not with observation," said Christ. "Lo! it's there! in the midst of you." When we begin to ask and our questions grow earnest, when we wait and look up, then the answer is at hand. When we grow humble, and no more imagine that we have God in our possession, or that we can make use of God for our own ends, when we are at the end of our human ways, and are taken hold of by a holy impatience with ourselves and others that the Kingdom of

God shall come, then it is at the door. "The real seriousness of our situation," says Barth, speaking of our time, "is not to be minimised, the tragic incompleteness in which we find ourselves is not to be glossed over. But it is certain that the last word on the subject has been spoken. The last word is *the Kingdom of God*" (K.S.G. p. 257; W.G. p. 297).

Barth and the Theology of the Fourth Gospel. The extraordinary closeness of the theology of Barth to that of the Fourth Gospel must be evident to all. St. John also does not give us Christ as He is knowable to the historian, but as He is knowable only to faith as the living Christ. He begins, where Barth begins, in the sphere of the supertemporal, the *Urgeschichte.* "In the beginning was the Word." Then "the Word was made flesh." But that was only the frail tabernacle in which the "glory" tarried. Jesus passed incognito through the world. "He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (i. 10). "There standeth One among you Whom ye know not" (i. 26). It was the great Paradox of God coming to the world in the form of a man. "No man hath seen God at any time" (i. 18). There is no way from man to God. But God in Jesus

Christ has flung out a bridge toward man. There is the same dualism in John's Gospel as in Barth, the same conflict of light and darkness, life and death. There is the same contrast of the old and the new, the flesh and the spirit, between which there lies nothing but a hiatus, death, the cross; beyond which the new begins. With Barth, as with the Fourth Gospel, the new birth takes place beyond our possibility of experience. There is no natural law in the spiritual world. There is the same constant emphasis on the place of "witness," the same attitude to the Scriptures. "They testify of Me." There is the same eschatology, the same note of crisis and judgment, the same emphasis that God always takes the initiative, the same central place given to the Resurrection, the story of Lazarus, the crowning point of the Gospel of John, being much in the thought of Barth. "Lazarus come forth! The releasing word, which can be spoken only by God, is Resurrection. That is the new world, the world of which we can only say, it is *totaliter aliter.*"

The present writer was so impressed by the closeness of the resemblance that he spoke to Barth himself about it, who concurred in his opinion. The Theology of Barth might almost

be described as the Theology of the Fourth Gospel (which, of course, is strongly Pauline) expounded for to-day. This certainly can be made the acid test to prove whether, as is sometimes questioned, Barth is Biblical.

Barth and Roman Catholic Theology. The close interest with which Roman Catholic theologians follow Barth's work can be understood, not because they discover in him any active sympathy with them (one of them describes his *Romans* as being filled with the " scorching breath of the old passion of the Reformers "); but because at points, as for example in his advance against all philosophical and theological immanence, he confirms their position. He shares with them the doctrine of the Divine Transcendence, the belief in the working of original sin, even unto death, the conviction of the absolute, unconditioned necessity of grace as a free gift, and the grounding of the new supernatural life in God. Baron von Hügel's insistence on the " given-ness " of Divine Revelation, the " creatureliness " of the true attitude to God, the " costing-ness " of spiritual religion, all springing from the " Otherness " of God, which in the end separated him from the Modernist movement in the Roman Catholic Church, shows how

the same ideas have been moving in different minds.

There are other points of contact. Barth, who is ever most respectful towards the Roman Catholic Church, has said "that it must be fundamentally possible in the long run to come to an agreement in thought even with a Catholic theologian, and even over the subject of the altar-sacrament, without any accompanying desire to take it from him" (W.G. p. 133). But Barth remains a son of the Reformation in the strictest sense, and calls for a fresh taking hold of our Protestant heritage.

CHAPTER VI

BARTH AS A PREACHER OF THE WORD OF GOD

ALTHOUGH Barth is now a University Professor he remains a Preacher of the Word, whose speech is penetrated with the consciousness that it deals with the ultimate issues of life and death, and for the Preacher of to-day he has a living message. This man who has little use for psychology knows the human heart right well and how to speak to it, and to those who have the ears to listen he is a preacher of moving power. It is not easy preaching and it is not easy hearing. Jesus came to the dead, to men like Lazarus, bound in the grave-clothes of the old life, and the preacher, says Barth, who does not himself speak as one who has himself been made alive from the dead cannot truly preach to men. It is a disturbing Gospel which Barth preaches. For when the word "death" has been heard and understood, and also the word "resurrection," one cannot rest peacefully, he says, in the familiar churchly folds. We are less the asking and the searching than those who are them-

selves asked and searched. Starting from his position as a Witness to the Word of God, and regarding any claim to be a prophet as ridiculous, Barth defines preaching as the declaring of the *Word of God. Predicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei.* There is no hearing that is without decision. There are no mere listeners or spectators, but only hearers of the Word of God. The preacher is also a hearer, speaking to himself as well as to others. He is a minister, a servant of the Word of God. Preaching is not only a difficult, it is an impossible task. As preachers we are called to preach the Word of God, but we are human and we cannot speak it. "Ah! Lord God, behold! I cannot speak," ought to be the confession of every preacher. All we can hope is to bear an imperfect "witness" and give God the glory.

The Preacher must take the Word of God seriously, not bending the text to himself, but bending before the text, waiting upon it, until he hears God speaking through it, until its truths "take hold upon him like an armed man." We do not go to the Bible to hear all sorts of petty things about the Jews, but to hear God speak to us. In the Bible is the answer to the great questions which our people bring to

church. And our work is to let God Himself speak through His Word. We must be content to be earthen vessels for the Word, and no more. The Preacher, says Barth, must take his people seriously. Why do they tolerate us? We can only explain it on the ground of some fundamental need in human nature. They do not need our help in the daily affairs of life, but they are aware that their daily life is bounded by the mystery of What? Why? Whence? Whither? They have no answer to these questions, and so they look pathetically to us. They must know that we can answer these questions no better than they can. Still they continue to look to us hopefully. Many may not have much use for us when all goes well, but when the ultimate appears on the horizon they send for the minister. Barth feels there is something deeply moving in the sight of people coming to church on a Sunday morning (W.G. p. 104). There is a sense of expectancy that something of significance is going to happen. The expectation lies in the whole situation, whether the people know it or not. And here is a man on whom the expectation lies in quite a special way as he opens the Bible and reads words of boundless significance, and lets the people sing the old

hymns, all on the border-line of immeasurable events. Of course, the people can be put off. Many are quite willing to be put off. They do not want to be brought face to face with Reality. Yet in their deepest nature, and in their best moments, they want the Word of God. For man cries out for God, and seeks to know what is on the farther edge of living. He does not want truths, but truth, not human solutions, but Divine salvation. We have as preachers, says Barth, no reason for our existence, unless we have something to tell, something to witness of God. Our people do not really need our observations on morality, or culture, or even our disquisitions on religion. If we do not take our people seriously, more seriously than they take themselves, if we put them off with secondary utterances, we need not wonder if they turn from us disappointed. "Christian preaching is the proclamation of 'the wonderful works of *God*' (Acts ii. 11), or it is not Christian preaching."

Once more, Barth will have us as preachers take the age we live in seriously, and seek to understand it. The Bible has a permanent message, but it has also a Word of God for to-day. "We must understand our times and

also ourselves, in our strange unrest and agitation. To understand means to have the insight of God . . . to understand means to take the whole situation upon us in the fear of God, and to enter into the movement of the era. The essential thing is understanding" (W.G. p. 294). "To understand the meaning of our times in God," he says again, "to enter into its God-given restlessness, is to give meaning to our times in God." In a world fermenting with questions, and with uncertain answers, the preacher declares the will and counsel of God as the eternal truth in which alone resides the power of redemption and renewal.

In a torn and divided world the Church offers a fellowship of love, in the power of faith, which is stronger and more enduring than all other fellowships. The preacher must concern himself for the inwardness of the Church, and in no sense for the Church itself (W.G. p. 130). It is not easy to maintain the Church's life in an age like ours. If it were not difficult, we should not need to bother. But because it is difficult, it is the call of God. The relation of the Church to the age, says Barth, must be largely one of criticism. But she renders society no service if for fear of disturbing it, or of

being disliked, she brings not the comfort and warning of eternal things. Society waits for this service. It will have respect for a Church that dares to disturb it, and make itself unloved, but none for a Church that is too cowardly to speak its truth without fear (T.K. p. 384).

Coming to Barth's own method as a Preacher, we have the two volumes of Sermons, published jointly with his friend Thurneysen, and we note that he carries these principles rigidly into his own preaching. He has no truth, no direct immediate communication from God to bring, for he is not a prophet. We have here neither æsthetic, nor mystical, nor practical addresses, but speech with authority, the authority of the Witness who believes he is declaring the Word of God. Barth's preaching is always speech with authority, speech in the Holy Spirit, for only the Holy Spirit can make our strange, broken, imperfect utterance to be the Word of God to men. It stands alone on faith. Preacher and hearer are both alike in the hands of Him Who alone can make human speech a Word of God which commands obedience. Barth's own preaching is always based upon a text to which he first sits down to listen. He never uses a text merely as a peg on which to hang his own observations on

religion or morality; neither does he indulge in allegorising; he has a great reverence for the Word of God. In a sermon on 2 Cor. ii. 17: "For we are not as many, who corrupt the Word of God," he has given us his own idea of a preacher (K.S.G. p. 200). He translates it: "We are not fraudulent hucksters of the Word of God." The huckster sets out to represent his wares in as faultless and alluring a manner as he can. He makes himself as accommodating and ingratiating as possible towards his customers so as to persuade them to purchase his goods. On every road in the East the Jewish peddler was found in the days of St. Paul, peddling his wares up and down the Roman world, a useful but not greatly loved figure, for his honesty was not considered to be above suspicion. Most of them were hawkers of goods with some hidden flaw which only came to light after the peddler was gone. And not only were there peddlers of goods, there were peddlers of religion and philosophy. St. Paul himself no doubt was frequently treated on his entrance into a town as another Jewish peddler. Here, says Barth, St. Paul makes his protest. He is no travelling merchant trafficking with the name of Jesus Christ for what he can get out

of it, but an apostle declaring in all sincerity the full unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ. Barth reminds us of some of the ways in which as preachers we may become hucksters—fraudulent hucksters—of the Word of God. We do so, e.g., when we put ourselves in the forefront of our message, and proceed to commend our goods like some expert salesman. That is all right and proper in business. But the Word of God is not something that can be thus bought and sold. It does not come into competition with other articles on the world's market. The Word of God is something that can only be received. Certainly it waits with a stormy impatience to be received of men. But it will not have a victory through any trick of the huckster. The Word of God has something special to say to each man, something quite personal and direct, but so long as he will not hear of himself, he will not hear at all. Barth's preaching is always a preaching to the individual, the word of a "Thou" to the individual. The relationship of God to us is not like a state relationship where we all obey the same law, nor a military relationship where we all step at the same time, it is a free, personal, and individual relationship. (K.S.G. p. 226).

Barth likes to bring his hearer to the point, his preaching is personal preaching. He deals very definitely with the question "What shall I do?" The first thing which happens, when Jesus comes into the night of a human life, is that this question becomes more living. The man is led into a deeper uncertainty and pushed to the brink, where he knows no more what he will do. For only when man's way comes to an end, does God's way begin (S.G. p. 133). Barth's message does not begin by being a Gospel of Comfort. He shows how Jesus is a disturbance in our life, and his call to repentance a "stone of stumbling," which has been rolled in our way (K.S.G. p. 66). Jesus disturbs us that He may make us right with God. He robs us to enrich us. He kills us to make us alive. Otherwise He cannot help us. We must repent, get a new mind, and go through the narrow portal. That is what Barth calls "overcoming the dead point." A preacher of repentance, he is also a preacher of the narrow way. The way of grace which we must go is a mountain-ridge which leads high up between two abysses, and in each moment there is only one possible thing for us to do. And all other possibilities are really impossibilities (K.S.G.

p. 190). But if there is daily risk in the Christian life, there is daily forgiveness. Barth's mind always begins to glow when he comes to speak of God's Forgiveness. The "Holy," he says, does not grow in our garden. It is pure grace of God. This is the new thing that has come to us. We do not live in Moses' time. "And not as Moses" (2 Cor. iii. 13). There is a vast difference between Moses' time and Christ's time. Moses' time meant to St. Paul not something small but something great. "To do as Moses" was to set up stern, high commandments, which stand like great hewn stones that nothing can dislodge. But the minister of the Gospel knows a higher task than to "do as Moses." He has a Gospel of the grace of God to declare. The great office of the minister is to present Christ to men, clothed in His Gospel. In Him we have forgiveness, and eternal life, although we are sinners and dying men. We live not in Moses' time, but in Christ's time. The times wait again for men who have the Christ Spirit, who know again what forgiveness means. Forgiveness delivers, forgiveness reconciles, forgiveness must be got into our politics, not morality, but forgiveness, not the spirit of Moses, but the Spirit of Christ. Forgiveness

reconciles nations and parties. Forgiveness makes it possible for us to live at all with one another. Only forgiveness heals wounds (K.S.G. p. 222). While Barth can make us feel the sharpness, the relentlessness and truthfulness that live in the words of Jesus as few preachers can do, no one can lay the healing balm on the truly penitent heart more tenderly. Barth's preaching centres largely round the great eternal "moments" in the life of our Lord, when the strange new world of God breaks in. As we should expect, the Resurrection, the "new thing which is the secret of Christianity," fills a large place. The wonder of it, for him, never dies. But he never forgets to remind us that it is not enough that Christ is risen, unless we are risen with Christ. We are to seek the things that are above. The rule of death is below, the rule of Christ is above (K.S.G. p. 171).

The thought of time and eternity occupies a great place in Barth's mind. He lives himself eschatologically, lives in the promises, in view of the end, which is the new beginning lives "on the brink," not of death, but of life, and it pervades his preaching. His mind moves much in his sermons between the great contrast of life and death. Life is the last

and deepest truth and it is found ever in contest with death. Nowhere tolerance, nowhere balance, but battle, battle, and always again the victory of life. Life is stronger than death. Death is the empty room where life is not. Let the life in, and death will withdraw. Put yourself on the side of life, and you will escape from the realm of death. Life and death are to Barth, of course, not only physical but moral terms.

Barth is a preacher of Hope. He lives in the Promises. His Theology might be called "The Theology of Hope," so strongly coloured is it with the thought of the coming Redemption to the Reign and Kingship of God. All preachers are to be men of hope if they are to be Christian preachers. He bids us expect great things from God. We are to "lift high the gates." A great King is to enter. Our need does not consist in this, that no help stands before our door. The Helper stands there, but the door is too narrow, too small. Christ is coming. He is always coming. That is the difference between the Christian Age and the old pagan world. Paganism had no hope of a Coming One (K.S.G. p. 12). Barth is also a great Preacher of Peace, of God's peace which passeth all understanding (K.S.G. p. 180).

But if Barth's lights are high, his shadows are very dark, as we come to feel when we read a sermon on " Jesus and Judas " (K.S.G. p. 116). " Man is something " he says, quoting Nietzsche, " that needs to be overcome." Man—Not the evil, or the godless, or the unbelieving, or the immoral man only, but man in every form, man as such, man as he is, apart from his evil, but apart also from his good qualities, needs to be overcome. Barth pursues man, or rather he pursues himself, for on no one is he so hard as on himself, until he comes to the last bastion, the strong tower behind whose thick walls dwells the " Ego." It is there that sin has its seat. From there the " Ego " issues forth, thither it returns. This wall must be broken down, this strong tower destroyed, before the man is overcome. The world knows well enough, he says, that on the whole our Christianity has not attacked that innermost citadel, our churches and chapels lie outside that last bastion. But that is what Jesus must have. " The *broken* and the contrite heart." The Offering which man brings must be the " offering " of himself (*Rom.* xii. 1).

As we should expect, many of Barth's sermons deal with God, usually with God as the great

" Other," Who is different from us, and Who is our judge. " All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, *but* the Lord weigheth the spirits " (Prov. xvi. 2). *But !* says the wisdom of the Bible, and when we have once heard it and understood it, we recognise its importance. *But !* signifies that in our thinking and speaking we have come up against something. That " *Other* " of Whom the Bible " *But* " reminds us waits us on the way, leaps out upon us, is a One with Whom we have all to reckon. The *Lord* weigheth the spirits. We all come upon His scales, to be judged of Him. God weighs, we are weighed. We weigh in the gross. But God weighs the actual weight, the content without the wrappings, the *spirit*, which is the man himself (K.S.G. p. 14). But there is also the other side. " *But* God Who is rich in mercy " (Ephes. ii. 4). There a door opens in an unexpected place. " *But* God . . . " a great new undreamt-of possibility opens after all possibilities seemed exhausted. A great beam of hope breaks into the prison house. *Jesus is Conqueror* (K.S.G. p. 145). Many people take umbrage at Barth because he speaks of God as the " Other," as if somehow that made Him seem even less than man. But he does so because,

to him, God is too wonderful to be spoken of in terms of earth, even in terms of man. Have we forgotten that Jesus bade us pray to our Father Who is in heaven? Even He, the Son, addressed Him as "Holy Father."

There is little of so-called "practical" preaching in Barth's sermons. He is weary of much that goes under the name of "working for the Kingdom of God." "Oh! we are so modern, so up-to-date, with our church halls, and tea meetings, and lectures and lanterns and films" (S.G. p. 157). He questions the value of much of it. It may even be proving a hindrance. "Are we hoping that something may happen? Are we not rather hoping by our very activity to conceal in the most subtle way the fact that the critical event that ought to happen has not yet done so, and probably never will?" (W.G. p. 20). Barth wants us to leave room for God to work. He does not weary of enjoining us to "be still." The Chinese philosopher, Lâo-tsze, he recalls to us, once compared the thoughts of men to a cart-wheel. Twelve spokes, he says, in his parable, meet together in the nave of the wheel. But there, where they meet is a hole—an empty space. And upon this hole rests the usefulness

of the wheel. For through this hole the axle of the cart thrusts itself, and round it the wheel turns. What would be the use of the wheel if that hole were wanting? What would we think of a cart-wright who perhaps in his zeal to make his work particularly good did not leave this hole for the axle, but proposed to fill it up with his own work? What Lâo-tsze means to say is this: "our thoughts are not the last thing, rather they point to something which is other and greater than they." We name this other thing to which our thoughts should point as "life," and we test the worth of our thoughts by whether they really lead thither or not. Our Christian thoughts about God, the world, and man ought to have this hole in the centre. They should point beyond to something which is not themselves, which is greater, which is "Other," and more than all our thinking or understanding. For there, like the axle in the hole of the wheel, there enters in where our thoughts leave off, the "Life," the "Reality," towards which all our thoughts tend. There they run together, and there they stop. For there it is God Himself Who stands, not only as a thought, but in His Being, His Truth, His Power, His whole Reality.

We must, says Barth, leave this hole in the wheel, this emptiness, which we call "faith," through which the Power of God may enter and do its mighty work. We are all too eager to-day to fill the emptiness, which should be a waiting for Power, with our own human activities. Leave room for God to work!

Enough has been said to show that Barth is not only a great theologian, but a great preacher, a man of his time, a time of fermenting thoughts and new ideas, the time of Einstein, with his doctrine of relativity, of Lenin and Soviet Communism, with its anti-God campaign, and that he is at home in the mental atmosphere of his day. He understands the movements and tendencies of his own day so well because he has in a sense epitomised them in his own experience. For one cannot overcome the tendencies of any time except by living through them. Having lived through the times himself, he understands the sickness of post-war Europe, and can put his finger on the place and say, "Thou ailest here and here." He has not only studied it deeply, but has submitted it to the searching scrutiny and criticism of the Word of God. He has himself gone through deep waters, and has come back with a tragic sense of life, and

especially of its evil, due to sin. He is not a pessimist, and will have no false denials of the world. He says "Yes" to life, to the life also of the *regnum naturae*, the life of humanity. But he stands against all false affirmations of the world and mere regard for the creature (W.G. p. 310).

He understands the modern man, and especially the needy, the broken, and the storm-tossed. Those who are satisfied with thought and life may have little use for him, but as one who knows the torn, longing man of our time, he speaks to those who are afar off. The emptiness of a life without God is held up to them, not as from a height, but by one who stands beside them. More unsparingly than others, Barth takes hold of man in his obstinacy and pride, but he takes hold of him from the side of God, with the preaching of the forgiveness of sins.

But he also speaks to those who are near, and who are within the Christian Revelation, the one thing really worth hearing, the Word of God. He may begin by making them angry, he certainly wants that they should be disturbed and should discover a new sense of need. For there is more hope, he says, when a man sighs *Veni*

Creator Spiritus than when he exults as if the Spirit were already his. We have been introduced to his theology, he adds, if we have heard this sigh (W.G. p. 134).

Barth seeks to understand "the mighty God-given restlessness of his time," which he himself shares, and "the mighty shakings of the world." We have here a key to the power of Karl Barth—his gift of understanding, and insight. He is striving to understand our time that he may find a place in it for the Word of God, and procure men to listen to it, as the one answer to the needs and questions of the age. While he may decline the name of the prophet he has, and knows that he has, a word for his age.

In an age of rationalisation and mechanism, in which the individual is depressed, Barth emphasises the "individual," and bids him hear the Word of God spoken to him as if there were none other on earth.

In an age which has lost all solid ground and is feeling around for some *pou sto*—some ground on which to rest—he proclaims the authority of the Word of God, which has burst through upon us from the World of Life, in Jesus Christ, in "the life that conquers death in Christ." (W.G. p. 295).

In a world dominated by relativity Barth stands for the absoluteness of God, of Revelation, and of Eternity.

In an age of secularism, trying to eke out an increasingly difficult existence by asserting the wonder of the world, he is turning men's eyes again to the wonder of God.

In an age of depression, he is a Preacher of Hope. He knows the contradictions of life, but he knows the great answer. He can powerfully describe the distresses of the time, but for him eternity is above, time is underneath. Wanderers we are between two worlds, but we wait for the Victory of God. "God opens to man the door of Paradise, in the midst of his world." Here is the deepest secret of the power of Barth—his eschatological hope, the Promise which his message contains for the home-sick heart of man. "God in history is *a priori* Victory in history. This is the banner under which we march" (W.G. p. 297).

Barth is convinced that what the Church needs to-day is not a clever Apologetic which will secure a place for it within the modern mind, but a fresh new insight into its own message. The melancholy earnestness of the time, he says, will not allow the Churches to be satisfied with

sham solutions. What the Church needs is a "doctrine" that will command the world today to listen, and a conviction that it has something to give which the world desperately needs, and which it will find no other where. "The question of right doctrine," he says, "introduces us to the *vacuum* inside the Churches, and inside Christianity." We need to rethink in the light of the Word of God our whole view of God, and of the world, and of the individual. We must go the straight and rigorous road, he says, which Luther and Calvin went, *from thought to action*, and no other. "The demand of the day is for a new approach in God to the *whole* of life" (W.G. p. 318).

To help the Church to take this road from thought to action, to make this new approach in God to the whole of life, to reinterpret the Word of God as the great Revelation for theologian, preacher, and hearer, is the work to which Karl Barth feels called.

The Theology of Crisis is not an entire innovation, nor is it a mere turning back, but it seeks rejuvenation at the Springs. It is a trumpet call to theologians and preachers: *Ad Fontes*. Back to the Springs of the Reformation and the Bible; back from our anthropomorphic religion

to a God-centred theology; back from our religious individualism to the authority of the Word of God; but back that we may go forward.

"Reformation takes place," says Barth, "when thought takes place."

But Barth is more than a theologian and preacher. He is a great ethical teacher and exponent of the Christian Life.

CHAPTER VII

BARTH ON "THE WAY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE"

If we were to ask Barth for a definition of the Christian Life he would probably say: "the Christian Life in the true sense of the word, the only sense in which it deserves the name, is the life which God lives in us in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit." For when we enquire after the Christian Life in its primary as well as its deepest meaning we are asking not after something which we do, but something which God has done, does, and will do, in us. It is true that we can speak of the Christian Life as a life that "is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3), but we must do so with caution, says Barth, remembering that our place now is not in God but in the world, and that when St. Paul says it is "hidden" he means that the Christian Life is a wonder of God into which we cannot penetrate (C.L. p. 27, Eng. Ed.).

Barth gives a complete rest to the word "self-realisation." The Christian does not realise

himself, the "Christian" is that in us which is not ourselves. Equally absent is such a phrase as "The Culture of the Christian Life." The Christian Life to Barth is not a human plant which we tend and water—it is a fight, a fight of Jacob, in which the Spirit of God contends with the proud hostile spirit of men. It is not a life which rises and soars, triumphs and succeeds; it is a life which goes ever deeper down, step by step, as it surrenders in penitence and humility to the Mercies of God, in Christ Jesus.

All idealistic, romantic, mystical notions of becoming "one with God"; "in tune with the infinite"; all suggestions that God and man can merge, or co-operate, each bringing something to the other; all ideas that men can become "organs" of God through whom He works, Barth sets aside as "unevangelical." Christianity is a "meeting" of God and man in grace, it is not a merging of God and man. There is no continuity between the activity of God and the activity of man; even though our activity be Christian and believing and the best, it remains our activity. God remains God, and man remains man.

At all costs, Barth will keep distinct the

Creator Spirit of God and the created spirit of man. The Spirit of God is not the spirit of man. Through God the spirit of man in his creaturely existence is opened for God's Word, by the Holy Spirit. But it is not man's work. As our spirit cannot produce the Word of God neither can it receive it, except by faith.

That Barth is so stiff-necked on this point, returning to it again and again, indicates that to him it is vital for Evangelical faith. He goes back to Augustine as the classical representative of the idea, the ruling idea of Roman Catholics as well as of many Protestants, secretly and openly, of a continuity between God and man. Augustine himself knew, he says, what later idealistic theology has not known, that the life of God is not identical with what we know of our own created spirit; but he sought the Uncreated Spirit in the continuity of the created, which, says Barth, "ever threatens to make man to be his own Creator and Reconciler" (H.G. p. 95).

This "sweet poison," he says, has so penetrated our Protestant theology in recent times that it has destroyed the quite other view of the Reformers and produced a variation of the theme of Augustine that "the reconciliation

of man with God is an act which proceeds from both, and which takes place by the will of man and the mercy of God" (H.G. p. 61).

Barth's watchfulness on this point never slackens. Let the door be opened ever so little, let man be given any share in his own salvation beyond faith, grant even that the "divine image" is something natural and assured on which man may build and not a "divine gift," and the whole righteousness of works, so dear to the human heart, is again upon us. Every other view than that of the Reformers signifies, openly or secretly, the identifying of the Holy Spirit with the creative power of our human spirits, and with that the co-operation of man with God in the work of salvation.

If Barth puts the Calvinistic doctrine of *Soli Deo gloria* in the middle point of his theology, equally does he bring back to its central place the Lutheran *sola fide*, "by faith alone," as its correlative. Yet he warns us that "faith" must not be hypostatised as if it were a principle apart from God, which was often done in Lutheranism. "Only through that which man is not, does he share in what God is" (*Rom.* p. 97).

From this point we shall set out to follow

Barth along the different stages of what he calls "The way of the Christian Life." It is a life which starts from the Cross, and is motived by the "mercies of God" (Rom. xii. 1), a life therefore which has its rise in a mountain land of mighty motive.

1. *The Christian Life begins in Faith. Sola fide.* As soon as the Word of God meets us, and we respond to it, we have what Barth means by Faith. Faith is man's answer to the Word of God in the existential moment. It is something which we cannot achieve, an impossibility which God alone makes possible. Faith is a "gift" of the Grace of God which calls us and at the same time gives us the power to respond. It begins in a great venture, a leap of trust (*fiducia*). When a man, not from a religious height, but direct from the sinful world, not with any mark of piety, but in his own naked creatureliness, broken and in his last distress, standing on the edge of an abyss, dares the leap into the uncertain, and finds himself held in the Everlasting Arms—that is Faith, in its primitive form. It is always a risk, "the risk of all risks" (*Rom.* p. 73).

Faith is an absolutely solitary, individual thing. There is nothing so personal as the call of God and the answering Yes of man

when faith begins. Faith is a divine miracle, a hidden thing. Flesh and blood does not reveal it unto us. No man can say of another that he has faith, no man can say it of himself. It lies completely outside the phenomenal world. So little is faith to be identified with a psychical act that it is much more the looking away from all that is human and psychical, the ignoring of all inner processes, the renunciation of every subjective experience, and the surrender to a transcendent divine "event." From the side of psychology it is to be described as purely negative, an act of self-emptying, or even more negative, as a vacuum to which the Eternal gives a content. Faith may be accompanied by experience, but we invert the order if we base it on experience. The assurance of faith is something *sui generis*, Faith is its own guarantee. It is faith in God, which ultimately means that the assurance of faith is found only in God. "Faith stands alone on the Word, hears it, and directs itself on God against all experience in a determined 'Nevertheless' depending on God's Word." The model of all believers is Abraham.

But while trust (*fiducia*) is a part of faith, it is not the whole of faith. Faith also includes

belief, and knowledge, and will, and obedience. "Faith is materially a knowledge, a recognition, my 'Yes' to the Word of God spoken to me, the act in which I receive it and take it to myself" (*Dg.* p. 329). And faith, says Barth, is always accompanied by obedience, in the power of the same faith which has taken hold of the sinner. For faith must have its "work." The work is our "existence," that is, our going forth into the activity of this or that moment. Faith cannot stand alone, it is ever a faith that proves, or fails to prove, itself in this or that deed (H.G. p. 82). Barth does not deny that faith expresses itself in deeds, what he says is that faith is so hidden and divine a thing that no one can tell whether it is faith or not that is thus expressed. We can make an offering with our deed, and to that we are called, but whether we are Cain or Abel, that stands not in our power. It is not even a secret of our own hearts. It is hidden in God and altogether taken out of our hands (H.G. p. 92).

Faith, to Barth, is never a completed thing, never at rest. Seen from the point of view of psychology, it is ever again a leap into the unknown, into the dark, the void. The believer is always in movement, always walking on a narrow

ridge between two chasms. At every moment he has certainty (*certitudo*), what Calvin calls "a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us" (Inst. Bk. 3 cap. 2; vii); but at no moment has he security (*securitas*). For "in time," as Kierkegaard says, "man receives no more than a fighting certainty." From the doom of a deadening *securitas*, Barth would wish to save us. The Christian life is never a possession. At every moment we are as dependent on God for it as we are on the air of heaven for breath. One never is a Christian, one always is a sinner. The Christian Life, therefore, while it is a life of Peace—God's Peace—is not without its tension, but it is the tension of hope. "This is the wonder of the Holy Ghost," says Barth, "that our knowledge becomes faith, our doing obedience, that man, in that he receives the Word of God not only once but daily, hourly, is led this way; now in this direction, now in that, but always the way between answer and question, question and answer, both the work of the Eternal Goodness on us, so that whether on the heights or in the depths we are held and carried by the same Word . . . *This Way is the Christian Life*" (*Dg.* p. 329).

(*a*) *The Paradox of its beginning.* The foundation and starting point of the Christian Life is a startling paradox. In the existential moment of faith in Jesus Christ, when we commit ourselves to Him, we are justified as sinners by the Grace of God, Who for Christ's sake counts us who are enemies as His friends, and receives us into the fellowship of believers, into the Church, a "Church of Sinners," as at once sinners and justified (*simul peccatores et justi*). Barth thus restores to its central place the great Reformation doctrine of Justification by Faith through the vicarious death of Christ (*Justificatio impii*). It is a paradox insoluble and unintelligible, a paradox against which our very reason and conscience cry out, that God, for Christ's sake, should declare the sinner just and pronounce over him His great "Nevertheless" of Pardon. Barth holds with Kierkegaard that there are elements in Christian experience which are non-rational, which defy rational explanation, and here is one of them. It is an act of God's grace which "passeth understanding."

In the same existential moment in which the sinner is justified, says Barth, he is also sanctified, and enters on a life of obedience (*Heiligungsgehorsam*), the "obedience of sanctification," the

humble, thankful, loving obedience of one who knows himself as sanctified by the Grace of God.*

The full human response to the Word of God which comes to us in the Cross of Christ is therefore not only faith, but faith and obedience; faith looking to justification, and obedience to sanctification. It is a response that is not made once and for all, but must ever again be repeated, as man pursues the Way of the Christian Life, a sinner and yet justified, bound to the terrible yet gracious God.

Barth goes back to what he believes to be the true New Testament doctrine, that in the same moment in which the sinner is justified or declared "just," he is also sanctified, or declared "holy." The word "holy" in the New Testament means "belonging to God," "standing in a new relation to God." Israel was "holy," she belonged to God, and God claimed her as His possession. In the Christian Church God is gathering out a new Israel, a

* It is unfortunate that in "The Word of God and the Word of Man," Barth's very important word, *Heiligungsgehorsam*, meaning "the obedience of sanctification," is wrongly translated as "obedience unto salvation," which makes a passage like that on page 172 unintelligible. The passage should run, "There is an obedience of sanctification, different indeed from the way of the moralists, which begins by descending from all heights, even from the highest heights, and as a first thing enters on a religious and moral disarmament, and not the opposite."—*Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, p. 149.

new family of God, as His possession (Ephes. i. 14). And just as the individual member shared in the "holiness" of the Old Covenant, so the believer in the new Israel is declared "holy," as belonging to God, Who lays His claim upon him.

(*b*) *Two sides of one Act of God.* Justification and Sanctification are therefore, to Barth, two sides of one Act of God upon men.

Justification is the pardon of the sinner (*Justificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner righteous.

Sanctification is the sanctification of the sinner (*Sanctificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner "holy." Justification directs attention to God the Reconciler; Sanctification directs attention to the man who is reconciled. Justification indicates the *terminus a quo* (God), Sanctification indicates the *terminus ad quem* (the sinner). It is one and the same mouth that says "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Justification), and also says "Take up thy bed and walk" (Sanctification). Justification and Sanctification are the execution of the Grace of God promised to the Christian in his baptism. They are the answer to the question "What does the Grace of God in Christ mean for the

man who meets it?" "What does it mean to be reconciled to God, and to be made a member of the New Covenant?" The particular emphasis of Barth is that Justification and Sanctification are both acts of the Grace of God, the centrality of which he wishes to restore in theology. Grace in its execution, seen from above, is Justification. Grace in its execution, seen from below, is Sanctification.

Justification is God's overlooking of our sin, which is still present and is not done away; His seeing in us, for Christ's sake, not rebels but lost sheep.

Sanctification consists in our being claimed of God in our sin as His possession, because of our justification. Without ceasing to be a sinner, the sinner is now a separated, a qualified sinner, a sinner who is laid claim to by God in an extraordinary way.

Barth is to be commended for his courage in bringing back into current theological speech those great Reformation terms: "The Word of God," "Faith," "Obedience," "Sinful Man," "Justification," "Sanctification," the very meaning of which we were in danger of losing. His teaching on Justification and Sanctification is particularly important (Z.Z. 1927: 4: p. 281).

(*c*) *Wherein they differ.* Having brought out the points at which they meet as Acts of God, Barth is equally explicit as to the points wherein they differ.

Justification is the Eternal side of the work of God's love for sinners as it stands over us with the majesty and clearness of the midnight sky—the *actus forensis.*

Sanctification is the temporal side of the work of God's love to sinners, related as New Birth to Conversion, Election to Call. Justification is simple, absolute, pure and complete. Sanctification is many-sided, incomplete, relative and unequal, the Grace of God in time.

Justification places us in the great absolute final decision of the Eternal God. It is a Yes which God speaks to us, and ever repeats to us.

Sanctification places us in the small, relative decisions of faith and obedience, the obedience in disobedience, obedience in time.

In Justification, God says to the sinner, "Live!" He is dead in sin (Ephes. ii. 5), not just apparently dead, as Modernism teaches, not a little dead, nor almost dead, as Roman Catholicism teaches, but quite dead, so that he cannot co-operate in his Resurrection, nor

effect any justification by works. He is dead, and can only be quickened by God. "But God, Who is rich in mercy" (Ephes. ii. 4).

In Sanctification, on the other hand, God says to the sinner, "Die!" What does that mean? Not that we are to replace our ordinary life with what is often understood as the "new life," a moral and pious life, but that we are to present our "bodies," that is, our whole lives, in our creaturehood and sin, as an "offering" or sacrifice to God in this present life (Rom. xii. 1). The Christian Life is not a second storey built on to the present life. It is the quite ordinary profane life which each of us has to live in his place and station. This whole life is claimed by God. We are sinners from head to foot, and God will use us from head to foot. God says, "Die!" He claims our life as an offering, but not in any way in which we are to be "organs" through whom God executes His will. The offering is and remains an offering, which God claims of us and which He will have us bring.

(*d*) *The Human Side.* What now of the human side? All that man can do is—to believe and obey. Just as Justification and Sanctification are Acts of God, to be regarded

conjunctively, so faith and obedience are acts of man to be regarded in like manner. But the power of these acts of man is alone the Power of God. Man can do as little for his Sanctification as for his Justification. It is not "my work," "my faith," "my obedience," that justifies and sanctifies. I am only worthy of punishment. Only in acknowledging myself a sinner do I take hold, in faith and obedience, of the Grace of God. Grace is a gift of God. It was an ill day, says Barth, for the new Protestantism when it began to understand the "having" of grace as an experience of the heart.

But, one may ask, "to what, then, shall we look to give us some assurance of our call and confirm us that we have grace?" "To our Baptism!" says Barth. It is the sign under which, as crying, struggling, opposing children, we were placed, the sign given by God, through the services of the Church, that we have been elected and called through Jesus Christ to fellowship with Him. As opposing, struggling children, we stand over against God our life long. Is it other with us now? asks Barth. Our grace in Baptism is pure grace. The execution of that grace is our justification

and sanctification. But have we nothing, then, of our own, no small beginning even, to bring? No, we know nothing, but that we are "lost," sick from head to foot, "always sinners," as the young Luther was fond of saying. Our salvation rests on Faith alone (*sola fide*). God says "yes" to man, and accepts him while yet a sinner, accepts him in face of all that his own heart and conscience can say against his acceptance. That is justification by grace. But—and this is often forgotten—in that God justifies a man He asserts His claim over him to be His possession. He claims his obedience. A Christian is one whom God has claimed. Christians are the people of God's possession, of whom the obedience of Sanctification is demanded (Z.Z. 1927: 4: p. 298).

(*e*) *Law and Gospel.* God's Word, which comes to man in the moment of his Justification and Sanctification, says Barth, is at once Law and Gospel indissolubly linked together. For Grace is Law as well as Gospel, and through both God calls us, after He has chosen us to be His own. "The Law keeps its place beside the Gospel as another, a second reality, equally true, equally commanding and necessary, because the same God stands behind both, because the one Holy

Spirit imparts both to men" (W. G. p. 264).

(*f*) *Soli Deo Gloria.* Thus the same God Who has mercy upon us, says Barth, asserts His rights over us. In that He asserts His rights, He has mercy, in that He has mercy, He asserts His rights. Grace is Law, and Grace is Gospel. The response of the believer can only be praise of God's mercy, and at the same time recognition of His unbreakable rights; a response of faith and obedience "to the Glory of God." Our faith and obedience become thus a "witness," a "demonstration to the glory of God," for God will be honoured (*Rom.* p. 417); an "echo" also of the great sacrifice of God in the gift of Jesus Christ on the Cross. But these have no place in our salvation. God remains God and man remains man whatever our offering may be.

The new thing in Christianity, therefore, according to Barth, is the righteousness which the believer has in Christ as his starting point, and not as the goal of a long journey. Once a man learns that sanctification, no less than justification, is a gift of God, he is delivered from all anxious striving to be something which he is not. He proceeds to "work out" his salvation, certainly "in fear and trembling," but

not in anxiety, for he not only works toward salvation which lies in the future in its completeness—and there is, says Barth, an energetic activity of man in grace—but he works "from" salvation, i.e. from justification and sanctification, as his starting point (Ph. p. 67).

The Justification and Sanctification of Religion. In the same existential moment, says Barth, when a man is justified and sanctified, his religion, his human striving, even his rebellion, are accepted of God and reckoned to him as faith and obedience. "If there is a justification and sanctification of the sinner," says Barth, "there is also a justification and sanctification of his religion, by virtue of which, in spite of the fact that, taken abstractly and in itself, it is the culmination of the rebellion against God, it can be called and can actually be Communion with God. Apart from God's co-operation, and considered abstractly, religion, even if on the human side it were ever so deep and sincere, is the culminating power of sin. But by the virtue of the Grace of God, in the concrete reality of Revelation . . . there is an acceptance of religion, a qualifying of human piety as faith and obedience, a reckoning of presumed as real reverence" (*Dg.* p. 317). Thus Barth,

who is fond of putting down the mighty from their seat, the pride of things that claim an absolute place, admits back into a relative place, after it has passed through the Divine Crisis, the Religion which, claiming an absolute place, he condemned as a sin against the first commandment.

It can be, he says, that Religion is not idolatry, nor a rebellion, nor the last phenomenon of the presumption and misery of man, but the service of God, a finger pointing to Grace; like the pointing hand of John the Baptist on the Isenheim altar picture of Grünewald—the Hand that points to Christ.

2. *The Christian Life is a Life pursued amid Problems.* Our Sanctification, says Barth, is a reality, but our obedience, that is, the obedience of sanctification, is a problem which we do not solve, into whose darkness we must ever again go, thrown altogether upon God.

(*a*) *The Ethical Problem.* The problem of obedience meets us first in the ethical problem, the problem of conduct, of "What ought I to do?" It is sometimes suggested that in Barth's theology there is no place for ethics. Since all good work is God's and not man's, man need not put forth any effort of his own. But

this is a complete misunderstanding. Barth's mind is deeply engaged with the question of Christian conduct. A tremendous earnestness rests upon his words on this subject and no rôle is more sternly forbidden than the rôle of spectator. We are concerned, he says, not with a view of life, or a philosophy, but rather with our very existence, with our own instant situation at this moment (W.G. p. 142). The ethical problem is for Barth not an academic problem, as it used to be, he says, for theologians. The era of the old ethics, the optimism of Schleiermacher and Fichte, is gone for ever, and the present problem of ethics is become disquietening and perplexing. For over man's confidence and belief in himself there has been written a *Mene, Mene, Tekel.* We have grown wholly sceptical of ourselves, of man, and of men's ideas as to moral personality and the moral goal. Man condemns himself as soon as he begins to ask about the good, because the only possible answer is that man is not good and, from the view-point of the good, is powerless. The ethical problem, therefore, is a witness to the sickness of man, a sickness unto death. For man can find no answer to his question. It is therefore more than a problem,

it is a judgment, a crisis, a doom for man. But the rock on which he strikes, says Barth, the Reality of God, becomes the rock of his salvation. As he bends before the doom that is revealed in the ethical problem a light breaks through the doom, the light of God's love. At the impassable frontier of death, before which we are called to a halt, the boundary that separates the Holy One from sinners, God meets us with a Word of Life. Through our doom we see what is beyond our doom, God's love; through our awareness of sin, forgiveness; through death and the end of things, the beginning of a new and primary life (W.G. p. 168). There is another world that cuts the circle of our ethical problem, the new, strange world of Jesus Christ. He is the change from No to Yes, from doom to grace, from death to life (Rom. vii. 24–25). Jesus Christ is the new Man from beyond the possibilities of man, beyond all that the pious man can do. He is the Man who is come from death to life (*Rom.* p. 252). In the Crisis of the Valley of Death there opens for man the door of hope in Jesus Christ, Who alone makes the good life possible for man. Forgiveness of sin is therefore, for Barth, the great answer of God to the ethical

problem which can only lead man to judgment and to death. But the forgiveness of sin is not an ethical principle, but a breach with the reality of the ethical, and is beyond good and evil. It is the highest expression of the Quite Other (*totaliter aliter*) which meets us in the Bible. The forgiveness of sin, as Luther emphasises, deals with what is against all reason, indeed "against all ethics," in which man is "against his own conscience," in which he "overcomes God with God." Yet Barth, as we have seen, does not propose to displace the moral law in favour of the Gospel. Just because man, to the end of his days, stands under the destroying work of the Fall, enslaved of will, evil in action, therefore the Law is set up inseparably united with the Gospel. "The law is and remains in force, and is by no means abrogated by the Gospel" (W.G. p. 170). The ethical problem, therefore, leads Barth to the same place as the dogmatic problem, to the Cross, and to "the renewal of the unrenewable old man," through justification by faith. Ethics to him is not a mere appendage to dogmatics, the problem of ethics is identical with the problem of dogmatics. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Barth is consistent in his anthropology,

and has in his ethics no other anthropology than in his dogmatics. The ethical problem is for him the problem of sin and grace, faith and deliverance. The moral demands are for him the demands of God, and as demands they place man under judgment. Therefore the primary ethical demand made on man is "the renewing of our minds" (Rom. xii. 2), "the fundamental demand, the fundamental meaning of all Christian life" (C.L. p. 60, Eng. Ed.). In other words repentance, *Metanoia.*

(*b*) *Ethics of Conscience and Ethics of Grace.* What Barth gives us is an Ethics of Grace, which he sharply distinguishes from all ethics of conscience, or idealism based on an ethical *a priori* in man, an autonomous free will, such as Kant presupposed. The generally accepted "Ethics of Conscience" among modernist theologians is founded on the conception that God reveals Himself above all in conscience, that conscience is an organ of Divine Revelation. "If we would know where in our experience," says Professor John Baillie, "the Divine Spirit most unmistakably manifests His presence, this is the answer, in the voice of conscience, where His law is written in our hearts" (*Ibid.* p. 462).

For Barth, with his doctrine of the "enslaved will," taken over from Luther (*De Servo Arbitrio*), such an ethics of conscience is out of the question. Conscience is not to him the organ of Revelation. In the voice of conscience we have a broken echo of God, as He *is* reflected back in the conscience of His creature, who is fallen from Him. Barth does not deny the truth of Rom. ii. 15; he says that the heathen in their simple naturalness are known of God, and are not without a view of the silver margin of Redemption and Forgiveness (*Rom.* p. 41). He does not say that the natural man knows nothing of God, but he has no saving knowledge, he does not know the true God, he does not know himself, in the truth, as a sinner, in guilt. Only in the conscience of the reconciled man does conscience come to the clear resonance of Revelation. The conscience of the natural man is utterly uncertain and unreliable. The fundamental question therefore for Christian theologians is whether ethics is to be grounded in the Law or in the Gospel, in the relation of man to God, or in the relation of God to man; in Law or in Grace. Practically all teachers of ethics, including Christian teachers, ground their ethics

in the ethical relation of man to God, and therefore begin by drawing a contrast between the natural man with his instincts and passions and the moral man with his idea of moral ends and values.

In all such ethics the Gospel has practically no place. When Jesus Christ appears at all it is only as a moral teacher or reformer, who is set alongside of Socrates as having a profound appreciation of the moral life, and as having, like Socrates, become a martyr for His convictions (cf. Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, p. 371).

At the Reformation it was profoundly felt that Justification by Faith meant an ethical deliverance, a new way out of the problem of moral need for man, and therefore the starting point for an "Ethics of Grace." But it was never carried out, and was soon forgotten, and the old Roman Catholic or Greek conceptions came back in new words. The first to make an attempt to construct an Ethics of Grace was Schleiermacher, in his *System of Christian Morals,* who set himself to the task of describing the conduct to which man sees himself led when Christian Faith arises in him. But he confined himself to the impulses to

activity which proceed from the Christian consciousness. Herrmann's *Ethik*, the reading of which when still in his teens became "an impulse to eternal movement" in Barth (T.K. p. 241), and the receipt of the 4th edition of which, on the morning of his ordination, he felt to be a benediction, first turned Barth's mind seriously to the subject. But Herrmann, true to his starting point in man, takes up the position that "in Christian ethics we must not wish to proceed from the fact of the already existing faith," that "to understand the Christian faith we must proceed from the understanding of the ethical," that is from the Law (*Ethik* p. 6). Thus he begins from natural life and ethical thought, reaching the "Rise of the Christian Life" only in Part II. Here also, as well as in Dogmatics, Barth has been compelled to part company with his "unforgettable teacher" and construct an Ethics of Grace which proceeds from the relation of God to man, that is, from justification by faith, in which the distinction between the natural man and the moral man ceases to have any meaning. Barth may, therefore, be regarded as the first Reformed theologian who has taken up the task envisaged by the Reformers and is

seeking to carry it out according to their mind and intention. Some believe that the weak spot of the whole Theology of Crisis reveals itself at this point. Can it become a theology for the outsider, the "man in the street"? Is the educational task of the Church to be abolished? Is there to be no place for Christian nurture? When Luther and Calvin faced the problem of building the Church they did not build it on justification by faith alone! "It is difficult to understand," says Dr. Keller, "how an ethics of conscience can be spared or how the moral law can be replaced by an ethics of grace."

To this it may be replied that Barth does not propose to replace the moral law by an ethics of Grace. We think that Barth has secured himself against this criticism sufficiently by the position which he gives to the Law alongside the Gospel, as "equally commanding and necessary." For children, for the immature, for the outsider, for "the man in the street," the Law must remain as the tutor to lead them to Christ (Gal. iii. 24). "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." "It is the law which must tear those who have the law out of all their sentimentality and romance and lead them

before the open chasm that divides the Creator and the creature" (*Rom.* p. 65).

Yet Barth will ever keep before us that the primary thing is God's Yes, and not His No. It is because we hear the Yes that we also hear the No and accept its judgment. "It is because God says Yes to us that the No of our existence here is so fundamental and unescapable." Therefore Barth emphasises that God utters His Yes to every child in baptism.

(*c*) *The Problem of the Neighbour.* As part of the ethical problem there arises the question of our neighbour. It was in reading Kierkegaard, who was deeply concerned with the problem of the neighbour, that this question also took strong hold on Barth. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" was to Kierkegaard an absolute demand of Christianity, and a demand that would necessarily involve suffering. Following Kierkegaard, Barth declares that the love to God completes itself in the event in which an invisible "Thou" encounters us with the problem of the neighbour "who fell among thieves" (*Rom.* p. 478). In the existential moment when the Word of God reaches us in Justification and Sanctification, it discovers to us also the problem of our neighbour. For the

Word of God erects its authority over us, and makes a claim for service and sacrifice. This is the difference of the Word of God from all other words. In other words we hear the echo of our own hearts, but in the Word of God we hear the voice of Another. It is a Word that is not relative, but absolute, not abstract, but concrete. It is absolute in that it binds us to God, it is concrete in that it binds us to our neighbour. From here, says Barth, we are to understand the claim of the Holy God upon us as a claim for our offering, for our service. We are pledged to God, and we are under an obligation to our neighbour, through our sanctification, a sanctification that is to become real in our existence—in the outgoing of our life (H.G. p. 84). "From life, from society, one cannot turn away. Men surround us on every side, they put questions to us. There can be no awakening of the soul which is anything but a 'sympathetic shouldering of the cares of our generation.'" "We live in society as those who understand, as those who undergo, and as those who undertake."

The Christian is called of God to love his neighbour in his own particular place. Every one is not a neighbour in the full sense of

making claim upon us. He is our neighbour only as he is commanded of God to make a claim upon us, a claim which is only recognised by faith. Albert Schweitzer sees a stone figure of a negro on a statue in Colmar which speaks to him of the misery of the Dark Continent, and turns his childish thoughts to that country. In the end, the look of that stone face makes him lay down his work at home and go to the help of the African negro. But the claim of the neighbour who calls us may come from quite another quarter. But from whatever quarter it comes, it is a claim that is absolute, because it is the claim of Christ Himself. "In Christ, Who is the turning from question to answer, from No to Yes, from death to life, I am not only one with God, I am one with my neighbour" (*Rom.* p. 479).

3. *The Christian life is a life lived in three orders.* We come now to one of Barth's most suggestive contributions to our understanding of the Christian Life. It is a life which the believer lives in the Holy Spirit at one and the same time in three orders; in the third and last, not existentially, but eschatologically, that is, in promise.

(*a*) *The Order of Creation* (*regnum naturae*). In

this first order in which the Christian lives under the Holy Spirit, the Word of God comes as the Word of the Creator, Who first issued the command of Life, to "replenish the earth," a Word that revealed itself as a Call to work. If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.

In this Order of Creation there was promised to man completeness, unity, wholeness. Man was to be in his sphere as creature as complete as God is complete in His sphere as Creator. The character of this world of creation is the urge of life, the will to live, which we see in all the world, and which, we believe, was given by God with the creation. But this world of nature, made for perfection, is become a fallen world, in which man now lives in his confused creatureliness and sin. The original world of God the Creator is hidden from us. In the form in which we see it, this life-urge, this will of the creature after life, is guilt-laden, and stands under condemnation as something unclean. It is an urge which cannot end otherwise than in transiency and death. Everything that lives has its time. The world, this Age, is under a curse, a curse that has been removed by Christ, but is not yet taken away, the curse of death under which all earthly life lies.

The fashion of this present order, and its guilt, lies in this, that the will to live, from the lowest to the highest, is a desire after increase, aggrandisement, elevation, an extension of the self, or "ego." By this is not meant merely a crude egotism, but quite simply the natural thing which every one of us wants; to live out our own individuality, to exercise the right, to maintain the strength, to put into force the power of our individuality. And in doing so we transgress the law and become evil. That there is something guilty here we become aware of in this, that we come into opposition with others, that what we call life leads to conflicts which we cannot avoid. In this conflict of life against life we see the real characteristic feature of the life of the order of creation as distorted by sin (C.L. p. 51, Eng. Ed.).

We are not, as Christians, to become conformed to this life (*Rom.* 12, 2), but are to exercise a resistance to it and to take a new and different direction. But this Order of Creation is, nevertheless, God's world, the world created by Him, and for Him, though a veil now lies over it (Col. i. 16). What we call the Christian life is to be lived in this profane

and common order of nature by each of us in his place. We do not need to undertake this or that work to live the Christian life. There are no provinces of which we say "this is outside God's sphere." God has erected His claim over all that is called flesh. There is not a religious sphere and a worldly sphere. God will have nothing less than everything.

We must, as Christians, affirm life, say Yes to life, even to the life of the order of Creation. This vast time-process, within the framework of which all thought, speech, and action now take shape, can always become the Kingdom of God, and such it will be when we are in the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God in us (W.G. p. 310). For even the Order of Creation is the Kingdom of God, though its glory is meantime concealed.

Barth thus affirms the thesis of Humanism, that "even fallen man is the bearer of the divine spark." He affirms the claim of the Humanist that the world is God's world. He does not share the denial of a Tolstoy. We are, he says, to accept quite naïvely the world as it is, and not as we dream it, and to ask about its relation to God. God could not redeem the world if He were not its Creator.

The Gospels also do not deny it, but affirm it. The parables are pictures of life as it is. Jesus affirmed life and found a pleasure in His pictures of the scolding wife who got the better of the judge, the speculator who invested his whole capital in a pearl, the farmer sleeping and rising in comfort while his land worked for him, the whimsical host who was determined to have his house full by hook or by crook, the silly fellow who tied his pound up in a napkin, the young scamp who was taken back by his father simply because he was his father. Just the actual life of men which Jesus saw and accepted as inevitable. Only out of such an affirmation of the world, says Barth, can come any genuine denial and criticism, Yes must precede No. Though man is a sinner, he is still a man, destined for completeness, unity, wholeness, as Humanism claims. The promise in Christ of Redemption reaches into the order of Creation, in which by faith, by a second wonder of the love of God, the lost image in man can be restored. Redemption in Christ must, among other things, be the bringing back of the lost promise of the Creator to man.

But, says Barth, while we affirm life in the order of Creation we must not let our affirmation

become a theme in itself, after the manner of Humanism, as if we were dealing here with absolute values. Our Yes to life must carry with it the Divine No. "We can honour the Creator of the original world only by crying out to the Redeemer of this present one" (W.G. p. 312). We must advance from Yes to No. from a naïve acceptance to a criticism of the order of nature. We cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven triumphantly in the sunshine of Humanism, proud of mind and whole of body. We must enter at best lame, halt, blind, and humbled.

But once we have gone through the strait gate, the crisis of the Divine question, and seen the world *sub specie aeternitatis,* then we can maintain towards men, and ourselves, a grateful, happy, understanding patience. "We can permit ourselves to be more romantic than the romanticists, and more humanistic than the humanists" (W.G. p. 303). Everything belongs to us if we belong to Christ (1 Cor. iii. 23). We shall go in and out in the fear of the Lord, says Barth, without becoming servants of idols. We shall go in and out of the house of the publicans and sinners—in and out of the house of mammon—in and out of the house of the State

—in and out of the house of science and art—in perfect liberty in the midst of freedom (W.G. p. 309). Thus, after Barth puts Humanism to the door with its absolute claims and describes it as death to the Gospel, he brings it back to a relative place in the Christian life. In the same way he takes back his favourite writer, Ecclesiastes, whose philosophy, he says, is "Epicurean in appearance only." Quoting Eccles. ix. 7, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy . . . ," and again, Eccles. ii. 24, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour," he says, "one surely fails to know the Gospels if he thinks Jesus could not also have said this." This is not worldly wisdom, this is truth in Christ. This is the solid and fundamental Biblical perception of life (W.G. p. 310).

It is a sheer misunderstanding of Barth to suggest that he is hostile to Humanism. He is only opposed to it, as we shall later see, as an absolute value. If we come to it through the strait gate of the critical negation, through the No, the whole world of humanism is ours. "To perceive the *absolute* vanity of life under the sun in the light of the heavenly life of God

is also to perceive its *relative* potentiality; it is to perceive that it possesses no insignificant, nor inglorious authorization" (W.G. p. 301).

(*b*) *The Order of Grace* (*regnum gratiæ*). The second order in which the Christian lives under the Holy Spirit, says Barth, is the Order of Grace. The Word of God comes to man in this order as the Word of God the Reconciler, revealing Himself as Authority, demanding humility, and bestowing the gift of love.

It is an order in which light is locked with darkness in arduous but victorious struggle (W.G. p. 313). We have to do here altogether with man as a sinner, but as a sinner justified by faith (*peccator et justus*). In this Order of Grace the Kingdom of Christ stands "in the midst of foes." The Holy Spirit as Reconciler strives against the hostility of the spirit of man and his righteousness of works, against the sin which man can put away neither by thought nor act; and brings forth the fruits of faith, joy, and assurance in the Holy Spirit. Christian life in this order is thus the life of justification by faith, the life of repentance and trust. Christian life in this order is also the life of sanctification, whose reality expresses itself, in the Holy Spirit, in the obedience of sanctifica-

tion, an obedience that is humble and gracious, and which deepens until it is performed in the power of love. For only then is it true obedience of sanctification.

It is here, as the Word of God sets up its authority over us, that the problem of Christian obedience arises; a problem which, we have seen, we do not solve, but into whose darkness we must ever again go, throwing ourselves upon God. The way which the sinner must go is the way of obedience. The yoke which he must bear is the yoke of authority. For as God's justified, we are God's claimed, God's possession.

The chief feature of this Order of Grace is that in our particular place and position we are under authority, and that it is in submission to this authority that our sanctification is fulfilled. That the reconciled, in the place where he is, truly "believes"—that is his obedience. His works are the works which his place and situation demand. They are not so much works of special piety as works of Christian worldliness, the ordinary tasks of men. The divine demands fall in with the fulfilment of the valid ordinances of society. Our sanctification is fulfilled not in the abrogation of the ordinances of creation;

marriage, family, and such like, but in their confirmation.

But, one will say, "All this is very austere. Where is the joy and peace in believing? Where is the happiness of the Christian life?" Barth does not forget this side of the Christian life. Certainly, he says, let there be a happy assured trust in the goodness of God. Let joy spring forth in the heart. What more glorious and better thing can we wish for a life than that there should be given to it eternal life? Only, he says, do not rest in it as something that is given, but as something which is continually being given. And do not forget that this goodness of God which meets us is the goodness of a God Who comes to us in Jesus Christ, bearing a cross; a God Who Himself went to death for us and with Whom we must be buried in Christ unto death, if we are to be raised from the dead. The Yes is hidden under that No (Rom. vi. 4; H.G. p. 76). The faith of the justified and the obedience of the sanctified sinner thus become a praise and recognition of the grace and the claim of God, an obedience that can be nothing other than thankful praise of the Mercy of God. But do not let us, says Barth, allow the adjective

"Christian" to flow so easily from lip or pen, as is the custom in our triumphant modern Christianity. "Christian world-view." "Christian morality." "Christian art." "Christian personalities." "Christian newspapers." "Christian efforts." What do they mean? Who permits us to be so spendthrift with this adjective when we must know that the conferring of it in its actual, earnest sense is quite taken out of our hands? The Christian Church, says Barth, should begin again to enquire what the word means. "What is a Christian?" (H.G. p. 93).

It is within this Order of Grace, and as the obedience of sanctification, that Barth finds his place for the work of the Church, the social state, law, civilisation and culture, and the worldly calling, which are so many means of Grace, relative and earthly, in our life as justified sinners, but which may be blessed in Christ. All these have at one time or another been regarded as absolutes—the State by Hegel and Fichte; Society by Karl Marx; Humanism in our day, as well as in past days, by the Humanists; the Christian Church by Roman Catholicism. None of these has absolute value, not even the Church. The Church has no

authority in itself, but rests altogether upon the authority of the Word of God. In the theology of Crisis, each of them is confronted with the Critical Divine Question.

Having put all these forth from their proud position as Absolutes, Barth allows them to return through the narrow door of the "crisis" as relative human ordinances, of high value as such, to which the Christian must submit, and in which he is to pursue the obedience of sanctification. There are phrases in Barth from which readers have drawn the conclusion that our attitude to the world can only be that of confirmed resignation. What can all our labours of reform effect? Are they worth while? Let us fold our hands and wait for God to work. Barth does use the word "Christian resignation," but it is the resignation that is distinct from all pessimism and peevishness, the resignation of one who knows that, in this order, man will never be other than a sinner who is justified, living in an order in which death rules, for the "fashion of this world passes away." It is the resignation not of folded hands, but of the man "who looks for and hastens unto the coming of the day of God," the resignation of one who waits for a

new world made by God, and who knows that it is on the way (C.L. p. 49, Eng. Ed.).

Barth is far from Christian quietism. As a good Calvinist, he is a confirmed activist. There is a justified activity of man upon earth which does not derive its motive power from moral principle, but from gratitude for the great Redemption bestowed on us, an activity of brotherly love which begins with our forgiving our debtors. The relative claims of all great reformers or social workers who wish to work for a new order of society, "to the glory of God," are fully recognised by Barth.

In Calvin's proclamation of his Gospel of Grace, the work in the "City of God" beside the Lake of Geneva had its due place. It is no good sign of moral ripenesss, says Barth, to be a cold-blooded sceptic and to have no faith in the social state or in world peace. Better a rigorist than an opportunist, better an enthusiast than a bourgeois, who hopes for nothing (Z.Z. 1927: 4: p. 305). The only persons with whom Barth is really impatient are the reforming busy-bodies who suffer from a lack of humour and who cannot keep off condemning people. Take from them, he says, their sense of moral indignation and you have

broken for them their backbone. "They all live by a secret or an open protest, by sighing and shaking of the head over the follies of the world, by separating of themselves from others, while the tragedy of the world, whose greatness must stop every mouth, they do not know" (*Rom.* p. 493).

The Millennium. Without thinking out to its end the idea of the realisation of the good in society, one cannot, says Barth, truly see the ethical problem, and the question of the good can have no meaning. All these things must play their part in promoting that better order of society to be realised in time, the goal of earthly history, which we call the Millennium. We do not seem able, says Barth, to argue out of the Bible the Millennium, grounded in what our stammering paraphrases call truth and righteousness, love and peace. The realisation of this better order of society on earth is embodied for us also in the ethical demand "What ought I to do?" (W.G. p. 266).

Without some such belief, thinks Barth, ethics cannot exist. But he clearly distinguishes this better social order on earth for which we are to labour from the Kingdom of God, which he always conceives of eschatologically,

as well as from the hope of eternal life in a future world.

All these are relative and not absolute ends. The world goes, the kingdom comes. By our activity and protest in the world, our fight for human order and righteousness, we, in the order of grace, bear our witness to the divine ends and point to that Eternal Order of God which never appears on earth.

(*c*) *The Order of Glory* (*regnum gloriæ*). The Christian lives also in the Holy Spirit, says Barth, in a third order—the Order of Glory—a new world of hope begotten by the Holy Spirit, in which the Word of God comes to man as the Word of the Redeemer, demanding gratitude and bestowing the gift of hope.

Barth distinguishes between *katallage* (Reconciliation), a present gift by which the believer is reconciled in the order of grace (2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. v. 11, etc.), and *apolytrosis* (Redemption), a gift which belongs in its completion to a future life (Rom. iii. 24; viii. 23; Ephes. i. 7 and 14, etc.).

Beyond the confused transiency of our creaturehood in the order of creation, beyond the fight of spirit against flesh and of flesh against spirit of the sinner—sinful yet justified—

in the order of Grace there is a last, final immovable hope in the order of Glory. This order of Glory, in which God is Redeemer, lies for Barth in the future, beyond this present world, beyond death and resurrection, in a new created world. It is the final eternal revelation of the Glory of God (H.G. p. 39).

Redemption is more than Creation, more than the completion and crown of Creation. It not only gives the lost world of Creation back again, but something which the lost world of Creation never had. Redemption means resurrection from the dead into eternal life. Redemption is therefore Creation, but without the possibility of sin and death (T.K. p. 382).

Redemption is also more than Reconciliation. In the world of Redemption man ceases to be a sinner justified by faith. He is delivered from the provisional character of his creatureliness, from the contradiction and the dialectic of being always a sinner and justified (*semper peccator et justus*), and becomes a " new creature " in the Kingdom of the Father.

In this present order of Grace the Holy Spirit is present to us as the Spirit of Promise. We live in the Promise, or, as we may put it, the Promise lives in us. We are not only

justified and sanctified sinners, we are in promise the children of God, children of our Father Who is in heaven. In the order of Creation we are servants, in the order of Grace we are enemies, though reconciled enemies, but in the order of Redemption we are sons of God. "Now we are the sons of God" (Promise) "and it does not yet appear what we shall be" (Redemption) (1 John iii. 2). The New Testament always speaks of Redemption as a two-fold relationship—to this world and to the world to come. In our here and now, our divine future, our lost reality willed of God is present to us in promise. We are "born again to a life of hope" (1 Peter i. 3).

We must, as Christians, then not only live existentially in the order of Grace, but must cross the border, as it were, and in the Spirit take hold of the Promises. What gives the Christian life its power and freshness is that it is a life lived eschatologically, lived in hope. Through the Spirit, our future reality becomes present to us in our present (H.G. p. 100). The Christian life is, therefore, a new life of hope in which the Christian is "hid with Christ in God" already in the present world; passing *incognito* among men, even as Christ Himself

passed *incognito* among men, because of their sin.

The Christian has now a conscience in the true, deep sense of the word (*con-scientia*), a knowing with God, which leads him into all the truth. Though under authority in the order of Grace he can claim freedom of conscience. The child knows the will of its Father (H.G. p. 101).

The Christian can also claim here and now the child's right of prayer. Prayer is also to be understood eschatologically, as prayer for that which is beyond what earth can give, a taking hold of the promise through the Holy Spirit "that maketh intercession for us." We are not yet redeemed. The Kingdom of God is not yet come. But it has "come nigh," as Jesus says. And not only we may, but we must take hold of the promise and draw the future into the present, as we pray: "Thy kingdom come."

In the Holy Spirit we have thankfulness, which is the sum and epitome of obedience, well-pleasing to God. Thankfulness means released obedience, released from the fear of the divine anger in the future and from all the cramp of human anxiety to "make good";

the thankfulness and freedom which knows that it never can hope to make any due return to God for His goodness.

Thus, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, heirs of the promises, not yet in possession, but appointed to possess (Eph. i. 14), we are to look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of God (2 Peter iii. 12).

God the Holy Spirit is therefore the Spirit of Promise (Eph. i. 13), ever coming and never come, always manna for the day, but never to be kept for the morrow (H.G. p. 100). This is the way of the Christian life.

"Though Christ offers us in the Gospel," says Calvin (Inst. II, 9, 3), "a present plentitude of spiritual blessings, yet the fruition of them is concealed under the custody of hope till we are divested of our corruptible body and transfigured into the glory of Him Who has gone before. In the meantime the Spirit commands us to rely on the promises. Nor, indeed, have we otherwise any enjoyment of Christ any further than that we embrace Him, invested with His promises. Hence it is that He dwells in our hearts, and yet we live like pilgrims at a distance from Him, because we walk by faith and not by sight" (*Auf.* p. vii.).

Barth warns us against the impatience which would snatch more than is given to us here; the impatience which would like to escape from the needs of our creatureliness and of being justified sinners to an island of the blessed, where there would be something better than hope, than waiting and hasting; an impatience that by such snatching would lose what had been given to us, the Word itself (H.G. p. 100). To seek to take, possess, have, feel, experience Redemption beforehand ends always, he says, not only in unprofitable illusions, but in disobedience and rebellion (T.K. p. 383).

Under the deepening power of this conception of the Promise, which has been Barth's most recent development, the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ, has become for him not merely a Promise for the individual, as in *Romans*, but one for the Church and for man. The Promise looks forward to the end of history, to the destruction of the contradiction between time and eternity, between God and man. While the Order of Glory lies beyond this mortal sphere, here and now the work proceeds. The Kingdom of God comes until the Day of Christ. His victory is in the world.

But "for the Redemption in the true, strict sense," says Barth, "we wait. Our Redemption in this true, strict sense is Jesus Christ in His Parousia, not before, not otherwise."

Barth, as we have come to recognise, is a thorough-going eschatologist. "A Christianity which is not altogether and utterly eschatological," he says, "has nothing to do whatever with Jesus Christ" (*Rom.* p. 298).

The relation of these three orders which we have sketched constitutes the central problem in Barth's ethical and spiritual thinking. The conception meets us first in an unformed condition in an address given at Tambach in 1919 (W.G. p. 272). Seven years later he develops the idea in an address at Amsterdam, and says that he is not disposed to alter these points of view (T.K. p. 373). They have now become the basis of his course on Ethics, on which the writer heard him lecture for a few days in the summer of 1930. The conception is not easy to grasp, but it is so central to Barth's thinking that the writer trusts he has not left it too obscure.

4. *The Christian Life as a divinely girded and guided Life.* The underlying conception of this whole Theology of Crisis is its doctrine of the

free, majestic, sovereign, transcendent God. Like the theme of a Bach fugue there runs through it the witness that over our weak wills and infirm purposes, and over the mad wills of others, there is a Will which is strong and purposeful, and which when it comes to expression may have quite other consequences than we can understand. It is a theology which presupposes Predestination and Election.

In dealing with Barth's ideas of Predestination and Election we must proceed with caution, for we have nothing later than his *Romans*, and we imagine that he has not said his last word on the subject, any more than he has on the Parousia. It may be that when the time comes of which he has spoken, when he re-writes his *Romans*, he will have more to say, and will say some things differently.

In his *Romans*, he parts company with Calvin and his doctrine of a fixed number as being predestinated unto life and a fixed number unto death, which he describes as mythology. For Barth and, as he believes, for St. Paul, the individual is not the object of election or reprobation, but rather the arena of election or reprobation. The two decisions meet within the same individual, but in such a way that, seen

from the human side, man is always reprobate, but seen from the divine side, he is always elect. Under this insoluble paradox, says Barth, stands our life, so far as it can be brought in faith into relation with its Divine Origin. The ground of election is faith. The ground of reprobation is want of faith. But who is he who believes? And who is he who disbelieves? Faith and Unbelief are grounded in God. We stand at the gates of mystery (*Rom.* p. 396).

CHAPTER VIII

HOW ARE WE TO PLACE KARL BARTH?

So far we have been trying to obtain glimpses of "the bird in flight," as it were, the movement in the heart of Karl Barth, but now we must face the inevitable question which people will insist on asking: "Where are we to place Karl Barth? Is he prophet or heretic? Is he modernist or reactionary? How are we to regard him in relation to British and American Theology?"

To fit Barth into any known scheme of theology, orthodox or liberal, is impossible. Probably the answer which would satisfy him best would be to say: "Barth is a *scandalon*, a stumbling block, a question mark, to stir men out of their easy solutions, to disturb them, it may even be to make them angry, that they may begin to think again, to think more deeply, and to think in God, and by the light of God's Word."

His theology, according to his own testimony, must be regarded as a "Theology of Crisis," and must be taken as an expression of that deep inevitable crisis or judgment into which

men as well as things, Church and Theology, Religion and Culture, are irresistibly thrown as soon as they are confronted with the living God; a crisis through which they must pass, unless they are to become worthless before God.

Thus we have seen Religion in the crisis, in which its claim to be an Absolute is dissolved, and it is set free to pursue its proper human ends. We have seen modern Protestantism in the crisis, and shown as betraying the message of the Gospel to the culture of the world and by its relativity losing the notion of the Absolute. We have been made to feel that we ourselves as theologians or as laymen were being pressed into the same crisis.

This conception of *crisis* was planted in the heart of this theology at the beginning, and there it remains as a test for men and systems. "Is not God the Eternal Truth of our life in that He is its Crisis?" (*Rom.* p. 50). The crisis starts from the conflict between the eternal human striving to know God, to make an image of Him, to humanise and possess Him, and the terrifying discovery that there is no way from man to God, and that no human thinking, not even the highest moral or religious insight, can take hold of God, the living God. And

from there all life and religion and culture are drawn into the crisis.

Barth has been carried forward from stage to stage in this critical movement by a force which he believes to be beyond himself. At the first he would not confess to a theology of his own. He was merely supplying a "corrective," a "marginal note," a "pinch of spice" (*ein bisschen Zimt*, Kierkegaard), for flavour in the food, but with no wish to form a new type or school of his own. He proposed to take his way through the existing possibilities, to the left of some, to the right of others, and through the midst of others, understanding them all, embracing them all, surpassing them all. "Who would not wish to be above the schools?" he says. This new movement did not come into being as the result of any desire on the part of Barth to form a school or devise a system, it arose simply, he says, out of what he felt to be "the need and promise of Christian Preaching" (W.G. p. 100).

Barth has now been swept beyond that point to the production of a constructive theology of the Word of God. But, as an introduction to English-speaking theologians and laymen unfamiliar with the movement, it will be best for a

moment to attempt the impossible, to arrest the "bird in flight" at the point where the movement is seen providing a "corrective" to current theology. Barth will liberate the different schools from the confining walls of their parties and interests to concentrate on the essential objective content of the Christian Gospel. And he will do so in each case by confronting them with the Critical Divine Question.

I. *The Barthian Corrective.*

1. *In the field of Biblical Criticism.* As a preacher Barth discovered for himself the utter inadequacy of a theology which brought to him the data of historical and textual research, but which had nothing to tell him of an absolute and holy God with a message for him in his sinful relativity. He came into a crisis in which he could no more preach, no more take God's Word on his lips. Out of this crisis came his first definite work, his exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. Accepting the results of Biblical criticism, but astonished at the modesty of its claims in stopping short with the historical and critical explanation of the text, he went back to Luther and Calvin, and showed that they really began where modern scholars leave off, and

expounded the theological content of the books. They " made the walls transparent " between the past and the present, between there and here, so that the Word of God became a Word for to-day. Barth's " corrective " was to follow their example in his *Romans*. Writing in the preface of another book (*Auf.* p. v.), he expresses his gratitude to critical scholars for the help they have given him at every step of the way. But his own questions and troubles, he says, seem to give them no concern. All their exegetical art, all their critical scholarship, is of no use for the conscience in its terrible needs. He is conscious, he says, of the relativity of his undertaking, but " until the arrival of the great man " who will overcome the present unsatisfactory conditions by combining the critical and the theological, he will attempt to provide the necessary " corrective." This " corrective " was probably more necessary for German than for British and American expositors, but it is not unneeded among us also.

2. *In the field of Institutional Religion.* Institutional Religion, what is known in Germany as *Vereinswesen*, passed for Barth at an early point into the crisis; it was weighed in the balance and found wanting. In the earliest

article from his pen, in "The Word of God and the Word of Man," we find him declaring, "What is the use of all the preaching, baptising, confirming, bell-ringing and organ-playing, of all the religious moods and modes, the counsels of 'applied religion,' the congregational-halls with or without cinemas, and whatever else may belong to the equipment of modern ecclesiasticism? Will something different eventuate from all this in our relation to the righteousness of God? Are we even expecting something different from it? Are we hoping that something may happen?" (W.G. p. 20).

Barth from the beginning showed himself strongly critical of a Christianity which is proud of its social gospel, Church activity, institutional enterprises, ethical efforts, but which neglects the essential—that is, the "crisis," through which all these good things must pass if they are not to be valueless before the living God. He maintains the same critical attitude to-day. In much of our ecclesiastical humdrum, our multifarious activities, social and other, he sees nothing but a secularisation of God's message and a treachery to the Church. "I have a horror," he writes, in an article we have already referred to in Z.Z. *Quousque tandem?*

" of the flood of anniversaries, speeches, sermons which the year 1930 will bring with deadly certainty. It is high time that we should make a halt on this way and turn." He is thinking particularly of Germany, but the " corrective " is needed also among ourselves. No doubt our complex Church organisation, which consumes so much of the Church's strength, must have some effect in the way of social and spiritual uplift. But is there not a real danger of thinking that the Kingdom of God can be achieved by mere unselfish effort? Barth does not depreciate human efforts of the kind as relative human efforts, but he will keep us mindful of the limitation and proportion of anything we can do in the service of God. Not thus does the Kingdom of God come. It is not to be compassed by skill of human effort, nor is to come by way of social evolution. Our human efforts will be heard by God as earnest prayers and will have their answer in that he will make the Kingdom of God draw near. But it is God alone Who can do this work, and on Him we must wait.

3. *In the field of Liberal and Modern Theology.* The hour came when the theology in which Barth himself was trained, the relativity of Harnack and the individualism of Herrmann,

passed into the crisis and became marked out for " corrective." Liberalism had made the "offence of the Cross " to cease. It had professed to find God in History and in Experience, whereas God was *unanschaulich*, and impossible for the human mind to grasp. It had so emphasised the immanence of God as to obliterate the distance between God and man. It had lost the real meaning of God's revelation by making Jesus exclusively a character in history. It had sought to build a theology on historical and religious data, both equally unreliable. It had attempted a synthesis of God and the world, and mingled the aims of the transcendent God with the elements of worldly culture. The assurance of modern theology was *superbia*, *hybris*, pride and presumption, the sin which led humanity to its fall.

Barth will proclaim afresh the great objective factor in the Gospel which is independent of human considerations and historical or psychological explanations. He will deliver liberalism from its vain attempt to explain the essential by the accessory, to interpret the transcendent by the historical and the contingent. This is his " corrective."

A deep gulf, it will be seen, divides Barth from

our own liberal theologians, also from those, like Professor John Baillie and Dr. Fosdick, in America, where liberalism, being exiled from Germany, seems to be finding a second home. To realise how deep the gulf is we have only to compare the views of Barth with those which we are familiar with in the books, let us say, of Dr. Garvie, Professor Baillie, or Dr. Fosdick. "The entire process by which men become aware of God may be described," says Professor Baillie, "in terms of human seeking and finding" (*Ibid.* p. 458). "Wherever you look at the underlying presuppositions of men's thinking about God to-day," says Dr. Fosdick, "you find not the old dualism, but a gladly recognised affinity between God and man" (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 266).

Against this humanised Christianity, as he regards it, and humanised Bible, Barth's soul is in revolt. For once you surrender the Scriptural idea of Revelation, and regard human discovery and Divine Revelation as but complementary sides of the self-same fact of experience; once you surrender the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and treat it merely as a book containing wisdom for the guidance of life which you have to "decode" for the modern

man, and in which you can pick and choose at will; once you surrender Christ as the God-Man and regard Him merely as one in a historical sequence with other religious geniuses in whom God has become incarnate; once you reject or ignore the witness and authority of the Church, you have nothing objective to abide by whatever. You are on the slippery slope that ends in Humanism, and religion becomes "anything one likes to make it."

But the chief error of the liberal theologians, according to Barth, has been the removal of the barrier between God and man, due to sin, which the Reformers stressed as the one true basis of a Christian Theology, and the throwing open of the door between man and God. "The presupposition of all our thinking is the conviction," says Dr. Fosdick, "not that there is a vast distance between God and man, but that God and man belong together, and in each other are fulfilled" (*Ibid.* p. 267). Once you have admitted this continuity between man and God, it is like the letting in of water through a leak in a Dutch dyke. Nothing can prevent a flood of Humanism, and these liberal theologians have nothing to oppose to it, for fundamentally they are with it. In the end it sweeps over them also.

Barth's constant insistence that the door is closed between God and man, that it can only be opened from the side of God, that God and man meet only in grace, his rejection even of the *analogia entis*, is the "corrective" which he offers to all liberal and modernist theology.

4. *In the field of Orthodoxy and Fundamentalism.* The point at which Orthodoxy came for Barth into the crisis was in its claim to possess a direct and absolute knowledge of God's mysteries. Orthodoxy, though it has been given a deeper understanding of God than liberalism, speaks in too direct a way about God, according to Barth, it claims to give in its dogmas too complete and concrete a cognition of God. It forgets that God is hidden, that He is the Unknown God, it lacks respect for the reserve due to His transcendent majesty. It is to protect the Transcendent against this too human and direct an attempt to express the Divine in positive terms, and in cut-and-dry formulæ, that Barth introduces his Dialectic method. It is a recognition also that the Divine incognito, which extended also to Jesus Christ in the flesh, is conditioned by human sin. This, therefore, is Barth's "corrective" to rational orthodoxy. There is a rational orthodoxy, familiar in Britain

and in America, which is no less in need of this "corrective." It is sometimes claimed that Barth himself is a Fundamentalist. Probably if he had to choose between Liberalism and Fundamentalism he would choose to be a Fundamentalist, just as if he had to choose between the New Protestantism and Roman Catholicism he would choose to be a Roman Catholic. But he is a Fundamentalist as little as he is a Roman Catholic.

He differs from the Fundamentalists on several grounds.

(*a*) He allows to textual and historical criticism, as Fundamentalism does not, its full say on all critical matters affecting the books of the Bible. There is room inside the movement for men holding advanced critical views, men like Bultmann and Brunner, for example.

(*b*) He refuses to make God an object of thought about Whom one can argue "in abstracto." This is to him an invasion on the reserve due to God from which the Dialectic method preserves us. God is to Barth always Subject, except in so far as He gives Himself to man. Only God can speak the truth about God. Barth would disagree, for example, with Dr. J. Gresham Machen when the latter says,

" If a man were truly scientific, we think that he would be convinced of the truth of Christianity whether he were a saint or a demon; since the truth of Christianity does not at all depend upon the state of the soul of the investigator, but is objectively fixed " (*What is Faith ?* p. 131).

(*c*) Barth will not allow us to objectify the Word of God after the manner of the Fundamentalists, or to regard it statically, so that it becomes, in the words of Dr. Machen, " the supreme text-book on the subject of faith." For Barth the Bible only becomes the Word of God to the individual in the existential moment.

(*d*) Still another point at which Barth diverges from the Fundamentalists is in his view that faith cannot be built on historical facts—as historical facts. " Christianity," says Dr. Machen, " is founded squarely upon facts " (*Ibid.* p. 242).

In his attempt to meet the modernists, Dr. Machen puts forward the historical facts of Christianity as the one sure basis of faith. What the historian sees is for him fundamental. But in his attempt to stem thus the flood of modernism, Dr. Machen completely fails. He exposes himself to the full force of historical criticism, that these facts are uncertain, that they cannot

be proved, that history is relative, and that to try to find a basis for faith in historical facts as historical facts is a vain hope. It is like trying to cross a frozen river which has broken up by jumping from one lump of floating ice to another. It may be a leap of despair, it can hardly be called a leap of faith.

(*e*) The last point at which Barth differs from the Fundamentalists is in the place which he gives to the Concrete Authority and Testimony of the Church. We must seek, he says our footing, our "Archimedean" fixed point, in the Witness of the Word of God, as it is guaranteed to us on the authority and the testimony of the Church, based of course on what the Church believes to be facts of history (*Dg.* p. 370). What we have in the New Testament is Witness, and only Witness, of the first believers. We have no "scientific" facts such as those with which the pure historian deals. Barth would agree with Dr. Machen that if the facts on which faith is based could be disproved, then it would be an end to our faith. But the facts on which faith is based are Christian facts, such as can neither be proved nor disproved by the historian.

If it be said that Barth here approaches the

Roman Catholic position he has his answer. The Reformation was not a Revolution. It was not the Founding of a New Religion, but a Re-formation, a Rediscovery of the Authority of the Revelation which founded the Church (*Dg.* p. 374). The Protestant Church claims also to stand in the line of Christian testimony and to rest upon it. "Protestantism protested not against but for the Church; and as a Church is not only not less, or weaker, but even more and stronger than the Roman Church" (T.K. p. 336).

5. *In the field of Culture and Humanism.* At an early point in his development Culture and Humanism were for Barth thrown into the "crisis." It was in reading Dostojewski that his eyes were first opened to the sin of Humanism in building its towers of Babel from the earth upward. To Dostojewski we trace the origin of Barth's frequent use of the phrase—our "towers of Babel." In the "Brothers Karamazov," Dostojewski speaks of the titanic conduct of men, "their fearful building of Babylonian towers," their attempts to "live an eternal life on this side." As Barth looked out on the world in the days of the War, and before it, what met his eyes was *hybris*, arrogance, irreverence, building from the earth upward, the

sin of Gen. xi. 4, being repeated, the sin of trying to do without God. In Dostojewski he saw the end of that sin foretold in a dreadful catastrophe. It was the original sin of Adam, *eritis sicut Deus* (ye shall be as God), the overstepping of the boundaries which separate heaven and earth. He saw that not only the world and its civilisation, but religion and the Church, were guilty of having betrayed the Gospel to the culture of the world. Barth early recognised in this humanistic culture an enemy of God. The note is struck in the address already referred to, delivered in January, 1916, about eighteen months after the outbreak of war, on which he looked out as a neutral. These towers of Babel which we build, he says, quoting Gen. xi. 4, are meant to quieten within us, to cover up, to bring to silence the strong desire we have for the righteousness of God. "We go off and build the pitiable tower at the Babel of our human righteousness, human self-importance, human earnestness" (W.G. p. 15). He is very contemptuous of the "happy gentleman of culture who to-day drives up so briskly in his little car of progress and cheerfully displays the pennants of his various ideals." This God to Whom we have built our tower of Babel is not God. He is an

idol. He is dead. It is only when " the uproar of our morality and culture and religion are brought to silence " that our true redemption comes. Then God Himself, the real, the living God, comes in glory. He approaches us as a " Wholly Other," so much greater than we thought.

To-day, after fifteen years, Barth still sees Humanism in the crisis. Its value is not denied, only it has to pass through Death to life. To the prevailing Humanism in all its forms, which he sees in its deadliest form in American Humanism, a veritable *euthanasia*, Barth will provide a " corrective." He will set Jesus Christ as a stumbling-block in the way of Humanism and Culture and introduce a radical turning, not back to an old orthodoxy, but forward to a new, positive, supernatural faith. But it is evident that in the interval since he first assailed human Culture and confronted it with the Divine critical Question, Barth has been occupied with consideration of the proper relation of the Church to Culture. He has recognised that " if culture is so totally devoid of all divine guidance and inspiration, and entirely opposed to God's hidden aim, then the danger is approaching that culture be again considered as having its own

immanent laws which have nothing to do with God's will" (Keller: *Expositor*, April, 1925).

The result is that Barth has now worked out in a most illuminating way the proper relation of the Church and Culture, which, he says, share in one task, and although they never can be united, yet they never can be separated. The Church is to Barth the community founded by God, consisting of sinful men living in faith and obedience, by the Word of God.

Culture—the word Barth uses covers what we mean by Culture or Humanism, as well as by Civilisation—is the task set by the Word of God to man, to realise the destiny of man in his unity of soul and body, here on earth.

They share, therefore, in a common work. There is meaning, says Barth, in the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel has always been at the same time a call to Culture. But there is meaning also in the other fact, that Christian preaching, if true to itself, has always met human Culture with a sharp scepticism. Christianity must ever be the crisis of Culture, for Culture grows up in that cleft which divides God and man, and is always an attempt to cover it over or close it up.

Barth considers the relation of the Church to

Culture from the point of view of the three "orders," with which he has made us familiar: the order of Creation, of Grace, and of Glory.

(1) In the order of Creation, Culture as it strives after wholeness, unity, completeness (the Promise originally given to man by the Creator), becomes a sort of reflex of the light of the Eternal Logos, a witness to the Promise, a pointing forward to that which man, as God's creature, may be, and which, in Christ, he will be. For the Promise of Creation is not denied but confirmed by the Gospel. This is the first line, says Barth, which unites the Church and Culture, the recovering of the Promise of completeness, unity, and wholeness, a task in which the two share. For the Church does not deny but affirm the hope of Civilisation. Hence the Church can leave, and has ever left, certain problems to civilisation, e.g. popular education, often after first pointing the way. She knows men as sinners, but she knows men also as men. But this does not mean that she consents to a wholesale sanctifying of Culture, such as Schleiermacher in his day, and the Humanism of our day, look for. "The Church will not see the dawn of the Kingdom of God in any work of human culture, but still will keep an open door for the signs which

announce themselves, perhaps in a great many works of human culture, that the Kingdom of God is coming nigh" (T.K. p. 377).

(2) In the Order of Grace, says Barth, Culture is the Law in view of which the sinner, justified and sanctified, has to exercise his faith and obedience. The Divine demands, the demand of Love to one's neighbour, the setting up of a Kingdom of Peace on earth, of Justice, of Truth, through men, these are also the works of Humanity. The Divine demands mean Humanity. The Law of positive Revelation agrees here with the Law of natural Right which slumbers already in Creation, and demands that it be given shape and reality. The content of the Law is therefore simply Culture. Men shall be men, not more, but also not less. That this goal is attainable, that a Kingdom of God as a Kingdom of Peace and Right and Truth is to be erected through men, the Law does not say. The Law says only that it is a matter for the exercise of obedience. The goal is really unattainable, we have not to build the Kingdom of God. But obedience will not ask if the goal be attainable, otherwise it would not be obedience.

This is the second line which unites the Church and Culture. The Church affirms in Culture the

Law which is given to men through the Word. It cannot cease to stand for the Law, with, without, or against Society. It knows sooner and better than Society how important it is. Woe to the Church which does not in some way preach this obedience! It will, with the Law, betray the Gospel, and with Culture will betray itself.

(3) In the Order of Glory, says Barth, Culture is the border set for man beyond which God Himself, in fulfilment of His Promise, makes all things new. Culture, not merely as a Promise, not merely as a Law, but as an Event, as a Reality which takes real shape and form, is not present, but only comes; it is not in our hands, but in God's hands; it does not belong to this side of things, but is beyond the Resurrection. God is our Boundary where the new begins—the limit beyond which we cannot go. The third line which unites Church and Culture must therefore be a critical one. The Church puts its hope only on God and on His fulfilling "Yes" and "Amen." In the building of the tower of Babel, whose top reaches to heaven, it has no part. It hopes in God for men, but it sets no hope on men, not even on good men, not even that man with the help of God shall build and

complete the tower. With this reservation the Church meets Society, not in depreciation of the work of Culture, but in highest appreciation of the goal which it sees all the work of Culture pursue, not from pessimism, but from superabundant hope. The Church does Society no kindness if it does not maintain this reservation; if it does not in its attitude and teaching bring to expression the comfort and warning of Eternity (T.K. p. 384).

Under all these points of view the Church, as a fellowship of sinful men, has not only to judge and orientate Society, but to judge and orientate itself. The Church knows its profane outward aspect, it knows very well that on the plane of history and of human life it is only a Society alongside other societies, it knows the relativity of Christendom. It knows that its attitude and ways of thought and speech are not in principle different from those of men as a whole. It knows that its special subject, "Religion," has the same questions and doubts as underlie all things human. It knows that its work, good and bad, cannot be other than the work of Culture striving after form and reality within the framework of human society. It knows that, however deeply grounded its

Christian fellowship may be, it can only withdraw itself in part from ordinary sociological laws. The Church swims along the whole line in the stream of Culture. The Church's hidden reason for existence is in its elevation and protest, but this can only be, and must remain, a matter of faith. The existence of the Church and of the Christians in her ceases at no moment to be a venture like all human ventures. But it would be senseless, it would be godless of the Church, resting on the Reconciliation in Christ, because of her too deep knowledge of human sinfulness, to let her hands sink and leave all willing and working to the devil. The relativity of the Church should not hinder her from taking her work as seriously as the artist takes his work, or the scientist takes his. With the Reconciliation, the claim of God has been erected over all flesh, and the Church must acknowledge this right, and not leave off to proclaim the Glory of God on the narrow and dangerous line on which the Church as Church can act. The Church must also direct on men and, above all, on herself the comfort and the warning of Eternity and the remembrance of God as *Boundary*. She must leave off building all towers of Babel, whether the world's or her own,

and humbly and confidently lay hold of the Christ Who is standing and knocking at the door as the Redeemer of her misery and frailty. Church and Culture alike stand on Hope.

The Church of our time, says Barth, must again learn to ask after God's will and work. The Church suffers to the verge of destruction through her overlooking of the comfort and warning of Eternity, through her forgetfulness along the whole line, of God as the *Boundary* where the new begins, of the returning Christ with His "Behold, I make all things new." There have been other hours, he says, and there will be other hours. But our hour points us, if all things do not deceive, in this direction. The Church will not be sound, says Barth, until she dares again to place herself altogether on the Hope on which she is founded (T.K. p. 391).

II. *The Barthian Reconstruction.*

But no great theology can stop short at the offering of "correctives" to the theology of others. The "real, flying bird" has gone on, and if we could arrest it, and draw it, in its flight, we should now discover it sweeping over other territory. In other words, the movement has now carried Barth into the region of constructive

Theology, and henceforth it will be as constructive Theologian that he will be judged. Of this side of his work, although it is still incomplete, we can say two things.

1. He is a *Theologian of the Word of God.* He has made a great beginning with *Dogmatik I*, with its central doctrine of a Speaking God. While he describes it simply as Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics, he carries us already deep into his theme, which he treats under four great heads: (1) The Doctrine of the Word of God; (2) The Revelation of God; (3) The Holy Scriptures; (4) The Preaching of the Church. Under the first head, he discusses such subjects as The Reality of the Word of God; the Three Forms of the Word of God, as Sermon, as Canon, and as Revelation; the Word of God and Man as Preacher; the Word of God and Man as Hearer. Under the second head, he treats of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ and the Wonder of his Birth; and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Under the third head, he discusses God in the witness of the Prophets and Apostles, the Authority of the Church, and the Freedom of Conscience in relation to Authority. Under the fourth head, he discusses God in the Sermon,

and the dogmatic Norm. How vital his treatment is, and how closely he keeps to the preaching of the Church, will be obvious from this brief outline.

An extract from a sermon by Calvin at the beginning, on 2 Tim. ii. 14, strikes the note of the volume. "The Word of Truth compels us, both him who speaks and him who hears. For God desires to dominate us. Jesus Christ wishes alone to have all mastery."

2. *He is a Reformed Theologian.* Barth believes that the most urgent task of the Reformed Churches to-day is the doctrinal task, the reconstruction of a Reformed Theology (W.G. p. 218). It is not a case, he says, of reproducing doctrine, now obsolete, but of producing Reformed doctrine, a much harder task. In this matter, he says, we have to conduct ourselves with the independence and dispassionateness demanded by Reformed doctrine. He believes the most timely message of salvation for the peoples of the West to be a declaration of their need for the Gospel *and* the Law. If we earnestly desire and call upon the Creative Spirit to come and breathe upon this valley of dry bones, we shall at least, he says, have begun to take possession of the inheritance of the fathers, which

to-day seems so far removed from us (W.G. p. 271). Barth, though he came from the study of Luther to Calvin, and would have all other students do the same, is Reformed to his very bones, even to his strong dislike of having his personality obtruded into his theology. *Soli Deo gloria* (W.G. p. 238). He is the first outstanding Reformed theologian in Germany for the last 150 years. But his concern is not for his own theology. He harbours no illusions that finality has been reached by him and his friends. A writer, reviewing Mr. Birch Hoyle's "*The Teaching of Karl Barth*" in the *Times Literary Supplement*, has suggested that Barth's theology is an "interim" theology. We do not suppose that Barth would quarrel with the word. "Everything which we do to-day," he says in one place, "is the necessary work of a period of transition" (*Auf.* p. vi.). "The so-called Barthian theology," he says in another place, "will one day go as it has come, and justice will be done to it" (Z.Z. 1926: 1: p. 36). Barth's concern is for the doctrine of the Church. For the Church can no more live without a theology than a theology can live without the Church. Barth does not think that the Church is ready at the moment to produce a new Confession of Faith, which will

speak in our own language, out of our own experience, to our own times. "Anything other than frightfully tedious, unoriginal, and mediating," he says, "a Confession could not be, without earnest preparatory theological work" (T.K. p. 99). For this reason he wants theologians, including those in the ministry, to get down to quiet, patient, loving, theological thinking, as a preliminary to the Church's writing of a Confession. For the present, he says, the Church has not a mind of its own on many things. The Church that is to write a Confession must have the courage, born of the insight it has won, to utter its views on the problems of life which oppress its members: such as nationalism, war, social problems. But he has his doubts if the Church of to-day will speak, or has anything to say, on these burning and dangerous problems where Christian and other worthy interests stand sharply opposed (T.K. p. 103). In Ethics even more than in Dogmatics, he says, the Church halts between Yes and No, is now silent, now vocal, but always "two steps behind the world." It is full of the best will towards all sides, but no prophet's voice, no watchman's cry sounds out amid the chaos of other voices. Barth blames the

Church for its want of any power of direction. He calls for a confession of sin on the part of the Church before it will be ready to confess its faith. "There are things," he says, "which one can only dare and do when one must. To these belong a Church's Confession of Faith." No enthusiasm, no good will, no Church polity can take the place of this necessity.

The doctrinal task of the Reformed Church of our day, says Barth, is to put itself under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, so that in our way, in our surroundings, we may witness to God's Revelation as the fathers did in their way and amid their surroundings. Thus only shall we serve ourselves heirs to the sacred inheritance of the Reformation.

We would here take leave of Karl Barth as a Reformed Theologian, as he loses himself in a vision of a revived and living Reformed Church facing new tasks. Whither this movement may carry him no one knows, not Barth himself; but it will lead him where he would wish to be led if it issues in an enrichment of the Church's doctrinal teaching. He seeks no glory for himself. In the nature of the case there can be for him no perfect, no "scientific" theology. It must, so long as we are on earth, be a *theologia*

viatorum (A Pilgrim Theology). But the appearance of Karl Barth in the Protestant Church, at this solemn juncture of her history, can only mean that he has been chosen and sent of God to do a work for his generation.

So far we have confined ourselves to a statement of Barth's views without offering or dealing with criticisms. We have ourselves received so much help and stimulus from his teaching that we are little disposed to criticise. We would rather that we should, to quote the appeal of a German writer, " take to ourselves the angry reproaches of Barth with whole-hearted earnestness, bend under his call to repentance, recognise its cutting truth, let its strong, earnest spirit blow through our souls, and not turn ourselves away from him by means of a learned critical analysis."

The present writer, in an article in the *Hibbert Journal* on the " Teaching of Karl Barth," in April, 1927, ventured to offer some criticisms. But as he has pursued the study of Karl Barth, and come to understand him better, and enjoyed the privilege of personal friendly intercourse with him, he has felt the force of these criticisms less and less himself; and what difficulties remain in his mind he is inclined to put down to

still imperfect understanding. For Barth is not easy to grasp, his style is weighted and involved, and his thought intricate and sometimes obscure. Besides, he is still developing, and on many points his thinking remains fluid. Even a comprehending writer like Mr. Birch Hoyle, who has a wide command of the literature, seems to us at times strangely to miss his meaning (*v.* Appendix to Chapter 8). Many of the supposed objections to Barth's views lie not in the views themselves but in partial or complete misunderstanding of them.

We propose to deal, in closing, with some of the criticisms which have been advanced against Barth as a theologian.

(1) *His one-sidedness.* Why, say many, does Barth press the transcendence of God to the point of almost seeming to deny His immanence? Why does he so emphasise the Godhead of Christ as to appear to injure His complete humanity, as our Elder Brother? Why does he so stress the unlikeness of God to man as almost to create an impassable gulf between them? In regard to this question, we have always to bear in mind that the movement began as a "corrective" and it has continued to retain something of that character. Besides a teacher

like Barth is not greatly perturbed by the reproach of being one-sided. He confesses to it in the introduction to "The Word of God and the Word of Man." He knows that it is thus that truth is pursued, from side to side, emphasis on the one side being corrected by emphasis on the other. Schleiermacher lent the great weight of his influence to the subjective side, making man the centre, and for a century the influence has lasted, and it is not yet spent. Much good has come of it, but also, and especially in recent days, no little evil.

Barth will lend the weight of his influence to the objective side, to give theology a new direction outwards and make *God* the centre.

So with the other aspects. The God of the modern man would not hurt a fly, but endures with perfect good nature the insults, indifference, opposition of His creatures. He calls for no decision, never puts a man to the test, is not even to be thought of as a Person. Barth proclaims that God is Sovereign, that there is such a thing as the Wrath of God, and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The modern doctrine of Divine immanence, preached by Humanism, has been seized and

appropriated by the multitude, and proclaimed. We are all sons of God, parts of the Divine, greater than ourselves. Barth brings back to our thoughts that God is transcendent and Other than ourselves. Modern interpretations of the Gospel have been soft and idyllic, the "offence" has been hidden away, the Cross has been covered with flowers. Jesus has been the "sweet" or "gentle" Jesus, the "mild" friend of man; God has been thought of as the superlative of man, loving as any father, and hard on none. Barth is resolved to make his age realise that God is not man, that we cannot deal with Him on easy terms, or turn Him to our own uses. He will bring home to us, as Kierkegaard sought to do to his generation, that God is Holy, and we are sinful. He will not take from us our Heavenly Father, as some have suggested; but he will remind us that our Father is in heaven. "God is in heaven, and thou art upon earth."

If Barth was to secure the ear of his age he had to lift up his voice, and even incur the risk of being considered one-sided and extreme. Now that the age has begun to listen, he speaks to us more quietly; also more positively. But the critic and the "crisis" remain.

(2) *His doctrine of Total Depravity.* "Barth has brought back the doctrine of total depravity, from which we thought we had escaped for ever." That is a frequent statement, and it is true. Barth has brought back the doctrine of total depravity. He is very hard on the natural man, that is, he is very hard on himself. He routs out the pagan in us, and in himself, to the last corner. He pursues the natural man to the deepest recesses of his fortress, and declares that there is no beginning with man's salvation until man in his inmost "ego" is overcome. The only man well-pleasing to God is the humbled, shaken man. The Christian Life, as we have seen, is not a triumphant going up, but a going down, stage by stage, until man is in the dust, helpless before God.

But this does not mean that on the ethical side there is no good to be found in man. There is much good to be found in man, even in the natural man, and Barth would be the first to admit it. But in the region of the Absolute, before God, there is none good, no not one. Barth will not discuss with us in the abstract the question, "Are men wholly evil?" But he must ask himself, he says, the personal question, "Am I wholly evil?" Then he must take

himself with this question and stand with it before the Cross of Calvary. There he is compelled to say, "There is no good in me at all." Will any sincere Christian venture to affirm anything else, as regards himself, or herself, if he or she goes with the same question to the Cross? That is how Barth understands the doctrine of total depravity. It constitutes for him the corner-stone of Christian theology. If that goes, the whole structure goes. This distinction between absolute and relative, not in a philosophical but in a religious sense, the distinction that is revealed in the crisis of the Cross, has always to be kept in mind if we are to understand Barth's way of thinking.

(3) *His Depreciation of History.* Many who are sympathetic to other aspects of Barth's teaching are alarmed by his apparent depreciation of history. They fear that the tendency of his teaching will be to empty history of content, and convey the idea that all which happens in time is illusion. But this is far from Barth's thought. The Cross happened in history, in time and place. Christianity is a historical Revelation, which gives it its unique character of once-for-all-ness. To say that Christianity is unique is to say that it is historical. To say

that God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is to say that He revealed Himself in One who entered into history, and at a definite place in history, and Who is only to be found there.

It is this historical aspect which, to Barth, makes Christianity a Revelation, and not a mere myth or speculation. *Revelation is History.* He does not depreciate history. But he is concerned to keep the distinction clear between historic event and Christian fact. He does not depreciate the historical Jesus. He is as clear as anyone that we cannot do without the Word made flesh. Christianity must never be separated from its historical basis. But it is not in the Jesus of History—and not in the historical facts of Christianity—that Barth finds the Revelation of God. In so far as Jesus belongs to historical events, He is irrelevant for salvation. He cannot be understood or explained as an historic event. He is the end of history, the irruption of God's Power into the world, of the new æon into the old one. Barth's mind is chiefly occupied with the "eternal moments," when this new strange world of God breaks through into the world of time, as in the Birth, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which alone make possible the understanding of Christ.

Barth would not deny a Revelation-value to those human moments in the life of Jesus when He passed incognito through the world, hidden from men by their sin, laying His hands on the sick, watching a widow casting her two mites into the treasury, observing the children at their play, *once He has been seen and understood in the light of the Cross.* But "the life of Christ becomes plain only and exclusively in His Death on the Cross" (*Rom.* p. 136).

(4) *His Neglect of the Revelation in Nature.* The criticism is often made that Barth has so little place for Nature as a Revelation of God. Dr. Keller complains that the idea of Creation is almost entirely overshadowed by the idea of Redemption. "A dialectic theologian could not point to the lilies of the field and the sparrows under the sky and read in their glory and freedom the signs of God's Providence and presence in the processes of the world." The meagre place which Nature occupies in Barth's teaching is somewhat surprising. Brought up in the loveliest country in Europe, seeing day by day from his early home the white peaks of the Bernese Oberland, he gives but a small place to Nature. He goes to the mountains for his metaphors, as he goes for his holidays, but with

the exception of one reference to the starry sky, we do not recall any passages where Nature witnesses to him of God, as Nature did to the Psalmist and to Jesus. His images from Nature, too, are mostly taken from her dangerous or stern side, walking on a knife-edge ridge between two abysses, swinging out over the void, the power of glacier water pouring from a height—nothing of Nature's gentler aspects.

He does not feel Nature to be, as it was to Wordsworth, a

> Presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts.

Nature seems to disturb him rather with questions, and with a sense of sadness. He hears, like Paul, only "the earnest longing of the creation" (Rom. viii. 19). And for the same reason. Nature, as we know it, is not God's work, but God's work spoiled and veiled through sin, "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." For Barth, God is hidden also in the creation. He does not deny the truth of "natural revelation." "All things were created by Christ and for Him." He rules in the "Order of

Creation" as the Eternal Logos. In the *theologia revelata* (revealed theology) the *theologia naturalis* (natural theology) is comprised. In the reality of Divine Grace the truth of the Divine Creation is brought to light. There is thus, says Barth, "a buried, forgotten truth of the Creation" brought to light here; and in this sense it is true that "Grace does not take away Nature, but perfects it" (T.K. p. 375).

But the truth means little for us. In a world which has fallen out of its original unity with its Creator, we can still see His tracks, but they are the tracks of a Great Unknown. Not in Nature, any more than in History, or in Religion, apart from Revelation, says Barth, is God to be found. Nature is not capable of revealing what is beyond all the relativity of concrete existence. *Finitum non capax infiniti.* We can only come to God the Creator through God the Reconciler, as He gives Himself to be known in the Word of the Cross.

So while we may love the mountains, says Barth, it must be with no pagan abandon, which loses itself in the object of our regard; but with a love that seeks to penetrate through the object to its Creative Origin, "to that Kingdom whose laws cast their shadows upon the events and

relations of the present age" (Rom. i. 20; W.G. p. 305).

On these and other points the Barthian movement encounters criticism. Barth does not object to criticism, and has confessed to the help which he himself has derived from the critics.

But the critics have learned that it is no more easy to criticise the "bird in its flight" than it is to describe it, and they have discovered that while they have been busy priming their guns the bird has flown on.

The critics often seem to forget that Barth is not an apologist. He is not concerned to buttress the Gospel by means of relative supports, such as philosophy, history, nature, or culture. His theology is a Theology of *Crisis*, and in the Crisis it is only the Absolute and Eternal that stands fast.

If Barth, or rather the movement in Barth, succeeds in calling a halt to our anthropocentric theology; if it sets the burning question of the absolute transcendent God again in the centre of our thinking; if it restores the category of Revelation to its place of honour; if it calls Christian thought afresh to revere the Word of God; if it puts again upon a fractious, restive generation the claim of the living God for

obedience, it will render invaluable service to the Church and to Theology, even if it leave aside other and secondary things.

Soli Deo Gloria.

APPENDIX

MR. BIRCH HOYLE's book* is a careful, interesting and, on the whole, a sympathetic book, but it contains at points, we think, misunderstandings of Barth, which we venture to point out.

1. Mr. Hoyle makes a good deal of the influence on his early style of Barth's journalism, during the two years when he assisted Martin Rade on the *Christliche Welt* (pp. 19, 244, 262), and the view has been accepted and passed on by reviewers. In the interests of truth we think it should be stated that Barth never was a journalist. He was engaged for a year in the office of the *Christliche Welt*, but on the technical side, and not as a writer, and during that time did not write more than two or three reviews of books. All this reference to journalistic influences he describes as pure nonsense. He has always found a pleasure in writing, but that has had nothing to do with the brief episode as a technician in a newspaper office.

2. Criticising Barth's teaching on the Word of God (p. 250), Mr. Hoyle says that there is "ample evidence in Scripture that prophets and apostles gained knowledge, speech from God, indirectly, through Nature and God's working in history." He quotes Jeremiah's opening vision of the "twig" and David's meditations on the starry heavens and on the sunrise as examples of God's "use of Nature and history as lesson-books." But in all these and other similar cases, Nature is used as a "sign" or "witness" to the God Whom the psalmist or prophet has already come to know through His Word. Jeremiah's call had already taken place before the vision of the "twig," which was also a "sign." Mr. Hoyle is here working with Lessing's idea of God as a sort of glorified Schoolmaster imparting "knowledge" by means of "Nature and history as

* *The Teaching of Karl Barth*, by R. Birch Hoyle (Student Christian Movement).

lesson-books," an idea of Revelation quite unacceptable to Barth.

3. Again, referring to Barth's teaching that " the truth which is from the Holy Spirit cannot be a particle of truth," but must be the "whole truth" (p. 253), Mr. Hoyle asks, " Did Old Testament prophets grasp this ' whole truth ' ? In view of John vii, 39, ' the Spirit was not yet given ' how can Barth say there was the same Spirit giving the ' whole truth ' in those prophets ? In view of the opening verses of Hebrews, how can he maintain the thesis that God to be revealed must altogether be revealed or there is no Revelation of God ? "

This appears to be a succession of misunderstandings. Of course, the Old Testament prophets did not grasp this " whole truth." That was the tragedy of it, that the Word of God did not have " free course that it might be glorified," because of the imperfect medium which the prophets offered to the Word. And that was precisely, as John says, because the Spirit " which those who believed in Him were to receive "—the Paraclete Who would lead them into all the truth—was not yet, since " Jesus had not yet been glorified." The Spirit present in the Old Testament is not the Risen and Glorified Christ.

But now, says the writer to the " Hebrews," the situation is changed. It is a contrast which he brings out between pre-Christian times, when God sought to reveal Himself through the imperfect instruments of prophets, and these last Messianic days to which the prophets looked forward as the End of History, the beginning of the *aion mellon*, when God found in His Son the perfect vehicle of His Revelation. As B. Weiss in his commentary on "Hebrews," says, " It is not the fragmentary character of each single revelation that is here brought forward, but that God in different times spoke to different men," compared with the " unique " character of New Testament Revelation (pp. 39-40). Moffatt brings this out clearly in his translation. " Many were the forms and fashions in which God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days He

has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom He appointed heir of the universe, as it was by Him that He created the world. He, reflecting God's glory and stamped with God's own character . . . " This opening verse in " Hebrews " is a much quoted passage with modernists. Dr. Fosdick quotes it (*Ibid.* p. 31). Professor John Baillie also (*Ibid.* p. 466). " What men had felt about Moses and the Prophets they felt in a still more compelling and definite way about Jesus Christ." But this ignores the contrast between Prophet and Son. The whole teaching of " Hebrews " (which was written to assure Christians that they did not need to leave their Jewish faith behind) was that the Old Testament dispensation was a " shadow " (chap. x. 1) of things to come, but now the Sun (which had created the shadow) had blazed forth in full splendour, in Jesus Christ, reflecting God's bright glory. Jesus, according to " Hebrews," had been already present in the Old Testament dispensation (chap. iii. 3), before the " days of His flesh " (chap. v. 7), " the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

4. Mr. Hoyle proceeds with other notes of " correction." He finds that Barth confuses the difference between Creator and Creature, which is metaphysical, and that between God and the sinner, which is viewed ethically (p. 255). There may have been some confusion in the earlier stages of Barth's thinking on this point, but he now makes it abundantly clear everywhere that the one thing which divides God and man is sin.

Mr. Hoyle naïvely suggests that Barth might give up his excessive emphasis on the Sovereignty of God in the interest of a more Christian teaching by allowing a greater place to Jesus' doctrine of the Father. But Barth believes his teaching to be more Christian than the sloppy sentimentalism about the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man which has passed for Christian teaching until quite recently. Did not Jesus teach that heaven was the throne of God, and the earth His footstool? (Mt. chap. v. 34).

Again, Mr. Hoyle hesitates about Barth's insistence on the incognito of Jesus in view of John chap. xiv., where Jesus says " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But this is surely to miss the point. These words were spoken to an apostle. To recognise the divine incognito is not given to the outsider, but is the gracious privilege of faith. Jesus was surprised that Philip after so long a time had not seen through the divine incognito.

Mr. Hoyle reproaches Barth, on page 259, for his zeal in attacking a mistaken pietism, and puts it alongside the Saviour's " mildness " towards mistaken opinions, and His ever ready assumption that ordinary folk knew something about God, like the Woman of Samaria. Was the Saviour always so " mild " against the mistaken opinions, for example, of the Scribes and Pharisees ? Barth shares with Jesus and Socrates a love for ordinary folk and an appreciation of their knowledge of God (W.G. p. 302). But he shares also Christ's indignation against Pharisaism and religiosity and all self-centred forms of piety.

Barth has a touching passage (*Dg.* p. 289) in which he says that, in the face of doubts and questions, his baptism comes to him as an assurance that he stands in grace, and gives him the confidence that his fight is the fight of a Jacob and not that of a Don Quixote. He makes frequent reference to his baptism in such terms in his writings. " All this," says Mr. Hoyle, " is ' hot-air ' and is simply untrue of human life as a whole." As Barth is not speaking of " human life as a whole," but of his own Spiritual Conflict, this remark seems hardly relevant.

As another note of " correction," Mr. Hoyle would ask Barth : " How, since God is so opposed to human nature, he squares that with God's demand that human nature should be transformed into the Divine ? " (p. 236). But Barth nowhere represents God as opposed to human nature as such. How could He be opposed to what He has Himself created ? He is opposed to the sin which has corrupted His creation.

Again, Mr. Hoyle would like to know how Barth would

interpret the Word of Jesus about the feet-washing. " He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit " (John xiii. 10). Barth would interpret it as St. John means it to be interpreted. When once a disciple like Peter is " washed," that is " regenerated," in the water of Baptism (Titus iii. 5, R.V.), he does not need again to be regenerated. But he needs daily forgiveness, daily cleansing. The reference is to the remission of the daily sins of the redeemed disciple, the need of which Barth constantly emphasises (p. 264).

Mr. Hoyle would also like Barth to expound Calvin's " complete definition of faith " as " a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence towards us." Barth would accept that to the letter as his own definition of faith, the faith of the viator as he pursues his way step by step amidst life's dangers, like the Alpine climber on a ridge, with " steady and certain knowledge " of the Divine Goodness," *not secure in himself*, but trusting God, one step at a time.

Once more, Mr. Hoyle asks if it is true to facts " that all Christians have to undergo this violent conflict, this convulsive ' conversion,' ere they can come into the realm of God's good pleasure ? " Barth nowhere says that there must needs be a " convulsive " conversion. The " event " in which God and the human soul meet may be quiet, hidden, even unknown.

Mr. Hoyle's book would have been clearer, we think, if he had kept to his title and left Brunner aside for separate consideration. While Barth and Brunner start from the same presuppositions, and travel the same road, more or less, they differ considerably.

Barth proceeds with caution and circumspection on his Alpine ridge, not secure in himself, aware that he is yet a long way from the top, and that much hard climbing has still to be done. Brunner's temptation is to regard the top as reached, the Theology of Crisis as a completed thing, and to proceed to systematise it with his uncommon lucidity and constructive power.

Or, to change the figure, Barth is still advancing with the storm troops, too keen to think of consolidating, more than doubtful if Theology ever should be consolidated, while Brunner is bent on consolidating his position at once.

Barth wants to preserve freedom of movement. He will entrust Theology to the living Church. He fears systematization. He even denies, as we have seen, in a striking manifesto, that there can be a science of theology. In the same number Brunner breaks a lance with him on the subject. He is less definitely negative. (Z.Z. 1930, p. 414).

Barth is a listener, and an expositor of the Word of God. Brunner is a keen speculative thinker who has been captured by the Word of God.

Barth is uncompromising. He will make no concessions to the man of to-day. Better no theology at all than a tamed, accommodating theology. Brunner's apologetic interests make him less rigid and uncompromising. He does not humble man, as Barth does, and he takes a less tragic view of the human will.

That the movement should have laid hold on two such different types of mind is evidence of its power. But if there are rocks ahead of it, they lie in this direction. (*v.* Z.Z. 1931, p. 36).

As a pioneer book, Mr. Hoyle's volume shows wide reading and a wonderful knowledge of the literature of the subject. A disciple of Barth, however, will hardly feel that Mr. Hoyle has got inside his mind and purpose.