

A SHELF OF BOOKS.

"THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD."

By Karl Barth, translated by Prof. G. T. Thomson
T. & T. Clark, 18/-.

This English translation of the first part of the first volume of Karl Barth's "Church Dogmatics," has probably been as much talked about as any theological work that has been published this year.

The main body of the "Church Dogmatics," as yet unwritten, is to consist of four volumes, on the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Creation, the doctrine of Reconciliation, and the doctrine of Redemption. Before tackling these, however, Barth has been at work on a volume of "Prolegomena"—i.e. a preliminary account of what dogmatic theology is and how its conclusions are to be arrived at—of which volume these 560 pages constitute the first half. Barth explains why he considers it necessary in these days for theology to give such a detailed account of itself. It is not, he says, because modern secularism and unbelief questions the right of theology to exist at all; but because there have grown up since the Reformation such serious differences of opinion as to the nature of Christianity and of Christian knowledge, and an "Evangelical" theology must clearly mark itself off from what is regarded as theology by Roman Catholics (and, I think we may add, Fundamentalists) on the one hand and by "modernists" on the other.

Barth's motive in writing this "Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics" is clearly reflected in its contents. He does not, for instance introduce his main volumes by attempting to overthrow the pre-suppositions of modern secularism and unbelief, or by offering philosophical proofs of the existence of God. He holds, as a matter of fact, that such a "lead in" to theological territory from "outside" is not possible. The Christian's knowledge of God cannot be arrived at by any sort of development or extension of his knowledge in general. The Christian only knows God as God makes Himself known to him (despite his own utter unfitness for such knowledge) in His Word. Hence Barth's account of the nature of theological knowledge is first and foremost an account of God's making Himself known, a "doctrine of the Word of God."

Barth's account of God's making Himself known to us, his "doctrine of the Word of God," divides itself up into a general introductory account, then an account of the Revelation of God in itself, then of the Word of God in Holy Scripture, and finally, of the Word of God in the living proclamation of the Church, particularly in sermon and sacrament. The present half-volume only gets as far as the general introductory account and part

of the account of the Revelation of God in itself; but it is full of foretastes, not only of the whole "Prolegomena," but of the whole body of "Church Dogmatics" as Barth has planned it. The second portion of the book, in particular, consists of a treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in considerable detail.

The most characteristic feature of Barth's "theological method" is his insistence that our interpretation of Christianity must be derived from and governed by the Word of God in Holy Scripture, and not only in the New Testament, but in the Old. He repudiates the idea that any dogmatic use can be made of supposed "preparations for Christ" elsewhere (and this, of course, strikes equally hard against those who claim to build on the New Testament alone, but who subconsciously replace the Old Testament by an armoury of notions derived from their contemporaries. I suspect, for instance, that there is a spot of this about O. E. Burton!) "Natural theology" of this kind does not really lead on to the Christianity of the New Testament, but to something more like the Pharisees and Sadducees. Once again, there is no "way in" to the world of Revelation from the world outside it; and it is only when the Word of God has already overtaken us, we know not how, that we can even begin "theologising."

ARTHUR N. PRIOR.

SHAPING THE FUTURE.

By Basil Mathews. 4/3 and 3/- S.C.M.

This "study in world revolution" hot from the press has the distinction of being badly written—for Basil Mathews. This means, of course, that it is well enough written for anyone else. It is a survey of the Christian Movement to-day "up against it." There are no "Christian countries"; the new frontiers of paganism are everywhere. The results of changes in methods of production are altering the whole life of the world. These forces must work themselves out. Mass movements—that is, movements involving huge drilled, propagandized, bribed, cowed masses, but controlled by a few scheming brains and plenty of irrational feeling—are at work either to take advantage of these changes (Communism) or to "freeze" them (Fascism). Together the economic and resultant forces and the mass movements are shaping the future. Can Christianity, so feeble in comparison, bear a hand too?

No, declares the world, these two forces are the only ones in the field. Yes, declares Mathews, having surveyed them and the Christian church through the world—yes, declares Mathews, personality is a third and ultimately stronger force. The Christian Church must pin its faith for the