

## Book Reviews

February

### FROM ROUSSEAU TO RITSCHL

Being the translation of eleven chapters from *Die protestantische im 19 Jahrhundert*.

By Karl Barth. Translated by Brian Cozens. Library of Philosophy and Theology (S.C.M. Press, London), 1959, pp. 435; 42/-.

1960

When Professor in Münster and Bonn, Karl Barth lectured on the history of modern Protestant theology, following the custom of German faculties which offer such a course as an important supplement to the lectures on dogmatics and history of dogma. These lectures, first published in 1947, dealt in nine chapters with the theology of the 18th century, followed by 19 chapters on the 19th century from Schleiermacher to Ritschl. The present English book contains seven chapters from the introductory part and only four (Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Strauss, Ritschl) from the main part. This selection is reasonable because some stars of the galaxy of the 19th century are of third or fourth magnitude and have not shone in the English speaking world which, incidentally, raises the question whether we shall ever possess a history of modern theology which would cover not only Germany and Switzerland, but also the French and English speaking world, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. In making their selection, the editors have shifted the emphasis from the 19th to the 18th century, and thus put into the foreground the great problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Thus they have given to the English public one of the finest works ever written in this field.

A later biographer of Barth may try to explain the predilection of this archenemy of the misunderstanding of the Christian faith by modern Protestant theology for the 18th century that has produced this misunderstanding. Barth's remarkable interest in, and knowledge of, the age of Enlightenment is known to every reader of his *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* (e.g. vol. III, I where p. 485 even his beloved Mozart, "the incomparable," appears as the climax of the music of all times till now). The opening chapter of this book, one of three important chapters of the German edition, on "Man in the Eighteenth Century" describes this man as the man of "absolutism" in the broadest sense. The chapter on Rousseau belongs to the best essays on the life and thought of this great Frenchman who also belongs to Switzerland. Lessing, Kant, Herder, Novalis and Hegel (a chapter on Goethe was planned for the original book, but never finished) are the great representatives of German thought on the border of philosophy and theology. They are followed by the comprehensive genius Schleiermacher, the radical atheist Feuerbach, the unfortunate D. F. Strauss and Ritschl whose "rounded, transparent and compact . . . train of thought" attracted followers, but has not given birth to an epoch as the theology of Schleiermacher did. The chapters are of unequal length according to the importance of the subject and the interest of the author. They are all informative, most of them even very stimulating as it may be expected if the greatest theological thinker of our time reveals something of his encounter with great minds of the past. There is a strong autobiographical element in these essays as every reader of Barth's books will feel.

The most important chapters for the systematic theologian are naturally those on Kant, Hegel and Schleiermacher. It is impossible to discuss them here. Barth shows how Kant, standing on the border of philosophy and theology, does not claim that his interpretation of

religion as phenomenon of reason leaves no possibility of any revelation, "since it might be after all, that the teachings of revelation stem from men supernaturally inspired" (quoted from "Disputation of the Faculties" on p. 193). Kant who never went to church recognised the existence of the Church which has its foundation in the Bible. Hence he envisaged "the possibility of a theology which would be *different* from the philosophical theology he himself was propounding. He explicitly calls this other theology, which limits philosophical theology, 'biblical theology', and it is his wish that the affairs of this biblical theology should not be 'allowed to mingle' with those of philosophy" (p. 192). In the case of Schleiermacher Barth emphasises rightly Schleiermacher's profound interest in the Church, and rejects E. Brunner's criticism for Schleiermacher's understanding of religion as mysticism. While he describes with great sympathy the attempt of Schleiermacher to reconcile Christianity with modern culture ("Shall the knot of history be thus loosed: Christianity with barbarism and learning with unbelief?" quoted p. 321), he shows why the great thinker was not able to retain the objective Word of God, the reality of Christ and the biblical understanding of sin and grace. The tragedy of idealistic philosophy in its attempts to interpret the Christian faith is made clear in the chapter on Hegel. It would have become still clearer if the development of the school of Hegel had been taken in account which ended in the final breakdown of metaphysics in European philosophy and in the claims of modern Communism that Marx and Lenin are the legitimate heirs of Hegel's philosophy, and that Marxist Communism is the necessary product of Western, Christian civilisation.

This outstanding book will find many grateful readers. The translation is good; even misprints in the German text have been corrected. Schleiermacher's "Glaubenslehre," the popular name for his main work *Der Christliche Glaube* should not be rendered with "Doctrine of Faith," but with the English title (see p. 424) "The Christian Faith," to avoid misunderstandings.

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general revelation and common grace. The section on the Church and the Means of Grace especially reaches a high level of sustained theological writing, particularly in the section on Baptism which in certain respects anticipates Cullmann's *Baptism in the New Testament*. Surprisingly, however, although the position of Reformed Orthodoxy is assumed throughout, a very serious lacuna exists in the total synopsis of the work in that no adequate consideration nor serious discussion is given to the subject of the Rule of Faith, to the Doctrine of Holy Scripture as to its nature and authority (The very brief chapter, "The Word as a Means of Grace," pp. 610-4, does not really deal with this subject). In recent years the subject of ecclesiology has been much in the centre of theological discussion but discerning minds are increasingly recognising that attention must be demanded and concentrated on the more basic theme (as its strange omission here indicates) of Holy Scripture as the Word of God.

Misstatements occasionally are made. E.g., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was not "written in Scotland" (p. 212) and the Authorised Version appears strangely designated as "The St. James . . . Version" (p. 684).

Questions for further study and references to relevant literature are added to the chapters and a comprehensive Bibliography is appended at the end of the book. Three indexes are added — to authors (very incomplete), subjects and Scriptural texts. This volume provides a useful conspectus of Reformed Dogmatics for the student, a valuable feature being the frequent reference to Dutch theological sources often inaccessible to the English reader. The publishers are to be commended on issuing so early in their career this major project in attractive format at such a moderate price.

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# ✓ SYMBOLISM IN THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

By Gilbert Cope (S.C.M. Press, London), 1959, pp. 282; 30/-

This is an exciting and exasperating book.