

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

### Letters to the Editor

Dear Friends:

For the past few years my mother, the late Mrs. H. M. Wolfe of the Bowling Green work, has sponsored an annual dinner at Christmas time for the destitute and unfortunate children of our group in the community and it has proven a great success and help. Now that she has passed into the Great Beyond, I am carrying on the good work that she did by continuing the needed help through my experience with her. Christmas is just around the corner, and may I ask you, dear and loyal friends who have been so helpful to support this project, and give me the same encouragement in carrying out this need as you gave my mother? It was her request that I carry on her work and my determination is greater now than ever before, for I would love to become the sort of woman that she was, in doing good for others. You have been wonderfully loyal in the past and may I ask that you think of us in the future. The road seems quite dark and dreary sometimes, yet through the blessings of Almighty God and through the prayers of my good friends. I feel that I will come out victorious in this great work. Kindly remember us in your prayers.

I am closing by wishing all of you dear friends a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Yours in His Work,  
Agnes E. Wolfe.

Bowling Green, Kentucky  
Dec. 1, 1936.

### "I Sat Where They Sat"

Ezekiel sat with the captives in Babylon and was "astonished among them seven days." Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me." The Classes of the Reformed Church have just held their fall meetings during September and October. These fall meetings are intended to face up to the general program of the Church. What was the impression which I got as "I sat where they sat"?

In the first place, the members of the Classes scarcely knew what it was all about. There was an apparent lack of information regarding the general work of the Church, with a corresponding apathy and indifference to Kingdom enterprises. The reports of Committees generally were commonplace, harmless

Now page 22, please

### Who's Who in This Issue

Dr. H. L. G. Kieffer, pastor of our Church at Frederick, Md.

Dr. W. H. Schlunkmann, pastor of Friedens Church, Milwaukee, and President of the Wisconsin District.



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Dr. Scott K. Wagner, pastor of Zion Church, Hagerstown, Md.

Rev. Theodore Mayer, pastor of Friedens Church, N. Tonawanda, N. Y.

Rev. Reinhard Krause, pastor of St. Paul's Church, Nashville, Ill.

Rev. S. Charles Hoover, pastor of Second Church, Harrisburg, Pa.

Rev. C. L. Schmidt, pastor of our Church in Ridgway, Pa.

Rev. Richard K. Morton, pastor of the Congregational Church, Rockland, Mass.

Rev. John B. Frantz, pastor of our Church in Woodstock, Va.

## ONE BOOK A WEEK

By CHARLES S. MACFARLAND

### Karl Barth Explains Himself

PART I

I once asked the Dean of a German school of theology if he understood Karl Barth. His answer was, "No, he does not even understand himself." I recently put the same question to an American dean and he replied that he did not propose to try. Barth's latest English translation, *Credo* (Scribners) is announced by the translator, J. Strathearn McNab, as being so "simple and popular" as to be understood by "every member of the Church." It is especially intended for preachers and authors who "have the weirdest ideas as to what Barth stands for." My answer would be that this volume may fulfill its purpose, but only if and when the average reader like myself extricates Barth's positive affirmations from his dialectically confusing antitheses, both when stated and implied. And when he does this there is little left in the book that is new or challenging, even to a liberal like myself.

A review, to do more than state these positives, would have to reproduce the volume, so fine spun are the logic and the exegesis. Nay more, one would have to multiply the book several times, so many are the implied "therefores" based upon disputable premises.

To begin with, Professor Barth removes the underpinning of any such effort at criticism by saying at the outset that historical analysis of the Apostles' Creed does not come within his purview. He uses it "simply as a basis for theological investigations." And yet, without concern as to when or how the Apostles' Creed came into being, he makes it the source of all Dogmatics, because "the meaning, aim and essence of the *Credo*" and of Dogmatics, even "if they are not identical, yet stand in the closest connection." The ensuing study, moreover, proceeds upon the assumption of identity. That is to say, we do not need to analyze the *Credo* in the light of what we know of Jesus' teaching—a virtual acceptance of a doctrine of Apostolic inerrancy which Barth, in other volumes, has disclaimed.

The best that I can now do is to give my readers the substance of Barth's *Credo*, most of which is my own *Credo*, and that of most of my readers, even though not "in the shape of *definite cognitions* (italics mine), won from God's revelation." With our author, however, "what gives faith its seriousness and power is not that man makes a decision, nor even the way in which he makes it, his feelings, the movement of his will, the existential emotion generated." "On the contrary, faith lives by its object." God's independence is such that He is under no obligation to reveal truth to man.

In the midst of a discussion of the very  
Now page 23, please

Committee meetings, but generally to get a whiff of fresh air or of tobacco.

Then there was a sense of hurry. They had to get through in a day! More important engagements were pressing. At one Classis, so I am informed, less than one-fourth of the members were present at an evening session when one of the major issues of the Church was to be considered. At another a Board representative who had travelled a good distance and spent some money to present his cause was told by the presiding officer, "We will give you five minutes!" "Make it brief," was the usual comment with which Board representatives were presented. The apportionments were accepted without the slightest regard as to whether or not they would be paid next year. The sense of any moral obligation inherent in such action was as far removed as the two poles. "I sat where they sat, and I was astonished."

While I sat I mused. I thought of many things and especially of how some of these glaring inefficiencies might be corrected. I am a critic, but I want to be constructive and helpful, if possible.

I became convinced that the time-honored custom of rotation in the offices of president is a mistake. It does not make for efficiency. Presiding over any assembly is an art, and few there be who can do it well without practice and experience. The president of a Classis should be the outstanding leader in the Classis. He should know and understand the whole program of the Church, and be familiar with every detail. He should know what matters are to be considered and what disposition should be made of them. He should carefully work out his Committees in advance, so matters can be referred to men capable of dealing with the same. He should create a wholesome atmosphere in which lofty themes and matters can be properly discussed. He should be more than a figurehead, putting motions before the house; he should guide the body towards proper action and attitude on important matters. He should command respect, so that things may be done decently and in order. But he cannot do all this if changed every year.

I am also convinced that it is foolish and futile for Board representatives to come to these meetings to present their cause in five or ten minute addresses. It is a waste of time, energy and money. It doesn't get anybody anywhere. The whole thing makes for superficiality. The motivating forces that cause men to grasp and give to these causes are never set into motion. It would be far better to have one capable and convincing person represent the whole program of the Church, and then sufficient time be given him to make a comprehensive, compelling, challenging presentation, with such an appeal, that the brethren of the Classis would feel impelled to carry out the program to their local congregations. This would eliminate the endless number of little speeches by Secretaries and the equally endless petty reports on the part of Committees that bring in a lot of undigested

## WILL ROGERS on "IMMORTALITY" JANUARY ISSUE OF CHURCH MANAGEMENT

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William H. Leach, Editor

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material for adoption. One Committee on Findings, carefully chosen, could bring to a focus such matters as would require definite action by the body. This would make for unity of purpose and action. It would save time, as it would deliver these bodies from a lot of routine which has become a weariness to the flesh and a bore, if not a nuisance.

I would also suggest that these Fall meetings be attended by a larger number of lay members, including men and women, and leaders of youth organizations. The lay members have a right to get in on the ground floor when the general Kingdom interests are being considered. They need to catch the vision and the inspiration of such meetings when once properly conducted. Many a pastor is unable to bridge matters over from the Classis to his congregation. He needs supporters. He needs carriers. More ganglia are needed to tie this work up to the local congregation. There is where the last stand is taken and the test ultimately made. If the pastor would have half a dozen or a dozen of his leading, representative lay members present, every congregation would soon feel the stimulating effects and there would come a renewal of life in the whole Church.

"As I sat where they sat" I felt that we were merely playing with this business of Kingdom enterprises. Wheels within wheels, but the spirit is not in the wheels. And the Lord is bringing us to judgment! Our Church attendance is decreasing. Our contributions are diminishing, our causes are languishing.

Dear Lord! Shall we ever live at this poor dying rate? I see a valley of dry bones—Can these bones live? O Breath, come and breathe upon these slain, that they may live! When the prophet had spoken the word of warning and his people hearkened to his word, a New Israel was born!

—Ezekiel.

### One Book a Week

*Concluded from page 2*

basis of ethical theory, Professor Barth assures us that "Credo does not signify the act of faith of a well-disposed or gifted or even an especially enlightened individual as such,"—which, to me, seems to mean that a simple-minded man like myself need only make his confession by subscribing to Barth's theology. And yet, in an adjoining paragraph, he tells me that "Dogmatics is the act of the Credo determined by the *scientific* (italics mine) method appropriate to it—*credo, ut intelligam*."

While, for this *ungifted* person, Dogmatics is not itself confession, "it is at-

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lied with it." Barth's basic doctrine of the moral impotence of man appears: "In the Credo the Church bows before that God whom we did not seek and find—Who rather has sought and found us." (A few of us only.)

Dogmatics must be based on *Exegesis*, (but as previously observed, without due regard to historical criticism). Dogmatics explains the Credo. The chief problem of Dogmatics is on three frontiers, the Sacrament, human life, and the frontier which separates eternity from time.

And now, to my dismay, I find that I have but reached the end of one relatively short chapter, which treats the first two words of the Apostles' Creed.

"He who believes in God in the sense of the symbol has the ground of a general faith in God (all of us as men always start out from that. . . ) taken away from under his feet in so far as he sees himself, in his confidence that man could of himself believe in God, confuted by God's revelation." (If the reader wishes to see a modern argument for the teleological, ontological and cosmological grounds of faith, which Barth thus rules out, he will find it in "The Purpose of God," by W. R. Mathews.) Barth's sole source of faith is in "revelation."

Our author adds little or nothing to the age-long discussion of the divine fatherhood and omnipotence, the problem of divine creatorship and sin, or of miracle. The reader doubtless has wondered about the place of prayer in Barth's doctrine of transcendence. While at most points his disposition is to intimate his (and our) ability to explain all Dogmatics, on this question he observes: "Prayer, in which man not only speaks with God, but in spite of sin, evil, death and devil is heard and answered by God, and, *incomprehensibly*, (italics mine) with and in spite of all difference between Creator and creature, with the will of God has part in determining the will of God." The

reader will perhaps share my relief in finding this word of intellectual humility in this great teacher.

Throughout the Creed thus far, we find implicit the distinction between God the creator and God the revealer. The Church proclaims and accepts "a special presence of God," "in his revelation." There are "very special forms of divine immanence (none however, in man, if I read Barth correctly) in the world." Schleiermacher was wrong in his conception of the Incarnation "as the completion and crown of creation." Here is the basis of Barth's apocalypticism—God's creation is become altogether evil. If we follow the "creation dogma," we shall have to "deny the Incarnation, miracle, prayer, the Church." The truth is that "it is just in the knowledge of Jesus Christ that we stand at the source of creation, faith and dogma." Thus far we have the author's introduction to his Dogmatics.

*To Be Continued*

### Book Reviews

Books here reviewed may be ordered either from Eden Publishing House, 1716-24 Chouteau Ave., St. Louis, Mo., or the Board of Christian Education, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia, Pa.

*The Life of the Rev. Benjamin Bausman, D.D., LL.D.*, by the Rev. Henry H. Ranck, D.D. Less than 100 copies of this, the second issue to be disposed of at \$1 per volume, half the original price. 443 pp. and 14 illustrations.

"I know of no man in the Reformed Church whose life and work will call forth more appreciation from the ministers and laymen of the Evangelical group than that of Dr. Bausman."

*Dr. George W. Richards.*

I have read this book with interest and profit. Upon receiving it with its 432 pages I thought, at first sight, it would be too tedious and too long. However, after beginning to read, it became more and more fascinating, so that I could hardly lay it aside.

It is the life of a truly great man of God, who had a large part in the development of the Reformed Church in the U. S. A., and who has left an indelible impression for God upon the life of many of its pastors and Church members. He was made of the same stuff as the sturdy pastors of the early history of the Evangelical Synod, many of whom came to my mind as I read this interesting biography.

Dr. Ranck has the happy faculty of choosing for his biography that which characterizes its subject most definitely. I recommended it to our brethren as a book which will give them an acquaintance with the Reformed Church in the U. S. A., such as they will not likely gain anywhere in one volume.

*F. C. Klick, D.D., President, Evangelical Synod of N. A.*

"The subject of this intensely interesting volume had the secret of ministerial power, which needs to be recovered."

*Dr. Charles S. Macfarland.*

"The book. . . deserves the widest possible distribution in the Church."

*Dr. Louis W. Goebel.*

This book written by the Rev. Henry H. Ranck, pastor of the Grace Reformed Church, Washington, D. C., is more than a biography of a great Christian pastor and Church leader. It is also a history of the inner development of the Reformed Church in the United States during a very critical period of its existence. The writer has done much research work and made a critical study of the development of the Reformed Church in the years covered by the ministry of Dr. Bausman, who played such an important part in this development that his life cannot be portrayed without at the same time presenting a picture of the life of the Church as to its theological training, its periodicals, its missionary work and its congregational activities. With all this the book is not a compilation of facts and figures but an interesting story, and the writer has combined much valuable information with human interest values. I would recommend this book particularly to my brethren in the Evangelical Synod group for a better understanding of the background of the Reformed group. The price of \$1, for which the second issue is being sold, puts it within the reach of all.

*Chas. Enders.*

Airman (explaining crash)—I just happened to get into an air pocket.

Sympathetic Old Lady—Oh, dear! And there was a hole in it.

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