

## THE WORLD OF BOOKS

## THE UNBOUND WORD OF GOD

Die Kirchliche Dogmatik: Bd. 1: Zweiter Halbband. By Karl Barth.  
(Evangelischer Buchhandlung Zollikon: Fr. (Swiss) 33.50.)

Reviewed by the Rev. Professor R. BIRCH HOYLE

THIS second half of the volume of introduction to Church dogmatics, with its 990 pages, unrolls before us like a range of Alps seen through a rift in the clouds. Peak after peak comes into sight, "Pelion is piled upon Ossa"; there are deep ravines, placid valleys, awe-inspiring, frowning crags. One cannot stay at these, much as one hopes to return again to them. As well try to carry in mind all the Himalayas as think of "reviewing" such a book.

But there shines through the book one central theme, "the Word of God." This Word is not primarily a book; it is, in Calvin's phrase, "God speaking in Person." This was first to Prophets and Apostles. Then the "Word" or "message" assumed a second form; the written word, Scripture. Again, the "Word" is heard through the preacher. Christian doctrine, according to Barth, is to be tested by the original speech of God, which is "revelation." And Barth's main concern is to clear away the many things—ecclesiastical systems and orders in Churches, infiltrations of world views which are man-made—which blur the windows of the mind and prevent us from seeing and hearing what God shows of Himself and speaks.

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Put shortly, Barth attacks Rome because the Catholic system plants man where only God should be. And he attacks much in recent Protestantism because it looks for revelation to scientists, theorists, inward "experience," and not enough to the "place" where God is to be heard: His Book within the Church. Barth's aim is to clear the track so that "the Word may run."

"Revelation" is God "showing us His very heart," as Luther said. This He has done uniquely in history in His Son, Jesus Christ, who is God in terms of human life. The "Word" is the Son. One great section of this book deals with what "God manifest in the flesh" means. Every twist and turn of argument "about it and about," which theologians all through the ages have brought forth is exhibited, and weighed in the scales by a mind that is "for ever haunted by the Eternal Mind," and by a soul full of wonder and joy as it feels the Mystery of God.

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All about the Virgin Birth, *pro* and *con*, is set down, about how the Divine and human natures could be reconciled in Christ; how all Scripture focuses on Christ, the Old Testament looking forward to Him, the New Testament looking back in remembrance of Him, and forward to His coming; how Time is God's Time—the interval between Christ's First and Second Coming; the miracles of Christmas and of Easter, where God "Broke in" and stamped History for ever with His seal: these themes fill the section which begins, "God's revelation takes place, as Scripture puts it, in the event of God's Word becoming man."

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The next great section—filling the third of this volume—explores what is meant by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in and through the Word, into and through the Church, and thence into the world of man.

This great section exhibits the "pernicious anaemia" that afflicts the Church everywhere. Man is everywhere and everything; his "religion" is mainly an attempt "to make himself righteous and holy against an image of God which man sketches arbitrarily out of his own mind," instead of looking at God's "portrait," seen in the Son. Who is God speaking. The Holy Spirit is "the subjective actuality and possibility of revelation." He opens blind eyes, softens hard hearts, and enables man "to see God." "God through Himself we then 'do' know, when He within us shines," as C. Wesley knew.

Here we have trenchant exposure of the Church's emptiness and how it may be filled. We thus, and *only thus*, come to know God as our Father, and that we are "children of God" through the Indwelling Spirit. This is a section all Christians need to subject their minds under.

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The third great section describes, by means of the Great Commandment, "the life of God's children" under the Word; a life of love to God and the neighbour, a life of praise "to the glory of God." Barth's spirit is at its sweetest and tenderest here, as it finds "deep within deep" in his devout contemplation of what, in God's mind, is human destiny. Christian ethics is rooted in revelation, and dynamised by the Holy Ghost.

In section three we are set in front of Holy Scripture by one who exhibits a wonderful knowledge of that unique library. Indeed, great trunk roads are driven through those writings by Barth, whose expository gifts are as great as his massive knowledge of all types of theology.

He has sharp words for form critics and others who juggle away Bible passages under the illusion that *they* know better than the writers of Scripture what the latter really meant and never wrote! We are never *over*, but always *under* the Word. And this is what gives the Church authority—this alone, that it is free with Scripture because bound to it, under it, to testify of it. The same holds good, also, as regards the preacher's theme. He is to be "a servant of the Word," and of nobody and nothing else: not even the Church as

an institution! It, too, is under the Word.

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Barth's ear is ever listening to "the many voices in the universe"—to-day, and asking how far they chime with God's Voice. He has a "hit" at the Oxford Conference last year, because it did not start from God's Word as it surveyed the world-problems. The Oxford Groups are reproved for talking so much about what *they* feel, and witnessing for man and not enough for God. Rome is assailed for putting Mary—a human being—in the place of the Redeemer, and then putting itself there and claiming prerogatives which belong to God alone.

He fears that Catholicism becomes Christ's mistress, and not the humble Bride needing cleansing. What he says has to be considered: it cannot be ignored, and for many a long year the Church will have to listen to this mighty pleader for "God's Almighty Word."

Last week the University of Oxford conferred its D.D. upon him: that act gives as much honour to the University itself as to Dr. Barth. And if in this Quatercentenary of the English Bible we want to know the treasures of revelation contained therein, no better guide can be found to-day than Karl Barth.

## A BUSY LIFE

"Thoughts and Talks." By Sir Arnold Wilson. (Longmans. 12s. 6d.)

Reviewed by Sir ALEXANDER MACKINTOSH

BROAD-SHOULDERED, shaggy-browed Sir Arnold Wilson, with kind, grave face, a soldier experienced in political service in India and Persia, is one of the most active men with a seat in the House of Commons. Not only does he play his part in Parliament, but he goes everywhere—to political schools and meetings, rotarian clubs, village dinners, training centres, and all sorts of assemblies of ordinary people. And wherever he goes he takes a sympathetic eye and ear. He gets the confidence of and chats with the people whom he meets in the manner of George Borrow.

His diary from 1935 to 1937 in "Thoughts and Talks" contains a record of everyday life in our times which will be of value to the historian. It is a record also of great interest to those who read it now.

## Biblical Knowledge

Sir Arnold Wilson is not one of the members who return the cards sent in from the lobby—strangers whom they do not know. His sympathy is with the poor and the workless, and he puts himself to ungrudging trouble to give help. He has been a life-long student of the Bible. He knows it intimately, and quotes it frequently, and along with the Prayer Book it has been a lantern to his feet as an individual. He gave his blood in Hitchin Hospital in his constituency—for the 26th time in December, 1936.

That is only an example of his assistance to his fellow-men. He takes an enormous number of railway journeys by day and night in carrying out his engagements, and he does what he can for the comfort of the third-class passengers with whom he associates or talks. Arriving with some young soldiers at Euston from Stockport at 4.30 in the morning, and finding no warm or appetising food in the station, he took them to a stall that he knew. Coffee, savoyes, hot pies, banbury cakes, and other delicacies awaited them. "We shook hands presently and parted regretfully; all soldiers have something in common."

Again, he took three sailors from Trafalgar Square to the nearest Corner House, where, in exchange for sausages and mash, they regaled him with

foe'sle yarns covering half the world. "I certainly had the better of the bargain."

In politics Sir Arnold is a Conservative, with an independent judgment. His instinct and experience incline him to the Right abroad and to the Left at home. He says he is more in sympathy with Disraeli, "the Tory Radical" in his outlook on society than with any of Disraeli's successors. Yet no one has drawn more inspiration from Disraeli's "Sybil, or the Two Nations" than Earl Baldwin, and Sir Arnold relies on Mr. Neville Chamberlain for a truly national policy which will reduce the difference between the various classes, and "spread the butter of enjoyment more evenly over the bread of necessity."

The forces now working for change are, he says, deeper than those of the Industrial or the French Revolution. They are akin to those of the Renaissance-Reformation upheaval. The radio and the motor, and the vast development of automatic machinery have done more to shape the State than anyone could have foreseen. "The Tory is not blind to these things; he intends to guide them, to ride the storm, and not to be beaten down by it. He prefers State guidance to State control, and State control to State ownership, but his preferences are pragmatic."

## Divided by Loyalties

There is no bitterness or prejudice in Sir Arnold's view of his fellow-men, and he tries to expel these feelings from others. The electors who voted against the Government in 1935 he regards as patriotic, public-spirited, and as good citizens and parents as those who voted for it. What then divides us? It is described by Sir Arnold as divergent and often blind loyalties, and, less often, blind prejudices and blind passions.

No one sees more clearly that our business must be to open each other's eyes to the great stretch of country before us which we must travel together. We might go on that journey more hopefully if all supporters of the Government and all its opponents took as much interest as Sir Arnold takes in practical aspects of the social life of the nation. That interest runs through his book.

## TWO FINE PIECES OF DETECTION

"The Nursemaid who Disappeared." By Philip Macdonald. (Collins. 7s. 6d.)

"Excellent Intentions." By Richard Hull. (Faber. 7s. 6d.)

THE publishers of the first of these books tell us that Philip Macdonald is back again and better than ever. All real "detective" fans must have been waiting for a reappearance of this master of intricate pattern and convincing characterisation. I thought, to my shame, that it would be the usual thing, and that reason for silence had been loss of touch. How wonderfully disappointed I was!

This story, dealing with child abduction and death by violence, has an innate humanity to touch us all. It is an exploit of Colonel Gethryn, started by the overhearing of a vague plot, fostered by the earlier experience of the hearer, analysed by the genius of Gethryn, solved by the patient teamwork of Gethryn and Co.

I wish perhaps that Pike, of Scotland Yard, was not so utterly secondary to solution, that Garrett, starter of the

hunt, was not so erratic, that we knew more of the person of the real criminal—but that is greed for more of a detective dish, and I fear a reader's gluttony.

Richard Hull's novel is chalk to Macdonald's cheese, but very nearly front rank in its own right. The explanation and detection of the murder is made plain to us by a recapitulation of the trial evidence that conceals the identity of the accused until the summing up of the judge.

The murdered man, rich and abominable, deserved his fate at the hands of his assassin long before the fatal poison laid him low. Many might have caused his demise, all with excellent intentions, but some will think that Mr. Justice Smith's were the most excellent intentions of all.

I regard Macdonald and Hull as inevitable for the detective library list.

L. C.