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Expository Times

38 George Street, Edinburgh.

Cutting from issue dated.....**OCTOBER 1949**.....**THE APOSTLES' CREED.**

Dogmatics in Outline, translated by Professor G. T. Thomson (S.C.M.; 12s. 6d. net), is the somewhat misleading title of an exposition of the Apostles' Creed by Karl Barth. Misleading, for it is not (nor does it purport to be) a formal and systematic treatment of Christian doctrine. And yet the essence of the 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' lies here, and here may also be found in one form or another most of the ideas that Barth emphasizes in his theological teaching. This is not the first time he has 'paraphrased' the Apostles' Creed. There was the 'Credo' of 1935 and the 'Confession de la Foi de l'Eglise' of 1943. The occasion that led to this third attempt was an invitation to lecture at Bonn to the students of all the Faculties; where in the summer of 1946 in the semi-ruins of the Kurfürsten Schloss he met them between the morning hours of seven and eight. He has in this volume recorded his impression of their 'grave faces, which had still to learn how to smile again.' But they must have been greatly encouraged by Barth's presence and uplifted by his message of Christian hope, all the more so that the lectures were—for once—delivered without a manuscript. And we can imagine with what vigour and intensity they were delivered. Indeed we get a sense of this as we read the lectures, even in translation. For this is no dull translation. Once again, and fortunately, the translator is Professor G. T. Thomson of the University of Edinburgh; and we must be grateful to him for the precision and clarity with which his skilled and practised pen conveys to us Barth's meaning—not always an easy task!

It looks as though doing without a manuscript (as he was forced to do owing to primitive conditions at the University of Bonn) has served at times to straighten out Barth's meaning. At any rate, to take one example only, his exposition of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth in the 'Credo' was, if we remember aright, far from easy to follow; but here he makes his points very clearly. He holds that the miracle of the Virgin Birth is the form of the mystery of the Incarnation, the *unio hypostatica*, the personal union of God and man in Jesus Christ. But we cannot say that the mystery took this form of absolute necessity. All we can say is that it pleased God to let the mystery become manifest in this shape and form. Yet while the Virgin Birth is a sign, pointing to the reality of the Incarnation, it is not a mere sign, which might even be deducted from the mystery. 'Every time people want to fly from this miracle,

a theology is at work which has ceased to understand and honour the mystery as well.' But there are many Christian theologians who would demur to such a statement.

WILLIAM FULTON.

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