

# From My New Shelf

By C. RYDER SMITH

*Dogmatics in Outline*, by Karl Barth. (S.C.M., 12s. 6d.)

When Professor Barth returned to Bonn in its ruins, he delivered a series of lectures to students from all the faculties of the University, including men who are not Christians. For the first time in his life he lectured without a manuscript—and enjoyed it. This book is a ‘slightly polished and improved transcript’, put into English by Mr. G. T. Thomson. The Apostles’ Creed furnished the framework for the lectures. The result is that we have a book for which many have long desired—a brief account of Barth’s teaching from Barth himself. He has often warned his readers that he may at any time change his mind on this subject or that, but it is unlikely that he will do so now on any principal doctrine. The word ‘dogmatics’ should be noted in the title of the book. Ever since Barth first burst upon the theological world, he has been involved in controversy. Here he discards apologetics and just tells us what his positive teaching is. Of course a careful reader will discern how he stands on the chief subjects of past and present controversy. For instance, he now gives a clear answer to the question with which he was almost pestered at the first, ‘What do you mean by “the word of God”?’ Primarily he means Christ, but secondarily he means the Bible, since it is through this book that Christ speaks, either directly to its readers or indirectly through those that preach it. Again, while Barth does not use the phrase ‘natural religion’ in this book, he does imply that he rejects it. Here it is interesting to note that he believes that God reveals Himself to some degree *through* nature. Barth implies, however, that even this kind of revelation is self-authenticating, like the direct revelation by Christ. There is no room for reasoning in either case. It is possible that here Barth does something, in his own way, to fill the gap left by his denial of ‘natural religion’. Again, he says outright that there is a ‘subjective element’ in Christianity. He must needs admit this under the first words of the Creed, ‘I believe’, and it emerges again under the exposition of the article, ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost’. It is unfortunate that the lecturer needed to hurry as he drew near the end of his course for one would have liked to hear more of Romans 8. He speaks of ‘the modern exuberance of this subjective element’, which was ‘brought by Schleiermacher into systematic order’. Some would say that it is the objective element that is over-exuberant in Barth. In passing, again, the lecturer implies that he is an enemy of all doctrines of the perfectibility of Christians in this life. Indeed, he believes that, even in them, much sin is inevitable. Again, to one reader, at any rate, he does not make his doctrine of predestination very clear in this book. In the Foreword Barth tells us that he came upon ‘an undamaged bust of Schleiermacher’ in the ruins of Bonn and that it has been rescued. One could make more than one parable out of this. But in my desire that a reader should keep his eyes open, I am forgetting that this book is dogmatics and not apologetics. It is far more important to ask where Barth is right than where he is wrong. An evangelical Christian will agree with nine-tenths of what he says here, and will rejoice that God has raised up a prophet to recall Christendom to Christ.

fully with him). The Wesleys' doctrine stressed the great Scriptural theme of the Priesthood of Christ. There is here an element in the early Methodist tradition for which the theological studies of Dr. Vincent Taylor afford us valuable modern assistance as we come to reconsider and readjust our Eucharistic doctrine. Dr. Rattenbury is less happy when dealing with the intricate question of the classification of the forms of this doctrine. He is confusing about Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, and rather depressingly enthusiastic about *The Apostolic Ministry* and *The Shape of Liturgy*. But about the value of his presentation of the evidence for early Methodist sacramental practice and belief, and his exposition of the doctrine of the hymns, there can be no second thoughts, and these are his main themes. The reference to the Epiclesis (p. 51) might have been supplemented by information about the important liturgical work in the Non-Juring movement. There are a few misprints (pp. 20, 82, 87, 104, 110, 147, 154.). The kneeling figure at the foot of a Fra Angelico painting (p. 25) is always either St. Dominic or St. Peter Martyr, and never the painter himself. It seems a pity to take a highly controversial and technical phrase like 'realized eschatology' and to use it as a heading for Chapter 4, particularly as Dr. Rattenbury immediately adds to his operative quotation from C. H. Dodd (p. 64): 'It was all that, but it was also mystical!' In these days, when all the Free Churches are seeking richer forms of worship, sometimes not without danger of importing strange fires from other altars, Dr. Rattenbury has rendered great service to Methodists by reminding them that in their own great hymns they have their own means of enriching the light and colour of their worship. But this book is more than a reminder, however valuable. It sends us to use our hymns in our prayers, beside our Bibles, as our fathers did, and to find in them divine food for growing souls.

E. GORDON RUPP

*A Godly Fellowship*, by F. Harold Buss and R. G. Burnett. (The Epworth Press, 8s. 6d.)

This story of the century of fellowship and helpfulness of the Methodist Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Association is like a chapter of the brotherhood of the Christians in the Acts of the Apostles. It is as vivid and colourful as a novel, and a record of high adventure as well. To us, living in days when the social conscience has awakened to the responsibility of ministering to the needy and the aged, it is almost unbelievable that a century ago a godly preacher of the gospel, ill and unemployed as the result of his illness, should have been allowed by the State—and still more incredible that he should have been allowed by the Methodist Church—to starve to death on a diet of turnips and scanty crusts. The indifference of the Methodist Church of those days to the deplorable poverty and privations of many of its lay preachers was a shameful business. But those were days of bitterness and strife and divisions—of the infamous Fly Sheets and the expulsion of ministers who rebelled against official intolerance—and I suppose it was hard for men at one and the same time to insult each other and succour the afflicted and distressed. But it was in that dark hour the 'Mutual Aid' was born. There were Local Preachers who realized that 'if anything was to be done the brethren would have to do it themselves'. How it was done is the fascinating subject of this book. The passage from suspicion and mistrust to the complete confidence and generous support of Methodism—from