

adequate idea of this rich and suggestive book. We hope ourselves to learn more from it in future readings of it. Barth's plans, announced in the second edition of the first part, still stand. He is to write his *Dogmatik* in four volumes, dealing with The Doctrine of God, The Doctrine of Creation, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, and The Doctrine of Redemption.

We English-speaking Christians have much to learn from Barth, and many of us have tried to do so. But Barth, too, might learn something from British theology. Among Barth's innumerable quotations we have noticed only one in English, a quotation from Edward 'Irvin' [*sic*] taken from H. R. Mackintosh's great book *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*. Dr. Mackintosh in his *Types of Modern Theology* spoke with characteristic graciousness of Barth and expressed his high appreciation of his teaching. But Barth's own statement of Christology might have gained much from the sympathy and insight of Dr. Mackintosh's treatment. From Dr. Mackintosh's book it is possible for the student to enter into the movement

of Christological thought. That a student will not learn from Barth. All tends to be black or white. There are writers of the distant past about whom he will tolerate no complaint. There are writers of the immediate past and of the present of whom he will hear no good. He still does not seem to realize that although the theologies of a Schleiermacher or a Ritschl have less to say to our age than they had to their own, yet even from them something can still be learnt; not all they wrote was wrong. And in the section on 'Religion as Unbelief' Barth might have written more wisely had he been willing to learn from writers like Drs. Farquhar and Macnicol who, holding as firmly as himself to the unique and final significance of the gospel, knew paganism too well to speak of it as if it were only sin and falsehood.

The immense scale of Barth's *Dogmatics* is a welcome sign of the seriousness with which he takes theology, but we find it hard to believe that what is only a part of a preliminary volume could not have been written with equal clarity and force in less than a thousand big and closely printed pages.

Contributions and Comments.

The Lachish Letters.

PROFESSOR HARRY TORCZYNER, Bialik Professor of Hebrew in the University of Jerusalem, has at last favoured us with his long-promised volume on these pre-Exilic ostraca—*Lachish I. (Tell ed-Duweir), The Lachish Letters* (published for the Trustees of the late Sir Henry Wellcome by the Oxford University Press; 25s. net). The title page includes the names also of Lankester Harding, Alkin Lewis, and the late J. L. Starkey, and acknowledgments are made in the Foreword and the Introduction to several other assistants and scholars. The ostraca, eighteen in number, written in iron-carbon ink with a reed or wood pen, were dug up in 1935 in the guard-house at Lachish, and are letters to Ja-ûsh, believed to be the military governor of the city, from a certain Hoshaiiah (who was located at an outpost) during the second Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadrezzar, towards the end of Zedekiah's reign (which closed 586 B.C., when Nebuchadrezzar captured and sacked Jerusalem). They are written in the ancient Phœnician script, but the language used is pure Biblical Hebrew. Professor Torczyner deserves the

gratitude of all Old Testament scholars for the marvellous pains and ingenuity he has manifested in his decipherment of the writings. The volume contains excellent photographs of all the letters, with transliteration into Hebrew and translation into English, together with a commentary on each one, a Glossary of all the Hebrew words, a comparative table of all the Phœnician scripts, and several Indices.

The learned Professor's theory regarding the letters will not, however, appeal to all scholars who have studied them. The archæological evidence is conclusive that they were found in the soot and ashes connected with the final destruction of the city, and must therefore be dated about 588–587 B.C. But Torczyner's view is that they were concerned with the flight of the prophet Uriah to Egypt (which is stated in Jer 26 to have taken place in the reign of Jehoiakim), and that they were probably documents brought (shortly before Lachish fell) from the city archives to the guard-house for the purpose of trying Hoshaiiah on charges of treachery connected with Uriah. Hence most of them were messages written, he believes, sometime before the inquiry, perhaps years before it, and not just before the fall

of the city. He puts forward the view that the flight of this prophet and his death may not have taken place till the time of Zedekiah, and thus the letters do not need to be dated as far back as Jehoiakim's reign, but just a few years before the end of the monarchy. This theory seems rather fanciful, however, and does not accord with the archæology or the Biblical history of the time. From the layer in which the letters were found, they undoubtedly date from Nebuchadrezzar's invasion in 588 B.C.; and as they are all of the same type, and one of them (referring to fire-signals) is admitted to have been written during the invasion, it is evident that all of them belong to the same time of tension and alarm at the close of the monarchy. The idea that they may have formed the court-dossier of Hoshaiah at some military trial has nothing to support it.

The theory, too, that the prophet mentioned in them is Uriah will not be accepted by the majority of scholars, for this prophet was certainly put to death in Jehoiakim's time, and this would put the letters back as much as eleven years or more before the fall of Lachish. Torczyner, it is true, attempts to bring Uriah's death down into Zedekiah's time, and thinks the redactor has made a mistake in placing it under Jehoiakim, but the narrative (Jer 26²² ff.) is admitted by the most advanced critics to be authentic as it stands. It is not un-

likely, indeed, that 'the prophet' (whose name is not given in the letters) was Jeremiah, for the statement in Letter VI. complaining of his words is practically identical with what is said of him in the Biblical record (Jer 38⁴).

Torczyner's idea, moreover, that the Nedabiah mentioned in Letter III. as the bearer of one of the messages is to be identified with the 'grandson' of Jehoiakim (cf. 1 Ch 3¹⁸) does not find favour with other scholars who have carefully studied the Phœnician script of the letters. The word which he transliterates נכר ('grandson') is clearly עבד ('servant'), and the royal grandson has nothing to do with the Nedabiah mentioned in the text. The former, indeed, on the most favourable estimate could not have been more than five years of age when Letter III. was written (according to Torczyner's date for it).

The volume will probably occasion considerable discussion and criticism. But if it should stimulate research into these invaluable documents, and reveal new points tending to clarify certain passages, great good will result. It is the reviewer's belief that scholarship will come to date all these letters to about February 587 B.C., only a few weeks or days before the fall of Lachish, and to see in 'the prophet' not Uriah, but Jeremiah, whose name seems to be clearly mentioned in Letter XVII.

Glenfarg.

J. W. JACK.

Entre Nous.

Some Thoughts on Bereavement.

To write to a bereaved person is the most difficult of tasks, it always has been so, and possibly not till months after the blow has fallen can the letter be of any use. Then it may be re-read; and some chance saying in it may reach and comfort the lonely. Thus it is surely worth while to read with attention what other and more distinguished people have said, and have found to be of solid use.

Possibly the letter written by Arthur Balfour to Lady Desborough, when her son, Billy Grenfell, was killed after his brother Julian in the War, may not be as well known as it might be. Mrs. Edgar Dugdale (who writes the life of her uncle) tells us that Balfour set forth 'more plainly and unequivocally than anything else ever put on paper, his feelings about death.' The gist of the letter lies in the fact that he entertains no doubt whatever

about a future life. ('I deem it at least as certain as any of the hundred-and-one truths of the framework of the world, as I conceive the world.') 'I am as sure that those I love and have lost are living to-day, as I am that yesterday they were fighting heroically in the trenches. The bitterness lies not in the thought that they are really dead, still less in the thought that I have parted with them for ever, for I think neither of these things.' He goes on to say that the bitterness lies in the certainty that, till he dies, he will never again see their smile or hear their voice, but then concludes victoriously—and here comes the steadfast helpful word: 'The pain is indeed hard to bear—too hard, it sometimes seems, for human strength; yet measured in the true scale of things *it is but brief*; death cannot long cheat us of love. . . .'

That is what we all long to give to the mourner