

THE BARTHIAN THEOLOGY

THE
BARTHIAN THEOLOGY
AND THE MAN OF TO-DAY

by the
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TO THE MANY KIND AND APPRECIATIVE FRIENDS
WHOM I MET IN CANADA
WHEN I LECTURED ON THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
IN AFFECTIONATE GRATITUDE

FOREWORD

THEOLOGY was of old compared with the Sphinx. It has at least one thing in common with it, as Barth has remarked, that it gives always again occasion for the question: "What then is it?" Theology is not a science, and it has "no continuing city" among the sciences. Not even the greatest theologies, of a St. Augustine, or a Calvin, can be comprehended under the general name of a science.

Theology is bound to Revelation and to the Written Word, and it exists only for faith. It is, one might say, the science of faith. It lives by the Word of God, and it must be ever becoming what it is, as the Church passes from age to age, and from problem to problem. No dead theology can be revived. Each age needs its own theology. It is the Church, and not science, or culture, which creates theology, and for the Church it is a necessity of life. In its theology, the Church reflects upon its message for the age it lives in, and measures it by the standard of the Word of God. It ventures to reckon with the belief that God will speak His Word in the present, because He has already spoken it. Theology is therefore memory, without which there can be neither faith nor hope. But it lives also in promise. Its essence is obedience to "the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

Theology becomes a reality in each age only in

its relation to the man of that age. It has reality for us in relation only to the "man of to-day." We live in a time when the *Word of God* has disappeared largely from theology, and its place has been taken by the great word—*Religion*. The object of the Barthian Theology is to plant the Word of God again in its proper place as the centre and the radius of Christian theology for the man of to-day.

If the Word of God be given its place once more at the centre of the Church's life, what must happen? What reactions will be set up in the wide circumference of the Church's activities at home and abroad? This book is an attempt to answer that question.

The time is arriving when each country must endeavour to translate the message of Karl Barth into its own modes of thought, and to acclimatise it in its own speech. No doubt, in the discipline of crisis and distress, God has been preparing the different lands for this fresh presentation of His Word. Jesus Christ, as Barth reminds us, can pass through closed doors. Nevertheless, there is a human task of translation, not merely of words but of thoughts, to be attempted, if this message is to become a Word of God to us. Simply to assimilate it into our present theological thinking would be to dissipate it; for its work is that of corrective, of reorientation and of new beginning, even if it begins by creating opposition and criticism. This theology is nothing less than a concern for a new understanding of Revelation, or the Word of God, and for a new attempt to procure a hearing for it in the present crisis in Society and in the Church.

This book is intended to follow up my former volume on *The Significance of Karl Barth*, of which

Dr. Barth was kind enough to write : " I have read it attentively and I am glad to tell you that I am entirely satisfied with its contents. I acknowledge it gladly as a good and accurate introduction to the work which I am trying to do."

My object now, among other things, is to show that this theology is not a foreign product which we are seeking to import, but that it has its roots deep in that Reformed Faith which we share with our brethren in the Protestant lands of Europe.

I have laid under contribution the valuable work of Thurneysen, Gogarten, Brunner, and Bultmann, for while they differ at many points, and the differences tend to increase, they are all, as Gogarten says, " one in intention," in securing its due place for the Word of God in our time. But in endeavouring to carry over the leading thoughts of the Movement, and to acclimatise them in the English-speaking world, I have exercised a freedom of interpretation for which its leaders are not to be held responsible.

I have once again to thank warmly my friend, the Rev. James Cosh, B.D., who read these chapters both in manuscript and in proof, and gave me ungrudgingly the benefit of his keen eye and accurate mind, as well as of his sympathetic understanding of the subject.

JOHN McCONNACHIE.

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CHAPTER I

A DAY OF CRISIS

IT has become a commonplace to say that we live in a day of crisis, or rather of crises, political, social, and economic, as well as religious. But many have not yet awakened to the perception of what a *crisis* is. While the word is used with different shades of meaning, it means literally "separating," or "judgment," and in this sense we now employ it. The crisis in which we find ourselves is nothing less than a world-judgment, a judgment on Society, and on the Church, in which none of us can play the part of spectator, for ultimately it is a crisis which sets each one of us before God.

1. A judgment is being pronounced to-day on our whole Western civilisation. This was the first insight granted independently to Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten, both at the time obscure ministers, one in Switzerland, and one in Germany, when some twelve years ago they sounded the first notes of their theological reveille. The year after Barth gave his epoch-making address at Tambach (1919) on *The Christian in Society*, (1) Gogarten startled the "Friends of the Christian World" at the Wartburg with an address on *The Crisis of our Civilisation*, which led Wilhelm Schaefer the poet, who was present, to exclaim that Martin Luther stepped into

the Banqueting Hall, and was again Junker Georg, ready to fling his ink-bottle at the head of the devil. We were experiencing, said Gogarten, a convulsion of which the war was only a premonitory symptom. The world, as it was, had fallen from God and was under judgment. This was the crisis of our civilisation. Either our Christian Religion was but the soul of this civilisation, the finest expression of its powers, in which case its life was bound up with it, and with it would perish, or we had a Religion which was the absolute and abiding crisis of this and every civilisation. Such, he held, was Christianity. A mere cultural religion knew no fall, no original sin, but only development. But in Jesus Christ we had an Act of God, at once of His holiness and of His grace, which was the judge, and not the product of our human culture. (2)

Humanity, as Barth and Gogarten see it, is not without its admirable features. Though subject to transitoriness and death, it has shown itself capable of great self-denial, and self-sacrifice, and through its efforts it has brought into being a whole group of cultural æsthetic and scientific values. But humanity hides in itself the titanic impulse to storm the heights, to "build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven, and make us a name." By ignoring the "distance" between man and God it has been guilty of Promethean pride and self-glorification—which to Barth is the crowning sin—and has succumbed to the guilty ambition "to be as gods." In the faith of last century in an unending progress of man, of human culture and morals, with Herbert Spencer as its high priest, this pride found arrogant expression. "Progress," he said, e.g., "is not an accident,

but a necessity. What we call evil and immorality must disappear. It is certain that man must become perfect." The final product of this pride of humanity is Humanism, especially as it has come to full flower in America. Dewey, the leading American Humanist, with perfect logic rules God out altogether. For if humanity be thus irresistible, if man can confront the world as lord, what need is there for a God any more? Man is God to himself. Religion remains as a human product, valuable because of its usefulness, but the only possible religion in the end is the worship of humanity.

This proud self-conscious humanity, with all its gifts and powers, has come into the crisis of its existence, and has been overtaken by judgment, in which all its fine idealisms are seen to have been delusions, and all its self-deifications to have been dreams born of an intoxication. Its judgment is revealed in its deficiency of power. It is become weak, and almost despairing, for the crisis is revealed in what it is not, as much as in what it is. The proud Towers of Babel which it sought to build are toppling down. Its sin of trying to do without God is being discovered. But this is perhaps its most hopeful aspect. For when it ceases to rely upon itself, and make of itself a god, hope may be at hand. The Kingdom of God comes "nigh" in the day of repentance. What this crisis of humanity has revealed most clearly is the want of a Divine Absolute, of a Word of God, and the weakness which that want implies, in a day of distress. (3)

2. But the crisis has come closer. Judgment has gone forth also on the Church, and particularly on the Protestant Church, which is experiencing one of

the critical hours of its history, in which it must either find its way back to its true nature and source, or perish. The Protestant Church of our time, by its individualism of thought and worship, and its want of true fellowship, has become greatly unfaithful to the Church of the Reformation. (4) Troeltsch was indisputably right in his assertion that our modern individualistic Protestantism has its roots much more in the enthusiasts and humanists of the time of the Reformation than in the Reformers. (5) We do well to be concerned over the condition of the Protestant Church, for the Church is essential to the continuance of the Christian Faith. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—outside the Church there is no salvation—is a Protestant no less than a Roman Catholic principle, if it be understood not of the Institution, but of the Fellowship. The Word of God is to be heard only inside the Christian Community, no man can discover it for himself. For the Church is a divine Society. It is not a religious fellowship based on the common religious experiences of its members, nor a gathering of people brought together for common ends and interests, or for the mutual edification of its members. In distinction from all such fellowships the Church is built, not on the desire, will, or purpose of man, but on the will of God. It is not a natural fellowship into which we are born, neither is it a spiritual fellowship which men can form. It is the divine Fellowship into which man comes by a divine calling; the *ecclesia*, or Fellowship of those whom God has “called out”; a Fellowship therefore which rests only on the Word of God. It has pleased God to reveal Himself in His Word once and for all in

history, at a definite place and time—that is the origin of the Christian Church. Its foundation on this act of divine Revelation is what distinguishes it from every other association, natural or spiritual. There is no Buddhist or Mohammedan or Hindu Church. There is only the Christian Church. The Church is nothing other than what Luther describes it, “a community of the saints, of the faithful, of the elect.” The New Testament knows nothing of what some one has called “the private religion of educated people.”

Let us consider, for a moment, what the Church which Christ founded is intended by God to be.

The Christian Church is to be the place from which the Word of God goes forth in mercy and in judgment over the whole field of life, for it carries the divine commission to proclaim the Word which it has received.

The Christian Church is to be the place where men are taken captive by the Word of God, the place where those who are thus taken captive become a Fellowship of obedience and service, under the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian Church is to be the place where the grace of God is found, and the medium through which it is communicated; the place where God comes forward to meet us in Jesus Christ the Mediator, with His Word of Reconciliation.

The Christian Church is to be the place of Hope, to which in a world of despair men turn with expectation, and find what Luther described as “a confident despair” (*desperatio fiducialis*). In the midst of the temporal and ordinary it should speak of the eternal, and extraordinary. Into the midst of the natural it

should bring the supernatural. It should be the Church of the Coming One, of the God of Hope, Who makes all things new.

The Christian Church is to be the place where man becomes conscious of the boundary which is set to all that is human, and where he is made to realise his own creaturehood and need.

The Christian Church is to have its life under the sign of the Cross. (6) For its glory can consist only in this, that in its poverty it hears and heeds the Word of God. The dream of power born of its own self-confidence with which the Church is often visited is far removed from the spirit which should animate a Church bearing the reproach of Christ. The Church of Christ can have no human importance, no human goals. As the Church of Him Who "suffered without the gate" it must ever remain the Church of the Crucified, a Church that lays no claim to fame, dignity, culture, or abiding place in the world, but must ever "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13). For the Church that does not know, or the Church which forgets that it is a Church under the Cross, betrays and crucifies Christ afresh. The Christian Church exists as the Society in the midst of other societies whose specific office is to confront men with the crucified Christ. As the Church of the Crucified, it must be a Church of Sinners, a Church of the Mercy of God, a Church of forgiveness, of faith and obedience, which remains with Christ in His humiliation, and daily hears God's call for repentance. (7)

If now we look at what the Church is, in contrast to what God means it to be, so uncertain in its witness

to the Word of God, so powerless to take men captive, so despairing in a world of despair, yet so eager to be a Church of power and earthly magnitude, we shall understand why it is a Church under judgment. Its true task is that of *kerygma*—proclamation—the call of the herald who makes known what no one has known before, and who comes as a bringer of Good News. The guilt and sin of the Church is that it has so little to offer to the world, because it has itself become so largely world. It is in the unhappy position of having to give out more than it actually has. It has lost, or largely lost, the Word of God, and proclaims instead its own bloodless word. It offers religion, beautiful services, social and cultural activities in abundance, but it is nevertheless in danger of losing its very *raison d'être* as a Church. For a Church which has sunk in many places into being a social centre, a home of Humanism, with nothing better to offer than some special brand of Christian culture, higher it may be, but one in kind with the general culture of the world, has lost, as Barth declares, the “substance of a Church” in the pursuit of shadows.

3. But the crisis has come closer. The minister of the Word is in the crisis. Some one has compared our age with the age at the close of the Roman Empire. Now, as then, there is a widespread sense that the foundations are being shaken on all sides. The distress of that time called forth St. Augustine's *City of God* which became a word of God to the Church of that day. Once more, a quite elementary longing has arisen for something that is beyond time's shakings, for an “Archimedean point” outside, a longing for contact with a Reality above the

relativity of history and experience. Christian people are in great confusion of mind and cannot find their way through the perplexities of the situation. What is wanting is a Word of Truth which will lay hold upon every heart, not a word which is the mere opinion of this one or that, but a Word which will stand over against all subjective views in the commanding power and majesty of objective truth. The people look pathetically to the Church to speak this Word, but the Church does not speak it. She does not sound forth the clear, commanding, captivating Word into our time. Her thought does not move inside the category of divine Revelation, but inside the category of human and spiritual values. The result is the turning away from the Church of many in disappointment and even in anger.

Looking back on the thirty years since I became a minister, I cannot help feeling that we ministers—and I do not exonerate myself—are in no small measure to blame for this present hunger for the Word of God. Thirty years ago, interest in Christian doctrine was at a low ebb. We were in the full flood of enthusiasm for Biblical criticism. It was necessary and valuable work on which we have no reason to turn our backs. But there can be no doubt that for the time being it has weakened the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and reduced it in many minds to an all-too-human book, a treasury of spiritual wisdom and little more. We have pulled down, but we have not built up. The old dogmatic view of the Bible as a sort of textbook of divinity became frankly untenable and had to be abandoned. But if the old dogmatic view had its defects, the new psychological view has even

worse defects, for it leaves the Bible entirely at the mercy of the individual preacher, and robs it of all authority as the Word of God. The Bible becomes a book of abiding messages in a transient setting which the preacher, by some inner criterion which he claims to possess, decodes for the benefit of his hearers. The preacher's attitude to the Bible becomes accordingly one of superiority. He comes down upon it from above, approves or condemns, selects or rejects, at will. Much recent preaching has gone to show how human and interesting the Bible is, and how much of it is on a level with our life. Abraham is seen to be a typical sheikh. The prophets are religious geniuses somewhat in advance of their time. The Bible, instead of being represented as the record of a faith which produced a nation becomes merely the record of a nation that produced a faith, valuable as a study in comparative religion, and with certain relative values for our time, but without any absolute worth—without a Word of God. But if this is all the Bible is, why should it continue to occupy the place which it does on our pulpits? The people ask for the Word of God, and still believe that it is to be found in the Bible. Their question is setting the preacher in a crisis. "Amazing as it is," says Dr. Lowrie, speaking of America where many preachers are ceasing even to preach from Bible-texts, "the people in general still believe in the Bible, in spite of the painstaking efforts of a million ministers, Sunday by Sunday, throughout several generations, to convince them that it is not essentially different from any other book." (8)

The chief endeavour of the preacher during the last thirty years has been to show also how very

human was the manhood of the Master. Our libraries overflow with books depicting Jesus as the ideal man, the great ethical preacher, the grand Exemplar of sweetness and light, while Christ as Mediator, as God-Man, has dropped out of sight. The Religion of Jesus has largely taken the place of the Gospel of Redemption. Jesus has been stripped of His Deity, and has become the historical Jesus, the Perfect Man, the first Christian Believer. But the preacher is again being set in a crisis, and compelled to answer the old question: "Who say ye that I am?" Is Christ no more than the greatest personality thrown up by history, or is He One Who has come from beyond? Is He, like the Buddha or Confucius, but a great figure of our history, Who more and more recedes into the past, or is He our Eternal Contemporary, Jesus Christ—yesterday, and to-day the same, and for ever? Is Jesus Christ but one of the great army of God-seekers, one of the wedge of humanity moving Godwards, seeking salvation, to use Brunner's graphic figure? Or does He come from above, from beyond, to meet the marching wedge and give it what it seeks? Does He belong to the history of religion, or is He a unique Revelation? (9)

Bound up with this question is another. What are we to think of God? Are we to think of Him as the Cosmic Consciousness, the ground of all being, identical with the best that is in us? or are we to think of Him as Another, Who stands over against us as Lord, and Who presses us into a narrow pass, in which we must either obey or disobey? These questions have become once more vital and searching for the preacher.

Again, much, if not most, of the preaching of the last thirty years has been semi-Pelagian. There has been a shallow evolutionary view of sin, and a correspondingly weak doctrine of grace. Preachers have been very insistent on the important place which man takes in the working out of his own salvation, and grace, one might almost say, has been sent into exile for a generation. Synergism has been enjoying its great day. The whole round of our preaching has been pervaded by this Pelagian conception of salvation as a work, in which we proudly share. Our watchword has been "the bringing in of the Kingdom of God," by which we have understood a social and moral idealism, bearing little resemblance to Christ's teaching on the Kingdom. The "tasks of the Kingdom" have been loudly proclaimed. There has been much religion but less faith, much work but less waiting, much reliance on man but less trust in God. It would almost seem as if the Church had busied herself in schemes of religious and social activity all the more because she felt that she had no real Word of God to bring. One finds it difficult to think of a time when there was more Church activity, and more activist effort to pool external resources in the interests of religion. A romantic religion of idealism has almost submerged evangelical faith. The religion of temperament and sentiment has displaced the religion of will and obedience. But this religion of sentiment and sympathy has proved inadequate for our time, and the preacher finds himself in a crisis. A place has once more to be found in preaching for a faith that lives in repentance, and self-surrender, and for a grace that saves. It is easy to believe in man, and speak

in romantic terms of his essential divinity, and of his homogeneity with God, when life goes by like a song. But the world has experienced a very apocalypse of evil, which has shaken the faith of all save the very young in the nobility of human nature, and its essential harmony with Christianity. Semi-Pelagianism has received a severe blow, and the way has been opened for a return to the Reformed Faith of *sola fide*, a doctrine which strikes hard at man's love of self-salvation, but which has healing for his soul.

4. The crisis has gone even deeper. The root cause of the crisis in the Church and in the pulpit is to be sought in our theology. Recent theology has been a very human, man-centred concern, making much of relative values, like history and psychology, but strangely silent about the Word of God as a Word of absolute authority. It has skilfully rounded off the rough edges of the Cross to make it fit into the building of modern thought. It has ignored the eschatological side of the Gospel as being little better than what Dean Inge has described as "Jews' old clothes," and it has kept the Last Things out of sight. Strongly apologetic in its interests, it has caught eagerly at any crumbs of comfort dropped by scientists in its anxiety to appease the modern mind. There have been great exceptions, of course, men like Dr. P. T. Forsyth—a Barthian before Barth—Dr. Denney, and others, who have refused to bow the knee to the Baal of Modernism, but the general tendency has been in the opposite direction. We find the Rev. F. R. Barry asking: "How can we set the Gospel of Christianity where, if anywhere, our world will see its relevance in the context of

emergent evolution, and of those claims, tasks, and opportunities which are the actual stuff of life and morality?" Dr. C. E. Raven is equally concerned to conciliate the modern mind. "The real concern of the Modernists," he says, "is a satisfying concept of God," satisfying, that is, to the modern mind. But surely the first concern of theology is not to ask, distractedly, how to make Christianity seem relevant to our world, but to endeavour to interpret the truth of the New Testament to men as it is, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Even if it be discovered that the Gospel cannot be fitted "into the context of emergent evolution," it may not turn out to be the doom of the Gospel. This desire to harmonise the Christian Faith with the modern mind is threatening to end in a substitution of a religion of pure immanence for the Christian Faith. The concepts of a monistic idealism are tending to replace the dualistic concepts of the Bible. Jesus Christ as a religious genius, "the religious genius of theism" (Tennant), is taking the place of Jesus as the Son of God. Salvation is being identified, particularly in America, with religious Behaviourism. The result is that the substance of Christian theology is in a state of dissolution. Theology, instead of having for its subject-matter the Word of God, has now something quite different, namely religion, or perhaps revelation in general.

Two great attempts were made during the last fifty or sixty years to come nearer to the nature of the Christian Faith, both of which have had results contrary to what was sought, so that instead of the reality of the Faith having been made clearer, it has been darkened. The first was the attempt to

get back to the Jesus of History, and to secure a living impression of Him, of His personality, and religion. The intention was to bring Jesus nearer, but actually the result has been to thrust Him back as a historical figure into a remote past, and make Him One with Whom we can have no spiritual fellowship, and only an indirect relationship. The second was the attempt to reach a better understanding of the Faith through a study of religious experience. The help of the psychologists was called in, and their interest in the phenomena of religious experience was felt to be flattering. But their assistance was of more than doubtful value, for in attempting to explain religious experience, they proceeded to explain it away. Even the phenomena of conversion were shown to be very human, and not necessarily Christian. But if religious experience can be shown to be a psychic phenomenon, not peculiar to Christianity, it can offer no foundation for a faith in God.

The sum and substance of this modern theology, of which these have been samples, can be briefly stated. Its professed object is to simplify Christianity and make it intelligible, to escape from the Christ of the Creeds, and return to the Jesus of flesh and blood, the Galilean, Who is to be interpreted by a purely human psychology. Stumbling-blocks, such as the miracles, are negotiated by various expedients, chiefly by bringing in modern psychotherapy, and the dynamic power of personality, and putting down to legend the inexplicable surd that remains.

According to this Modernist theology, Christianity is the highest and the best of all the religions of

the world. It stands on the uppermost rung of the ladder of comparative religion, and in it, so far as we can see, the long evolution of religion towards perfection has completed itself. There can be claimed for it what Troeltsch has called a "relative absoluteness."

The key to revelation, according to this view, is the doctrine of development. We can trace the development of revelation, which is the upper side of human discovery, through all the lower religions, and up into the Old Testament. We can see it at work among a people with a peculiar genius for religion, until there emerged from it at last the Christian Religion, the Founder of which was Jesus of Nazareth.

God incarnates Himself in every man, for all men are in a sense divine, but He has incarnated Himself supremely in Jesus, a man Who supremely achieved, because God supremely enabled Him, and Who has for us the value of God. He lived the perfect life, in word and deed, His miracles reflecting a personality not only of power, but of love and compassion. Pursued by His enemies, He accepted death in the course of His vocation as Prophet and Teacher, and died on a Cross, making thus the supreme sacrifice in showing forth His love to men.

Not much is said about His Resurrection. It constitutes a problem best left unexplained, for it is not necessary to faith. Jesus is and remains the pattern man, the ideal of humanity, to be represented to our children as a great Hero among the heroes of the world, and to our young men as a great Master and Teacher. The universal truth,

which He has made the possession of mankind, is that God is our Father, and we are all His children. Therefore God can be approached without fear, and without any dread sense of distance between us and Him. He is near, He is immanent in the world, in nature, and history, and in the heart and conscience of man, and therefore we can experience Him and on the basis of this experience build our faith. Man is a child of God, not inherently wicked, with a bias toward the good, but frail and prone to fall. But he needs must love the highest when he sees it, and with the help of Jesus, as His great Example and Ideal, he can be saved from his sin, especially in the life of service.

The great task which Jesus has set to man is the building of the Kingdom of God, by which we are to understand the bringing in of a new social order, a perfect human society here on earth. The goal seems farther off than Jesus apparently expected it to be, but we are confident that at the last His dream will be fulfilled. And although we may not see it, our spiritual growth here will have prepared us for perfect service in the hereafter, a state which we are to think of as continuous with the life that now is.

Such in brief is the theology of Modernism which is being set to-day in the crisis, a crisis which has been brought about mainly by three causes.

The first has been the influence of philosophical idealism. There began with the Renaissance, and found full expression in the French Revolution, the conviction of the sovereignty of the human reason, and of the free autonomous will, which was taken hold of by the great metaphysicians, and worked up into the system of philosophical idealism. Theology

seemed to recognise in this idealism a kinship with the Christian Faith, and believing that it had found in it a good ally against secularism it came increasingly under its power. (10) But, as it has turned out, idealism, so far from proving a good ally, has betrayed the Gospel, and the result is what we describe as Modernism. Idealism starts from the ego, from man as lord of the world. In the depths of man's spirit the Absolute reveals Himself, for God, as Eternal Reason, is the deepest ground of the soul. There is a continuity, therefore, between the temporal and the eternal. God and man are in their essence identical. (11) It follows, then, that man, in the kernel of his nature, is good. Out of himself he can do what God demands, out of himself he can create the right relation to God. He is man enough to overcome, through his own activity, the cleft between him and God. That he may come to God, all that he needs is an ideal, an imperative. It is not necessary that God should first come to him. The Gospel is not a raising from the dead, it is only a loosing and letting go. (12)

The second cause of the crisis in theology has been the doctrine of historical relativity. The ruling idea of modern history is the idea of development. It remained to Troeltsch to apply it to Christianity, and to deduce its final consequences. For if we place Christianity in the stream of history, and subject to the developments of history, the result must be a complete relativity. In place of being the absolute religion, Christianity becomes merely a historical phenomenon, superior it may be to other religions, even the highest religion which so far has appeared, but it carries no guarantee that it will not at some later

day be surpassed. The result of this view is, that all sense of Christianity as a Revelation, happening "once-and-for-all" in time has disappeared from the modern historical consciousness. Such a view of Christianity, as Troeltsch admits, makes it dependent on the civilisation in which it takes root and grows up. A blow has been dealt to its decisive quality as an Act of God, an event breaking into time and place and speaking to all times and all places. It has been transformed into a common religious truth or idea, and rendered thereby harmless.

The third cause of the crisis in theology has been the excessive devotion to religious psychology which has sought, as we have seen, to come nearer God by an analysis of the experiences of religion. This pursuit of the Divine through psychology has proved an *ignis fatuus* which has decoyed many, for while the psychological facts of faith are proper subjects for scientific study they yield no knowledge of the reality of Revelation. There is no divine *datum* which man by any study of psychology can master, for the Divine is not given to him in the processes of his soul.

5. But the crisis has gone even deeper than theology. It is the crisis of the individual before God, the crisis of the Christian personality with which we are confronted. What is the Christian personality? It is not merely a religious personality but a redeemed personality in which the ego dies that Christ may live. It is not self-sufficient. It needs and it feeds on the Word of Another. It lives "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In contrast to the autonomous personality of idealism, it is heteronomous, taking its law from Another. Its

characteristic is self-effacement, and humility. The Christian personality is peculiarly the product of the Christian Faith. It is not merely the natural personality purified and refined, though, as Luther says, "grace does not altogether change nature, but uses it as it finds it." It is the human nature broken and restored and become a new creature. The Christian personality does not need any more to aspire after self-realisation since God has realised it, it has found itself, come to itself, in God. It no longer seeks the good in itself, but in the gift of God. It does not seek to soar, it descends in growing humility as it comes to know its utter dependence on God. Its life is a constant exercise of penitence and faith from day to day, never secure, never triumphant, yet always sure of God, and resting on His Word.

This is not the type of personality that is in favour in our time, but something much more aspiring and dominating. Personality is now regarded as the creative self-ruling principle of man's being. He lives by his own powers and according to his own laws. Being himself a creator, he stands outside of all that is created. He has within him certain qualities through which, by the use of appropriate means, he can realise himself. He carries within himself his own norms and values by which he judges all things. He is autonomous, accepting no law or word of another, for only what he has himself thought out or experienced counts for anything with him. He knows the truth himself, he discovers it in himself. He will acknowledge nothing as religious but what can be met with in the actuality that is present to him and can be re-created out of his own sensibility. He is willing to have religion, but it must be without

revelation. "Not revelation but experience" is his watchword.

Roughly speaking, this might be described as the creed of the Modernist, though the word must be held to cover the widest variety of views from the theism of some modern theologians to the atheism of a Middleton Murry. The faith of the Modernist, whatever be his views, however, starts from this claim to autonomy. His own reason, his own conscience, his own sense of values are for him supreme. "I must live my own life." This claim governs everything. (13) On the basis of this principle, the father of which is Descartes, there can be, says Barth, no knowledge of the Word of God. The heteronomy of the Reformed Faith has been largely replaced to-day by the autonomy of an idealism which knows no law outside itself. To this we are to trace much of the present disintegration of the old divine ordinances of society, of the family, home, marriage, which constituted the firm foundation on which life was lived out in a former day. What man was, he was through those ordinances, but what he is now, he is through himself. The world in which we live is one of convinced individualism which accounts for the prevailing uncertainty and confusion of thought, and the moral Bolshevism so rampant. (14) For ultimately this teaching must mean the emancipation from all authority as such, and especially from the concrete authority which is the basis of the Christian Church, the Revelation of God in Christ. Even a casual acquaintance with the books of such writers as Bertrand Russell, D. H. Lawrence, or Aldous Huxley is enough to show that a challenge is being offered to the Christian personality such as it has not met for centuries. For

between the free autonomous personality of the Modernist, owning obedience to no law outside itself, and the heteronomous personality of the Christian, dependent on the Word of God, there seems no possible reconciliation.

This is the crisis in which Modernism has placed the Christian personality and compelled it to face the question whether or not it is to remain true to itself. Much of our theology and preaching in its zeal to come to terms with the Modernist spirit has been tempted to compromise on this question of autonomy and personality, and to represent the Christian life as, to use the words of a distinguished preacher, "simply the natural life purified, refined and perfected in God." Great Christian personalities have ever been broken, humbled personalities, who have known themselves as saved by grace alone. But the preaching of our time has sought rather to lift men by an appeal to their strength than by a reminder of their weakness, and their need of divine grace. It has made much of the seeming good in human nature, and has inclined to ignore the overmastering evil. It has identified Christianity with moral goodness, and has substituted for the doctrine of redemption that of moral betterment. This is not a preaching to produce great Christian personalities, and the crisis into which it has brought us must be regarded in part in the light of a judgment. For it has to be admitted that the present world crisis is due in no small degree to the lack of Christian personalities in the so-called Christian lands. If there had been more Christian personalities we should not have had the World War, nor the almost equally disastrous Peace, nor the present chaos and distress.

Looked at from the human end, what we call the Barthian Movement has issued from this crisis. All its leaders, such as Barth, Gogarten, and Brunner began in the idealistic, or in the Ritschlian School of theology and have reached their present position through the door of a great disillusionment, a door by which they believe God has brought them forth into a large place. For them a new era of faith has begun, not of faith in man and his works, but of faith in God and His Works. In an illuminating chapter Barth has himself traced for us the road by which he passed out of the School of his "unforgettable teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann," and reached his present theological position. (15) Many of us in the ministry to-day have been experiencing something of the same disillusionment, and have discovered that the modern theology, which once was our pride and satisfaction, has proved a broken reed to lean on in a time of crisis.

Like most of my contemporaries in Scotland, if I may be allowed this personal reference, I was also trained in the School of Ritschl, as interpreted by Herrmann, being one of the Scottish "caravan" of students, as Barth was one of the Swiss "caravan" who travelled yearly to Marburg to sit at the feet of the master. I also think of Herrmann as "my unforgettable teacher," kindest of men, to whom I owe more than I can tell. After more than thirty years I recall his parting words at the close of a session: "Gentlemen, it may be that some day, when the water rises to your necks, a word which I have spoken may come to your memory, and help to rescue you." A day did come when the water rose to our necks, but in such flood that no word of a Herrmann, or of

any other man could avail. We needed a Word of God.

Herrmann rested everything on individual personal experience. He taught us that God turned towards us in the objective fact of the historical life of Jesus, and that we must "lay hold by faith on the inner life of the Jesus of History." He reiterated that revelation was not doctrine, faith was not belief. He insisted that religion did not rest on history, or mysticism, or rationalism, but only on our own personal experience, as we laid hold by faith on the Jesus of History. Communion with God was through this Jesus of History, not through the risen and glorified Christ, of Whom we could have no knowledge. Bible and dogma were but "the pious thoughts of others"; only what we heard "of ourselves" had authority for us. It was magnificent, and challenging, and liberating, to be told that we must rest all on our own religious experience. "The air of freedom," as Barth says, "blew through Herrmann's class-room." But for many of us there came an hour when this romantic individualism of our beloved master could not bear the strain of things. With all his prophetic fire, and brave fearless personal faith, Herrmann had not provided us with a basis for faith in the Word of God strong enough to stand a cataclysm. A day was to come when to "lay hold on the inner life of the Jesus of History" did not suffice for me: I needed the assurance that Another had laid hold on me. All the uncertainty and relativity of time and place in the Gospels opened before me like a yawning gulf. I did not lose my personal faith, but my theological foundations gave way, and personal faith might in course of time have followed, had I not been guided

on to a securer foundation. No event in history, I perceived, however well authenticated, could serve as an ultimate ground of faith, for such a foundation needs a finality which no history in the nature of things can have. Nor could any laying hold of the inner life of Jesus, which threw the responsibility of choice back on myself, offer any ultimate assurance or authority. This conclusion I had reached before I even heard of Barth. His solution of my problem, which I found had also been his problem, at first repelled me. Then for some time it alternately attracted and repelled me, until the opposition in my mind yielded before what I perceived to be the truth of the New Testament, that the only absolute basis for faith is the Word of God. If I have been able, in any measure, to understand Barth's pilgrimage, it has been because I have travelled along the same road.

But not only among ministers in this country and in Europe is this crisis being experienced. Even in America, the stronghold of idealism, as Dr. Walter Lowrie tells us, the same sense of disillusionment is being experienced. On returning from a long residence in Europe he finds that, while it still predominates in the pulpit and in the pew, liberalism no longer sits in the highest places in the Divinity Schools. The watchmen in those high places are beset with the uneasy consciousness, of which the rank and file are not yet aware, that the leaders of liberalism in the land of its birth, such as Troeltsch, have conceded that liberal Christianity is *not* Christianity. (16)

The way, therefore, is being prepared for a turning-point of the sickness, in Society and in the Church, towards health and life, an implication which is also contained in the idea of *crisis*. If this turning-point

is to come, the first thing necessary is that, as a Church and as individuals, we should realise that we are all involved in this crisis, and that there is no place for the onlooker. If the Church is sick, it is because *we* are sick. If the Church has grown stale through depending too much on outward rites and organisations, and too little on the life-giving Spirit of God, the sin is at *our* door. If modern Christianity has moved away from its base, in the New Testament, and accommodated itself to modern ideals, it is because *we* have loved to have it so.

The Call of the Barthian Movement is, in the first place, a call to repentance in the spirit of St. Paul's great Reveille (Rom. xiii. 12). "Jesus shakes us," says Barth, "that He may put us on firm ground. He judges us that He may make us righteous. He robs us that He may enrich us. He kills us that He may give us life. Otherwise we cannot be healed."

In the second place, it is a Call to a new hearing of the Word of God. Help can only come to our time through the coming of God again into our lives, and our surrender to His authority.

CHAPTER II

KARL BARTH GOES FURTHER

AT the close of the war Protestant theology on the Continent found itself in a sore plight. Liberal theology, with all its idealism rudely shaken, was left with hardly a word to say in the crisis. Orthodoxy sat guarding its treasures in the Bible, faithful but confused. Man had come to the end of his resources, and optimism had been replaced by pessimism. Spengler's *Decline of the West* seemed to echo the mind of all. No God, no plan was anywhere to be discerned. Blind fate ruled the darkened lives of men.

The situation in Britain was not so acute and critical, but it was nevertheless perplexing and disheartening, and many were ready to listen to the prophets of Decline.

America still clung to her sentimental idealism, too far removed at first from the centre of the disturbance to be fully conscious of the cataclysm which was in time to shake her foundations also.

It was in this hour of need that Karl Barth blew the first bugle notes of his theological reveille. People looked up and listened, for it was a heartening message which he proclaimed. God was coming. Resurrection was at the door. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Our need did

not consist in that no help stood before our door, but in this, that the door was too small, too narrow. It was a truly prophetic note, strong and new, yet it called men back to the Bible, as the Word of God, and back to the springs of the Reformed Faith.

The Call was taken up by Gogarten, Thurneysen, Brunner, and others. It was heard in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Denmark, and elsewhere on the Continent. Its notes began to reach our shores, and to awaken in some hearts an answering sympathy. To-day it has sounded round the world. The theology of Barth and of Brunner is being eagerly studied by Christian students in Japan, in translations of standard works. Canada is opening its doors. America, if still perplexed by it, has begun to listen, prepared in part by the recent shock to her prosperity, and to ask what it means for her.

Meantime Barth has gone on, and has travelled far since the publication of his *Romans* in 1918, written, as he says, in the introduction to the English translation by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, almost within sound of the guns. "Looked at from to-day," he writes, "it is a book of another time, and by another man." (1) He was then a young country minister who only knew in part what ecclesiastical and scientific responsibility meant; and who, unconcerned about the forces that were with him or against him, plunged into a conflict whose inner and outer significance he could only perceive from afar. After fourteen years he is still in the midst of that conflict, the issues of which he now discerns more clearly. It is nothing less than a battle for the Word of God. "Theology," he says, "means *ministerium verbi divini* (the ministry of the Word of God), and nothing else."

In my previous book I endeavoured to describe the earliest stages of Barth's intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage, and I propose now to continue the story. The publication of the first volume of his new Church Dogmatics (*Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*) in December 1932 constitutes a further stage of a pilgrimage which must and will have significance for many. For the first time Barth says, "I know where I mean to come out, if the Lord will." (2) The words occur in the preface of this volume of over 500 pages, which is to be followed by five similar volumes, dealing with the doctrine of God in Creation, Reconciliation and Redemption; a work in the preparation of which he says he must "reckon with many years."

When he set himself to the revision of his *Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics*, he found that he could not, and would not, say the same as he had said. All the problems had, in the intervening years, presented themselves in a richer, but more troubled and difficult shape, and he must go farther back, and lay deeper foundations. Nothing remained for him, therefore, but to begin all over again, and say the same quite differently. The result has been a repetition of what happened with the second edition of his *Romans* eleven years before, in which he left "not one stone standing upon another." The new Dogmatics is an entirely new book, conceived on a greatly enlarged scale. It does not even bear the same title. Instead of calling it a "Christian" Dogmatics as in the first edition, he renounces the use of the great word "Christian," against the too light use of which he has himself protested, and chooses now to call it a "Church" Dogmatics. By this he will indicate that Dogmatics is not a "free" science, but is bound to

the Church, inside which only it has place and meaning. He expects that this change will further increase in some quarters the lamentations over his development, but others will perceive what his real meaning has been, when in recent years, and in this book also, he has taken up an attitude against the Church. It has really been on behalf of the Church. (3)

This new Dogmatics differs in many respects from the previous volume, and is one more sign that Barth as a thinker and theologian does not stand still. It is a richer and more mature book, more solid and theological, more grave, austere, and weighty, but it is also, as he hopes it may be, simpler and more transparent as to its ultimate purpose. The preacher has been put under severe restraint by the theologian, and one regrets the disappearance of those pictures and metaphors in the creation of which Barth is a master. The role of prophet of a new Christianity, which some have proposed for him, is scorned and repudiated. He declines to be a prophet, and has less and less taste even for producing a "new" theology. The disposition of the book is clear, the learning profound, and amazing in its sweep. Fortunately the man escapes at times from the control of the theologian, as in the frankness of his Notes, and he opens his heart to us, as he usually does, in his Foreword. He has discarded a number of phrases of his own creation, of which he must have grown weary, through hearing them so often repeated by others, and has substituted new ones. Barth has never concealed his dislike of being adored. He would rather be criticised than canonised; and the last thing he desires is, that the Church or theology should be "Barthianised."

The names of some of his early masters have disappeared. Dostoievski is no more. Kierkegaard remains, and has left an abiding impression upon his thinking. Kierkegaard's doctrine of "the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity" made Barth an eschatologist, and such he remains. His doctrine of the "moment," which one might describe as one of the poles of Barth's theology (the other being the "Word"), derives also from Kierkegaard. But Kierkegaard no longer occupies the centre of the field; and with the modern religious-psychological School of Wobbermin, which is carrying forward the subjective side of Kierkegaard's work, and developing a theological anthropology, Barth has no sympathy. His chief masters, after St. Paul, are Luther and Calvin, particularly Luther, followed at a long interval by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. He is at home in the classical theology of the Middle Ages, which accounts in part for the sympathy shown towards him by some Roman theologians. He has moved farther off from the School of Schleiermacher and writes that "in any conceivable continuation of the line, Schleiermacher—Ritschl—Herrmann, he can see nothing but the clear destruction of Protestant theology and of the Church." (4) While he considers the protest of Herrmann as having had its justification, he now regards his old master as having been too individualistic, romantic, anti-intellectual, and anti-catholic, and says that "Protestantism will do well not to identify itself with Herrmann." (5)

1. *Barth defines his position.* The first thing which rather startles us in his new Dogmatics is his expressed desire that he does not wish to be regarded as the

leader of a Movement, or as exponent of a School. He makes it clear that he has no desire to be looked to as "the leading spokesman of the so-called dialectical School," nor does he wish his Dogmatics "in its new form to be considered as the Dogmatics of the dialectical theology." In this respect also it would be a *Church* Dogmatics. "The fellowship in which and for which I have written this book," he says, "is the fellowship of the Church, and not a fellowship of theological workers." (6) "One will understand the book so much better," he adds, "the more one understands it as a book 'which goes its own way,' and the less one considers it as an exposition of a movement, tendency, or school." He knows, he says, many men and women with whom he is warmly bound together in a common mind, and with whom, theologically, he can go arm in arm, but that is not a school.

Barth has always been restive under the suggestion that he is to be looked upon as the leader of what we must needs call the Barthian Movement. He knows that there is such a movement. He himself teaches that when the Word of God is experienced it sets up such a movement since it is in its very nature to do so. (7) But the leader of such a movement is *God*, and not Karl Barth. *Soli Deo gloria*. One who writes with knowledge said some four years ago: "Barth is as lonely to-day as he was twelve years ago notwithstanding the success of his theology," (8) and that still is true. He is alone, because he chooses to be alone. He does not possess, like Brunner, the group mind, but is, as he says, an *Alleingänger*, a man who takes his own independent road in thought and action.

He uses the present opportunity to define his relation to his friends in the Movement. Probably, after his friend Thurneysen, he stands nearest to Brunner, but in his recent introduction to the English translation of *Romans* he says that while he and Brunner are kindred in their minds, he does not wish to have his theology understood without more ado according to the plan and expositions of Brunner's theology. He desires to have it considered by, and for itself. There are, as we shall see, some important points at which they differ, and the differences may probably increase. Brunner, who has the gifts of the systematic theologian, and the instincts of the apologist, seeking points of contact with the modern mind, and also something of the impatience of the men of Zürich, is more prepared to proceed to the construction of a "new" theology. Barth, with the caution of the men of Berne, and without the apologetic impulse, concerned first and foremost to get at the truth, come what may, desires first to have the doctrine of the Church re-stated. He believes that, until this is done, the ship of a new theology could not be made seaworthy, and, if it was done, it might prove to be unnecessary. Brunner also has not, so far, shown the same deep sense for the meaning of the Church and of the Church Confessions as Barth, nor does the concern for the Church appear to lie with the same burden upon his soul.

Barth clears up also his relations with his other friends, Gogarten and Bultmann, who differ chiefly in that they look to philosophy for help in laying their foundations; Gogarten to Griesbach, Bultmann to Heidegger; while Barth will incur no debt to the philosophers.

The burning point of interest, as well as of difference among the Barthians at the present time, concerns the question of general revelation, and of the *imago Dei*. The doctrine of the *imago Dei*, says Brunner, determines the fate of every theology. In it, the difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism has its origin, and on it questions of tremendous importance concerning the right of nature, of society, of State, and civilisation, depend. The subject has occupied Brunner's mind for some years, particularly the question of the point of contact between man and God. He himself finds the point of contact for the Word of God in the humanity and personality of man the sinner, to whom he allows a place for a natural knowledge of God, albeit it can only be a knowledge of the anger of God, and therefore a desperate knowledge. In man *qua* creature, he holds, there resides the possibility or capacity of man for God, which discovers itself in man's question after God, as well as in his science, and art, morality, civilisation, and religion. Everything human, in contrast to the animal, rests on a memory, an *a-priori* knowledge of God. In the keeping awake of this memory lies the worth of idealism.

On this question Barth takes a very definite line of his own, in opposition to Brunner's view, which he rejects as Roman Catholicism (*Thomismus*). He has clarified his own view in recent years regarding the *imago Dei*, and writes with great decision in his new Dogmatics. He will not allow to man, as we shall see later in detail, any natural capacity to take hold of God. The capacity for God is lost through sin, and the lost point of contact must be restored by grace. The point of contact is to be found not

outside but inside faith. It is the Revelation itself which creates in man the necessary point of contact. Barth will not have the Christian Revelation treated as a species of the *genus*, revelation. The knowledge of God, which the Church has, does not stand or fall with the general possibility of man's religious knowledge. As if, he says, from an investigation of human knowledge, any insight into the possibility of Divine knowledge were to be looked for! Revelation to Barth, whether to Jew or heathen, Isaiah or Cyrus, is an event of faith. Man does not possess it as a natural capacity, but only by faith. While Barth rejects the *analogia entis* (likeness of being between God and man) of Roman Catholicism he does not deny the idea of analogy, but substitutes for it an *analogia fidei* (likeness through faith). The believer by faith becomes like God, and able thus to receive the Word of God. This is the meaning of St. Paul's remarkable word: "Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God" (Gal. iv. 9, R.V.).

In whatever form, whether by the *lumen naturale* of Aquinas, which later crept into the Protestant Church through Melanchthon, or by the religious feeling of Schleiermacher, or by the religious *a-priori* of Otto, this claim to a continuity between man and God, according to Barth, weakens the conception of sin, and detracts from the glory of God's grace. Salvation is *sola gratia*, by grace alone, in which view he is strongly supported by Gogarten.

2. *Barth renounces his errors.* There are certain things in the first edition of his Dogmatics which Barth now regards as errors, and which he openly renounces.

He admits the justice of the criticism of Th. Sieg-

fried in *Das Wort und die Existenz*, and of others that at a certain point he had borrowed from existential philosophy to ground his position. (9) Without clearly admitting it, he had made a transference from phenomenology to existential thinking, i.e. from thought which views things from without, to the thought of one who shares, in his existence, in the things. Barth read with terror, he says, what Siegfried wrote that "on this basis—that of the existential thinking introduced—he will build his Dogmatic." He fell, he admits, into the danger, against which he warned others, of using philosophy to help out his theology, and he admits that in the matter of existential thinking he had shown reverence to the false gods. (10) He is astonished now at what he wrote in his first edition, at page 111, that the Word of God was made dependent on its reception by man; an idea, he adds, only possible to existential thinking. His words were: "One does not speak of the Word of God if one does not speak of it as being received through men." (11) In his new Dogmatics he lays a deeper stress on the objectivity of the Word of God. But he does not renounce existentialism altogether. Like the new birth and conversion, existential thinking, he says, is an indispensable ground of theological work in the sense in which Anselm, Luther, and Melanchthon understood it as a visitation of God from without, in which the existence of man is involved. But as the word is used to-day, says Barth, it is being made to serve human ends, and is threatening once more to bring theology under the yoke of psychology and legalism. Thus existential thinking, in so far as it has any philosophical character, disappears from Barth's

theology. His position now is that theology can learn nothing from philosophy, and ought to learn nothing from it. (12) He has therefore, in his new Dogmatics, removed everything which, in the first edition, had the appearance of seeking support, or justification for his theology in Existential Philosophy. The second error which Barth renounces is the tendency he showed to develop an anthropology, as a basis for understanding the Word of God. Gogarten, in his criticism of the first edition of the Dogmatics, described its chief "defect" as the absence of a proper theological anthropology. Barth is glad that he discovered such a defect, for he believes that at the time he was actually on the way to such an anthropology. He has now seen the error of his ways, and refuses to go one step in the direction which Gogarten and others invite him to take. (13) On the contrary, he withdraws from all thought or wish he may have shown in that direction. Such a question as "What is the Word of God?" must not be conditioned by any anthropological investigation, but must be independently considered. As the Word of God is not based on any support sought in existential thinking, neither can anthropology be allowed to appear as a basis for its understanding. So once more he lays stress on the objectivity of the Word of God, and refuses to place the doctrine of the Church in the framework of an anthropology. (14)

3. *Barth answers his Critics.* Some one has remarked, it is a pity that until to-day Barth has found no really dangerous antagonist. Those who have assailed him have done so on minor points. In his Dogmatics he deals in various places with those criticisms. The most widely expressed has been the criticism that he

is on the way back to Scholasticism, and ultimately to Rome, apparently, as he says, because "he holds that Church History did not begin with 1517, and he can quote Anselm and Aquinas without abhorrence." (15)

The imputation that his teaching has a Rome-ward tendency has stung Barth into a vigorous repudiation. On this point he says that he is of good courage, and is sure of his ground. (16) He rejects the grounds on which this reproach is based, and says that he perceives in Roman Catholicism a powerful and inveterate enemy of evangelical religion. In his book on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (*Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*) he has dealt, as we shall see, with his opposition to Roman Catholic doctrines, tracing the origin of the error in regard to the *imago Dei* back to St. Augustine. In his later book on Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God (*Fides quaerens intellectum*) he shows that his doubts about St. Augustine have become still stronger regarding St. Thomas, and he passes behind Aquinas to Anselm, and exalts the priority of faith to reason in a manner which countermines the whole structure of the Roman theologian. The end to which he is working, he says, is to provide an evangelical theology able to confront the Church of Rome on its own ground. The errors of Rome are kept steadily in view in his recent volume. "I hold the *analogia entis* (doctrine of likeness between creature and Creator) to be the discovery of antichrist," he says, "and consider that on that ground alone one can *not* be a Roman Catholic. I take the liberty to say that I regard all other grounds which one can have not to be a Roman Catholic as short-sighted, and trifling, in comparison." (17)

It is true that the Barthian theology has met with

an alert attention on the part of the Roman Church, such as no Protestant theology has met with for many a long day. This interest is really due, as Dr. Walter Lowrie observed during his long residence in Rome, to a fear lest it may lead to a revival of Protestantism. (18) But it has given rise to some suspicion in the minds of good Protestants, a suspicion fostered by the recent going over to Rome of two theologians, Eric Peterson and Oscar Bauhofen, who at one time showed some sympathy with the Barthian theology, although Barth himself declined to accredit them. Wobbermin, who is notably hostile to Barth, has made the most of this incident. He has suggested a direct connection between the Barthian teaching and the Rome-ward movement on the ground that Barth has surrendered the Reformation conception of faith as *fiducia* (trust), and given it the connotation of belief or doctrine. Barth deals with this criticism at length, and rebuts it vigorously. (19)

That Barth has any sympathy with Roman Catholic doctrine, or with the Roman Catholic Church as an Institution, can only be regarded as absurd by those who know him and his teaching. His conception of the Church as a Church of Sinners, under the sign of the Cross, which must ever be going forth without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ, is worlds away from the Roman Catholic idea of the Church as an earthly magnitude, which has found a resting-place in the world. But it is true that, with him, a new tone of toleration and friendliness has entered into the controversy with Rome; and Roman theologians, with an answering sympathy, have been heard to say: "Here is a Protestant with whom we can begin again to talk, instead of talking past one

another, as we have done for the last three hundred years." There has scarcely ever been a Protestant theology which has sought to understand and judge the Roman Catholic position so respectfully, and with such freedom from polemic, as that of Barth. He has recognised that he is dealing with a concern of the Faith common to both Roman Catholics and Protestants ; for the Christian Faith did not begin at the Reformation. He has shown himself willing to learn from Anselm, Aquinas, and Bonaventura ; and distinguished Catholic theologians, on their side, like Adam, Przywara, and Grosche, do him the honour of taking him seriously. In the new search for the Church which Barth has instituted, the return to the old Confessions, the demand for authority, the emphasis on objectivity, the Roman Catholics may recognise some confirmation of their own position. It is true also that in his condemnation of subjectivity and individualism Barth stands nearer to the Roman Catholic position than to Protestant Modernism, the devastating effect of which on the Church he deplors in his new Dogmatics. But Roman Catholic theologians are in no doubt that what they are seeing in the Barthian Movement is a threatened rebirth of that old Church Protestantism, which shook the Roman Church to its foundations in the sixteenth century.

That Barth's emphasis on the need for Church doctrine should be regarded as Romanising shows how far we have travelled from our Reformation fathers. Barth has simply gone back to the position of the Reformers that there must be a Church doctrine, which will constitute a Rule of faith and life for the members of the Church. Thus his new Dogmatics bears the general title : The *Doctrine* of the Word of

God. In other points he stands far apart from the Roman Catholic position, but at this point he stands with the Roman Church on New Testament grounds. We have been so fascinated, during the last generation or two, in extracting the personal, picturesque, psychological, historical elements from the New Testament that we have forgotten what the Reformers re-discovered, how much of it arose first as doctrine—*didache*—for the instruction of the early Church. (20) Through Barth and others, genuine Protestantism is again finding itself in our day ; and old buried truths, which the Roman Catholic Church has retained, but which modern Protestantism has lost, are being recovered, and restored to their place in the Church.

4. *Barth proceeds to build.* For Barth the time has gone by to blow bugle notes, or, to use his own figure, to pull the bell-rope of the Church in the night. He has now set himself with trowel and plumb-line (and also with sword, like the men of Nehemiah) to the erection of a massive theological edifice. The catastrophe of the Protestant Church, as he sees it, and the cause of its devastation by Modernism, is due to its neglect of theological and dogmatic work. The real concern of the Church that the Gospel should be rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered (*recte docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta*) is being neglected. (21) He believes, that a better Church Dogmatic would be a more important and solid contribution to the questions and tasks of the time than the solution of many apparently more pressing problems. He may talk sometimes in earnest, and sometimes in jest about the matter, but, he says, "it has gone through my soul."

What he has planned and entered on is the prepara-

tion of an evangelical Dogmatics which will define the relation of the true evangelical Church to Roman Catholicism on the one side, and to Modernism on the other. His Dogmatics is in the first place a confession of his own meditation on the faith of the Church. Dogmatics, he says, is "an act of repentance and obedience. The Church confesses itself to God in that it speaks of God." (22)

Although his dogmatic edifice is still far from complete, it is sufficiently advanced for us to note some of its dominant features.

To begin with, it is a modern building, constructed on a new and original plan. While Barth is at home in the Church of the ages, his mind is never far from the present hour, and the problems which it presents. The Word of God for him must ever be the Word for the Moment. His Dogmatics is written for the present, and in view of the present situation, for Barth also is a "modern." He will not surrender that good word to those whom he criticises as Modernists, and who would fain claim the word for themselves. The Christian who lives by the Word of God which speaks to him ever in the present, by its "contingent contemporaneousness," must always be modern. The Church itself must be modern, if it will keep step with Jesus Christ, Who always is modern and contemporary. But Modernism is another matter!

But while Barth is modern, he has no objection to the use of old reliable material for his building. A distinctive feature of his work is the rediscovery of the lost, or greatly lost, and forgotten doctrines of the Christian Faith—the grace of God, the need of repentance, justification by faith, sanctification as the claim of God upon all believers, and the Christian

life, as a life of faith and obedience. All these, and other great truths of the Christian Gospel, are being brought back, and given again their place, by Barth, inside his Church Dogmatics. The schools of historicism, idealism, psychologism, have had their day, or nearly so, and have made their contribution, and the Word of God as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer, has again, with Barth, returned to claim attention and demand obedience. In its opposition to all subjectivity, and its suspicion of much which goes by the name of religious experience, his theology constitutes thus a break with the trend of theology since Schleiermacher.

But while Barth is modern, he is no theological impressionist, like many of the moderns. He will have the truth stated firmly and solidly in a doctrine, as Calvin sought to do, to be a rule of faith and life to believers. He remains true to his early undertaking, that of exegesis, and he is still, first and foremost, an expositor of the Word of God. He does not ply a free theology, but considers himself bound by the text of the written word. He is not interested in world views or philosophies, and he has no wish to provide the world either with a new philosophy, or a new theology. He will be nothing more and nothing less than a theologian of the Word of God.

During these years, when his mind has been on the march, he has of course abandoned old positions and moved forward to new positions, although "position" is not exactly the word to use of a Movement which he himself compared, in an earlier volume, to that of a bird in flight. But underneath apparent changes and inconsistencies in his progress, as a

Christian theologian, there runs a deep and deepening consistency which can be traced from the beginning until the present, and which finds ample illustration in his new volume.

There is, first, what might be described as his *Biblicism*, his loyalty to the Bible. His theology is through and through Biblical theology; theology, that is, which asks after what the apostles and the prophets have said, that we may know what we ourselves should say to-day. (23) This *Biblicism* means a turning away from nearly all types of modern theology and an assault on them in the name of the God Who spoke to the apostles and prophets. In his *Biblicism*, Barth shows himself a true son of the Reformation. Just as in the day of the Reformation the walls between the first century and the sixteenth fell away, and the Reformers heard the Word of God out of the New Testament speaking to them a Word in the present, so Barth will make the walls which divide the first century from the twentieth fall away, that we may hear the Word of God spoken through the Scriptures as the Word of God also for our time. The Bible must be re-interpreted, and the actuality of God's Word as a present Word, heard again to-day. For while the Church has kept its faith in the Bible, it has done so in a way which has too often forgotten that God is the Lord. It has emptied the Word of God of its dynamite, and substituted for it human feelings and experiences, making of the Revelation of God a human possession which it can command, instead of knowing itself as being commanded by it. What the Reformers did in their day was to liberate and bring to the light an amount of early Christian doctrine of a highly explosive nature, which the

Church for some hundreds of years had stored away in her dogmas, and rendered harmless. The same thing is being done by Barth in our time. Like the Reformers, he has gone back to the New Testament, and his thinking is to a large extent early Christian and eschatological, while coloured also, of course, by later Christian thought. In his doctrine of the Word and the Moment, of the Kingdom, of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, in his criticism of religion, and of the Church, there are distinctly explosive elements which make his theology to be anything but a tame and domesticated theology.

The next constant feature of his theology is his loyalty to the Church. This took shape first in the form of a pungent criticism of the Church as the Church of Esau, and led many to regard him as hostile to the Church. At that time he looked at the Church chiefly on its worldly side, as an institution which belonged to this side and this age, and to the ordinances of flesh and sin. Like this world, and man, it was under judgment. It had made the attempt to humanise God, to bring Him down into time and space and relativity. It had converted the lightning of heaven into a domestic stove. (24) Now he perceives that the Church must of necessity have this face to the world. Even Jesus, to be the Word of God to men, must needs assume the flesh of sin. He has looked deeper and discovered the eternal significance of the Church, and even when he seems to be against it, as in his noted address on the "Distress of the Evangelical Church," which brought him into much controversy, he is in reality for the Church. (25) Theology and Church cannot be divorced, since theology has only meaning as a function of the Church. The misery

of contemporary theology, he holds, is due to the fact that Protestant theologians have no Church behind them with the courage to declare its doctrines, and therefore they have no consciousness of speaking as the servants of God, but must pursue an individualistic course, from which no great theology can proceed. Barth is a theologian in the service of the Church, and he has earned the right to be a critic of the Church through his loyalty to it. He does not forget that apart from the Church there would have been no Bible. The New Testament itself is "witness" handed down by the Church, which, as the channel of believing testimony, is as indispensable as the Bible itself.

The last consistent feature in Barth's theology, to which I shall refer, is the note of Hope which has run through his message from the beginning until now. Notwithstanding the fact that he is often charged with dwelling overmuch on the thought of judgment, he is predominantly a preacher of Hope. This note of Hope is the outspoken character of his theology which makes it peculiarly a theology for to-day. From the optimism of thirty years ago, which produced the watchword, "The Evangelisation of the World in this generation," many have swung in our time to a deep pessimism. They see Christianity everywhere losing the initiative, and secularism sweeping over the earth, and winning victories on every field. Some, in their faithlessness, are seeking refuge in the Roman Catholic Church. The optimism sprang out of a too great faith in man, the pessimism springs out of too little faith in God. Only a theology which strikes the note of Hope, of Morning, of Resurrection, of Easter, can provide the Church with a marching message to-day.

Such is the theology to which Barth would lead us. Its goal as well as its starting-point are in God. Unless hope is to spring from some other source than man, we are, indeed, hopeless. But the hope of the Gospel, as Barth reminds us, is the hope in God, a hope grounded "not in any act of our creaturely spirit, but in an Act of the Holy Spirit of God," Who brings the new heaven and the new earth, because He is Himself the New, the Coming One. The word which creates, judges, reconciles, is also the Word of Promise, the Word of a Redeemer. Across the judgment of to-day springs the rainbow promise of to-morrow. And where the future is full of hope there also must the present be full of patience, for the hope of the future transmutes itself into patience in the present, which is "hope in the shade," the brave "nevertheless" that bears up under all burdens because "the Lord is at hand."

Since the early days of his *Romans* until now Barth has been concerned not only to seek the Truth, but to meet the actual world situation. He will describe not only the light which comes from the Word of God, but the darkness into which it shines in our time. The word "Present" has come to its rights again in Barth, whose theology keeps constantly in mind the man of to-day.

CHAPTER III

THE WORD OF GOD

THE cardinal tenet of Barth's doctrine of the Word of God, in his new Church Dogmatics, is the authority and norm of Holy Scripture, as the witness of the Revelation of God, and the presupposition of the Church's proclamation. (1) But in view of the present situation in which the evangelical Church is placed, face to face with Roman Catholicism on the one side, and with Modernism on the other, Barth considers that the subject calls for a comprehensive treatment. Accordingly, he seeks to present a doctrine of *the Word of God*, and not merely a doctrine of Scripture; or, in other words, his doctrine of Scripture is presented as part of a wider doctrine of the Word of God. It is necessary, therefore, that we should grasp clearly what he means by the Word of God.

At the heart of the Universe there is the Person of a speaking God (*Dei loquentis Persona*), Who as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer, seeks fellowship with His creatures. That is the central conviction of Barth. "God with us," he says, "in that we have the content of the Word of God stated in general." (2) The Word of God cannot be stated as an axiom of mathematics or physics. It is not like a fact of human experience, or a common truth, or a natural

law, which can be established. There is no particular category under which it falls, or syllogism by which it can be proved. The Word of God is always, in all circumstances, *suo modo, sua libertate*. As the Word of a sovereign God it has a character and freedom which is all its own.

1. Where is the Word of God to be found ?

In giving us his answer Barth starts from what he calls "the proclaimed Word," the proclamation of the Church (in sermon and in sacrament), as the most immediate place in which the Word of God meets us. (3) Preaching and Sacrament are simple and visible things, as the bread and wine of the Lord's Table are simple and visible things, but as that which they will and can be—actualities of Revelation—they are not simple and visible, "they are spirit and they are life." By the proclamation of the Church Barth means essentially the repetition of the Divine Promise. On the ground of the Word which God *has* spoken, direction is given in His Church, through men, to the Word which He speaks, and will speak. The presence of God in His Church is His free unsearchable Act in which He confesses Himself to this witness, and thus fulfils the promise in a double sense. This event in the heart of the Church is the work of God's grace, the grace of the free, strong, personal Word of God. The presupposition of the proclamation of the Church is the Word of God. It is also the commission, on the basis of which the proclamation of the Church rests. It is, further, the theme of the preaching, which must be given as a proclamation. And it is the criterion as to whether the proclamation is actual proclamation; a criterion which we cannot handle, but which handles us, and which is in the

power of none save God. The Word of God is the event itself in which the proclamation becomes actual proclamation. It is that which makes the Church to be a Church.

Behind the proclamation of the Church, Barth seeks the Word of God in its second form, in Scripture, in "the written Word." In Scripture we have the witness to the Word of prophets and apostles, to whom it was originally and for all time given, and it, by being put into the Canon by the Church, has become Holy Scripture. (4) It is the concrete form of the Church's memory of God's past Revelation, on the strength of which it awaits God's future Revelation. The Scripture thereby is a document of the Church, a recognition that it knows itself as not left alone, for God is with it; and in its Canon it has its marching orders. The Bible is not in itself God's Revelation, but as the Word of God speaking to us, and heard by us, it witnesses to the Revelation. As the prophetic-apostolic Word, it is the witness and proclamation of Jesus Christ, the promise of Immanuel, of God-with-us. It is the Word of men who yearned, waited, hoped, and at last saw and witnessed to Jesus Christ as Immanuel, and it promises that He will be so for us also. The statement that the Bible is the Word of God is therefore a confession of faith that we ourselves have heard God Himself speaking in the Biblical human word. He who hears it, and says Yes to it, believes. In the event of Revelation it becomes the Word of God. The Bible cannot be abstracted from the activity of God, by Whose power it becomes ever again His Word. He is not bound to His Word, but His Word is bound to Him. He can use, or not use,

the words of Scripture, as He wills, for they are at His disposal. He is Lord also over the words of Scripture.

Behind the Scripture, Barth seeks "the Revealed Word," the Word in its original form, out of which Scripture and Church proclamation have sprung. (5) The Person of a speaking God meets us in this Revelation. In his search for the Word of God Barth ultimately arrives at Jesus Christ, God's Son or Word—for the two are identical—Who speaks for Himself, and needs no witness, and Who has called both the Old and the New Testaments into existence. God's Word is His Son, not a *theion*—something divine—it is God Himself as Person Who comes to us in Jesus Christ His Word. "He who says Revelation, says 'the Word became flesh.'" This identification of God's Son and God's Word renders, says Barth, the Roman Catholic conception, as well as the Old Protestant conception of the Word of God, as a body of revealed truths, impossible. (6)

These are not to be regarded as three Words of God, but as three forms of the Word of God which is one; as proclaimed, written, and revealed.

2. What now is the nature or character of the Word of God?

The Word of God is, first of all, a Word which has the nature of Speech, spiritual speech. It employs, of course, physical media, as in sermon and sacrament, in the verbalism of the Bible, and in the corporeal form of Jesus Christ the Word, but it is primarily spiritual, and only of necessity physical. (7) It is the speech of Person to person, of Reason to reason. It is a rational and not an irrational event, and stands in correlation to hearing, to understanding,

and to obedience. It is speech that carries in it the power of truth. Of no other speech can one say, as of the Word of God, that it carries in it the decisive power of truth. It is, further, personal speech. God's Word means that God speaks. It is not a thing to be described, nor an idea to be defined, it is not a truth, not even the highest of truths. It is *the Truth*. Further, it is a Word with a purpose, and with the character of address. We know it only as it is addressed to us as a Word that concerns us. It is never a common truth for us to grasp and pass on to another. God remains sovereign of His Word, which never ceases to be His Word. It is what Barth describes as a *concretissimum*, a concrete individual word for the moment, which can be spoken neither before, nor after, but only in that moment. God has something quite special to say to each man which concerns him alone. This word addressed to us is a Word which we cannot say to ourselves, and which under no circumstances could we say. It says to us always a new thing, which we have never heard from any other one. It is the rock of a "Thou" flung in our way. It is the Word of the *Lord* in comparison with which no other words, however deep and touching they may be, are the words of a Lord. Last of all, what God says to us, ever and again, remains a secret which is revealed only in the event of His actual speaking to us.

The Word of God is, secondly, a Word which is also a Deed. (8) Only a word! we say. But when God speaks, this mistrust is groundless. The Word of God needs no Act to complete it; it is itself the Act. He who believed that he heard God speak, and asked after the deed that accompanied the Word,

would only show thereby that he had not heard God. If our hearing of a sermon, or our reading of the Bible, does not bring about a corresponding event, it is certain that in the sermon, and in the Bible, we have not heard God's Word. We have only heard human words. For the Word of God always makes history. One needs only to think of the connection between Word and creation, Word and calling, Word and forgiveness, Word and miracle, Word and blessing, Word and punishment in the Old and New Testaments. "And God *said*, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. i. 3). "For He *spoke* and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9). What God *does* in His Word is the same as what He *says*. It is always a *concretissimum*, a deed by itself, which can neither be anticipated nor reproduced. It is always and will be always something special "which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9).

The Word of God as Act becomes ever a present Act. The time of the original Word of God is not ours; the time of Jesus Christ and of those who heard Him, and witnessed to Him, is not ours. But Revelation possesses, says Barth, the peculiar character of what he calls "contingent contemporaneity." (9) In the event of Revelation time falls away, and what happened in the there and then (*illic et tunc*) is spoken to us in the here and now (*hic et nunc*). Jesus becomes thereby contemporaneous with us by the free act of God, while yet the historical difference between then and now is not annulled. We are not farther from Him than were the Christians of the first century. He was their contemporary, and He is ours. He is therefore an Eternal Contemporary.

This doctrine of contemporaneousness, which Barth learned from Kierkegaard, is very central in his teaching, making the Word of God always a present Word to him. In the event of Revelation, as he says, the Word is always the Word of the present moment, or rather of an eternal moment in the present. Where and when Jesus Christ becomes contemporary with us through Scripture and preaching, when the God-with-us is spoken by God Himself to us, then we come under a new mastery. (10) Man as a hearer of the Word, which becomes a Deed, finds himself in the sphere of the Divine claim, as one on whom God has laid His hand. Such words as "election," "calling," "separation," "new birth," all indicate a promise, but also a claim over men, through which God binds them to Himself. Gospel and Law alike, as concrete contents of the Word of God, signify in all cases an arrest of the man (Phil. iii. 12). The Word of God says to him concretely and personally that he is not his own, that he belongs to God. The Grace of God means that a man is no more left to himself, but is given over into the care of God. The Word of God as Deed means also decision. (11) That is what distinguishes it from a mere happening. Unless the Word of God is understood as decision, it is not understood at all. God is the Lord, over Whom is no other and nothing other, and that is true also of His Word. As decision, it is not an actuality that can be determined or proved in general. It is always a Word which comes specially to this or that definite man as a call, an election, which places him in a situation where he must decide. This is his crisis, a crisis which God has forced upon him, and in which God is revealed to him. This decision

qualifies his whole life. He receives a new quality from God, a quality which becomes his own essential quality, yet such that he cannot give it to himself. This new quality is God's decision over his belief or unbelief, obedience or disobedience. It is the Act of God's unsearchable judgment. But the decision that falls is always *God's* decision, and therefore it is a just and good decision. (12)

The Word of God is, thirdly, a Word that is hidden. Barth is deeply impressed by the mystery of God's Word, and warns us against the leaven of overpositiveness. (13) The Word of God, he says, remains a mystery, above all, in its "worldliness." When God speaks to a man, this event never and nowhere distinguishes itself outwardly from other happenings in the world, in such a way that it is marked out as being different from them. The Church is, in fact, a sociological magnitude with definite historical and structural dimensions. The sermon is, in fact, a symbol in compromising proximity to all other possible symbols. The Bible is, in fact, a document containing the history of a primitive religion of a people of the Near East. Jesus is, in fact, as the founder of a religion, historically difficult to discover, and when He is discovered, He appears a somewhat ordinary Rabbi of Nazareth, beside more than one other founder of a religion, and even beside some later representatives of His own religion. The Biblical miracles do not break through the walls of this worldliness, and even when they took place were otherwise explained than as proofs of the Word of God. The veil is thick. This means that we have the Word of God always in a form which, as such, is not the Word of God, and does not betray that it

is the Word of God. (14) Further, by this worldliness which belongs to the Word of God, we are not to understand merely that the Word of God meets us in the transparent garment of creaturely activity through which it can be seen, or as in a mirror which reflects it back. The worldliness of the Word goes deeper. Because this creaturely activity is that of fallen man, and because the Word of God meets us in this activity, its form is not that of pure nature. Likewise our knowledge of the Word of God is that of our fallen reason. The place where God's Word meets us, then, is, both objectively and subjectively, the cosmos, in which sin reigns. The form of the Word of God is actually that of the cosmos, which stands in opposition to God. It has as little the capacity to reveal God to us, as we have the capacity to recognise God in it. Where God's Word is revealed in it, it takes place, not so much through it, as in spite of it. (15) This was so also with the Revelation of God in Christ Whom God sent "in the likeness of flesh of sin" (Rom. viii. 3, R.V. Marg.). Revelation means the becoming flesh of the Word of God, and becoming flesh—the flesh of sin—means entering into this worldliness. This accounted for the fact that Jesus became Revelation, not to all who saw Him, but only to those, who by faith penetrated the Divine *incognito*. (16)

But this worldliness of the Word of God is not to be regarded as an all-too-terrible evil, for it is indeed a necessity. We are in the world, and are ourselves, through and through, worldly. If God did not speak to us after a worldly fashion, He would not speak to us at all. To decline to have to do with the worldliness of His Word would mean

that we should decline to have to do with Jesus Christ.

For another reason, the Word of God remains a mystery, says Barth, because of its one-sidedness. Under this term he describes what elsewhere is spoken of as "dialectical," one of those much used or abused words of this theology from which Barth seeks an escape. He means that the Word of God never reveals itself to us as a whole, but always only one side at a time, while the other remains hidden. It never comes to us in such a way that we can command it, or reduce it to a scheme, or synthesis. If we could, it would cease to be the Word of God. In the Revelation of God His hiddenness is to be acknowledged, His glory in the lowliness, His goodness in the strictness of His Word. (17) Faith is the recognition of our boundary, the acknowledgment of the Divine mystery. It was the conviction of this fact which led Luther, as we shall see, to develop his doctrine of the *larva Dei*—the indirectness of God's self-revelation—over against the proud claim of Rome to a direct contemplation of the majesty of God.

3. How does the Word of God reach us?

God has spoken, and speaks to us, first, as our Creator. (18) Creation itself is a Word of God, but the veil of sin lies over it, and there reaches us out of it only a broken equivocal word. Nature, as we know it, is not the voice of God, nor is it the garment we see Him by, nor is it a mirror which reflects Him. The Creator speaks to the creature which He has made as a Great Unknown. It is only "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. xi. 3). Man also is a creation of the Word of God, but sin has dulled his

ears to the voice of God, and made the danger of self-deception ever present. What appeals to us as the worthiest reaction to the world may not be obedience to God; what seems to us a light from heaven may even lead us astray. There comes to us from Nature and from the heart of man no sure Word of God.

Man is born into an order of Nature in which he stands to God in the relation of creature to Creator. He is made in the image of God, but the *imago Dei* has become so buried and lost in sin that it is irrecoverable by man, and but for the grace of God is unknown to him. The divine image is not any longer a capacity which belongs to man as a thing assured, nor is it an original quality of his nature of which he could himself have knowledge. It is not a thing given, but a thing to be given, it is not a fulfilment but a promise. The restoration of the Divine image can only be a wonder of the grace of God. (19)

One of the fundamental convictions of Barth is that there is no direct continuity between the Creator and the creature. The creative Spirit of God is not to be identified with the created power of our human spirits. Every other presupposition, he holds, implies the identification and continuity of the Holy Spirit with the created spirit of man. At this point Barth parts company not only with all Modernist theology, but also with St. Augustine, the father of Roman Catholic theology, and with its whole later development, and takes the road of St. Paul, Luther and Calvin. St. Augustine, he says, knew what later idealistic theology does not know, that the life of God is not identical with man's created soul-life. But nevertheless he sought the Uncreated Spirit in the

continuity with the created spirit. God is not the soul, according to St. Augustine, but He Who is over the soul, and more than the soul, is still originally in the soul, and the soul is conscious of its origin. (20) From this point of view has proceeded the whole Roman Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis* (likeness in being between the world and world-Creator) which Barth describes as "the discovery of antichrist." On this doctrine the Church of Rome rests its belief in the possibility of a natural knowledge of God in the human creature. The relation between God and man is conceived of as organic, and there is thus no breach between them. The supernatural is built upon the natural.

While Barth rejects this doctrine as a very fountain of error, it is not to be supposed that he leaves no room for the Revelation of God in Nature and conscience when once the Divine image in man is restored by grace. On the contrary, he sets forth from the position that the Word of God is, first of all, the Word of God the Creator and Lord of our being. He holds that there can be no right understanding of God as Redeemer apart from the Revelation of God as Creator, just as there can be no right knowledge of God as Creator apart from the Revelation of God as Redeemer. To the image of God lost in Adam, but restored in Christ, belongs the capacity to hear the Word of God that is spoken to us, and to know it and receive it as the Word of God (Rom. x. 8). (21) If with the Word of God in our hearts we go to Nature, as the Psalmist did, we shall find that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." Our Lord was continually being spoken to by His Father through the ordinary

things of the created world, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the sunshine and the rain. But these things are only vocal of God to the ear of faith. That God made the world is no scientific doctrine, and no amount of scientific study of Nature can discover God in it. But he whose mind has been illumined by the Holy Spirit can and should see in the visible created work of God "His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20). In the same way, the reason and conscience of the man in whom the Divine image is restored by grace become the reflexes of the voice of God. God the Creator gives each of us this world as the place of our activity, where in our natural and social environment we are to hear His Word, and under His laws and ordinances, laid in Nature, we are to live out our lives. Let each of us take seriously the environment in which God has placed him, and endeavour to hear the Word of God as it comes to us out of it. As our Creator, He demands of us the recognition of His laws and ordinances, and the adjustment of our lives to their obedience. Reverence for the ordinances of our Creator, Whose creation, in spite of all disfigurement due to sin, is the given actuality of our life, demands also the thankful acceptance of His goodness in those laws and ordinances through which He makes possible for us the service of our neighbour, and indeed life itself.

The Word of God as our Creator, says Barth, affects us as no human words, as such, can do, for it is the Word of One Who circumscribes our existence, determining our beginning and our end, and to Whom we stand in the relation of creature. (22) It is the Word of One Who is Lord of rising and setting suns, of life and death, and Who speaks to us in the

wonder of the new-born child, and in the mystery of the face of death. No human word has the power to meet and strike us in our very existence as the Word of God our Creator. It is a Word which reveals as necessary for all, the restoration of that original relationship between us and our Creator if we are to know the life that is life indeed.

This Word of God as Creator is not only a Word which He has spoken, but a Word which He speaks, on and on; since Creation is to be thought of, not as a past, but as an ever-present event.

God has spoken, and speaks to us, secondly, as our Reconciler. He has offered and offers Himself as Reconciler. Who is this God Who offers Himself as Reconciler, and where is His voice heard? This Word comes to us through history. It is characteristic of both the Old and New Testaments that in their answer to this question they do not point to some place beyond history, but right into the midst of history. In history, and especially in what we call Bible history, the Word of God has broken through into time and made history. History itself is not Revelation. History has no clearer voice than Nature. But the Word of God becomes history and utters itself at particular times and places to the ear of faith. The Bible lays remarkable emphasis on the historicity of the Revelation which it reports. (23) It says always energetically that the Revelation was given to this man and that man, in this and that situation. All those to whom the Word comes are very conscious of the time and place. Amos tells how the Word came to him "two years before the earthquake." Ezekiel remembers the day and the hour when the Word of the Lord came expressly to

him. When the Bible will speak of Revelation it gives a story, or a piece of history, the content of which is a self-revelation of God. It lays particular stress on questions of place and time in relation to what it describes. Every Revelation, of which it reports, is *placed*, both as to scene and hour. That Cyrenius was Governor of Syria must not fail in the story of the birth of Jesus, nor the fact that Pilate was Procurator of Judea, when He was crucified; which means that in reporting Revelation the Bible will relate history. It will not give a general report but always the report of a relation between God and some particular man, in some definite situation. Each event is special and not to be repeated. To hear the Word of God in the Bible means to hear of one who was called to go forth into a foreign country, of another called to be a prophet, of another called to be a priest; of a whole people which is chosen, led, governed, blessed, trained, rejected, and again accepted. To hear the Word of God in the Bible means to listen to such stories. (24) But we can understand the history of Israel only if we recognise that there was something more than the story. There was something above history, but on the borders of history, to which Barth, in the first edition of his *Dogmatics*, gave the name of *Urgeschichte*, which we might translate as revelation-history, or super-history. Here and there a point is reached in actual history where Reality arrives, and speaks to a man, and singles him out as an object of attention, and sets him in a crisis which gives his life its true meaning. The event is history, yet it is no mere historical event as such, but has absolute and decisive meaning for all history. It does not arise out of the process of history, it is

not the outcome of those immanent laws which produce history, but is an event in which God Himself comes. (25) This Divine Coming, just because it is no mere culmination of forces resident in history, but a breaking into history—not an *evolutio* but an *ingressio*—can only be perceived by faith, for outside faith Divine Revelation is not visible. The Word of God in such a coming is not to be understood first as history, and then, as such, as decision; but first and foremost as decision, and then as history.

Such a coming Barth finds particularly in the events of the years A.D. 1-30, which are not to be explained by history, but which give meaning to all history. (26) “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John i, 14, R.V.). The significance of this event was that it was the Word of God as Reconciler. God does not deal with us as dust or clay although we are His creatures. He does not submit us simply to His creative power, nor rule us by His creative might, in order that He may complete His Will in us. He seeks us as such who can be found. He speaks with us as such who can hear, understand, and obey. He deals with us as our Creator, but as a Person to persons, not as a Power over things. The Word-made-flesh means the reality of an intercourse opened between us and God in Jesus Christ. God does not merely will and work in the Revelation in Jesus Christ, He opens to us His Will and His Work. This is not something to be taken for granted. It is a wonder, and the most wonderful thing in it is not that the proposition *finitum non capax infiniti* is

annulled. More wonderful and mysterious is the annulment of the other proposition: *homo peccator non capax verbi divini*. The Word of God the Reconciler has overcome not merely the incapacity of man's finiteness, but the impotence which he has brought on himself by his sin; and has opened intercourse and made a covenant with him, while he is still a rebel and an enemy. (27)

In Jesus Christ the Word became flesh in the most literal way. He had to become flesh in order to approach and meet us. He had to become complete man, the veil of the Divine had to be closely drawn, the *incognito* to be complete. Flesh is the nature of Adam, the nature of man, which stands under the curse of the law, in opposition to God and to itself, and Christ became the bearer of our contradiction. The Word became *flesh*—not a hero, not an unmistakable Divine personality, but Jesus of Nazareth. (28) In one respect only did the nature of Christ differ from that which human nature has become; it was without sin. This truly human Jesus came under the curse of the law for us, and accepted all the consequences of our disobedience, entering, in His love, into the sphere of the lordship of sin, that He might subdue it.

Jesus is the true and effective Revealer of God and Reconciler with God because the Word of God in Him was not something divine, but was the Son of God Himself. The faith in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is not the faith that in Him a god became man, but that in Him God became man. His Godhead is not to be understood as something which He acquired. It was neither a soaring of man up to God, nor a pouring of God into human nature.

It was not the humanistic godhead which Modernism claims as the highest honour for our own human nature, but the hidden Godhead, the knowledge of which man cannot bear, the fear of which fills every religion. This is the Godhead of Jesus, the Godhead of the Eternal Son or Word of the Eternal Father, and there is no other true Godhead. "From Jesus as the maximum of the religious man to Jesus as Mediator," says Brunner, "there leads no bridge." (29)

Much that has been written in our time about the "Jesus of History" has been profoundly untrue to history. The whole idea of Jesus, as a great dynamic personality, to which Modernist writers have accustomed us, is foreign to the New Testament. They have simply transferred their modern ideas of a great personality to Jesus, and made Him the symbol of the general ideas about God, and man, which find favour with themselves. In the same way they have transferred to His teaching their own ethical ideals and social enthusiasms as regards the future. Schleiermacher once pointed out that two heresies have persisted in the Church, the one representing Christ as so divine that He has ceased to be human, and the other representing Him as so human that He has ceased to be divine. If the Church has been falling into the former heresy, and forgetting the true humanity of Jesus, let it stand corrected. "We cannot do without the Man Christ Jesus," said Charles Kingsley. But the time seems overdue for the emphasis to be laid in another quarter, viz. on Christ as the God-Man, the Divine Mediator of the New Testament witness, from which the endless Lives of Jesus of recent years have carried us away. In that witness Christ is set forth under two aspects; the

aspect of a human historical life, and the aspect of a supra-temporal transcendent existence. We have the Christ "after the flesh," the human Jesus, and we have the Christ "after the spirit," the risen and glorified Christ. (30) The New Testament does not permit us to forget the first aspect. The Word of God comes to us in Jesus of Nazareth, in lowliness and hiddenness, the acceptance of Whom as Saviour pours contempt on all our pride. For He does not come as a super-man, nor even as God Himself, but in His humanity, meek and lowly in heart, and in the form of a bond-servant. But it is the second, the transcendent aspect, on which the New Testament witness chiefly dwells. It is strangely indifferent to the outward life of Jesus. In other biographies, the main place is taken up with the early days of the hero, with his activity in the world, while his last hours and death are passed swiftly over. But in the story of our Lord, we have but one phrase descriptive of His childhood, and one incident recorded of His boyhood. Then a brief account of His ministry, the chief emphasis being laid upon His words and miracles. And then, in full detail, in all four Gospels comes the story of His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, told as the story of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah who had been rediscovered in Jesus (Acts viii. 32). (31)

The most significant emphasis of the New Testament witness is not that Jesus lived, but that He died; not that He exhibited the powers of a human personality, but that He renounced them, "emptied Himself," as St. Paul says; not that His humanity blossomed into divinity, but that it surrendered at the approach of the Divine, becoming obedient unto

death, yea, the death of the Cross. His obedience was the obedience of suffering (Heb. v. 8). The *slain* lamb alone is worthy to receive glory and power (Rev. v. 12). Christ is the grain of wheat that must fall into the ground and die in order to bring forth fruit (John xii. 24). The Jesus of the New Testament witness is not a hero, nor a thinker, nor a reformer, nor a founder of a religion. On the contrary, He is seen at the very peak of His career sacrificing all the heroic, psychic, dynamic possibilities of His genius to an Invisible Other, going as a sinner among sinners, subjecting Himself to the judgment under which the world lies. (32) -The New Testament bears central witness not to the human Jesus, His Religion, or His relation to God, or His spiritual teaching, but to Him as One Who was "born of David's offspring by natural descent, and installed as Son of God with power by the Spirit of holiness, when He was raised from the dead" (Rom. i. 3-4) (Moffatt). "Beyond the *death* of the Man Christ Jesus," as Barth says, "lies the place, from which the light falls on Him which makes Him to be the Revelation of God the Father." (33)

The most glaring defect of those Lives of Jesus, to which we have referred, is their failure to give its central place to the event on which the New Testament witness lays supreme stress, the Resurrection, as the crowning Revelation of the Word of God. It is not the Rabbi Jesus, nor the wearied Jesus, not the Jesus under the limitations of His humanity, but Jesus the Christ, under the transcendent aspect of His risen life, Who is declared in the New Testament witness to be the Word of God. Barth, as we shall see, regards the question how far

the humanity of Christ, as such, is the Revelation, as one of the most difficult problems of Christology, and one about which he is not prepared to dogmatise. But at any rate the full Word of God is not to be sought in the manhood of Jesus, *kata sarka*, as if His flesh were itself something divine; for then divinity could be reckoned as an attribute of humanity. It is in the Christ "after the spirit" that the Church is to know, and in Whom it is to seek, the full clear and final Word of God. (34) "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh," says St. Paul, expressing this great conviction, "yet now we know Him so no more" (2 Cor. v. 16, R.V.). We may study objectively the human personality of Jesus, and not find the self-revelation of God we seek. We may make Jesus a hero, but in this we shall not be going beyond Judaism, and its heroes of the faith. And even if we pass beyond hero-worship and reverence Jesus directly, and undialectically, as God, we may be manifesting only a form of idolatry. We can think of Jesus truly only when we think of Him dialectically, as the God-Man, after the manner of the formula of Chalcedon, as "the same, truly God and truly man." The Godhead of Jesus is the hidden mystery of His Person, revealed only to faith, and then only in hiddenness. He "reveals Himself," says Barth, "in His hiddenness, and hides Himself in His revelation." The true meaning of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word can only be grasped when we find a standpoint above and beyond the historical Jesus, the standpoint provided by the Resurrection. As God was not fully *manifested* in Jesus except by the light of His Resurrection, neither will He be manifested to us, save by the same light.

Jesus, the hero, must die for us that Christ, the Word of God, may live.

The complaint has sometimes been made that Barth depreciates the Jesus of History, and empties His earthly life of all spiritual and revelatory content. This is a misunderstanding of his whole teaching. How could the Word of God reach man except through the word of a man, a Word becoming flesh, on our human historical plane? Faith cannot be based on the Jesus of History, as such, for all history is relative, but neither can it be based at all apart from Him. Christianity is a historical Revelation. Barth gives its full value to the human story which he recognises is indispensable. But he will keep us in mind that it is from the witness of the Church, and not from the story, that we must take our beginning. On that witness our faith must ultimately rest, even as the faith of the Church rests on it. The witness of the Church was before the written story, and only in the light of that witness can it be read, and interpreted. The story was written to confirm the witness, and but for the witness, it might conceivably be a piece of fiction, with no more value than a tale. Not a few of our so-called Lives of Jesus, in which the story has been separated from the witness, are more or less such works of fiction. The most moving and significant part of the Church's witness to Jesus is that He died, and rose again, and became for the Church the living Christ. The story of Jesus of Nazareth can only be understood in the light of that witness. Any attempt to separate the Jesus of History from the Christ of Faith and describe the one apart from the other is untrue to the New Testament witness. The two are inseparable. There is

no meaning, and there is no value in the Jesus of History unless He is confessed as the Christ of Faith. But this Christ of Faith is but cloud and mist, without actuality, apart from the fact of the Jesus of History, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate. It is an error, even in thought, to speak for a moment historically of Jesus, in forgetfulness of the fact that He is the living Christ Who is with us to the end of the ages.

All that we see on the surface of history in the Death of Jesus, for example, is a touching event, not essentially different from that of the death of a mother for her child, or of a doctor for humanity. The fact of Christ's Death merely as a fact of history tells us nothing beyond this, that He died as a hero or martyr who lays down his life for a cause. But to faith, the Death of Christ, the Son of God, on the Cross has a great transcendent and revelational value as a Word of God to man. For in it we see God in Christ, entering into the sphere of that discontinuity between man and God which we call sin, flinging Himself into the breach which sin has caused, and subjecting Himself to the judgment under which the world lies, the No of the Divine Wrath. The Death of Christ, therefore, not in its historical but in its transcendent meaning, becomes a great Word of Reconciliation, through which man awakens to the fact that he is an object of the Divine Love and Grace, which have come nigh to him in the Cross of Christ. God in Christ has entered into the contradiction of man's life with His heavenly gift of peace. But this awakening comes only by the Holy Spirit, through Whom the Jesus of History becomes the Christ of Revelation. There is no natural continuity between

the two, the continuity is supernatural, transcendent, and spiritual; that is, it is through the Holy Spirit.

The Cross, however, is only to be fully understood in the light of the Resurrection, which is the crowning Word of God in Jesus Christ, revealing, said Luther, "a deep secret Yes in the No." The Cross represents the end of all human possibilities, but beyond is a possibility which does not lie with man, the possibility of God, the Resurrection. The moment of complete darkness of all things human, when Jesus has reached the point of despair and cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" is the moment when the light of God breaks in. In the Resurrection, the new world of the Holy Ghost touches the old world of the flesh "as a tangent touches a circle." (35) The Resurrection is not to be regarded simply as a historical event, or as belonging to the sphere of historical events, in general. It does not belong to history, but is a breaking in of a new world from beyond time and history. The historical is not the Revelation. Thousands may have seen and heard Jesus the Rabbi in the days of His flesh but the historical was not the Revelation, so too the historical in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not the Revelation. (36) The empty grave was not the Revelation; but was capable, like all history, of being explained in a very commonplace manner, as indeed it was (Matt. xxviii. 15). The particular manner of the resurrection appearances, the question, whether the tomb was empty, or not, whether Christ rose and left the tomb with a physical or with a spiritual body, are matters for historical enquiry, which do not immediately concern the faith in the Resurrection. Opinions

regarding them will continue to differ, as they have done from the beginning. (37)

But the Resurrection itself, as Barth says, is "the absolute miracle." It signifies the end of the old world, and the beginning of the new. This new world is not a mere continuation or prolongation of the old, but an absolute *novum*. "Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*. Death hath no more dominion over Him." He has passed into a different world-order, which is not ruled by death, but which possesses a new quality of life. Resurrection therefore is super-temporal. It is a movement from above, in which eternity invades time, and transcends all human categories. Resurrection is Barth's most significant expression for that crisis in which the Word of God comes to a man, and gives meaning to his life. We live true and meaningful lives only when God the Lord, Who has revealed Himself in Christ, brings our life into the crisis of the Resurrection, in which all things become new. The deepest problem of our existence—Death—hides its deepest truth—Resurrection. Resurrection means that we live under the sovereignty of Divine grace, and no longer under condemnation. It is the voice of God which claims us, and calls us forth into the world where all things are made new, and where we are set free from our bonds.

The theme of Death and Resurrection appears in all Barth's writing, and meets us again in his new Dogmatics. He is deeply exercised over the thought of Death, in which he sees a parable of the End or *telos* of the world. "He Whom Jesus named the Father is absolutely known," he writes, "at the death of man, at the end of his existence." (38)

Death, as the end of the individual life, is not a transition of an insignificant nature in the *continuum* of time, it is a crisis, an end which qualifies the whole of life, and characterises its every moment as mortal. Life can only be contemplated, understood, and estimated, when it is brought into the light of the austere last moment, and of the final hope. For Death does not belong to time. It is a point at which time and eternity meet, at which the Eternity of God sets a limit to the endlessness of time and things. In the crisis of Death, the End casts its shadow, Eternity makes itself visible, and God speaks His last Word, as Reconciler. The reminder which Death gives is so momentous, so urgent, so disturbing, because it implies also the message of the Resurrection behind it. This Word of God, the Reconciler, is not only a Word which He has spoken, but a Word which He speaks. It is the event of the Word of God to the sinner to-day. It is not a mere symbol if one says that the Jesus of the years A.D. 1-30, Who died and rose again, speaks to us here and now this Word of God. The Word of God has eternal content, eternal meaning, and is ever again the Word for the moment. The Catholic Faith is not to Barth what it is to the Roman Catholic Church, and to many in the Protestant Church, a static unchanging body of doctrines on which the ages gaze, as on some old historic tower, but an objective truth which becomes continually Word, actuality, event, crisis, judgment, new beginning, in the Church and in the individual. This Presence of God is the free unsearchable Act of God's grace, His repeated Promise, through the Holy Spirit. (39)

We come, lastly, to the Word which God has spoken,

speaks, and will speak, as Redeemer. On the ground of the Word which God has spoken, we are directed in the Church to the Word which God will speak to His Church. Under this future revelation we are to understand no other than that which has taken place for all time, even as the Christ Who is to come again will be no other than He Who has come, but now we are to know Him as One Who comes to us. This Word of Redemption is the Word which God Himself proclaims to men, and through which He promises Himself as the Hope of the future of man, as the One Who comes to meet man on his way through time, as the End of time, as the hidden Lord of all times. (40) It is God's greatest Word to man, His Word as Lord, Lord of lords, Who was, and is, and will be; Who Himself maintains His relation to us, and with that, keeps faith with us in life and in death. What God has said to us, and says to us, will still be said to us, in this last completed eschatological relationship, that He is our Redeemer.

The hope of Redemption—as the goal and completion of what God purposed in Creation and much more—a Redemption that “draweth nigh,” but which does not belong to this present age, is the crowning truth of Barth's doctrine of the Word of God. We know nothing of the goal of God, he holds, if we do not understand the beginning, that is Creation; but we understand Creation imperfectly if we do not understand the goal, that is Redemption. It is that regeneration, of which Christ speaks to His disciples (Matt. xix. 28); that redemption of the purchased possession, to which St. Paul looks forward (Eph. i. 14); that consum-

mation when the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Rom. viii. 21). As Redeemer, God is the End and Goal, the Whither as well as the Whence of all, and inside that boundary of Whence and Whither, in the Now between past and future, our destiny is fulfilled. Here we live "between the ages," in which God's Kingdom and the devil's kingdom are engaged in conflict until the last Judgment. But the Word of God, which is the *memory* of the Word made flesh, is the *hope* of the Christ Who comes in glory.

We encounter at this point what is to many a stumbling-block in the teaching of Barth, his eschatology, but a stumbling-block which begins to give way. The idea of world progress was one of the most cherished thoughts of the pre-war world. The world's road was pictured as a steep ascending way, but the heights ever beckoned upwards, and made the climber forget his weariness. This thought of progress was employed to interpret Christ's doctrine of the Kingdom in terms of a moral end which man was to bring about, or a task which he was to accomplish by his own efforts. But the faith in progress, which a generation ago rang out with such pathetic hopefulness in an Alfred Tennyson, has come into so deep a crisis that many begin to speak of giving up the hope altogether. The old confident belief in the ascent of man to the Kingdom of God, as a climbing to higher and always higher elevations, is no longer held anywhere, except perhaps in America, which, with "its ebullient optimism and blind belief in the inevitability of progress," to quote Dr. Lowrie, still believes in an ascending progress to a goal inside history. (41) This waning

faith in a triumphantly progressive Christianity, which was a dream born of idealism, and without foundation in the New Testament, would seem to be preparing the way for Barth's doctrine, and may in course of time remove the stumbling-block. Barth himself is uncompromising. "A Christianity," he says, "which is not altogether and utterly eschatological has altogether and utterly nothing to do with Jesus Christ." We shall not understand his full doctrine of the Word until we remember that as an eschatologist he thinks in terms of Beginning and End, of Source and Goal. His doctrine rests on "the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity." Eternity is not to be confused with the endlessness of time. It is not, as it seems to have been to Plato, infinite time. Eternity is not a phenomenon of time at all. Eternity is the eternity of God, of His Reign, which presses into time and determines the present, in that it compels men to decision. Time as such is finite, being limited by eternity. Beyond is God Who is both Beginning and End, at once the Source and Goal of time and history. Therefore Jesus Christ is spoken of as "the first and the last and the living One" (Rev. i. 17-18). We live in the moment, the interval, between Eternity and Eternity, and in this eschatological Now, the decision falls for us, between life and death. So this present life is daily qualified by the Eternity that is ever at the door. The worth of a man for God and Eternity is determined not by some human quality, nor by the content of his soul-life, but only by the way in which he makes his choice in the here and now of his existence, when he is set in the crisis by the Word of God, the Redeemer.

To Barth, therefore, the doctrine of the Last Things can never be, as it is to many, a negligible appendix to Dogmatics. It is central and significant for the whole, because it deals with that which lies at the foundation of all time, and of all that takes place in time. By the Last Things, he does not mean Last *Things*, that is, events which, temporally considered, lie inside history, whether in some dim or distant future, or at the door. He means *Last Things*, the End that lies outside history, and determines history, the Things of God, Who is both the First and the Last. (42)

In recent years eschatology has had little place, either in theology, or in preaching. But Jesus believed profoundly in His Future, and in His future relation to His Church. His Church, He teaches, is to hope for His Coming, and to find in that hope the chief incentive to activity. (43) When we speak of the Future of Christ, we use the word in a specific sense. The future, in the ordinary sense, is time which is not yet disclosed, the *continuum* of time, which stretches out endlessly in front of us, beyond the point which we have reached. But when we bring the idea of the future into relation with Christ, we lift it out of the endless *continuum* of time, and place it in eternity, that is, outside of time. The Future of Christ does not belong to time, any more than His Beginning belongs to time. "In the beginning was the Word," means that Christ had His Beginning outside time and history. So also has He His End. It is the forgetfulness of this fact which renders all pre- or post-millennarian theories of the Second Coming of Christ unsatisfactory. Carried away by figurative expressions,

their expounders assume that the Second Coming will take place inside time and history, and before the time-form is annulled. But the End and the signs of the End which accompany it, do not belong to history. The Future of Christ is God's time, beyond all time and history; it is the Coming to us of God from beyond time and into history. For in time and history all things come to pass, since time carries death in it continually. "The fashion of this world passes away," says St. Paul, who looked for a change in the whole scheme of things. It is impossible to think of time without thinking of its transiency, but Christ is One Whose Future is not bound up with the transiency of time. Beyond the world that now is, a quite other world and time begin, a new heaven and a new earth. This future is the Future of Christ and of His Kingdom. He belongs to the future, He brings the future, it is His Divine task to bring it. We cannot speak truly of Christ other than eschatologically, that is, other than in terms of Coming and of End. All the stories of His miracles rest on the presupposition of His Future, for what are they other than signs of His Future, breaking in upon the world in promise? Faith in Christ itself is an eschatological conception. (44) It is not a timeless, optional attitude which is open to man. There is a "too late," when one shall seek and not find (John vii. 34). With Christ there begins a history which is no more world-history, but end-history; history in which world-history runs towards a Judgment-seat, beyond which lies a completely new beginning. His Cross points forward to this future. He leads us to the last limit of all being, the frontier of death, and shows

us that real life begins for us where all else leaves off. From beyond the grave He comes to us, which means that His Reality lies beyond time, beyond this world. What other does the Resurrection mean than that we can understand Christ only if we understand Him as the Lord of a coming, of a new world? Resurrection is not of this world, it puts this world in question. Resurrection is an anticipation of the new world. We have in Christ One Who by His Revelation of the new world, which is hidden already in time, has taken the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. There is quite another future for us, then, than the known, temporal future which every moment sinks down behind us, without end or goal. There is God's Future, which every day comes to meet us.

Much of the Modernist writing about Jesus is nothing else than an attempt to explain Him apart from eschatology, but the New Testament does not write thus about Jesus Christ. Its witness on points may differ, but as to the truth itself, its testimony is clear. The favourite doctrine of the immortality of the soul as a continuity between here and hereafter, in which the soul develops and ripens here for perfect service in the hereafter, is derived from Plato, and not from the New Testament. The Christian doctrine is the Resurrection of the dead. It implies a brink, a break, an end, and a new beginning on another plane, so that it is impossible for man in time to form any valid conception of eternity. The life which we live here and now will be completely transformed in the Resurrection. There will be no developments of history, or of a single life, no elevations which reach out beyond death; there

will be but one thing, the Coming of Christ to us (John xiv. 3). It will be truly a Coming to us. In that moment between time and eternity which we call Death, we shall be met and made new men by the Coming Christ. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53). It will be the same man who is called into the life eternal. Of that there can be no doubt, for the identity of the mortal with the immortal man is established in God. It is the wonder of the Resurrection. (45)

The future of Christ's kingdom then, according to the New Testament, is something quite different from any ultimate goal of human development inside history, such as it has often been pictured. It also implies a goal, but a goal that is beyond all possibility of human achievement, a goal to which no road leads, which cannot be reached from below, but can only break in from above. Into the sickness of the world and the unhappiness of time there has broken, in the Coming of Christ, the Good News of a blessed end to the sickness, in the Redemption of God. We are reconciled to God, but we are not yet redeemed. Yet we are proleptically redeemed, redeemed in anticipation and promise, and our life even now is "hid with Christ in God."

This, according to Barth, is the great last Word God has yet to speak to man in the future—the Word of Redemption—with which his doctrine of Salvation culminates (1 John iii. 2). Redemption is to be Eternal Life, but not in any sense of development, or intensification of this present life. All developments or intensifications end in graves. Barth's doctrine of Redemption is closely bound up with

his doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. So many doctrines of immortality are attempts to think of Eternal Life as a sort of prolongation of this life in a spiritual world, a continuity between the present and the future life. That seems to be the obsession of all forms of spiritualism. But this is not Eternal Life in the sense of the New Testament, which means a life completely and qualitatively different from all that is temporal, in which men "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. xxii. 30).

As to the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ, we are given but the barest hints in the New Testament, for "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts i. 7). But we must reckon in some way or another with the Parousia, as part of our obedience to Christ's Word. There will be a Last Day, an actual Day, which will break in as to-day and to-morrow, for an actual end to actual time must begin in time. (46) In its Coming, the Day of the Son of Man will annul all days of men, and will constitute the End and Crisis of human history when "time ends, eternity's begun, and thou art judged for evermore." Looked at from the one side, it will be the last moment of time. Looked at from the other, it will be the beginning of eternity. More we cannot know, and more we are not to seek (Matt. xxiv. 36). We are to live and labour in the attitude of waiting (ver. 42).

Barth's doctrine of the Word of God has brought us back to the New Testament with fresh eyes to perceive that the Kingdom of God is to come, that it lies in the future, while it presses into the present.

It is the *consummatio mundi* which God alone can make possible. The Christian Church is the Fellowship of those who look for, and hasten unto, the coming of the Day of God, hoping, praying, labouring, if so be that their services be acceptable to God (2 Pet. iii. 12).

We have not understood Christ, the Word of God, if we have not understood Him as supremely the Lord of a new, a coming world. We have not begun to live the Christian life, unless here and now we live in the promises, or let the promises live in us. If anything should lead us to take a share in the conflicts and sufferings of our time, if anything should compel us to enter into the questions and needs of the world, surely it is this hope of the Coming of Christ, the Word of God, our Redeemer. For how shall we harvest if we do not sow? How shall we conquer if we have not fought? How shall we receive answers if we have put no questions?

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLE AS WITNESS

SOME part at least of the present crisis in the Church must be put down to the fact that she has been deserting her springs in the Bible, and the one way out is that the Church should return to the source from which, throughout all the changes of her history, she has perennially drawn strength and renewal.

It was in the Bible that Barth himself found a door out of his disillusionment, and obtained a new access of spiritual power. His friend, Thurneysen, with whom he fought out his battle, has lifted the veil from that critical time when, as young ministers, they found themselves without a Gospel to preach. "We read the Bible," he says, "in a new way. We read it more respectfully, more as an eternal Word addressed to us, and to our time. We criticised it less. We read it with the eyes of shipwrecked people whose all had gone overboard. The Bible appeared in a new light. Beyond all interpretations, its genuine word began to speak again; the word of forgiveness, the Gospel of the coming Kingdom. . . . The Bible led us back to the Reformation, and the Bible and the Reformation have held our attention through the years."

From the beginning, the Barthian Movement has been characterised by a profound loyalty to the Bible.

“In the Bible,” says Brunner, “we hear a language which we hear nowhere else, we meet a God Whom we meet nowhere else. . . . That is why we believe in the Scriptures.” (1) “The Bible,” says Barth, “lifts us out of the old atmosphere of men to the portals of a new world, the world of God.”

The first note of the Barthian reveille, therefore, to which we are summoned to listen is its call to the Bible as the Word of God. What have we in the Bible? To answer that question, all the critical and historical labours of the scholars are required. Their contributions are not only valuable but essential, and if we say little about them, it is because we take them for granted. “There can be,” says Barth, “no knowledge of the Bible as the Word of God without concrete knowledge of its historical character.” But the point at which the labours of the critical and exegetical scholars leave off is where the theological and spiritual study of the Bible really begins. “Dogmatics, as such,” he says, “does not ask what the apostles and prophets have said—that is the work of exegetical theology—but what, on the ground of the apostles and prophets, we ourselves ought to say.” (2) This, he adds, “was really Calvin’s purpose in his *Institutes*, to direct Christian thought and speech to find its own answer in the *present*.”

1. We start, then, with the question: “What gives the Bible its supreme value for faith to-day?” Let us look at some of the answers proposed.

The Bible, says one, is valuable for its literature. This is profoundly true. In any history of literature, the Bible must be assigned an important place. We cannot do without the varied forms of speech and style which meet us in the prose, poetry, and drama of the Bible.

We ourselves are of the world, and if God did not speak to us after the manner of the world, He would not speak to us at all. What other was the Incarnation but an entering into our worldliness with His Word? But to view the Bible merely from the humanistic standpoint as a book to be recommended for its style and beauty, as was done in the days of rationalism, and as is being done again to-day, by some literary critics, is fundamentally to misunderstand it. If we make of the Bible an idol which we worship for its style, "then is the offence of the Cross ceased."

The Bible, says another, is valuable for its history, especially of the Jewish people. It is true that the Bible is full of history, social, cultural, political, and national, as well as religious, and its history is indispensable. It is not without significance, as we have seen, that when the Bible will tell of God, it does so in the form of a story, or series of stories. (3) It lays stress on such unimportant things as topography and chronology. It is never the report of something general, but of something particular, which it gives, something which happened then and there, to this man or that man, or people. But it cannot be for its history, *qua* history, that we supremely value the Bible. When we compare its history with the history of Greece and Rome it appears insignificant. Its little wars with the Philistines and Amalekites seem petty things.

The Bible, says another, is valuable for its moral teaching. That also is true. It contains a rich collection of deep, far-seeing statements of human wisdom, and its moral code has never been excelled. But there are other ancient books, such as those of

Plato, or Epictetus, full of great moral teaching. Besides, there are large sections of the Bible which are not suitable for moral instruction. Many of the Bible heroes are not fitted to be set forth to the youth of to-day as models of virtue. If the Bible is to be treated merely as a text-book of morality, it is an unsatisfactory book. It contains no clear counsels, either for men or nations, as to what they are to do in particular situations, or in regard to difficult questions, such as war or divorce. To put the Bible into the hands of a young person and say: "Here is a text-book on morality," would be doubtful wisdom. For the person might well ask: "But where am I to seek for guidance? If I find different counsels in different parts of the Bible, which am I to follow?" He would have every reason to be puzzled. It cannot be for its moral teaching that we give supreme value to the Bible. Yet its moral teaching is indispensable.

The Bible, says another, is valuable for its religion. Its purpose is to tell us how to seek and find God. But once more difficulties confront us when we proceed to search the Scriptures for guidance on religion. For we find different religions in the Bible. There is the peasant religion of early Israel with its sacrificial offerings. There is the later religion of the prophets who poured scorn on such offerings, and called for obedience. There is the still later religion of legalism with its punctilious observances. And coming to the New Testament, there is the religion of Jesus, of One Who was without sin; the religion of St. Paul, of St. James, and of the writer to the Hebrews, all of them different. Which religion are we to follow? The Bible be-

comes a perplexing book if we regard it as a book of religion, and offers us no clear guidance.

But now, if instead of looking at the Bible as literature, or as history, or as morality, or as religion, we begin to ask such questions as: "How did all this come to be?" "How did this little people come to speak such words, and live such lives?" "How did Abraham come to leave Ur?" "How was Moses able to promulgate the Ten Commandments?"; then we are on the threshold of an answer as to why we give supreme value to the Bible. The answer is, in one word, GOD. (4) It is because there is a God Who lives and speaks and acts behind all that we have been considering. Behind all that literature and history and morality and religion there is the Word of a self-revealing, eternally-living God, Who of His own will chose to make this little people, and these great prophets, and in the end His own Son, the media of His word to men.

The Bible is, in the first instance, a great monument of ancient literature, and must come under the same laws of historical criticism as are applied to all other literature. But in the moment when we have said that, there emerges beyond it the claim that here is God's Word, veiled and hidden under the frail outward form of human words, and straightway everything becomes different. We hear the Word of God.

What gives the Bible its supreme value is because we have in it the Word of a speaking God, a divine Revelation. It is this that makes the Bible something other than a compendium of historical facts, or of moral ideas, or a treasury of spiritual insight. God has revealed Himself in the history and literature of

Israel in a way in which He has not revealed Himself in the history and literature of Greece or Rome. In the Bible, the strange new world of God has broken into this world of space and time. It is not the history of Israel only which the Bible brings us, but a history of redemption. The reality, therefore, which lies behind the call to an Abraham to get out of his country unto a land which God will show him, the reality which lies behind a Moses at the burning bush, and a Gideon at the threshing-floor, is the world of God which breaks in upon history, and morality, and religion, and gives them a value above the literature or history of any other people. Those writers, who speak as if revelation were just the upper side of human discovery, fail to do justice to the truth that revelation is a meeting with God *in which God takes the initiative*, and reveals Himself. God came first to an Abraham, and to a Moses, breaking in upon their lives in such a way that they had no doubt but that what they heard was the Word of God, a Word with which they could not parley, but which they must simply obey. One cannot reflect too long, says Barth, over the distinction of Kierkegaard between an apostle and a genius. (5) It is the Other in a man which, pressing in upon him from without, makes him to be an apostle.

As a Word of God, therefore, the Bible is greater than its literature. The literature is the earthen vessel, the Word of God is the treasure.

As a Word of God, the Bible is greater than its history, or than all history. While God has revealed Himself in the history of the Jewish people, the history of the Jewish people is not the revelation of God. History of itself contains no revelation of

God, for history is the story of the evolution of a sinful race. Its wars and bloodshed, rises and falls, are tokens only of the sin and disobedience which mark its course. Revelation, on the other hand, is the divine world as it breaks into history, and discovers itself in history as something altogether different and new. Revelation is history. It is the speaking of God in time. "The content of every story," says Barth, "is the self-revelation of God." The Bible lays, therefore, such remarkable stress on the historicity of the Revelation which it reports, because it understands by Revelation no creation of man. (6) But history, as such, is not revelation. History is temporal, revelation is eternal. History is of man, revelation is of God. When the divine world breaks through in an eternal moment, history for the time being ceases, not in the sense that it comes to a temporal end, but in the sense that it is brought to a crisis, to a supreme turning-point. To that moment in actual history when eternal Reality arrives, Barth, as we have seen, gives the name: *Urgeschichte*. (7)

As a Word of God, the Bible is greater than its morality. Morality is the effort to attain the chief end, to satisfy the demands of the law, to live the good life. It is the truly hopeless effort to attain to a righteousness of our own. There is in the Bible much of this moral striving after righteousness, which is spoken of as the "curse of the law." Revelation, on the other hand, is the declaration of a divine righteousness, a righteousness of God, revealed to man. It is this which supremely meets us in the Bible—not the doings of men but the Work of God, not the various ways which men take to live the

good life, but the power out of which the good life comes, not the old world of man, but the new world of God, and of His morality. In this new world, to which belong such things as grace and forgiveness, a David becomes a great man in spite of his sins, and publicans and harlots enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the self-righteous Pharisees. In this world, the true hero is the prodigal son who so nobly repents, and not the elder brother who feels no need of repentance. Morality knows the struggle and the defeat. Revelation tells of the new beginning, of victory and resurrection.

As a Word of God, the Bible is greater than its religion. Religion is the longing, the seeking after God, the most pathetic of all human searches, of which the Bible offers a wealth of illustration. In some of its aspects, as in the story of the tower of Babel which stands there as a warning against pride and arrogance, religion is shown as becoming a challenge to God. Much of the polemic in the Bible, as in the prophecies of Amos, is directed against religion, while no one ever said harder, or more disparaging, things concerning it than Christ Himself. St. Paul's attack on legalism, in which the Jews put their confidence as the way to God, was directed on what we are accustomed to call *religion*. Religion has often, in its self-sufficiency, and independence towards God, proved a stumbling-block which has come between man and God. For while it is man's highest possibility, the very apex of his achievements, it is still but a human possibility, entirely interwoven with the world of men, and by no means leads man out of the problematic of guilt, but rather more deeply into it. So far from being his salvation, it is rather

the discovery that he is not saved, for by no effort of religion, not even the highest, can man come to God.

There is much in the Bible which we would describe as religion at its highest and best, much which is man's cry to God, uttering his deepest feelings of penitence, of longing for purity and fellowship with the source of life. But what gives the Bible its supreme value is not its religion, not the cry of man to God, but the Word of God to man—God's answer to his cry. As Barth puts it: "It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the real content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about man. The Bible tells us, not how we are to speak to God, but how God has spoken to us, not how we find a way to God, but how He has sought and found a way to us."

But now, having discovered what gives to the Bible its supreme value for faith to-day, viz. that it is the Word of a speaking God, we can return and recover what we seem to have lost. The literature of the Bible becomes the more precious, the history the more instructive, the morality the more edifying, the religion the more moving, since we know that God is speaking to us through them all. In man's questions the divine answer is already grounded, for the Word of God is the answer to all the quests and questions of the human heart. "Thou hadst not sought Me, hadst thou not already found Me."

The Bible itself, it must be understood, is not actually the Word of God. The Bible is one thing, and Revelation is another thing. He does the Bible a poor honour, says Barth, and one unwelcome to itself, who identifies it with the Revelation. The Bible is not itself the Revelation which has taken

place, but as God's Word speaking to us, and heard of us, it witnesses to the Revelation. (8) The Revelation begets the Scripture which witnesses to it. The Word of God is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and it cannot be bound up in morocco. The Word of God is not bound. It is not even accurate to say that the Bible "contains" the Word of God, as if it were some sacred receptacle in which the Word of God is stored. Revelation is the utterance of a speaking God Who cannot be separated from His Word. What we have in the Bible is not the actual Revelation, as it broke upon an Amos, or a Jeremiah, but the witness to it of the men to whom it came as a "burden" which wellnigh crushed them. The Revelation itself was absolute, but those to whom God spoke were human beings who belonged to a particular place and time, sinful men who could see only brokenly and imperfectly, and their witness was therefore relative. For if they were to convey what was given them, they must employ human words, and like other men they were liable to err. God's Word can only reach us in this hidden, indirect, way through the words of men. It is human words we hear, not God Himself, but human words coming to us through sinful men to whom God has spoken. The Word of God is always perfect, whether it be the Word of God as it comes to an Abraham, or the Word of God as it comes to a Paul. It is like a sun which ever shines. But the eye which receives it may be partially blind, or at least dim. While there can be no degrees in divine Revelation there are degrees in inspiration, that is, in the receptivity of the witnesses, which is always more or less imperfect.

The modern method of explaining the Bible, and overcoming its difficulties, has been the theory of progressive revelation, viz. that through a long process of evolution, of which we have the record in the Bible, God has been progressively revealing Himself until the climax is reached in Jesus Christ. When in the last century the doctrine of evolution was applied to the Bible, it became almost an axiom that in the development of revelation the key had at last been found to the Old Testament. But to-day we have become less confident. We do not deny a measure of development in the religious experience of the Bible witnesses—the experience of a Paul is enriched by the previous experience of an Abraham—but we need to distinguish the relative sphere in which it operates from that absolute sphere in which God dwells. Considered historically, the religion of the Bible witnesses develops and becomes differentiated—the religion of an Abraham was a simpler thing than that practised by Israel after Moses—but we cannot think of God, the Giver of Revelation, in terms of development. The Word of God must always be an absolute Word. “Revelation as such,” says Barth, “is never relative.” (9) It is man’s reception, dependent as it is upon his age, circumstances, environment, and above all upon his sinful nature, which is imperfect. The theory of progressive revelation, which seems to provide so easy a solution, raises more difficulties than it can hope to settle. It involves the transcendent God in the time process, and in the process of natural law, and renders Revelation relative and not absolute. But if God is to reveal Himself, He must not, in so doing, cease to be God. The doctrine of evolution, in point of

fact, imposes on the Bible a conception which is foreign to it. The Bible is an eschatological book which lives ever on the brink of things to come, and knows nothing of the gradual development of moral ideas. What we meet in it is always a breaking in of something from beyond, something new, other, transcendent. Those who hear the Word of God recognise that it is not some growth of their own experience, but the Word of Another which often cuts across their experience. God reveals Himself, not in processes, or ideas, or truths, or even in heroic religious personalities, but in His Word, which can never be a human discovery over which any man has power. (10) To the men of the Bible, with that "upward look" of which Barth speaks, to whom the Word of God was a fire from heaven, it would have seemed, not a climax, but an anti-climax, to be told to think of Christ as the culmination of an evolutionary process. The emphasis of this theory has been so much on the *progress* that it has not given sufficient thought to what the Bible means by *revelation*, which it has identified more or less with religion.

What we have in the Bible is *witness* to the Word of God. Just as I can look out on the hills and on the sea and say: "These are witnesses to the creative Word which God spoke, when He made the heavens and the earth," so when I look in the Bible I find the witness to the Word which God spake to an Amos, or an Isaiah. The witness may be broken, and fragmentary, but that may only be the better proof of its reliability. We have here the difference between the Bible and the Koran. The Koran claims to have come down from heaven, while the Bible makes for itself no such claim. It is not a work which has

been dictated from heaven, but a witness to God conditioned by men, for whom there can be no claim for inerrancy. The whole material of the Bible, so far as its external form is concerned, is temporal and earthly. Even when the Word of God meets us in its more immediate form, in the "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophets, it is not the divine Word which we actually hear, but the witness of the prophet; a "word concerning the Word," and not the perfect divine Word itself. For when God speaks His Word to the prophet, the prophet first of all speaks the Word to himself; it meets and strikes him, in his opposition, as the Word of Another, and becomes broken like a ray of light in a prism, and sometimes, it may be, distorted by his disobedience. But in the Bible if we use it properly, not as a cushion to rest on, nor as a quarry in which to dig for comfortable texts, but as God's Word coming to us through the lips of frail and sinful men, we shall actually hear God Himself speaking to us in words which pierce, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. For it is not inerrancy, or any other human virtue, which makes witnesses for God, but the light of Divine Truth itself shining in the witness of erring and only partially good men.

But there is One, in Whom the Word of God reaches us without limitation or reservation, because the truth in Him is not broken or deflected by any contradiction of sin in His nature. "He who says Revelation," writes Barth, "says: 'The Word became flesh.'" Jesus Christ is supremely the Word of God translated into our human flesh and speech, and if we are to speak of plenary inspiration it can only be of Him. He is God's personal Word which

does not need a prophet as a medium, but is present *in persona*, in the Word made flesh. "Jesus speaks for Himself," says Barth, "and needs no witness but that of His Holy Spirit, and the faith that rejoices in the Promise which is received and laid hold on." (11) In Him the pure world of God has entered into our human sphere, not as a historical force, or historical figure, not as a mere divine impulse, but as the Eternal Word of God to us. Yet even in Christ the Word of God appears *incognito*, veiled in the flesh and visible only to the eye of faith. Since the first days until now there have been those who could see in Him no more than "this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know" (John vi. 42). Jesus as the Word of God is a truth of Revelation.

The claim which the Bible makes for itself, therefore, is that it is not only a witness to a Word of God, but to *the* Word of God, the self-revelation of God given once for all in time, which has its centre and completion in Jesus Christ. In the Bible we have a unique book, witnessing to a unique thing, a special revelation of God to man, and as such it is the Book of the Church. It is, to quote Barth, "the document of a unique hearing of a unique call, the document of a unique obedience to a unique command." (12) The Bible has supreme value to faith to-day because it is the Word of God to Man.

But how, it may be asked, is this claim to be squared with what appear as revelations of God in the heathen world, in a Socrates for example? Were there no extra-canonical prophets? What about Melchizedek King of Salem, or Ruth the Moabite, or Cyrus the Anointed of the Lord? Did they also, like an Abraham, receive a divine revelation? There

is no ground for denying that they also heard the Word of God. "He who believes in revelation," says Barth, "will not say that it could not have reached some whose answering voice is not heard in the Biblical Canon. It can be God's pleasure very suddenly to bless Abraham through a Melchizedek, or Israel through a Balaam, or receive help through a Cyrus." (13) While in the Bible we have the *Church's* witness to the Word of God on which it rests, and to which it listens, we do not exclude the possibility of the Word of God reaching other waiting receptive hearts in the heathen world. On the contrary, it is what we should expect of a free and sovereign God.

2. We pass to the question: "What gives to the Bible its wonderful unity?" There is an entire difference between it and such collections of literary masterpieces as one finds in other lands. The Bible is a great living unity, and its unity is found in its purpose. Its purpose is to tell us, not of the right relation in which we are to place ourselves to God, but of the covenant relation in which He has placed Himself to us, and it takes the whole Bible, and the Bible as a whole, to tell it. Some would suggest an expurgated Bible, but while there are books which are central, and books which are on the margin, there is no book which is irrelevant. Each is there for the sake of the whole, and for the interpretation of the whole.

In order to understand the New Testament we must start from the Old. The Word of God in the Old Testament is a supernatural message, a Word of God to man, the Word of a free sovereign transcendent God Who takes the initiative, and comes

down in love and grace to man, and makes a covenant with him. It is the Word of a God Who chooses whom He will, and has pity on whom He will. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. xx. 2). This is probably the most important word in the whole revelation at Sinai, for in it lies in promise the whole later divine revelation. The sovereign God, claiming Israel as His people, breaks into the silence and darkness of Egypt, "that slave pen," with His arresting delivering word, and reveals Himself as One Who comes to men and personally meets them, there and then. Revelation is never something impersonal, never the expression of truths, or ideas, but a Word, the Word of a "Thou" addressed to an "I," which is to be answered with obedience. There is in the Old Testament no philosophy, for, with such a God, all philosophising must cease. The religion of the Old Testament, it is often said, belongs to the category of moral religion, but in point of fact the prophets know nothing of a moral law, they know only obedience to a personal will. What we call the moral law is an abstraction, something which we have separated, and which we ought not to separate, from the will of God, for the God of the Old Testament is a God not of legal but of personal relationships, Whose Will we are to do, and Whose Word we are to obey. The Old Testament is a forward-looking book which from first to last prophesies, turning our thoughts onward to the future. (14) It deals, not with the historical but with the divine future, the future which comes towards us, and in this it differs from all other books. It tells us that God will, in quite another way, come

to His people. Its message is that of a coming Kingdom of God, in which God, Who is sovereign Lord, will condescend in mercy to His children. It knows nothing of our modern idea of progress, of a world becoming better and better by some gradual evolutionary process, in the course of history. The only progress of which it knows is that which goes through conflict, rejection, and judgment to new creations, an eschatological progress (Matt. xiii. 30). With this word, eschatology, we have expressed the most characteristic feature of the Old Testament, and that which separates it most decisively from the modern world view. He who is unfaithful to God has nothing to look for, according to the Old Testament, but judgment. This thought of judgment, which pervades it, is a necessary presupposition for the understanding of the New Testament, for how can one concern oneself about redemption who has no anxiety about being lost?

When we cross to the New Testament, the same thought of a Kingdom to come meets us on the threshold, and the same conception of Lordship. Jesus Christ is Lord. (15) The particular message of the New Testament is that the Kingdom of God has come "nigh" in Jesus. It does not say that it is fully come as a present actuality, but it is present in its beginnings, its promises, its first approaches. While man is still under the dominion of death, it cannot be said that the Kingdom of God is come. It has made a beginning, as a Word of God to man, and in the faith that responds to it, but the old world is still left standing with a very real independence of its own. The dominion of death is broken, but it is not yet removed. The Church

must still continue to pray : " Thy kingdom come," for in its full meaning and character it will not come this side of the barrier of death. In the Cross and Resurrection of Christ we see indeed that the present order is to pass away, for the beginning of a new order has signalled itself, but it is in advance, in promise, and not yet in actual fact. Jesus believed that in dying He was inaugurating this new age, this Reign of God, with its implications of authority over the hearts and wills of men, of which both the Old Testament and the New have so much to say. God the Father had sent Him, not merely to alter something here or there, or to improve the world by morality, but to proclaim the resurrection of the dead, and the coming of the new world, and the new man.

Jesus Christ, therefore, is the bond Who holds the Old Testament and the New together, and secures to the Bible its unity. He indeed has Himself called the Old and New Testaments into existence. The common idea which sees in the Old Testament exclusively the Law, and in the New Testament exclusively the Gospel, which speaks of the God of the Old Testament as the holy Lawgiver, and of the God of the New Testament as the loving Father, is untrue to the Bible. It makes the Bible fall apart into two different worlds, in which each proclaims a different God, or the same God Who shows Himself differently. But in the Old Testament, and in the story of the Jewish people, Christ found no other God than the Father Who had sent Him. When He prayed in the words of the Psalms, when a word of a prophet helped Him to clarity as to His Mission, He knew Himself as face to face with no other than His loving Father. When, in the story of the prodigal son,

He gives us a glimpse of the Divine Father's heart, He departs for no moment from the consciousness that this Father is the same God Who spoke to Moses and to Jeremiah. The New Testament is distinct, however, in this, that it bears witness to the actual Coming of Him Whose footsteps we hear approaching all through the Old Testament. A true understanding of the Bible, then, is possible only when it is viewed in the light of Jesus Christ. The difference between the Old Testament and the New, prophets and apostles, is the fluid difference between promise and fulfilment, law and gospel, which are not only both of God, but both of grace, indissolubly connected with each other. "The whole Bible," says Thurneysen, "has in the end no other content than to witness to the One Who comes from above." Jesus as the Son or Word of God is the One to Whom all the Scriptures point. "These are they who bear witness of me" (John v. 39, R.V.). In what the apostle describes as "the fulness of the time" (Gal. iv. 4), which is identical with the Coming of Christ, something happened which, in relation to all else, is absolute. An event in the midst of human history, and itself a part of history, yet not belonging to the continuity of history, nor pointing forward, or aspiring to, some distant goal—that is the fulness of the time. (16)

The Word of God in Jesus Christ, witnessed to in the Bible, is a *Deus dixit* to which there is no analogy, a great declaration for every man to hear, that the prophecy of Isaiah (vii. 14) of Immanuel, "God with us," has been fulfilled. The Bible is the word, the witness, of such men as have longed, waited, looked, and at last seen and handled the Word of Life (1 John

i. 1). It tells, testifies, and proclaims this God, and it declares through its words, witnesses, and preachers, that He is Immanuel—God with us and for us. (17)

Jesus is Immanuel—God with us—in the simplicity of His childhood. The message of Christmas is summed up in the word, Immanuel. It is God with us, God Himself breaking in on history, as the angels broke in on the silence of the skies, and speaking to man as He had never spoken before; God coming from the heights of heaven in a new way, to dwell with men upon the earth. The Christian Church does well to give a central place to the message of the cradle, for the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem was a new thing, the strangeness and surprise of which thrills through the New Testament. The wonderful Christmas stories all betoken the consciousness that something altogether new and foreign to this earth has entered it, in the sublime yet humble event of that night in which the angels sang.

Jesus is Immanuel—God with us—in the sympathy of a great compassion for mankind. "When he saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted . . ." (Matt. ix. 36). "Jesus," says Barth in a recent sermon on this text, "seeks us. He is different from all others who seek us in this, that He has compassion on us, and not on Himself. . . . He is the One Who under all circumstances finds us." (18) The human aspect of Christ's Revelation of the Father, as we can see both in his sermons and in his new Dogmatics, is coming to occupy a larger place in the mind of Barth. "We cannot say enough of Jesus," he says. Yet he does not forget that Jesus is nowhere at home here on earth. He is the Man Whom we all, who are at

home, have nailed on a Cross. He is the Outcast. But He is also the Lord of Glory under the veil of the flesh. The Jesus of the New Testament, the real Jesus, is One with Whom unheard-of events are possible, and actual. In Him there flashes forth something of an unknown and new world, which breaks through what we call Nature. He lives by the powers of a world which is not our world. He who approaches Him, or has to do with Him, must reckon with the power and might of God Himself, which lies out beyond all known powers, and laws. In the miracles of Jesus, which the Evangelists describe as "wonders," we meet those evidences of the new world of God which was invading the present world, and setting itself against its evils and limitations.

Jesus is Immanuel—God with us—in the might of His redeeming love on the Cross. Immanuel with sinners! He the guiltless takes the place of our punishment. He, Who has no compassion for Himself, is free to have compassion on us. "Jesus Christ—that means God," says Thurneysen, "but God in the place of my guilt." (19) It is in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ that the wonder of this new world of Divine Mercy bursts fully through, and becomes the crowning wonder of Revelation. (20)

This immediate meeting of Immanuel—God with us—in Christ, does not take place by way of historical reminiscence. In the first instance we know Jesus through the Biblical tradition, and it is important that we should have a reliable historical picture. This service is rendered to us by Biblical students, but that does not make the past to be present to us. All we

have is a belief in historical facts, which lacks certainty. For it is impossible to come to certainty, or to immediate contact with God, by way of memory. So long as the event rests only in our memory it is always something smaller and poorer than what actually took place, and it tends like other memories to pale. The historical Jesus only becomes Revelation—God with us—when He meets us as the living Reality in the present. When He comes to us and becomes contemporary with us, we enter on a new, a personal relationship. When we hear and read what He said and did, the Christ of Yesterday meets us as the Christ of To-day and To-morrow (Rev. i, 8), For God Who reveals Himself in Holy Scripture stands as the Eternal over all time. The sacred story not only happened before us, it can to-day happen in us, and for us. It can find its continuation in our life-history. This immediate presence of Christ, as God with us, the Bible calls faith. "In faith itself," said Luther, "Christ is present."

This doctrine of Christ the Word of God as Immanuel—God with us—has become central to Barth's thought. The historical, biographical, psychological Jesus of Modernist theology is not the Word of God. The Coming of Jesus was not an event of world history. Jesus was not thrown up by history, but came down into history. He is not a figure of our history, not even the greatest figure; and to the historian, as historian, He is not known. Historical judgment may be passed on Him as a hero, or saint, or prophet, or even as the founder of a religion, but not on Him as the Word of God. Had Jesus belonged to our history, He would now be reckoned with the ancients, for all human history stands under

the sign: "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." But He is as near to us in the twentieth century as He was to the men of the first, in virtue of that contemporaneousness which belongs to Him as Word of God. A historical Jesus is remote, and becomes ever more remote, but as the Word of God He is present, real, and contemporary with every age. Historically considered, Jesus constitutes an insoluble problem, but in the light of Revelation He is seen to be the meaning of all history. As the Messiah, He is the world's turning-point, the end of the old, the beginning of the new, the key to the history of man, the interpreter of the whole creation. His light is the light of the Old Testament, the light of all religious history, and of the history of truth. If the Word of God had not become incarnate in Jesus, the whole reality of history would have remained dumb and unexplained.

3. But the question arises: "How are we to find in the Bible, and in Jesus, the Word of God?" (21) It is an important question, for while the Word of God is to be found in the Bible, the actual finding of it is not the simple matter which some imagine. Often we can only wait and pray until it "finds us." "The demand," says Bultmann, "that one should say at once, unambiguously, what precisely is the Word of God must be refused because it rests on the conception that an existing, intelligible, complex of sayings could be so named. What 'Word of God' means can indeed be formally stated. But it is just this formal explanation which makes it clear that a content of the Word of God cannot be conclusively laid before us. It can only be listened to, ever again." (22)

The Word of God does not lie in the Bible in any

static form. We cannot, as Barth says, abstract it from the free activity of God, by Whose power it becomes Word of God. It is not to be found, as the older Protestants conceived, as a stable summary of revealed propositions, like the paragraphs of a law-book. Revelation is not the communication of such a knowledge, but an event that takes place in the Bible which, apart from this event, is not Word of God, but a book like any other book. "The Bible," says Barth, "is God's Word so far as God allows it to be His Word, so far as He speaks through it." (23) In the event of faith, Revelation and the Bible are indeed one, even to the words, and the Bible *is* the Word of God. The Bible, or some part of it, finds us, and becomes, and ever again becomes for us Word of God. It searches us, addresses us, and sets us in a crisis. The Word of God does not come to us at all, either through the Scripture or through the preacher, except as it comes to us individually, compelling us to say: "It is to me that this is spoken." The Bible constitutes for us, therefore, a permanent occasion of crisis. We can never know when some Word of God will thrust itself home on us, piercing us like a sharp two-edged sword, and once we hear such a Word addressed to us the question does not even arise, how we are to know it as God's Word. We know it without any question. The conviction that God is speaking, says Barth, needs no other ground, and is to be replaced by no other ground; the Bible is recognised as God's Word because He has spoken it. (24) We are to hear the actual Word of God to us out of the historical situation of the writer, and we are not to forget his historical limitations. To ignore or deny them is to turn the Bible into an

oracle. But in and with the historically conditioned Word we are to hear the Word of God. At no time will the whole Bible be Word of God to us, now it may be one part, and now another, but that particular word which goes through us at a particular moment, in some concrete situation, is for us the Word of God.

The Reformers explained this event by saying that the Word is made known to us, and becomes for us the Word of God, through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the correlative of the Word, Word and Spirit belong together. The Word without the Spirit leads to orthodoxy and bibliolatry. The Spirit without the Word leads to mysticism and individualism. The Word needs the Spirit, as the Spirit needs the Word, to be complete Word of God. It is thus that the Bible never grows old, but is always contemporaneous with us, receiving ever new life through the Spirit. The Spirit makes the letter to live, so that the Word spoken there and then, becomes for us the Word of God here and now.

So also is it with Jesus as the Word of God. The meaning of Christ's life and work is not intelligible to man on his natural level. Nor is it possible for man, on his natural level, to see in the Death of Christ a Word of Reconciliation. It is to him only a touching incident in history, with nothing of the nature of a Revelation. He cannot, by the exercise of his reason, perceive in Jesus a Coming of God into the midst of our sin and death. Jesus becomes for us the Word of God only as the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to see in the outward facts a Word, a significance, a Divine meaning. The possibility does not lie in us, but only in God. As the Word of God does not repose in any static fashion in the Bible,

neither did the Word of God in the human Jesus. As we shall see in more detail later, Barth is prepared, we believe, to allow a greater place to the *humanitas Christi* in Revelation, but he does not conceive of the Word of God as actually to be identified with the human Jesus, which would constitute a deification of the creature, and ignore the hiddenness of Revelation. It is not to be forgotten that, as we have said, Jesus did not become Revelation to all who met Him, but only to the few, and even these few could deny Him and forsake Him, and one of them could betray Him. (25)

The Modernist Jesus-cult, as well as the Roman Catholic worship of the "Heart of Jesus," are contrary to the teaching of the Bible in which God alone is Revealer, whether in the prophets and apostles, or in the appearance of Jesus Christ. God does not reveal Himself without the creature, but in and through it, but so that He alone is Revealer, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus can only be known as the Word of God through the Holy Spirit, for there is hidden in Him that which does not yield its secret to historical or rational search. "There standeth One among you Whom ye know not." Only a faith, lit by the Holy Spirit, can pierce that *incognito*.

4. One last question: "Who has said that the Bible is the Word of God?" Who has taken these old books of history, poetry, prophecy, and put them together and declared that here we are to seek the Word of God? The Church has placed these books in the Canon, declaring them to be authoritative books of our Faith, by which all other books on the Faith are to be judged. The Church has done this, not because we have here the crown of Jewish literature,

but because we have here the story of divine Redemption. "The Bible," says Barth, "is the concrete means through which the Church is reminded of God's accomplished Revelation, and with that is called to proclamation of the Gospel." (26) The Canon was formed by the slowly settling mind of the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that through these books the Word of God was reaching the Church. Believers, listening through the centuries for the divine Word, heard it in those books, and what the Church did was to register a conviction which had already been reached within the Fellowship.

The declaration of the Canon, then, is an act of faith on the part of the Church, in which it countersigns the witness of prophet and apostle, as well as of those writers whose witness is less direct. It can only make the Canon practical and provisional, not definitive and closed. But the Canon remains for the present the standard or rule of Holy Scripture. We may regret that this or that book is or is not in the Canon, but we must respect the guided mind of the Church.

The creation of the Canon is one of the most impressive examples of the response given by the Church to the Word of God. The Bible has made itself to be the Canon, because it has impressed itself, and always again impressed itself on the mind of the Church. The Church did not write the Bible, but she guarantees it. And as age after age studies this wonderful collection of spiritual witness, it is recognised that we have in it the Word of God conveyed to us from there to here, from past to present, through the Holy Spirit. The Bible inside the Church is no antiquity but a living tree, bringing forth its fruits in

every age. If it be true that there would be no Bible without the Church, it is equally true that there would have been no Church without the Bible.

This does not mean that we are to regard the Bible as the only well of Christian hope and comfort. We are free to draw inspiration and stimulus from any well whose water will minister to the health of our souls, and it may be that sometimes we shall find more help and succour in some other book than the Bible. Abraham Kuyper, the eminent Dutch theologian, was led into the great religious crisis of his life through the reading of an English novel. But in the Bible we have the Canon by which other books may be measured, and other views corrected, according to the mind of the Church. The Canon is carried on the march, says Barth, as a staff in an outstretched and living hand pointing men forward in the way which they are to take. (27) "Here is a particular place where God speaks," is what we mean when we say "Canon." Through the Canon the Scripture becomes *Holy* Scripture, and the Bible not so much a historical monument, but much more a document of the Church, a written proclamation of the Word of God.

We do not call these enclosed books the Word of God because men, in a human manner, have erected this wall round them. But since it has pleased God to address His Word through these books, men have felt compelled in their human weakness to set up this wall, as if to say: "Here, if you will take our word, you will actually hear God speaking to you." They will do no other than give God the glory.

CHAPTER V

THE LOST AUTHORITY

IF the Barthian reveille was, in the first place, a call for the recovery of the Bible as the Word of God, it was, in the second place, a call for a return to the lost authority of the Church of the Word, the Church of the Reformers, in order to surmount the present crisis.

There is to-day a remarkable revival of interest in the Church of the Reformation all over the Protestant world, except in America, which, as a new country, may suffer from a lack of historical perspective. It is being recognised that we are passing through an epoch similar to that of the Reformation, in which many of its features are being reproduced, and the call is heard from different quarters for a return to the springs of the Reformed Faith. Some call for a New Reformation, for it is perceived, and rightly, that no mere repetition of the old will avail in our day.

What we call the Reformation was a many-sided movement, the beginning of a new era for science, and civilisation, as well as for religion, in which a new life began to burst all barriers. One of the first institutions to feel it was the stately edifice of the Roman Catholic Church. Its worship was beautiful, its cathedrals sublime, its priesthood all-powerful, but was it the true Church, the Church which Christ and

His apostles meant it to be? In that question lay the nucleus of the Reformation.

In spite of its flagrant iniquities, the Church of the Middle Ages stood forth as an earthly magnitude which appeared to be unshakable. It had long forgotten, except in name, that it was a Church under the sign of the Cross, and believed that it had attained to glory, power, and rest, here on earth. Filled with a supreme assurance, it maintained that its words about God and life could not be put in question. It refused to know anything of the prophet's word that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and lived from the elementary presupposition that it possessed a free direct approach to the secret of all life—to God. One thinks of the splendid élan with which the Scholastics like Aquinas moved forward to the conquest of heaven as well as earth, or of the sense of victory with which the Mystics essayed to climb the unapproachable heights of Godhead. Not everyone, of course, possessed this power, not without effort did one enjoy the vision of God, but there was a place and a way for those who would take it; that place and way was the Church, which controlled the secret of knowledge. On the altars of its cathedrals, which were filled with the thrill of the divine mystery, the daily oblation was offered that opened the way to God, and it was unthinkable that any man, who had put himself under the guidance of the Church, could go astray. (1)

Thus the medieval Church stands forth before us, mighty and self-confident. Who would dare to lay hands upon her? The Reformers dared. Driven by a mysterious fear and unrest they went forth from her cathedrals to seek a peace which they could not find

there. What was it that drove them forth? It was sin. The real starting-point of the Reformation was the breakdown of all ecclesiastical assurances before the reality of sin, in the soul of Martin Luther. Nothing which the Church had to offer could avail with him. Was there not a bridge between man and God, was not the Church daily overcoming the gulf in the Mass, offering a meeting with God for those who believed? That might be, but Luther had lost all faith in this so-called bridge. When he recognised that the gulf between man and God cannot be overcome from man's side, that neither a magic-working sacrament, nor the will of man strengthened by divine grace, can overcome sin, Luther ceased in that hour to be a monk. (2) But in this situation of despair he came to know God in Jesus Christ and found a "confident despair" (*getroste Verzweiflung*). God met him in quite another place than where the Roman Church laid the meeting—not in the Mass, but in His Word—and assured him of His forgiveness. For while man is and remains a sinner, God by an act of grace, which is beyond reason and experience to grasp, counts him as righteous. This was the great discovery of the Reformation, as it is the distinctive characteristic of Christianity.

Luther did not think of himself as discovering something new, but as rediscovering something old, which had been lost. The Reformers never thought of themselves as innovators. Had they been innovators they would have been very different men. Innovators are usually proud, self-conscious men, but the Reformers took their way in fear and trembling. What they called the "new life" was a way of fear, reverence, and contrition of heart. Faith, as Luther

never tired of saying, was humility. The Christian life was a *militia Christi*, a warfare in the obedience of faith. It was not a jubilant or triumphant life, yet it was a life full of overflowing praise of the royal grace of God. As Elijah was fed by the ravens, so the sinner, said Luther, lives by the grace of God in the depths and on the heights.

This new knowledge of God, which he called *theologia crucis* (the theology of the Cross), Luther set forth in strongest contrast to what he named the *theologia gloriæ* (theology of glory) of the medieval Church, with its proud and confident claims to a direct knowledge of God. For Luther and the other Reformers, the Cross was the central mystery of Christianity. It was the sign of the Christian Faith, of the Christian Church, and of the Revelation of God in Christ. The whole battle of the Reformation for the right understanding of *sola fide* was nothing other than a battle for the right understanding of the Cross. He who understood the Cross rightly, according to Luther, understood the Bible, and understood Jesus Christ. The objective reconciliation on the Cross, the propitiation set forth in the Word of the Cross, was the presupposition of that most incredible of all wonders, the justification of the sinner. The Word of the Cross was a hidden and secret Word which came to man not directly, but indirectly. God met him not in the so-called mystery of the Mass, but in the actual mystery of the Word, before which he must humble himself. "The nerve of Luther's thought," says Barth, "was in his doctrine of the *larva Dei*" (the mask or *persona* of God), by which he indicated the indirectness of God's self-communication, occasioned not only by the creatureliness but

by the sinfulness of the creature. In view of this divine mystery he rejected the "theology of glory" and "*speculatio maiestatis*" of the Roman Church, and replaced it with the "theology of the Cross," which recognised the boundary and the mystery of God's Word. In the Revelation of God, His veiling is to be acknowledged. But the Church has ever again forgotten it, and claimed a direct knowledge of God, (3) not perceiving that in giving up the indirectness of the knowledge of God, it gave up the actual faith, and the actual Word of God. This, to Luther, was *superbia* which he regarded as the cardinal sin. Every form of pride, in his view, must be broken, every kind of victorious speech and pride of knowledge be humbled. There must be an end to all human security, so that there should remain only the life of justified grace, and the casting of ourselves on the mercy and the promises of God.

The Reformation was therefore a Re-formation, not a Revolution. It was not an attempt to build a new religion; the Reformers were not God-seekers, in our modern sense. It was a resolve to return to the New Testament, and re-form the Church according to its standards. The Reformers always emphasised the antiquity which was being recovered. This conservative character of the Reformation belongs to its very nature. "Here *stand I*," said Luther, "I can no other." But in that lay its very radicalism, for it searched back to the lost roots of the Christian Faith in the New Testament.

But the Reformation was also a crisis, in which judgment went forth on the sins of the Church. The wonder indeed is, that the Reformation did not arrive centuries before, so corrupt had the Church become.

“We can no longer say with Isaiah,” says St. Bernard, already in the twelfth century, “‘the priests are as the people’; in our day the priests are worse than the people.” The Reformation arose as a protest against the pride and moral blindness of the medieval Church. It took down the shutters and let in the light, the searching, revealing light of the New Testament, and the light became a judgment.

The Reformed Church to-day stands in an equally searching crisis, in which, as I have said, many of the features and conditions of the Reformation are being reproduced. As the consciousness of this fact grows, the Reformed teaching on man’s sin and need, on God’s judgment and mercy, and the renewal of life through faith and obedience, is having a new power of persuasion. It is being realised increasingly that the hope of the Church lies in a return to the Church of the Word, and to the Word of the Church.

1. The Reformed Church was a Church, an *ecclesia*, a *communio sanctorum*, as Luther described it. It carried forward the great thought of the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The recognition that God’s Word does not meet men as individuals, but in a community of believers, brings us to the very foundation of the Reformed Faith. Protestantism was a protest, not against but for the Church. Nothing was farther from the thoughts of the Reformers than any wish to separate themselves from the Church, which was the Body of Christ. The Church’s unity was to Calvin a holy concern for which he was willing, as he wrote to Thomas Cranmer, “to cross ten seas.” For the Church was the *Mother* of all believers “since there is no other way of entrance into life

unless we are born of her, and nourished at her breast . . . out of her bosom, there can be no hope of remission of sin" (Inst. Bk., iv, 1).

2. The Reformed Church was supremely the Church of the Word, the place where the Word of God was spoken with authority, and received by faith. The preaching of the Word made the Reformation. This Word the Reformers found in the Scriptures. The oft-repeated reproach that they substituted an infallible Book for an infallible Church, while in a measure true of a later age, was not true of the Reformers themselves. To them certainly the substance of all Scripture was the Word of God, but its authoritative character belonged primarily to it as the Word of God, and only secondarily as Scripture. Medieval theologians regarded the Bible as a sort of spiritual law-book, a storehouse of divinely communicated doctrinal knowledge, a view which later crept back into the Protestant Church; but the Reformers saw in it a new home for the Spirit within which they could have, not only knowledge about God, but actual communion with God. They believed that in Scripture God spoke to them His Word in the same manner as He had done in earlier days to His prophets and apostles.

By the Word, the Reformers always meant an objective Word—the Word of Another. Against the protests of the Anabaptists and Mystics of that day they stood firmly for a *verbum divinum alienum* which was given to the Church to deliver. It was never from the self-conscious "I" they set out, but always from the Word of God, a Word which did not arise in their own consciousness nor come out of their own reason, but which reached them from be-

yond. This was the source and ground of its authority. Reformed theology had its origin not in the pious feelings of the Reformers, nor in their religious experiences, but in the Word of God. When Calvin writes on *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* he uses the word *Religion* not in our modern sense of a subjective experience, but of an objective Revelation. The Word of God, to the Reformers, stood above everything. (4)

The reason why they took hold so firmly of this Biblical expression—"the Word of God"—was because it was to them the radical opposition to all the pious doings of men. They would drive home to men the need to beware of what rises up in their own souls, in religious thought, and pious ideal. For nothing in us provides a way to God, they would say, not the inner light, nor mystical longing, nor pious feelings, nor religious practices. With all these things we remain within ourselves, we speak only to ourselves, and listen to ourselves. From ourselves we can never come to God; the gulf which divides is too great. But in His Word God has thrown out a bridge, as it were, from His side, by which man can come to Him. Reformed faith is thus the dependence on Another; it is not a Word coming out of me which saves, but a Word coming to me, which is given me. It is not an experience of God, it is not the possession or enjoyment of God, it is not the coming to oneself in self-realisation; it is the looking away from self altogether to Another, and the rendering of obedience to Him. There is no pantheistic absorption, no becoming lost in God, in the Reformed Faith, but only a hearing and obeying of the Word of God.

Roman Catholic theology seeks from the works of God, in Nature, history, personality, to rise to God, and it reaches its crowning-point in the Beatific Vision, in which the soul partakes of God. The highest good which man can attain is reached in contemplation. (5) In Reformed theology, on the other hand, which finds the Revelation of God in His Word, and particularly in the Word of the Cross, the activity of the believer has its summit in obedience. Faith is an obedient hearing of the Word of God. As compared with Roman Catholic piety, Protestant faith exhibits a sobriety, actuality, and deep humility. The sovereign God, high and lifted up, is One Whom here on earth we can neither see nor possess. In faith we meet with Him not directly but through a Mediator by way of His Word. Word implies "distance" between God and man. Were God and man identical, no Word would be needed. But Word also implies willingness to bridge the "distance."

In any actual meeting another comes to meet me who is not myself, but who confronts me, so that I can say that I am here, and he is there. (6) He comes to me and communicates with me, which he can do in no other way than through a word. He *speaks*, and thus a bridge is thrown from him to me, and over that bridge I may go to meet him. Such a bridge is the Word of God. So long as I am a mere observer of God, I may have my own views about Him, but with all these views I remain within myself. I conduct a monologue. But let God speak to me and the monologue is broken. There is now a dialogue, in which God the Other addresses me in His Otherness, and I have to answer with my

obedience. The Word which He speaks to me is not under my power, I cannot compel it, all that I do is simply to receive it. Thus fellowship with God stands altogether on grace. But does God give me His Word? Then I know it as His; it is not something which I have dreamed or imagined; He has spoken it and I have heard it. It is for this reason that the Fellowship which comes into existence between God and man through the Word is so firm and steadfast; it does not rest in man, nor in any feelings that come and go, but is entirely the gift of Another. It is plain then why the Reformers lay the whole weight on the Word, the Word alone, and alone the Word. Unless God has indeed broken the eternal silence and spoken, all is vain. The whole reality of our meeting with Him depends on that Word. While the Word of God separates God and man, it also unites them. It stands in the middle like a bridge between a "Thou" and an "I." It establishes a relationship, it creates a fellowship. Through the Word, God comes to man in grace and love; through the Word man comes to God, in faith and obedience. For speaking stands in correlation to hearing. *Verbum basis est*—the Word is the foundation—said Calvin, speaking of the Christian Revelation. It means the actuality of an intercourse between us and God which He Himself has laid, a communication of a Person to a person, of Reason to reason. It is a rational, and not an irrational, event, when God speaks. *The Holy* of Rudolf Otto, says Barth, whatever it may be, is at any rate not to be understood as the Word of God, because it is the numinous, and the numinous is irrational, and not to be distinguished from a force of Nature. "Just on

this distinction everything hangs for the understanding of the idea of the Word of God." (7)

But not only has God spoken to our reason and person, He has spoken in our flesh and in our own speech. Jesus Christ is the actual and effective Revealer of God, and Reconciler with God, because God gives Himself to be known in Him as His Son or Word, not merely as something great or significant about God, but as God Himself, which from eternity He is. Jesus is Son or Word of God for us, because He is that first in Himself. (8) Here we stand before the wonder of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, Who has uttered the Word of God with the lips of a man. The distant God has been brought nigh, even unto our flesh. We perceive, therefore, the importance which the Reformers laid on Jesus Christ, recognising in Him, exclusively, the Word of God to man. They did not enter into questions of Christology. The burning point of the Reformation was other than that of the fourth century. But before the wonder of that Word they stood still. In human speech, God's Word had sounded out to them so that they could grasp, and understand, and know that God had not left them alone. The Christ of the Reformers, on Whom they founded their Faith, was not the mere historical personality, the Jesus of History, but the Word of God made flesh. The great Word of St. John's Gospel (John i. 18) may be taken as summing up the Reformed doctrine of the Word of God.

3. The Reformed Church, as the Church of the Word, was a Church of Sinners, a Church of the Grace of God. (9)

The Roman Catholic Church took the line of

Humanism. Man was a rational animal, the most complete nature among the animals, the most incomplete among the angels. His nature was good, though not wholly good; it was weak, and needed care and guidance. But it had been spared a radical crisis. The bridge between God and man might be frail, but it remained unbroken. There was an *analogia entis*, a likeness and continuity between the Creature and the creature, even in his fallen state. Salvation was in the keeping of the Church, and was to be won by works of merit. Justification, in the Roman Catholic view, was a prolonged activity of usages, and machinery of all kinds, which, by a combined effect, was believed to change a sinner gradually into a saint, so that he became righteous in the sight of God.

Luther discovered that it was possible to go through all that labour of works without having any real sense of pardon, or ever being comforted with the sense of the love of God. He came to the discovery that man was not free in will, that he was radically evil, and only to be saved by grace. But by faith, which was the gift of God, he could receive a revelation of God's Fatherly love which gave him the immediate assurance of pardon, at the same time inspiring him to the doing of all manner of loving service. For "It is not good works that make a good man, but a good man who does good works." This was his doctrine of justification by faith, which became the sheet-anchor of the Reformation. It had two results. At one stroke it did away with the whole medieval doctrine of salvation by merit, swept out the Mass as an *opus operatum*, and restored the simple Table-fellowship of the

Lord's Supper. The Reformed Church became a Fellowship of sinners who had been justified by faith alone. Its members lived in the Divine Reconciliation, lived in faith and obedience, and not in vision; children of God, waiting for the redemption.

If the Protestant Church is experiencing a critical hour in its history, it is due in part to the fact that she has been untrue to this great Reformation doctrine of the justification of the sinner, and has gone about to provide a religion not so disagreeable to men of pride, one in which they can have the credit of cooperating with God. In her eagerness to conciliate the modern spirit she has surrendered to the temptation to become a Church of the religious-minded, the home of culture and ethical idealism, and has left off to be a Church of Sinners. Hope will return to her when she is willing once more to be a Church of the Mercy of God, the Fellowship of those to whom God in Christ has proclaimed forgiveness. For the purpose of God with man in Jesus Christ is not to elicit his slumbering divinity, but to deliver him from his sin.

4. The Reformed Church, as the Church of the Word, was an authoritative Church. It stood for authority; for law and discipline, and its authority reposed on the Word of God. Luther had a great fear of masterless men. His battle with the Anabaptists and enthusiasts of his day was a battle for the Word of God as sovereign, over against individualism. His attitude to the Peasant War was ruled by the same consideration. Is God the Lord? Then man is His servant. Roman Catholicism is often identified with the principle of authority, and Protestantism with the principle of freedom. But

this is a confusion. The only freedom of which a true Protestantism knows is the "freedom of the Christian man." Any other claim is the claim of a pseudo-Protestantism.

The present crisis in the world arises from the fact that there is no longer any accepted authority in matters of faith. People are content to take their guidance from the churches, from writers of books, from the Press, from the wireless, being swept hither and thither by currents of thought, of whose existence they hardly know. But the question of authority, with its correlative of obedience, is becoming once more urgent, and not until we again acknowledge the authority of the Word of God, as communicated through the Church, shall we be able to speak on questions of faith with any authority. For true authority can never be the authority of a man, or of a Society; true authority must always be a Divine authority. (10) Only where God declares His will, and where His judgment falls, is there authority. All human authority, even when it is the purest and highest, is only a pointing to the one authority of the Divine Will. Faith to the Reformers was heteronomous, it was obedience to the law of God. Let the Church once more take its stand on the Word of God, and become the Church of the Word, and it will speak again with authority, not with the mere authority of an institution but with the authority of God Himself.

5. The Reformed Church, as the Church of the Word, sought no power or glory for itself. The Reformers saw clearly where the Church of their day had gone astray. It had forgotten that it was a Church under the sign of the Cross, which must

remain in the world without visible power or greatness, and had erected itself into a holy visible Institution, placed high and conspicuous in a sinful world, to be a refuge for the souls of men. In magnifying itself it had obscured its crucified Lord.

Seeking to be true to their divine Lord the Reformers went forth from the Church which they believed to be no longer faithful, and left all claim to earthly dignity and outward authority behind. They would have no such visible Institution, no such separated area in a profane world, but would face the storms of an alien world with no other weapon than the Word of God. When Luther went forth from the Elster Gate of Wittenberg on December 10, 1520, to burn the Papal bull, which Rome delivered against him, he carried not only the bull itself in his hand, but what was of much greater moment, the *codex juris canonici*—the law-book of the Roman Church, which claimed to control not only the Church but also the State, indeed the whole of human life. He cast the codex into the fire, and none of the later Reformers proposed to restore it. Thus, the Reformed Church entered on its history by renouncing all earthly claims to the place or rights of a State among the world States. The Church, in the Reformed sense, is not a State, nor is it a power over against the State, but rather an island in a great sea, surrounded and often overwhelmed; a place where it has pleased God to reveal His Word in this unhallowed world. The Reformed Church is a David, not a Goliath, poor yet making many rich, not a Church triumphant, but a Church in weakness, under the Cross, bearing the reproach of Christ. If the Reformed Church is

to become authoritative again, it must be willing, as the Church of the Word, to renounce all other claims, and rest on the Word alone. It must think less in terms of the Church, and more in terms of the Gospel.

Barth looks with some anxiety on the evident craving for form, visibility, and outward authority which characterises some branches of the Protestant Church to-day, evincing a pride, and a dream of power, that is alien to a Church bearing the reproach of Christ. "A Church," he says, "cannot squint, with one eye on God, and with the other on some human necessity, or lofty goal, of one kind or another." (11) The power of the Church must lie in something quite different from this present will to visibility and earthly power and position. The Church is not the Kingdom of God. It is not the continuation, nor the representation, nor the incorporation of the Revelation proclaimed in Christ. It does not repeat the sacrifice of Christ. It has not to communicate, propagate, or spread salvation. The Church is only the earthly body of the heavenly Head and in its weakness and vulnerableness is a sign that God, Who once appeared in lowliness, is present in it. It can do nothing other than give a sign of its obedience, the highest and clearest sign which it can give of being willing to serve God—the sign of the Cross. The Church is a Church in that it listens, and listens to God, with a cry *de profundis*, and is willing if God so wills to be rejected by Him. True loyalty to the Church must have its mark in this; that it does not call out "Church! Church!" but "Jesus Christ."

The real temptation of the Church in every time

is that she should propose to herself to be great. But the truly original evangelical perception of the Reformers was that the Church cannot be great, either in her teaching or in her works of love, except in so far as she thinks, not of herself, but only of the work and gives God the glory. For of the Church it is also true that "whosoever will save his life shall lose it." "The whole history of the Church, indeed of the world," says Brunner, "would have taken another course, if the 'theology of the Cross' had not become always again a 'theology of glory,' and the Church of the Cross, a Church of glory."

Barth sees this temptation in the organised Church to-day, to be too positive in itself, too sure in its moods, speech and behaviour, too confident and cheerful, as if it had the Word of God in its pocket, and he bids it beware of this danger. (12)

6. The Reformed Church, as the Church of the Word, was a preaching Church. The place of the officiating priest was taken by the *minister verbi*—the servant of the Word. During the Middle Ages, except for the work of the mendicant friars, preaching had become a lost art; but with the Reformation it returned with a flood, and under God became the means by which the Church was re-formed. The Reformers lived by the view that what is preached and heard in Christian preaching is no more and no less than God's Word. *Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei*. The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. In this remarkable identification of God's Word and man's word in human preaching, the Reformers dared a tremendous thing. They reversed the relation of Sacrament and Sermon

from that assigned to them in the Roman Catholic service. Exactly at the centre of the service, at the point where the eucharistic transformation took place, they placed the Sermon, which in the Roman ritual had occupied a merely secondary place, as a means of preparation, but not as the channel of Grace itself. The Mass was complete without it. (13) They did not depreciate the Sacrament, but they exalted the Sermon, and set it in the midst of the life of the Church as the representative event in which a personal meeting with God takes place. People who say that they come to Church to worship God and not to hear a sermon, have not grasped the rudiments of Protestant worship. The preacher's word, when he preaches the Gospel, is a sacramental act charged with blessing or with judgment. The mystery of preaching is truly not less than the mystery associated with the eucharistic transformation. For every sermon ought to be an event, and to carry in it the real Presence of God, Whose creation it is. There is and can be nothing more worshipful, nothing more sacramental, than the speaking and the hearing of the Word of God, in its true original power.

God's Word cannot be otherwise given us than in hiddenness, in a true human word. (14) In preaching, God the Subject is conveyed in the covering, the swaddling clothes of an object, corresponding to that other greater revelation given also in hiddenness, in swaddling clothes, one Christmas night in Bethlehem, the Word of God made flesh. By his human disclosure about God, and his own witness-bearing to the Word, the preacher creates round the hidden Word a zone of attentiveness, respect, and real understanding, and thus makes room for God

Himself to speak. In that moment, God communicates His eternal Word in Jesus Christ to the hearer, and sets him in a crisis in which he must give heed to it. That is the presupposition on which, according to the Reformers, the mystery of preaching rests.

7. The Reformed Church, as the Church of the Word, was also a sacramental Church. Not the Sacrament alone, and not the Sermon alone, but the Sermon and the Sacrament together constituted the visible centre of the Church of the Word. (15) As the Word reached the believer only in the Fellowship, so in the Sacrament the Fellowship was perfected. "One is not to separate the Word and the Sacrament," said Luther, "for Christ hath embraced the Sacrament in the Word." For Calvin also the Sacrament is "an outward sign by which our Lord seals in our consciences the promises of His good will towards us." He emphasises that "a Sacrament consists of the Word and the outward sign," and quotes the saying of St. Augustine: "Let the Word be added to the element, and it will become a Sacrament." While the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper actually took place only four times a year in Geneva, Calvin envisaged the complete worship of God as embracing always the Sacrament as the "seal" of the sin-forgiving, holy Love of God, and of His promises.

The Sacrament therefore was to Luther and Calvin what it was to St. Augustine, a *verbum visibile*—a visible Word, because it "presents the promises of God portrayed in a picture, and places before our eyes an image of them." (16) In the Sermon Christ is presented in words, in the Sacrament there is

something added to the Word which makes the One spoken of more clearly understood. As the Word of God is an event which takes place in the soul, a mysterious event not to be explained from the side of man, so the Sacrament, as a "visible word," is also an event, a mysterious meeting of God with man in hiddenness, but also in actuality. It is an event over which we have no power, but which has power over us. It proclaims the grace of God which is beforehand with us, the *a-priori* of the Divine work over against all human work, and emphasises it as an event, with the character of grace. In Baptism, for example, before we can speak or act, we are claimed as captives of divine grace, and acknowledged as God's own. Before we have called, God has called us; decision is taken regarding us, before we decide. Baptism means that salvation for us does not stand in what we say to God, but in what God says to us. God confesses Himself to man as Saviour and invites him to His Kingdom. So also in the Lord's Supper. The "grace of Jesus Christ," the new beginning from above, is proclaimed to us on the threshold of the Lord's Supper. We do not come to the Lord's Table with our ideals and our promises which are to make a way for us to God. The Lord's Supper is the "visible Word of God" that a way has been made for us by God's free grace in Jesus Christ, which we are to accept by faith. The Sacrament is one thing, as Calvin said, and the power of the Sacrament is another; but in and with the sign there is given to faith the gift of God.

The presence of Christ in the Sacrament, says Barth, is, first of all, a *symbolical* presence. (17) We

must not, he says, take offence at symbols, for God speaks to us through symbols as a definite form of conveying truth. To reject this form of speech would be to reject the sermon, indeed the whole idea of Revelation itself. For the divine reality of Revelation is always truth, and symbol; truth in symbol; and in that it is the symbol of the grace of God, the Sacrament is truth—God's Word in a sign.

The presence of Christ in the Sacrament is, secondly, a *spiritual* presence, that is, a presence through the Holy Spirit. Spiritual presence means presence from above, from God, in the moment of revelation, in contrast to all physical or psychical presence. It is presence by God's free grace. In His Sacrament the exalted Christ is thus present with us, and speaks to us through the sacred symbols (John vi. 63).

The presence of Christ in the Sacrament is, thirdly, an actual or *real* presence, in which an act of God takes place, an event wherein He confesses Himself to His Church as Reconciler and Redeemer, and sets the participant in a decision demanding obedience. The Holy Spirit makes Christ *present* to us, in that He opens ear and heart to His Revelation, in Word and Sacrament, and claims our obedience. This is the Reformed view.

If the Reformation had been carried out we should have had another world than we have, for we should have had other men. But the Reformation is not yet complete. Whether we call it a new Reformation which we look for in our time, or a setting forward of the still uncompleted old Reformation is a matter of words, so long as we endeavour to capture the mind and spirit of the Reformers. The Reformers

did not seek for new revelations of their own, on the contrary they anxiously warded off all such pretensions. The whole confidence of their meeting with God in His Word was that it was the original Word, the Word spoken in Christ Jesus, which again was spoken to them in a living way. In that, they distinguished themselves from those enthusiasts in the day of the Reformation who confused their own words so lightly with God's Revelation, and fell from one uncertainty into another. Barth invites us to follow in the steps of the Reformers rather than in the steps of the dreamers and idealists, attractive as some of them undoubtedly were, and still are. A Church which is to recover its lost authority, and have a Word of God for our time, must needs first return to seek new strength in the wells of the Reformation.

"Barth and his school," says Dr. W. P. Paterson, "have rendered a real service to the Churches and the world by republishing with power the substance of the Reformed Theology as belonging to the substance of Christianity . . . and by the exhortation to get back unreservedly to God, and to take revelation still more seriously as the very word of God. For there is nothing which our anarchical and distracted age has more need to be assured of than the truth of Calvin's conviction that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth . . . there is nothing which mankind more needs in every age than a Gospel that offers as the free gift of God a veritable salvation from sin, and from the blindness and the misery which are its inevitable penalties." (18)

But Barth believes that something more is needed than a simple republishing of the substance of Re-

formed Theology. Protestantism has, in the course of the centuries, become so secularised, and its true doctrine has been so forgotten through a growing arbitrariness, that nothing less than a quite new superstructure needs to be reared on the true foundations of Church doctrine. A better Church Dogmatics will, he believes, prove a more important and solid contribution for the overcoming of the world crisis than many of the propositions which at present occupy our minds. It will serve to point us to the hidden but not lost spiritual centre of the present hour, the Word of God. (19)

The new theological structure which Barth proposes to rear will be found, however, to be entirely consonant with true Reformation doctrine, which takes growing hold upon him with the years. He has a particular liking for Knox's *Scots Confession of Faith* because of its objectivity, compared with the more subjective Westminster Confession of Faith. He will be found to have much in common with the Scots theologians of the best period—the first century after the Reformation—the period of Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, Durham, and others who were recognised as among the first by continental theologians. In their doctrine of the Bible as its own best evidence, and therefore as in no need of external evidences; in their doctrine of God as Sovereign Creator, and of man as a fallen creature whose independence is lost; in their view of the vagueness and unreliability of natural revelation, “far too vague to come close to men's hearts”; in their doctrine of the Church as a supernatural institution and therefore as authoritative; in their high doctrine of the Sacraments, as media of supernatural grace

“whose organic action is to us incomprehensible, but not on that account to be denied” (Rutherford), the Scots theologians stood on ground, which Barth is striving to recover for the Church of our time.

CHAPTER VI

MARCHING ORDERS

THE Barthian reveille was a call to the Church of the Word to bestir herself and take the road, and declare the Word of God to men. For if the Church is to count in the world to-day, her Word must have "free course and be glorified." The present crisis is marked by a widespread confusion. There are so many efforts, movements, solutions, competing for a hearing in the religious, political, and industrial spheres. Everyone has his view, or his remedy, but each man knows that his neighbour has probably another view, or another remedy. There is no word of truth or authority which can lay its claim on all, and which all will acknowledge; and because this word is absent, men fall apart and drift like shipwrecked sailors on the open sea. The crying distress of the world is that the man of to-day knows no word which really takes him captive; there is a complete want of a concrete spiritual authority under which he can learn obedience. Without any reverence in the presence of a higher, knowing nothing indeed higher than himself, he pursues his unsteady way, without support or guide. The world is sick because men are left to themselves, without way, or goal, or limit. They have no longer any absolute standards, or boundaries, at which they must draw up and make a halt.

With sublime faith in her immovable dogmas, the Church of Rome has stepped forward at this hour, and claimed to offer the one rock of certainty among the waves on which the souls of men can find a resting-place; the one place, where, amid the babel of human words, a clear unchanging Word of God is spoken. To those who have made shipwreck of faith amid the boundless subjectivity of the time, the offer of Rome is tempting and specious, and not a few, weary with "ever climbing up the climbing wave," are being led to seek their rest in Mother Church.

Within the Protestant Church, on the other hand, uncertainty and individualism reign; she has no clear Word of God to offer for the guidance of her people. Even her pulpit has not remained undisturbed by the great unsettlement. It is an open secret that many people scarcely expect a preacher to utter a clear word of divine Truth. The most they look for is that he will express his views about the truth in an interesting way, and show how it reflects itself in his mind and heart. For it is the individual personality of the preacher, his manner of thinking and speaking, which stands in the foreground in the Protestant pulpit of our time. Need we be astonished at the pride with which the Church of Rome points to her quite other grounds of confidence and assurance?

If the Protestant Church is to remain the Church of the Word, she must have an assured word to speak in the present crisis; not just the word of some popular preacher whom the people idolise, but a word which confronts all subjective stand-points, meanings, interests, in the power and majesty

of a Word of God. For it belongs to the Protestant Church also, as we have seen, that she should speak a binding, controlling word, and call for men's obedience. It must be a word which God has given to the Church to speak, for the Church can only dare to speak of God, because God has spoken to her. "Only in so far as such a Word is spoken by God to the Church," says Barth, "is there any right or meaning in speaking of God in the Church." (1) The presupposition which makes preaching to be preaching, and the Church to be a Church, is the Word of God. The Word of God is the commission, on the giving of which the proclamation of the Word rests. The Word of God is also the subject that is to be preached, if it is to be actual preaching. The Word of God is also the criterion by which the preaching is to be judged. It is not a criterion which is at our disposal, but a criterion at whose disposal we are. The Word of God—and this is the most decisive thing—is also the event itself, in which the preaching becomes actual proclamation of the Word. (2)

The Protestant Church does not claim, after the manner of the Roman Catholic Church, to have or hold this Word of God as her own abiding possession. Like the manna in the wilderness, it must be continually received afresh by her through faith. (3) For if the Word of God ceases to be an event, and is allowed to harden into a dogma, or become a tradition, its spiritual power is lost. The Word of God can be no private possession of the individual, with which he can go aside to enjoy it by himself, as a bird with a crust. In His wisdom God has determined that it shall be received only in the

fellowship of the Church, and the first thing which it does is to break in upon our natural selfishness, and transform our fellow-creatures into neighbours, and brethren.

1. *Distinguishing Features.* This Word which God has given to His Church as its "marching orders" has certain well-defined features which distinguish it from merely human words. (4)

It comes to us always as the Word of Another, before Whose authority we give way. "This does not contradict the idea of self-determination," says Barth, "it means, however, that the self-determination of a man, as such, takes place in a particular spot, and in a definite connection. It has its beginning and its ground in a higher determination." (5)

The Word of God does not rise out of man's own inner consciousness, it is not a fact of history, or of experience with which his mind is identified. What is spoken to him by God is, of itself, arresting, sometimes startling; it claims and captures him, and has an objective quality that is all its own (Isa. lv. 8). A study of the way in which the Word of God came to an Isaiah, or to a Jeremiah, or to a Jonah, will show that so far from the prophet's mind being identified with the Word of God, his first inclination was to shrink from it, or flee from it, as something terrifying and unwelcome. St. Paul is found warning his converts against the false notion that the Word of God had its origin in them. "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" he asks them (1 Cor. xiv. 36). To the Reformers also, faith was always this dependence on the Word of Another, not a Word coming out of them, but a Word coming to them; not the

enjoyment of God in the heart, but the looking away to Another, the transcendent and holy God, Who yet condescends to dwell with the humble and contrite spirit (Isa. lvii. 15).

The Word of God to the Church is always a sovereign Word. It is, and remains, God's Word, and cannot be separated from Him and turned into a general religious idea. We cannot have the Word of God at our disposal, nor can we canalise it to our own ends. We cannot argue with it, nor can we measure it by our human standards. It is a Word which we have simply to receive and obey. Offence or faith, obedience or refusal, are our only possible attitudes when we are face to face with it. "If the Lord will feed me with crab-apples," said Luther to Zwingli, "and bid me take them and eat them, shall I ask why?" *Credo ut intelligam*—I believe that I may understand—is the way of faith. Faith is primary, or it is not faith. No intellectual *intelligere* must precede the *credere*, for knowledge does not take priority of faith, but *vice versa* (Rom. i. 17). All reasons, by which we make clear to ourselves how far the Word of God deserves the preference to other words, can be grounded *a posteriori*, but God's Word bases its validity on this, that He speaks it to us. A Why or a Wherefore is thus excluded, otherwise it would not be God's Word. I can refuse, deny, disobey, but I cannot question that the Word of God has this categorical and sovereign character. Simple obedience to it, and the experience which grows out of obedience, is the way of knowledge (John vii. 17).

The Word of God to the Church is always a personal Word. It is never a common religious

truth, nor is it to be comprehended under a general idea, such as we employ when we speak of the voice of Nature, or the voice of History. It is not a vague undefined sound, or a mystical sense pervading the soul, but a definite Word through which a man is addressed, the Word of a "Thou" to an "I" forcing him out of the detached position of an on-looker into a crisis which demands the decision of either-or. (6) The Word may come to a man as a personal call to himself, or it may come in some claim of duty to a neighbour, which makes itself very clear to him amid the different claims and opportunities of his life. But in whatever form, it presents him with a moral choice and compels him to a decision. If he takes the road of obedience he enjoys the fellowship of God, and becomes in the fullest sense a personality. If he refuses, "he remains a part of the dim, grey world which has no direct relation to God."

The Word of God to the Church has a particular character as a Word of Reconciliation. It is a Word which both condemns and forgives, or rather, which forgives while it condemns, for the reconciliation is primary and prevenient. What distinguishes the Christian Gospel from all other religions is not that it is a Gospel of salvation, but that it proclaims the sheer forgiveness of God to the sinner in such a way as to lead him to repentance. The God revealed to us in the Gospel comes to meet the sinner in his sin, and does not even wait for his repentance. This Word of Reconciliation, moreover, is never a mere general statement that God forgives the sinner, but a definite Word that God forgives *me*, a Word which is heard by me

only in an existential moment, when by faith I acknowledge the justice of God's judgment, and accept the offered reconciliation.

2. *Characteristics of Christian Preaching.* In these features of the Word of God we are given the guiding lines for Christian preaching. For God can speak His Word only through the preacher, who bears witness to the fact that God has spoken it to him, and who therefore is under a burden to speak it to others. (7) Preaching rests on a profound principle of the divine order of the world that God never acts on men directly, but always through a human personality, touching men through men. Thus, since the Word of God reaches us only through the words of a man, preaching is a necessity both for God and for man. "Christian preaching," says Barth, "is not only God's Word but also man's; not only God's gift but man's task, and it is the second, as it is the first, not only in part but altogether." Let us understand what this means. The preacher is good or bad as a preacher. He is not a pipe or a reed of the Holy Spirit. Just as the divine Word of God appeared in an earthly human child in Bethlehem, and as the Word of God is found in the earthly and temporal character of the Bible, so the Word of God through the preacher is human and earthly. The preacher can only speak human words. That is the border and limit of his preaching. But in and through those human words he dares to believe that God speaks His Word. Preaching is human speech, says Barth, in and through which God Himself speaks as a King through the mouth of His Herald, and which is to be heard and received by us in faith and in obedience as' divine

speech; as divine decision over life and death, as divine judgment and discharge, as eternal law and eternal Gospel, one with the other. Christian preaching takes place under the presupposition that God's Word, spoken in His reconciliation and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit, lets itself be heard even to-day in the services of the Church. Not all speech about God, however, is true preaching. The preaching of the Church, instead of being a *ministerium verbi divini*, may prove an impassable barrier which lies in the way of the Word of God. "How shall it come about," asks Barth, "that the preaching shall be not only truth, but truth as *actuality*, that is, as work of God?" . . . "We stand here," he says, "before the fundamental difficulty of the preacher, beside which one may describe all other difficulties, with a quiet conscience, as child's play." (8)

Not for nothing did the crisis come for Barth himself as he faced the problem of the sermon, for he has never been able to escape from it. In his new Dogmatics, he still abides by the original issue which led him into the struggle for a truer theology. His concern remains the sermon, as the proclamation of the Church. As he puts it, the sermon is the attempt of one, called in the Church for that purpose, to express in his own words, and make intelligible to men in the present, through the exposition of a piece of Biblical witness, the promise of the revelation of God, of His reconciliation, and calling, here and now, for those who are waiting for it. (9)

It was in his study while preparing his Sunday sermon, as he has told us in unforgettable words, that the crisis came upon him, out of which arose his "marginal note" to theology, and later his

Dogmatics, as the explication of the Word of God, *preached in the Church*. We shall best understand his theology, he says, if we hear through it all the minister's question: "What is preaching?" Meeting the expectant faces of his congregation, he had not the courage to offer his own thoughts, and feelings, or preach his personal experience. These people had not come to hear his opinions on life and its problems, but to be told about the fundamental contradictions of their existence. Preaching, as he had been trying to practise it, the preaching of religious values, or the satisfying of religious needs, based on his own experience or that of others, was no longer possible for him. The men of the Bible, to whom he turned for guidance, did not preach about their feelings, or their inner experiences, they did not even preach about religion. Barth made the discovery that man as man cries for God. He cries not for truths, but for Truth, not for something good, but for the Good, not for answers, but for the Answer. He does not cry for solutions, but for salvation; not for something human, but for God as Saviour even from humanity. And to seek to give his people the answer, God's answer, became his task as preacher. "Our task as ministers," he says, "is to tell that God becomes man, but to tell it as God's Word, as God Himself tells it." (10)

Defined thus, preaching is seen to be a venture, an impossible venture. As preachers we ought to speak the Word, but we are human and we cannot speak it. Only the man who would rather not preach, says Barth, who feels that he cannot preach, has understood the situation of the preacher.

There are two things which alone make preaching possible. The first is, that we believe God has addressed Himself to us in His Word, and that there is thus between Him and us an indirect, but still true, identification through His Word. The second is, that we believe we have been given a commission to preach. We can only escape from the impossibility of preaching on the ground that we are commanded by God to speak His Word.

As a minister of the Word, the preacher speaks a word that is not his own. He is neither a prophet, nor an apostle; he makes no claim to direct inspiration, indeed as a servant of the Word he must disown it. The Word has not its origin in his human spirit, or in his religious consciousness, he is a witness to a Word of God which has come to him, and which is far greater than he can grasp or experience. He has his authority, as he has his office, not through the dynamic of his own personality, but as a minister of the Word. The sermon stands, therefore, in a certain contradiction to every other form of speech. The ordinary speaker knows the truth himself, and as the autonomous speaker he addresses the autonomous hearer. But the *momentum constituens* of the sermon is its heteronomy. The word which it carries is the Word of Another. The authority of the Christian preacher rests not on his own thought, but on the Word of God. His is authoritative speech, speech in Christ, claiming obedience. This is why the Christian preacher is so far removed from the Modernist, with whom nothing weighs but what he himself has thought out, or experienced.

As the Word of God to the Church, the sermon has four particular characteristics.

It is, first, a proclamation of the Word, the call of the herald who brings not only good tidings, but also new tidings. The minister is given the task of proclaiming the Word of Reconciliation, for the Gospel in its essence is not an imperative, but an indicative. It does not consist in demands, though it does demand, nor in ideals, though it sets up ideals; it is primarily a gift. It gives to the world what the world neither knows, nor has; it discloses the mystery of God's purpose in Christ which had been hidden from the world throughout all ages. It is not the proclamation of a general truth, but the unique unheard-of Word of the Sovereign God. This Word, as we have seen, cannot be imparted other than in hiddenness. Even Christ Himself could not be given to the world save under the veil of the flesh, visible only to the eye of faith. We cannot replace the Word of God by our own, not even in the moments of our highest inspiration, not even when we quote the words of the Bible, for in the Bible the Word of God is also hidden. But if we cannot replace God's Word by our own, we can be its herald and forerunner, and for this work God claims the service of the Church. For He will not speak His Word without us, but only through us. It is in the line of John the Baptist that the Church and the ministry make their testimony. In the outstretched hand of the Baptist, as he points to the Lamb of God, and says "Behold!" in his stern "prepare ye the way of the Lord," we discern the sign and calling and task of the Christian minister which is to point to, and witness for, and proclaim Christ as the Word of God.

The sermon is, secondly, an address to the in-

dividual. While the Church is the Fellowship of those who are addressed, and brought into the crisis, the last inner content of the sermon is always addressed to the individual. The sermon directs itself to the man in the man, the man in his naked humanity, in his loneliness and need before God. If the preacher does not get at the man inside his entrenchments, within which dwells the *ego*, he does not get him at all, for in the Church there is no public, in the ordinary sense of the term, but only the single hearer, whom the preacher addresses with a : "thou art the man!", and sets in the existential moment. This moment is not a mere moment of time, but a moment lifted out of time, and qualified by eternity, by the fact that God speaks to the man His "To-day, if ye will hear My voice." The Word of God has always this double quality of being contemporaneous, and addressed to the individual, who by his decision becomes what he is.

The sermon is, thirdly, an invitation. It has what has been called the "wooing note" (2 Cor. v. 20). It calls the hearer into judgment, but it offers him at the same time divine grace. It is not the office of the Christian preacher to proclaim damnation, but to preach with tenderness the Word of Reconciliation. While he sees life as it is, and calls sin unsparingly by its proper name, he is not to believe *a priori* in the godlessness, ignorance, and opposition of man. He must reckon him as belonging to God, and while he addresses him as captive, it is as a captive of Zion who by the waters of Babylon is dreaming of Jerusalem. He must do this, not because he believes in any particular bias to goodness in man, or in any so-called unconscious Christi-

anity, but because he believes that to man, made in the image of God, no quest after God can be strange. Without the least illusion about man as he is, he must believe that, in all his lost condition, his questing and questioning, his hunger and thirst after that which can only be found in God, is the most real thing in him. This is not to be regarded as something to be placed to man's credit, but as a reflex, an echo, of the love which first loved him (1 John iv. 19). To understand man truly and fundamentally is to perceive that in all his wandering he seeks God, and that he would not seek God if God had not already found Him. He is a sinner held fast in the grip of the love of God.

The sermon is, fourthly, a word with authority. Christian speech is not the utterance of an opinion, or a lecture, or the giving of good advice, but the proclamation of something which is authoritative, because it is God's Word. Barth has noted three characteristics of Christian speech which impart to it a quality that is all its own. (11) It is commissioned speech. "A Christian does not speak of God and of man because he wants to, nor does he choose what he desires to say, he speaks because he must. It is responsible speech. It is the uttering of what the preacher believes in mind and heart to be the truth itself, and therefore he claims for it in all humility, and with a full consciousness of its inadequacy, to be heard of all. Last of all it is speech worthy of being believed." "A Christian preacher," says Barth, "does not speak in the way of a clever conversationalist who wants only to be listened to, or as a teacher who claims only attention, or as an agitator who seeks only agreement, or as a person of importance

who desires only acquiescence. He considers that what he says is worthy of being believed."

But the proclamation of the Word of God is not confined to what we describe as preaching. Why should adoration, and philanthropy, and religious instruction, not be, now and again, says Barth, much more actual preaching? It is not a truism to ask, he says, whether the sacrificial part of our worship be not much more real preaching, whether the existence of a Bodelschwingh was not much more a proclamation of the Gospel than the well-meant sermons of thousands of preachers? It cannot be denied, he says, that God can speak His Word through quite other means than what we call preaching. "God can speak to us through Russian Communism, through a flute concert, or a blossoming branch, or a dead dog, and we shall do well to hear Him when He actually does so. . . . (12) He can speak to us also through a heathen, or an atheist, and give us thereby to understand that the boundary between the Church and the profane world runs always again quite differently from what we have hitherto imagined."

3. *Temptations of the Preacher.* In a time in which, as Barth says, "the typical modern Protestant sermon claims to be nothing more than the lively expression of the personal piety of the particular speaker," there are certain temptations against which the minister of the Word has to guard. (13)

There is, first, the temptation to preach his own word, and not the Word of God. As a man under authority, he is not at liberty to give free rein to his own thin heresies, and the extravagances of his individualism, and to unload upon his people his own novel or *outré* views. He is not in the

pulpit as the place where he will find most outlet for his own individuality, nor is he there to lay bare the inmost secrets of his own soul. He is not a lecturer on sacred themes, but a minister of the Word, a man with a Book, bound by the heteronomous teaching of prophets and apostles. He is not an organ of a new revelation, but a witness to a revelation which has been already given, and to which he is first to listen himself, before he can speak to others. For the preacher is also a hearer of the Word of God, listening himself to the Word which he declares to his people. The sermon is not in the hands of the preacher; sermon and preacher alike are in the hands of Him Who alone can make human speech to be the Word of God. God remains Lord over His Word, calling for the obedience alike of preacher and hearer.

The Word which the preacher brings is the Word of the Church, and not his own. He sets forth from the Church as from a fellowship of brethren who agree with him, and from them he goes to the world. Christian preaching presupposes a Church, not a public. It is the Church expressing itself, becoming conscious of itself as a Church, and as a witness for God. The Church is the Fellowship of those who have been addressed by God, and entrusted with His Word to proclaim to the world. "The Christian Church," says Luther in a sermon, "keeps all the words of God in its heart, and turns them round and round." But if Christian preaching ceases to be God's Word issuing from His Church, descending on man, and bringing forth the fruits of Christian faith and life; if it yields to the temptations of the day, to become mere lecturing

or moralising, which leaves the hearers unchallenged and unchanged in their daily lives, it will die out as an institution, and God will open up other ways for the proclamation of His Word. It may well be true, as we are often told, that there is too much preaching of a kind to-day. Our country has been greatly afflicted with the curse of clever preaching, and still more, America, where, Dr. Lowrie tells us, even the custom of beginning from a text of Scripture is being abandoned. But if it be a preaching of the Word, and if the Word pierces as a sword, and is obeyed, there cannot be too much preaching. Those who depreciate the Sermon, in the interest of the Sacrament, are doing the Church an ill service. The Reformed conviction that the paramount element in Christian worship is the preaching of the Word is still incontestable. "The Word alone can do it," said the Reformers. What happened at the Reformation has happened again and again. Every time in the course of its history, when God in His pleasure has quickened His Church, it has been through Christian preaching, Christian witness, and so must it ever be. Not that the Word need necessarily be preached from a pulpit, or even in a Church. The Word of God was before the day of pulpits, and may be after them. It is not bound by convention, and if the preacher ceases to be a minister of the Word, the Spirit of God will desert both him and his pulpit.

A second temptation of the preacher is to allow the proclamation of the Word to lose itself in a discussion of the problematic of life. To deal with the problems of life and of the world makes, no doubt, interesting preaching. The hearer finds

a certain comfort in the more adequate expression which the preacher can give to his needs and questions, even if the preacher has no more light to throw on their solution than he has himself. To have the stark facts of existence clothed in appropriate language and given their place in life has a soothing and satisfying effect. But all that actually happens is that the hearer's deep need, in reality his quest after God, receives from the preacher an expression which, for the moment, quietens his mind. He remains within himself. He becomes only the more interested in himself. There is no real answer to his question. But the true concern of the sermon is not to remind men of their questions, but to bring to them the divine answer. In Christian preaching there must be not merely an expression of experience, but the coming down of a Word of God into experience, which grapples with the problems of life and confronts them with the living God. The result may not be so soothing as the other type of sermon—some sermons are too soothing—it may even be disturbing at the first, but it will be the true preaching of the Word. Let the preacher enter into the problems of life with all the insight of which he is capable, but unless he has the great answer of God to bring, he is not a preacher of the Word. The Christian preacher is in the pulpit, not merely to investigate and give expression to experience, after the manner of the poet or the painter, but to master it, by letting the Word of God "speed on and triumph." His task is to set the little affairs of men in the light of the great Answer, and to lay that Answer on men's hearts.

The answer of the sermon can be, of course, only

an indirect answer. That does not mean no answer, nor does it mean a dubious or evasive answer. An indirect answer means an answer that points, clearly and definitely, to the word of Another. That Other is God, Who gives His own answer in His Word. This pointing and leading to the answer of God is the ministry of the Word. It does not intrude into God's territory, it recognises its own definite and circumscribed service, and points to God's Revelation in Jesus Christ. "Then said Evangelist, *pointing* with his finger over a very wide field," writes Bunyan, "do you see yonder wicket-gate? . . . Do you see yonder shining light?" That is the preacher's proper task.

A third temptation of the preacher of the Word is to allow himself to be entangled in cultural interests, and social or political services. It can be very well-meant, and it can be ethically well-grounded, when the Church gives herself in part to be a Welfare Institution, or a Home for Culture in the best sense, seeking the highest good of humanity. So also with the emphasis on the national side of the Church's life, and the promotion of patriotic ends and interests, to which the minister is often tempted to devote himself. But there lurks in all this form of service the possibility of betrayal of the Word of God. The Roman Catholic Church knows this danger, and occupies herself more primitively, but perhaps more truly, with the salvation of man, and therefore with the great concern of God. The Church best understands man when it understands him, not as a citizen of earth, but as a pilgrim of eternity, as one who is needy, as one who asks and waits for the answer given in the Word; as one who most of

all needs to know that the Lord thinketh upon him. For man's deepest distress springs out of his quest after God, a quest which never can be stilled, but must always break forth again in new forms. Since God has spoken to him, man suffers from a wound for which there can be no healing but that which God provides in His Word. (14)

In this light the preacher must understand man. He must see him in the whole contradiction of his nature, between angel and animal, in the whole need of his existence, in his guilt and hopelessness, and imprisonment, in a situation out of which he cannot deliver himself by any work or effort of his own. Because of this deep distress of man, the Christian preacher must often refuse the lower appeals of culture and social service in the spirit of a Nehemiah: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." As a minister of the Word he cannot possibly make all the different concerns of men his own, not because he does not know them; not because he despises them; not because he does not carry them on his heart; but because as a preacher he has his own particular concern with men as pilgrims of eternity, who, because of their sin, are under sentence of death in time.

The Church of the Word must have the courage to understand man better than he understands himself, to understand him from above, from God, for Christ's sake, and to give him not perhaps what he most wants, but what he most needs, the Word of the Church, the Word of Reconciliation.

4. *Presuppositions of effective Preaching.* We pass now to consider certain presuppositions of effective preaching.

The Church which is to proclaim the Word of God with power must first understand it. That is, it must have a theology. (15) Theology in recent years has tended to degenerate into an anthropology, into a mere study of religion, and of man as a *homo religiosus*, and it has been pursued even independently of the Church. It has become, particularly, a study of what has been called Christian Experience, and has tended more and more toward subjectivity and individualism.

The task to which Barth has set himself is to recover the original meaning of Theology as a study of the Word of God, and to bring back the theologian, as well as the preacher, under the controlling power of the Word. Theology, like preaching, is a ministry of the Divine Word. Further, it is "a function of the Church," a form of the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord; an attempt through the labour of reflection, and interpretation of the Gospel, to do His will. There can be no such thing as an unbelieving theology. Theology is not itself the proclamation of the Word of God. (16) It is meditation on this activity, and on its right manner of execution. The task of theology always arises afresh out of the insufficiency of the Church's presentation of the Gospel. For the Church must ever be putting to itself the truly necessary question, as to whether it is in a position to carry out the proclamation of the Gospel, and as to the right content of it. Theology must always come in as a corrective.

The task of theology arises also out of the possibility of heresy within the Church, that is, of the Church in conflict with itself, with one or another form of faith. This is a possibility at no time to be

excluded, and very real and present to-day, with Roman Catholicism on one side, and Modernism on the other. (17) To press toward the true doctrine, to seek after the Catholic Faith, not by any self-chosen standards, but by the standard of the Revelation itself, on which the Church is grounded, and as it meets us in the testimony of prophets and apostles, is the task of theology. The Church can never dispense with the service of theologians; it needs them so that its preachers may be not only well-equipped pastors, but also students and expounders of the Word. Theology can only serve, as the best sermon can only serve, so that the Word of God may have "free course and be glorified." But as the Word demands the human service of preaching, so it demands also that of theology. The difference between it and preaching is but a difference of service. Theology is not a manner of playing at intellectual speculation with individual self-assurance, it is an activity of the Church, a particular aspect of Church obedience, to be carried out with the humility that is due to the Church's Head.

While the methods which it employs are scientific, theology cannot be grounded in the common idea of a science, such as the science of biology. (18) It is rather to be compared with the function of an embassy of a foreign state. It represents and defends the Christian Revelation *in partibus infidelium*. It has its own laws and sphere. If it is faithful it will serve the pulpít, but, like every other right service of the Word, it must be left to do its work for itself alone, without regard to the immediate practical importance or usefulness of its results. The preacher is not entitled to ask that a theology shall be made

ready for his use. A purely practical theology is not a theology, in the true sense of the word. The business of theology is to keep the Church attentive to the ground and subject of her preaching. For the Church has constantly to adjust herself to the new conditions of thought under which the Word of God is to be proclaimed. Theology is the concern for the truth of the Church's proclamation; for the greatest danger which can befall it, is falsification of its message. This danger is the origin of theology. It is the watchman's responsible office that has been entrusted to it. If the Church will do without theology she must dispense with this attentiveness.

Theology has a further task. It has to accompany the proclamation of the Gospel, in the different branches of the Church's work, with definite questions as to their relation to their ground and subject. It will question the preacher as to the content of his preaching, and as to whether it constitutes an event for the hearer. It will question the teacher of religion as to the basis and manner of his teaching. It will question the missionary as to the motive, task, and call to mission work. It will be the servant of the Word in compelling each of these activities to enter in at the narrow gate of the crisis, through which the most glorious deeds of faith and love must pass, if they will be accepted of God, as faith and obedience. Then theology will have done for the Word the service which it can do, and which men may expect of it.

The Church which is to proclaim the Word of God with power and conviction must, secondly, confess its faith. (19) Not only must the individual believer witness to his faith in some act of confession;

the Church, as a Church, must also make its confession. A Church confesses its faith when it must. No great Confession has ever come from the Church except when forced out of it in some crisis of its faith, when it could do no other than witness. It is not for the world's sake, but for its own sake, that the Church confesses its faith. The defence of the Faith against external foes is the work of apologetics. Confession of faith is made by the Church in order to protect itself against internal foes. For "only in the sphere of grace," as Barth says, "is there belief and unbelief." Only Israel can believe or not believe. When the Church, standing on its watch-tower, becomes aware of danger to its faith approaching, not from without, but from within, and when it begins to fear for itself, then the hour for confessing its faith has come. Out of such hours of agony have all great Confessions issued.

The movement in the Church to-day for the restatement of the Church's Faith is intelligible. For the Confessions of the day of the Reformation can no longer constitute for us the form of our confession. The problems of their day were not our problems, and to our problems they have no word to say. Any attempt to revise them is out of the question. They can have interest for us mainly as great historical landmarks of the Faith which we retain as our subordinate standards simply because, so far, the Church has not had the faith to produce a Confession for our time. But the problem needs to be faced, and we are being compelled to ask whether the Church of our day has the spiritual vitality to create a Confession of Faith. Will it be able to provide anything more than a restatement

which will mediate between contending views, and cover over differences with vague, ambiguous expressions? Will it be the answer of the Church of to-day to the Word of God, which a Confession is meant to be? (20)

The rapidity with which so great a Confession as the Scots Confession of Faith was produced by Knox and his associates astonishes us until we remember two things. The first is: the Reformers had a clear and definite idea of what they wished to include in the Confession, viz. the statement of the Reformed doctrine regarding God, sin, and salvation. The second is: they had a clear and definite idea of what they wished to exclude and renounce, viz. the doctrine of the Papal Church, particularly in regard to the Mass. But what makes the preparation of a Confession of Faith, or even a restatement of the Church's Faith so difficult to-day, is that the Church has no clear and definite ideas along either of these lines. It has no more the same concern that the Word of God be kept pure, and unmixed with heresy. The position, indeed, taken by many is that the Church must be so broad-minded and hospitable as to find a place for all forms, high and low, of religious faith and life, and to embrace everything which claims to bear the name of Christ. But if this is so, the Church has really no need and no place for a Confession of Faith; indeed a Confession loses all serious meaning, as well as living power. Neither does such a Church need a theology, and some Churches are proposing to do without a theology. But the question must arise, can such a Church go on calling itself a Church? Does it retain the "substance" of a Church? It is not a vain

question. There can be no true Church without a definite witness, any more than there can be a true Church without a definite theology. (21)

The Church which is to proclaim the Word of God with power and conviction must, thirdly, share its faith and life. A Church which is a *communio sanctorum*, based on the unity of all who belong to Christ, must also exhibit that *communicatio bonorum*—that sharing of its blessings—on which Luther and Calvin so strongly insisted. A theology, or a Confession, which is separated from life, from what Luther calls *experientia*, can only be harmful, because of the temptation to make theology or creed a substitute for Christian living. While for the sake of order the Reformed Church has its regularly ordained ministry, and duly constituted services, it holds to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Every believer must share in witnessing and in proclaiming the Word, for unless a faith is being propagated by the witness of its believers, through the Holy Spirit, it is not living at its maximum power. The particular manner and place of the witnessing and proclamation of the Word must depend on the concrete situation of the witness.

This doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and the duty laid on all to witness, has again and again been lost sight of in the Church in days of low spiritual vitality, and the first sign of a new awakening has always been a rebirth of this sharing of blessing. It is receiving fresh expression in our time in the Oxford Group Movement, in which we are witnessing a genuine rebirth of New Testament fellowship, or *koinonia*. The old lost radiance, the same impulse to "togetherness," even to the sharing

of possessions, are again being seen. No doubt, there are dangers in the Movement, as there are in every vital movement, including the danger that some indiscreet people may bring discredit on it by their too intimate confidences. For there are wounds which we should never show except to a physician. But its doctrine of "sharing," both in its form of confession of sin, and of witnessing for Christ, is a much-forgotten New Testament truth which needs to be given its place again in the Church. The same is true of its other central doctrine of Guidance, in which another greatly lost truth of the Christian faith is being rediscovered. For if we are not to believe in the particular guidance of God, we cannot believe in guidance at all. This guidance, it is rightly emphasised, is given only to the fully surrendered life. The doctrine has its perils, and sometimes one has the feeling that the technique of "listening-in to God" is represented as too mechanical and simple. As it is not easy to know the Word of God, neither is it easy to know the Will of God. One can so easily mistake one's own voice, or an alien evil voice, for the voice of the Spirit. In the early Church already it was found necessary to "prove the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John iv. 1).

The free spontaneous way in which the Group Movement has arisen, starting from the practical and not from the theoretical end, has prevented its theological side from being developed, but this defect will, we trust, be remedied. The book by Geoffrey Allen—*He that Cometh*—the work of a trained theologian, is to be welcomed; still more the association with the movement of a theologian

like Emil Brunner who sees in its work a testimony to "the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, based on the message of reconciliation." A certain relationship between some of its main teachings and that of the Barthian Movement is not to be denied, although there are also obvious differences. "The Oxford Group Movement," says J. P. Thornton-Duesbery, one of its leaders, "holds spiritual kinship, with all those who have realised in experience the truth that Karl Barth and his School are proclaiming in Germany; the truth that God is still free to act, breaking in *von jenseits* upon the world, and upon men—and that He does." (22) It is a truly knightly Movement, every member of which feels called to be a *miles christianus*, a soldier in the army of God. *L'appel de la route* is in their hearts, as they go forth with their witness, in faith and prayer, to the ends of the earth.

One's main anxiety concerning this Movement is lest, after having glimpsed the heights of objective Christian truth, it should fall back into a subjectivity, to which it exhibits, in some of its manifestations, a certain proneness. One can think too much about one's soul, and one can talk too much about one's sins. But its call to repentance, and restitution, its loyalty to the Bible, and to the Church, its faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, and in God as the Hearer and answerer of prayer, and Giver of guidance, above all, its shining victories in making the Gospel a glorious reality to many, speak for themselves.

But before the Church can understand, or confess, or share its faith in Jesus Christ it must itself first believe and live it. A Church marches on its faith. It proves itself by its faith. (23) *Credo ut intelligam*

is a principle for the Church as for the individual. Its theology is an act of faith. Its creed is meaningless except as a Confession of *Faith*. Its sharing is valueless unless it has something to share. By faith the Church lays hold on the promise of the Spirit that "He shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 13, R.V.).

CHAPTER VII

THE WORD AS CRITERION

THE centrality given to the Word of God in this Theology means that it relates itself to the whole circumference of Christian thought and activity. There is set up at the centre, a criterion which exercises authority and judgment on many different fields. It determines the true nature of Christian worship, the training of the young, the attitude to Missions and to the Social Gospel, as well as to Evangelism. It presents a challenge to many views which at present hold the field.

1. We begin with the Word as the criterion of Worship. The true Church of the Word leads of necessity to the worshipping congregation, in which faith is kept alive through the celebration of Divine Worship and of the Sacraments. It is contrary to the teaching of the Reformers to separate, as is sometimes done, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of Worship. For the ministry of Worship including the Sacraments, is part of the ministry of the Word, and the two are not to be divorced. The essence of the Protestant, or, as it would be more appropriate to call it, the Protestant-Catholic Service, in distinction from the Roman-Catholic, is the Service of the Word. While the Reformers demanded that the preaching of the Word should have the central place,

they did not neglect the other parts of worship. Luther allowed the widest liberty in forms of worship so long as the proclamation of the Word received its rightful place. "Where the Word, as the main matter, goes right," he said, "there everything else goes right." Calvin had a keen sense for worship and especially for what he regarded as fitting (*rite*) worship. It was in the matter of reverence towards God that his own opposition to Rome reached its culmination. His definite decision was taken when it became for him the chief thing in the Christian life to honour and worship God aright, and when he recognised the tremendous gulf between the Mystery-liturgy of Roman Catholic worship, and the true worship of a God of majesty and holiness. Everything which had the appearance of being a vain show, and which distracted men's minds from God, every relic of the Mass, which was idolatry, he ruthlessly cut out, and the Reformed Service with its psalm-singing, prayers of confession, and simple, gripping preaching of the Word, took its place. What made the Calvinistic Service to be the great and living worship of God which it became was the single purpose that flowed like a rhythm through it, to worship God "in spirit and in truth." (1)

Can we express in a sentence the essential difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant worship? In the centre of Roman Catholic worship stands the Altar, in the centre of Protestant worship stands the Word. The central thing in the Reformation was the discovery by Luther of a gracious God, Who did not need to be moved by any Mystery-drama, but Who was Himself the Mover—a God Who justified by faith alone. The fundamental difference between

Roman Catholic and Protestant worship is a different belief as to the nature of God. The Roman Catholic Cultus is built on the inviolable mystery of God, Who can be approached only through an intermediary. None but a priest, endued with supernatural powers, can interpret to men this hidden God, but under such spiritual guidance the worshipper can, by a long process of justification by works, enter into the peace of God. The Cultus belongs, therefore, to the substance of Roman Catholic worship, as being the one and only means of salvation, while the Sermon, in marked contrast to the Sacrament, is no constitutive element in the idea of the Catholic priesthood. (2)

Protestant worship, on the other hand, rests solely on faith in a God of Grace, Who comes to us in His Word, and Who in Jesus Christ meets us as our Reconciler, without the necessity of an intermediary. There is free and open access to God. He is to be found in every place and not merely in sacred places, at all times and not only at special seasons.

This Christian doctrine of worship, which was lost in the Church, was rediscovered by Luther and Calvin. For Luther, worship consisted simply in this, as he puts it in a sermon, that "our dear Lord Himself speaks with us through His Holy Word, and we again speak with Him through prayer and song." (3) The worshipper does not need by works of the law, or by penances, or by any machinery of worship, to come to God. God has come to him. He is already justified. Worship is not a means to salvation, but an outflow of praise and thanks for salvation already given. In worship we do not primarily receive, we give. Worship is oblation, the offering of the individual in the Fellowship, or the

offering of the whole Fellowship itself, as a glad expression of thanksgiving to God, Who has revealed Himself in the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All Christian worship, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, is the fulfilment of the great word of promise which the Risen Christ gave to His disciples: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In the middle point for both stands Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Revealer and Mediator. But whereas in Roman Catholic worship the altar becomes Golgotha, and Christ is believed to be present on it in flesh and blood, in Protestant worship He is present by His Spirit, as the worshippers make their offering of praise for the great sacrifice once and for all accomplished on Calvary. There is thus a different conception of worship corresponding to the different conception of God held in the two sections of the Christian Church.

The Word, as criterion, determines that worship shall conform to the Protestant type, while leaving the utmost room for variety of form. For Barth, worship consists in the proclamation of the Word, and in the Sacraments, as *verba visibilia*; although sacrificial, and other elements of life, in the answer of man to God, are not to be excluded. The "activity of helping solidarity," he says, "face to face with the outer distress of human society, belongs also to the answer of God," and is to be counted as worship (4) (James i. 27). We shall detail some of the elements of a true Protestant worship, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, and also to Modernism which, as Barth says, is in this respect not unlike Romanism in that it sees something taking place at the heart of the life of the Church quite different

from the grace of the free personal God, in the event of His Word. (5)

Protestant worship, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, centres round the proclamation of the Word of God. "Of the Divine Service," says Luther, "the greatest and most important portion is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God." The presence and power of God together with His will of grace for the world are revealed not in a symbol, nor in a dramatic representation on the altar, but in the Word of God as an event, and especially in the Word made flesh. And since this promise is contained in the Scriptures, the Protestant Service is a service of the Scriptures. Revelation, Scripture, and sermon, as Barth insists, belong together. Protestant worship, therefore, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, is Biblical worship, not in the sense of a dead worship of the letter, but in the sense of a living contact with God through His Word. As Hermann Bezzel put it: "The Word is the audible Sacrament, and the Sacrament is the visible Word." (6)

Protestant worship, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, is people's worship, the worship of the *ecclesia*, and calls for the active participation of the congregation. (7) In Roman Catholic public worship there is no congregation, in the actual sense, since each worshipper must approach God individually through the priest as an individual who remains apart, and who alone, as the representative of Almighty God, can procure the treasures of salvation. The whole collective intercourse with God is bound up with the activity of the priest. No priest: no worship.

Protestant worship, on the other hand, is a worship

of laity, and does not depend on the presence of the celebrant. The officiating minister is not the representative of God to the people, but the representative of the people before God, who in virtue of his orders created by the Church "that all things may be done decently and in order," does that which every Christian has the right to do. So far from the minister of the Word standing apart, and possessing some special priestly and sacramental power, he is a fellow-worshipper with the people, closely united with them in praise and prayer. Even in preaching he is speaking the Word of God to men to whom God has given it, equally with himself, and he can preach only as he himself hears.

Protestant worship, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, is free personal worship. The Roman liturgy is a great objective institution, built up out of the liturgical labours of the centuries. The officiant is an automaton, who is allowed no freedom of action, no play of personality, his sole duty being to celebrate without mistake in word or gesture. Protestant worship, on the other hand, is the worship of personalities, whose service is perfect freedom, and springs every time afresh out of the depths of the Spirit. All that is binding is alien to it. There is freedom from forms, or, if one chooses, a freedom to use forms. Liturgies can only be models and examples, they cannot become fetters, for the wind bloweth where it listeth. The living, witnessing personality of the man who has been laid hold on by God for this service is the power of Protestant worship, and gives to it its supremely spiritual character. It makes the highest possible demand on the minister of the Word, and lays on him a

tremendous responsibility, for, in putting his personality at the disposal of the congregation, he engages in a sacramental act which, as a far-off reflection of the Word made flesh, must both humble and exalt him.

Protestant worship, in contrast to the mystical, sensuous character of Roman Catholic worship, is strong ethical worship, whose goal is not the beatific vision, but Christian obedience. In Roman worship, everything temporal fades away, including the moral tasks of the present, while the gaze of the pious is wholly directed on the heavenly city. Protestant worship, on the other hand, looks, not at a distant kingdom of truth and beauty, but on this world, into which the Kingdom of God is to come. The object of Protestant worship is to quicken the thought of the Kingdom of God, of its claims and promises, in the hearts of the worshippers, and thus set free strong ethical impulses. "Does God exist for man," says Barth, "as the answer to the proclamation of His Word, as the prayers, hymns, and confessions of the Church say that He does? Then man must also exist for his fellow-men, in fellowship with whom only is he an actual man, the man for whom God exists." (8) The present is to be filled with the powers of the Eternal. Here we live "between the ages," which accounts for the contradiction of our lot, but the kingdoms of this world are one day to become the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ. Roman Catholic worship leads the pious away in thought from this present evil world to God. Protestant worship leads the worshipper, surrendered to God and filled with His grace, back into the present and needy world, to the solution of the great tasks which

God has set for men. Christian worship is not meant to serve the end of world-flight, but of world-conquest, the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Protestant worship, in contrast to Roman Catholic worship, is spiritual worship. It knows only "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter ii. 5). We need no more to reconcile God. We are reconciled. The repetition of the Offering in the Mass, as Brunner says, betrays doubt of what God has done once and for all. "The Cultus is through the sacrifice of Christ fundamentally abolished, and henceforth worship has only the meaning of thanks, praise, and petition." (9) In the Protestant Church also, the holy Sacrament is the greatest of all Services. We too adore, for adoration is the climax of all true worship. But we adore not a wafer, but a living and glorified Lord Who is present spiritually at His Table. Here we encounter the greatest contrast between Roman Catholic and Protestant worship in the different conceptions of the Divine Presence. In Roman worship, God's presence is confined to the consecrated host, while to the Protestant, God is present in the event of His Word, in the hearts of His worshippers. The one thinks of the presence of God in terms of space, the other in terms of spirit.

Barth urgently recommends Protestants, in their polemic against Rome, not to use the word "magical" in this connection. (10) There is, he says, no sensible definition of the idea of "magic" which really meets the authentic Roman conception of what actually takes place in the Mass. We must do justice to what is true and Christian in Roman Catholic worship. It has striven to set Christ as Lord in the centre, and to keep faith with the central truths

of the Gospel, and it has, as Barth has indicated, some searching questions to put to the Protestant Church to-day. (11) Over against the individualism of modern Protestantism, it has maintained the organic and corporate character of the Believing Society. It has insisted on the priestly vocation of the Church, and on the true nature of worship as Offering. It has probably understood better than the Protestant Church the intimate connection between soul and sense and all that side of worship which we have come to embrace under the word "devotional"—the power of silence, the impressiveness of music, colour, and Church architecture, and suchlike.

But when we pass to the moral and spiritual side, Protestant worship stands forth in all the power and majesty of its simple truthfulness. It alone has striven to be faithful to the vocation of the Church as prophet, and to that simple type of worship which seems to come nearest to the mind of our Lord (John iv. 24). In so far as worship is a moral act, an act of the whole man, in so far as faith leads to righteousness, and creates character, the glory lies with the Protestant Church. So long as the Protestant Church keeps the Word at its centre as criterion, it retains its worship in its original simplicity and truthfulness, for the controlling, judging Word will not have it otherwise. But when the Word is pushed aside by a Cultus, or even by the Sacraments, as if they were in themselves superior, then the Roman Catholic type of worship, with its sensuous strain and Mystery-character, takes again possession.

Another effect of the criterion of the Word, on which there is no space to dwell, is to expel the weak,

sentimental, subjective hymns and music, which have invaded our modern Protestant hymnbooks, and to replace them with the robuster spiritual songs and music of a better day.

2. The Word as criterion of Religious Instruction. Barth holds that the Church must consider much more earnestly than it has hitherto done the question as to the *recte docere Evangelium*—the right teaching of the Gospel to the young—a problem which, he recognises, falls within the scope of Dogmatics. (12)

The crisis to-day is acutest among the young, for they march at the point of the column of humanity, and their reactions to the questions of the hour are the strongest. In its negative form, the reaction of youth consists in a turning away from the traditions of the fathers, and from every form of authority in general. But this turning away may only be a form of seeking. Young people are weary of mere views, ideas, and counsels, but they may be opener than we imagine to truth, to a real, directing, authoritative Word of God. Every voice is crying out for something positive, and though the young may not know it, what they are hungering for is a living and commanding Word of God. Such a Word the Church has not been giving them because it has itself lost it. It has been giving them instead what it calls "Religious Education." Never in the history of the Church has more consideration been given to the study of psychology and pedagogics. The latest American methods have been introduced, and have borne fruits in all our Sunday Schools. The "plant" for work among the young, particularly in America, has never been so elaborate and costly. But as far as providing the young generation with a foundation

of objective Christian Truth is concerned, the result has been failure and disappointment, and nowhere more than in America. As a consequence there is a growing alarm in the Church, and a demand for real instruction in Christian Doctrine.

This whole system of Religious Education, which is being pursued, is built on certain presuppositions which cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the New Testament.

To begin with, it is based on a false anthropology, on the idea that man in the core of his nature is good, and that what we have to do in religious education is to draw out the good in him, and bring it to expression. This doctrine of the good nature, "the sweet song of the old serpent" as Barth calls it, was reborn in the Renaissance, developed by the idealistic philosophers, and has been brought to maturity by the American Humanists, among whom it is become almost disrespectful to speak of a man's sin. But the "new man" of the New Testament is a *new* man, and not a refined and perfected old man.

This scheme of religious education is based, secondly, on the false principle of autonomy, derived from Descartes, to which we have referred, and applied to the training of the young. The child is to be brought up to express himself, and to find his own laws and norms and values inside himself. There can be no such thing as the law of Another calling for obedience imposed on him. This new pedagogics is expressed in terms of value. It asks not after the meaning, or truth, of the Word of God, but after its value. Religion gives new values to life. What in the Bible serves the end of religious education is to be valued, what does not serve it is

negligible. Even Jesus Himself is submitted to the pragmatic test of "value" for the child, instead of the child being taught to submit himself to His authority. This whole idea of autonomy claimed for the child is foreign to the New Testament, where the claim and *nomos* is that of God alone. A true Christian pedagogics must start not from man and his values, but from God and His Word, in Jesus Christ.

Once more, this scheme of religious education is founded on a false principle of communicating the Christian Revelation. The great aim of modern pedagogics is the rational communication of truth. It proceeds from the presupposition of the autonomy of reason in matters of religious knowledge as of other knowledge, and seeks to convey a direct knowledge of God, in that it makes God intelligible. It proposes to build up *ab extra* in the mind of the child an adequate conception of God, attribute by attribute, as one would sit down with him on the floor and build a tower of bricks. But we cannot thus make God an object of knowledge. God can be known only as He gives Himself to be known in His Word. There is a religious rationalism which is almost as deadening as secular rationalism. Both are related; both place education in the centre; both seek it in the same way. But the result, from the point of view of the Christian Revelation, is disastrous. Instead of leaving in the mind of the child the sense of the wonderful, majestic, sovereign God, Who can be known in no human way, the result of these efforts has too often been to set up in the child's mind a poor tedious human idol which he can certainly understand, but which he flings on

the rubbish heap as soon as schooldays are over. God the Tremendous, the Hidden One, in every Bible story is betrayed by being explained away to make Him intelligible. When will we understand that we only hinder the meeting between God and the child by our clever rational explanations? By no human means can we communicate to a child the knowledge of One Whom no eye can see, and no ear can hear. It is God alone Who creates the knowledge, through which He becomes known. The work of the teacher is not to give to the child views about God, or values, or religious ideas, not to build up in his mind an object, or idol, which he calls God, but to be the means, or the bridge, by which he comes into contact with the living God Himself. (13) As this bridge between God and the child the teacher is indispensable, for in teaching, as in preaching, the Word of God can come only through the word of a man or woman. In most cases, the Word of God comes to all of us, first, through the lips of our mother, or our Sunday School teacher. The work of the teacher is to witness, to point, to lead the child to God, by teaching, example, and prayer as revealed in Jesus Christ. There is no diviner ministry on earth.

The Barthian Movement finds itself in opposition to many of the present educational ideas and practices, in the religious training of the young, and it calls for a new and a true evangelical pedagogics. It proposes to place once more in the foreground of religious instruction, as was done at the Reformation, the substance of the Christian Faith, the Revelation of God in Christ, and it seeks to persuade the Church to consider the question of a *recte docere* as the most

pressing task before the Church. "Religious instruction as such," says Barth, "has as its task to teach, not to convert, nor to set in the crisis, and as such it is different from preaching." (14)

The opinion sometimes expressed that the Barthian theology has no place for religious instruction is wholly mistaken. Its literature is alive with the question. Edward Thurneysen, Theodor Heckel, George Merz, George Müller, and others are busy working out the principles of an evangelical pedagogics. "I fear," says Thurneysen, who has devoted himself to this field, "the dogmatising of the old school less than the God-forgetting psychologising of the new." These advocates of an evangelical pedagogics start from the position that pedagogics is not the Gospel, and the Gospel is not pedagogics. There have been, as Heckel reminds us, two attempts in pedagogical work which have started from opposite directions. (15) The one attempt has sought to draw the Gospel directly into an idealistic pedagogics, and make it merely the means to an end, the religious education of the child. The other has sought to turn the Gospel itself into a pedagogical textbook. Both methods have been wrong. In the first, the Gospel is simply made use of in the construction of an alien building, namely an idealistic religious education. In the second, the Gospel itself is given the character of a pedagogical law-book. Both divest the Gospel of its true nature, as the Word of God. Religious instruction, according to the Barthian standpoint, is a ministry of the Word, like that of the preacher, or the theologian. The Christian teacher does not obtain his results by the cleverness of his methods, nor by the creative power of his genius, nor by his

religious personality, but by bringing the child under the power of the Word of God itself. He is primarily the servant of the Word, and therefore of the Church. In teaching, as in preaching, the theme is God and His Word. The aim and hope of the teacher must be to bring about a meeting between God and the child in the event of faith, when there arises on the child's world the strange new possibility of God, the Unexpected, the Reconciler, Who comes to meet man in judgment and in grace. A true evangelical pedagogy must start from God, and what He has done for man in Jesus Christ, that is, it must start from forgiveness. It must be an evangelical, and not a humanistic pedagogy, which declares to the child from the beginning the Divine forgiveness, of which the teacher cannot begin too soon to speak. The child is not to be brought into a world of negatives, but of glorious positives, of God's glory and mercy, amid which the Holy Spirit will do His work on his soul. The new man in Jesus Christ is not the fruit of religious education. No education can make a sinner righteous. That is God's work. "One thing is certain," said the Church historian, Rudolf Sohm, "not our education will save us, but the Gospel." The teacher must not indulge in any educational optimism, his only hope is in Another. He must not adopt any superior or authoritative attitude as a religious teacher, but must place himself with his pupils as a sinner before God, needing, equally with them, the Divine forgiveness. "I believe," says George Müller, Rector of an Evangelical School at Bethel-Bielefeld, who has been putting these principles into practice, "that in the consciousness of guilt, and in the power of the forgiveness of sin, which has been

given us in Christ, the real secret of evangelical pedagogics lies. All else seems to me of secondary importance. If our pupils know that we, with all the authority which we must exercise over them as teachers, stand with them in common before God as confessing sinners, that nothing else can help us, or them, but the grace of God, which is new every day, it will work far more strongly on them than all the correct behaviour which we can win from them by any legal claims we make. Prayer appears to me still to-day the real source of power of an evangelical teacher." (16)

The first qualification of the religious teacher of the young, according to this view, is that he must be a witness, one who has himself been laid hold of by the Word of God, and who speaks, not of this or that, but of the revelation of God in Christ. He must himself live by the Word of God, and by prayer, which alone opens the Scriptures to himself and to his pupils. He must place himself not beside God, but under God, as witness and teacher, in speech and life, of the Good Tidings of God.

Secondly, he must start from a true doctrine of man. He must ask . . . "from what do I begin? From the good in man, or from the grace of God?" If he is true to the New Testament and to the Reformers, he will not start from the good in man. For "the content of history," as Gogarten says, "so far as it is human history, is the terrible history of sin, of the complete falling away of man from God." The error of our present religious education is that we have been proceeding from the anthropology of an idealistic humanism instead of from that of Christ and of the New Testament. Our Lord Himself has

left us in no doubt as to His doctrine of man (17) (Matt. xv. 19).

The third qualification of the religious teacher is a knowledge of what the Bible actually is. The Bible is not a book, the primary object of which is religious education. It is not a collection of moral patterns. It is not an arsenal of religious truths for the warfare of life. It is not a pious story-book, out of which we can tell to the children all manner of wonderful and unheard-of things. It is not a book of religious heroes, not even is the life story of Jesus told as the life of a religious hero. Nor is it a book of psychological experiences. The men of the Bible are not primarily interested in their own souls. The Bible is the witness to the revelation of God to sinful men in Jesus Christ, the good news of the gracious God, and as such it is to be taught to the young. Bible history must be taught as Bible *history*, for every story has its own concrete setting, and its own special Word of God to man. (18) The Bible contains no bloodless abstractions, or general religious ideas which are to be universally applied. Every truth is a particular truth which comes to a particular individual. Therefore the Bible lays emphatic stress on history. When God speaks to men it is in the form of a story, the story of an Abraham or of a Moses, and the content of each separate story is some particular self-revelation of God. Bible history must be taught also as *Bible* history. As conveying God's Revelation it is different from all other history. Revelation, as we have seen, is history, story, event. But history as such, is not Revelation. *Sacra scriptura sui ipsius interpres*—the Bible is its own best interpreter—is a principle which the teacher should

never forget. He is not to place himself under the domination of the interesting, or the psychological, or the valuable, but under the domination of the Word itself. He must not make the Bible the playground for his own imagination. The Word of God is to be presented in its strength and character as *God's Word*, and he must trust to the power of the Word itself to carry its message home, rather than to his own expositions. The teacher who departs from the Bible story as being too strange and difficult to the mind of a child, and proceeds to humanise and simplify it, forgets that the child has a depth of sensibility for the reality of God that is often lacking in the adult. The adult lives in a world of thoughts, ideas, and discussions; the child, in his simple-heartedness, realises in a much more intimate and personal way the actuality of God. In childhood we believe in heaven, we are alive to the beauty of heavenly things; we still know how to kneel down. The limited world of the child is wide open toward God, whereas the extended world of the adult is often limited toward God.

The fourth qualification of the evangelical teacher is a deep knowledge of the child. The anxiety regarding a false psychology must not be allowed to beget in us a fear of a true psychology. Every right pedagogical art and psychological insight must be called into activity by the teacher in order that the Christian Revelation as a *verbum alienum*—the Word of Another—may be planted in the heart of the child. On his level, in his language, and in his world, a world, as Dr. John Brown said “about three feet high,” the Word of God is to sound forth, and make its claim upon the child. His power of

taking in and absorbing must be carefully considered. One does not go on pouring water into a kettle which is already full. Concrete observation of the real child, and not theorising about the ideal child, is what is desired in the teacher. Before it can be understood, the Bible story needs to be translated into the language of the child. This is part of the teacher's work as *bridge* and medium. The instruction must be vivid, and concrete, and in keeping with his capacity to comprehend, if the child is to be brought in touch with the strange new world of God, revealed in Jesus Christ.

This duty of religious instruction is the first work of the Church, and must be undertaken by teachers who are the servants of the Church. The child is to be given a definite content of Christian Truth, a *doctrina Christi*, such as the Reformers insisted on. The Christian Revelation is to be taught, not as a dead dogma, but as a living, gripping Word, calling for obedience. Something more than stories is needed, although the story is an essential vehicle of truth for the child. Something more than moving pictures of Jesus as a Hero is needed, although these also have their place. The theme of religious instruction must be the Good News of God, in law and in Gospel. The work of the teacher is a glorious work, but he must remember his boundary. He is a witness, and he shares his own religious life with the child. But he forsakes his proper place, and puts himself in the place of God, if he claims to impart religion, or of himself to be a life-changer. Only God can give God to the child, since He only is Revealer; only God can give new life to the child, since He only is Life-Changer.

The base of operations in the work of Christian instruction is Baptism. The bringing of a child to the baptismal font is a confession on our part that we do not believe in any creative power of the child or parent or teacher, out of which will unfold a complete life, and thus we bring the child to God, Who alone can make of him a new creature. In baptism we look back to the work of Christ in reconciliation, and forward to the promise that we are called to be the children of God in redemption. Baptism proclaims the double fact, that man is fallen under sin, and called to God through grace. It means that before we have called, God has heard us.

3. The Word as criterion of Christian Missions. Another question which has been deeply exercising the Barthian theologians is the relation of this Theology to Christian Missions. They feel that the day has come when the whole question of missions, both home and foreign (for the old distinction is being effaced), must be brought again to the judgment of the Word of God. How does our missionary work stand in regard to it? What is the call and work of the Christian missionary? Is it, as Zinzendorf put it, "to win souls for the Lamb"? or is it to open to the heathen the benefits of so-called Christian civilisation? Does the missionary go forth to build on what he finds already present in heathendom, and call the heathen to his deeper self and to God? or does he go forth with a word which must first unsettle, and ultimately destroy the old foundations of heathendom? On this problem also Barth has done some fundamental thinking. (19)

The *call* of the missionary, like that of the preacher and teacher, he says, is first to be a servant of

the Word. He is, before all, a messenger, one sent, who is not concerned with what he himself has to say, but with what God is wanting to say through him. Christian Missions are primarily an activity of God in Jesus Christ carried on through His witnesses. The sending of the message is rooted in the sending of Christ Himself. Further, missions are an activity of the Church, *in actu confessionis*, a particular form of the Church's confession of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. That must rule out all such ideas as that the object of missions is to "spread Christianity," as if it were some new and superior form of culture, or to bring to the heathen the cultural benefits of the West. The activities of education, of medical and social work, must of course be pursued in the mission field, for Christ came also to heal the sick, but always as second-line activities, which need to be continually tested by the criterion of the Word, as to whether witness is being borne through them to the new world, which God is bringing. For man's deepest need is not education, nor even healing, but salvation; and the missionary of Christ must have something better to bring to the heathen than social or cultural blessings; his true work is witness-bearing. Missions are not mere propaganda on behalf of another, and what is considered a better religion, and they lose their significance, and may prove even injurious if carried on as such. Simply to transfer a man, horizontally, from heathenism to Christianity without bringing about an entry of the Lord Jesus into his heart, may do him positive harm.

The *motive* of the missionary is the same as that of the preacher, to make known to the heathen a Gospel of such Good News that it cannot be kept,

but must be proclaimed. The Church has a secret which she is under a constraint to share with the world. It is because God has revealed Himself in Christ that men feel compelled to carry His Word abroad to the ends of the earth. The Church under this compulsion of the Cross undertakes an astonishing thing in its missionary work. It dares to believe in a complete new beginning by faith. It goes forth into emptiness, as it seems, although Christ is already there, and works in hope and against hope. It cannot argue or parley, it can only proclaim. It does not reckon with any development of what is already there in heathenism, but with a creation out of nothing. It does not proclaim the healing of the sick, merely, but the resurrection of the dead. It dares to tell men something which they cannot know, or discover, and sets them in a decision which they cannot fully understand. It dares, with the one hand, to take from the heathen his gods, his holiest possessions, without offering him, with the other, any obvious substitute or compensation, and throws him altogether on a life of faith.

The *message* of the missionary is the same as that of the preacher, the proclamation of the Christian Revelation. This Revelation stands in sharpest contrast to all those attempts to reach God, which we describe as the World Religions. They constitute the great attempt of man to secure a *re-ligio*, a re-binding of the broken union with God, by his own efforts. In all their varied forms they have one thing in common. They all come from this side of things, and represent man's approach to God by human means. They all believe that man can simply and directly get back to God. The message of the

missionary, on the other hand, is that God alone can renew the broken unity, He alone can create a true *re-ligio*, and that this has been done once and for all in the Cross of Reconciliation. The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, therefore, must be proclaimed to the heathen as his one hope. (20) The missionary goes to the mission field not to build upon the old religions, but to witness to a Revelation which must ultimately undermine and destroy them. This message means combat and *skandalon* in the world of heathenism, for Jesus Christ becomes thus the judgment on, and the end of, all the religions. It is doubtless true also that Christ is the Fulfilment of what the religions of the world have been seeking, in the sinful heathen heart, also, the Divine ordinances, as, for example, honour towards parents, slumber. But the real work of the missionary is to proclaim Christ as the end of the religions. Religion is born out of the heart and thought of man, and is of the world. Revelation is not of the world, but comes into the world as the answer to man's religion. The missionary cannot be too deep a student of the world religions, but it must be in order that he may discover the weak spot "between the joints of the armour" through which the Word of God may find an entry into the heathen heart. Face to face with the world religions, the Christian Mission must begin with the Gospel witness, that it knows what the believers of the religions do not know, that man is a poor creature who cannot discover God, but who can only wait until God discovers him (Acts xvii. 23). Then it will preach the forgiveness of sin, and no other kind of obedience but that which comes out of forgiveness. It will oppose no Christian system

of thought to the world religions. It will not strive against them. It will preach the freedom which the religions have taken away from men, and which only the true God can give back. And it will preach it not as an ideal, but as a real Christmas gift.

The *method* of the missionary is the same as that of the preacher. He is a witness who can do nothing but point the way to God in Christ. The task of missions can only be the preparing of ways, and the opening of doors so that Christ Himself, the King of Glory and the Saviour of the world, may enter. The goal of Missions is not Humanity but the Kingdom of God, and missionary work is to be carried on with a view to the Coming of the Kingdom. It is interim, provisional, "between the times," until God comes forth as Lord and King. He alone is the Last Word, and in His hand lies the final Judgment.

Can and dare the answer of Christianity to the religions, asks Barth, be other than Christian Missions? Not propaganda, which cares only for human ends, and directs itself towards them; but the Christian Mission which tells man to his face that he misunderstands his own deepest needs, when he tries to satisfy himself with those religions. Christianity proclaims to man what God has revealed, and what he must listen to, because God has revealed it. It believes concerning itself, what the religions cannot believe concerning themselves, that it rests on a Divine Revelation, and not on any human thought or opinion, however impressively stated. Concerning a human thought or opinion one can parley, says Barth, but concerning revealed truth one cannot parley. If the Church has heard the Word of God,

then it has a mission, something to say which man must hear, and it cannot be silent.

But Christianity is confronted to-day not only by the old religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam, but by the much more virile new religions of Communism, Fascism, and Humanism, which are capturing the youth of East and West. At the Jerusalem Conference it was stated that the greatest enemy which the Gospel has to face in our time is secularism, but this statement may lead to serious misunderstanding. For Christianity is face to face to-day, as Barth says, not with a world empty of gods, but with a world full of them. A generation ago, harmless world-views and philosophies occupied the field, now it is aggressive religions, of which there is an orgy. What is to be the attitude of the Church to them?

Does Christianity see and understand, asks Barth, that it is confronted with a whole series of alien religions—"Communism" with its anti-God propaganda, a religion such as Christianity has not had to face since the dawn of Islam; "Fascism" (or Hitlerism) with its slogans of Race: People: Nation: a religion of fixed dogmas, unqualified power, and forfeited freedom; "Americanism" with its deities of health and comfort, its bright-eyed egotism, united with a brilliant technical skill and indestructible optimism—and that it must have an answer to them? (21)

Does Christianity see that it has nothing to look for from these alien religions except conflict, which may become acute, even deadly? For they are all opposed to Christianity, and all intolerant, since Christianity puts the godhead of all their gods in question.

Does Christianity know, Barth asks further, how near the temptation lies to avoid this threatened conflict by a small betrayal? All that is required are a few grains of incense, a few concessions and accommodations, as the seal of betrayal. Does Christianity realise that this must not happen? If it rightly understands itself, it can do no other than prosecute the attack on the religions which lies in its very nature. It cannot argue with them, or throw out bridges towards them.

Finally, he asks, does Christianity understand itself? Does it understand that its proclamation, in contrast to other proclamations, is the Word of God? If it rightly understands itself, then it will not wish to be only a religion, it will know that it is more, that it is other, that it is the Church of the One God, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of the God Who has compassion for the lost. A Christianity which understands itself will desire nothing else than to provide the place where, amid the wordy splendours of the religions, man listens, and God speaks.

4. The Word as criterion of the Social Gospel. The relation of the doctrine of the Word of God to the so-called Social Gospel, which is so widely preached, above all in America, has also been under consideration by the Barthian group, and particularly by Gogarten. (22) Brunner deals with many of the problems which underlie it in his *Ethik*, to which we shall refer later. Barth in his new Dogmatics deprecates that the social work of the Church, with its all too human activities, should, as such, be set forth as the proclamation of the Love of Christ, but he is keenly alive to the problems. (23) By the Social Gospel is meant the call for social reconstruction, for

a new and better social and political world-order, in which many of the evils of the present, such as bad housing, poverty, unemployment, war, shall be done away.

The demand rises out of a real and grievous need. For at the heart of every social problem there is a social wrong. All these and other evils are symptoms of the sin of a fallen world. The immediate impulse of all men of good disposition, and especially of young men, with the generous enthusiasm of youth, is to say: "Let us arise and see that these evils are righted." Reproaches are also heaped upon the Church for her apparent apathy, politicians call upon her to be up and doing, and stung by these charges, she sets about with feverish activity to occupy herself with some aspect of the Social Problem. Christian people, besides, have shown themselves much more willing in recent days to undertake social work than to engage in soul-saving. They feel it to be less intimate and exacting, and possibly more correct. Not a few declare this to be the supreme task of the Church.

The present age, with its peculiar needs, has forced this problem on the attention of the Church. What we call the Social Problem had its origin in the industrialisation of the masses during last century. They were uprooted and torn from their old ways of living, and from their old loyalties and obedience, and swept into the industrial maelstrom, and they have never again been able to find a true resting-place and home in society. Many have not even a house in which they can live in decency, and bring up their children. Their chief distress of all is just that their life is robbed of its true humanity. Things, great

anonymous powers such as capital, companies, big business, tyrannise over them, and come between them and true life. If the Christian Church were to close her eyes to these evils, she would be cutting herself off from life itself, and from God, Who is to be found of us in our neighbours. For she would be refusing to take her share in bearing the load of misery which lies upon society.

But the question is whether the preaching of the Social Gospel, and the doing of social service, is the proper response of the Church, and whether it is the way in which she can best help to remove those evils. She is certainly on the right track when she employs the word "social" to describe the dangerous sickness under which mankind is suffering. It suffers because it has been deprived of true life, and of that order without which man in the long run cannot possibly live. To that extent the Social Problem is emphatically the concern of the Church. But is the Church on the right track, when she begins, *as a Church*, to work in a social manner, and make the Social Gospel her central Gospel, as she has been doing, in many quarters? The Church may well occupy herself with some forms of social service, as a second line of activity, to provoke the State to good works, as she did in the past with such marked success in education. But ought such service to be given a place in the first line of activity? Gogarten and the other theologians of the group answer the question with a "hard round No." The Church has to do with the Social Problem in the most intense manner, since the evils of society are symptoms of the "sickness unto death," the sickness of sin, from which humanity is suffering. But if the Church is not to betray the

Gospel she cannot answer the social question with a mere social answer. (24) She must give another answer; an answer which does not merely reveal the symptoms of the disease, but lays bare the root of the trouble, and removes the poison. She must deal with the sin of man, without the cure of which there can be no real remedy for those evils in the body politic, which we describe as the Social Problem. The Barthian theologians are not indifferent to the social wrongs which have prompted the Social Gospel. Some of them, including Barth himself, began as Christian Socialists, but they have suffered disillusionment with the Social Gospel, and have come to perceive that these external remedies "heal the hurt of My people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace."

The Social Problem is ultimately a question for the State, and the only remedy for it is through the State, which God has meant should be one of His greatest gifts to men. But the perfect city can only come through the perfect citizen. The so-called Social Evil is really a spiritual evil, and can only be countered by a spiritual remedy. What St. Paul said of his day is true also of ours, that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness" (Eph. vi. 12). What are the powers which the preachers of the Social Gospel propose to summon against those foes? Social remedies! Mere powers of flesh and blood! But only powers called out of a like sphere to that of the enemy, the spiritual sphere, can avail anything. *The Social Question demands a spiritual answer.*

An aspect of the Social Question of particular

urgent concern to Barth and his followers is the challenge which is being offered to-day to Christianity and to the Church, especially on the Continent, by Communism. They recognise that the whole of Christendom is being placed before a decision of tremendous moment, and that nothing less than the very existence of Christianity and of the Church is involved. With much that Karl Marx has said about the dehumanising of the proletariat through capitalism, and its consequent evils, they agree. They have no sympathy with any blind hatred of Communism. We are not, as Barth says, to take up a front against the Communistic proletariat, which would be like taking up a front against poor Lazarus. Communism is an inevitable reaction against Idealism, it is a recognition that the fate of the worker, including the fate of his soul, is largely determined by his economic condition.

The error of Karl Marx was to degrade man to a mere creature of Nature, who is what he eats, and to ignore his divine origin. The result has been to encourage the crassest eudæmonism and naturalism. The chief misery and distress of history, the Barthians perceive, is not man's industrial condition, to be cured by some future secular State, it is man's sin. And because the need of man is deeper than Marx allows, because it is anchored in his spiritual life and not in his industrial relations, because it has arisen out of the wrong relations between God and man, it can only be remedied through man's recovery of the lost image of God his Creator, and of his divine sonship. While this help is to be mediated through men, it can only come from God. It comes ever again in His Son, "Christ Jesus, our Hope." The call of the

Church to-day is, that instead of hiding behind its own walls of self-righteousness, and delivering its all-too-easy moral admonitions to the poor and distressed proletariat, whom Christ came in the first place to call, it should go to them with the strong liberating Word of God's Reconciliation. When the Church becomes again a Church of Sinners, a fellowship of faith, and hope, and real succouring love, and when it comes thus actively to the people, the people will come again to the Church.

5. The Word of God as criterion of Evangelism. The last field we shall touch, in which the Word of God must act as criterion, is Evangelism, for no living theology can be divorced from the Gospel. Barth is not an Evangelist any more than he is a Social Gospeller. "One can only be something," he would say, "one cannot be everything." He is a theologian, a dialectical theologian, and therefore he is not prepared to take up positive positions and dogmatise either as to what form shall be impressed upon Society, or as to how the Church is to do her work of Evangelism. That is for others. But Evangelism, as a ministry of the Word, must be the goal to which this Movement directs itself. A true theology of the Word must issue in a militant Evangelism (Rev. xix. 13).

As the Evangelism of the Word, it must have its origin in the Revelation of God in Christ, and must break in upon the soul as a Word from beyond. It must come as a sovereign Word, as the Word of One Who is Lord of our lives, with Whom we cannot parley, and Who claims obedience and surrender in everything we are, and have. It must come also as a personal Word, a Word directed to the individual,

the Word of a "Thou" to an "I." It must be what Dr. Buchman describes as "personalised evangelism."

As the Evangelism of the Word of God, its spearhead must be directed at sin, as the source of all the world's evil, at sin in every form; not only the sin of the non-religious, but the sin of the religious, for as Barth says, "the pious man, self-justified by his piety, is the last strong obstacle this side the action of God." It must evoke a response, even if it be at first the response of opposition, but its ultimate purpose is not to blame but to heal the sinner, and bring about the experience of the changed life. This experience has its beginning, not in the soul, but in God.

As the Evangelism of the Word, it can reach men through any lips, lay or clerical, for as the Word of God is not bound, neither can it be confined to any ready-made channels. God chooses His own channels. It was not to Annas and Caiaphas, although they were the high priests, that the Word of the Lord came, but unto John, in the wilderness (Luke iii. 2).

As the Evangelism of the Word, it is a message of new life, of revival to the Church, and through the Church to the world, and it must rely absolutely on the Holy Spirit to bestow the gift of faith, the power of obedience, and the daily guidance of the sanctified life.

Barth laments, in his new Dogmatics, that the Word of God cannot exercise its power as criterion on this and other fields, because there is wanting in the Protestant Church a serious theology. "How catastrophically must the Church misunderstand itself," he says, "when, under whatever pretext, it

imagines that it can undertake or carry out any serious work on what are certainly important fields, such as the reform of Church worship, or social work, or Christian pedagogics, or the ordering of its relations to the State and to Society, without at the same time doing what is necessary and possible with regard to the obvious centre of its life!" (25) We shall never, he holds, do the work which needs to be done on those different fields, until the Church sets itself to earnest theological work. Theology, he says, is not a form of peace-time luxury, for which there is no time when things grow serious for the Church. Things are always serious for the Church, says Barth, for she is always on her trial. And especially in days like these, when she is being assailed from without, theology is the most urgent of all her tasks. Let there be no mistake, he says. From these perverted ideas about theology, which prevail, there will arise and continue a lasting and increasing falling-off in the life of the Church. "The whole Church," he concludes, "must seriously desire a serious theology, if it will have a serious theology."

CHAPTER VIII

THEOLOGY OF THE WORD

THE Movement towards a truer theology arose out of the discovery of Barth and others as preachers, in the dark morning of the post-war world, that there was no vital theology with which the Church could meet its crisis.

Liberal theology, in which they had been trained, had proved unable to bear the strain under which much of its optimistic idealism had given way. Uniting itself with modern thought it had caught the ear of the modern man. Its individualism, its emphasis on liberty, its doctrine of the free autonomous will, its deification of man's powers and capacities, appealed to his egotism, and secured his approval. It made him the centre of all things; his perfection the goal of creation; his conscience the place of revelation; his spiritual values the tribunal before which even God must justify Himself. Religion had become little more than the attempt to relate everything to God, and give a meaning to life. Christianity was the highest religion because it had the purest morality, and stood for the worthiest moral values. It had lost its unique and central place in the life of man, and had become merely a rung, even if the topmost rung, in the ladder of comparative religion. In wide circles this liberal theology was accepted as

the only form in which Christianity could be held by enlightened men. But under the new spiritual realism this whole idealistic structure has crumbled, and the full relativity of its presentation of Christianity has been exposed to view.

Orthodoxy, particularly in its extreme form of Fundamentalism, was discovered also to be inadequate to the situation. It had always remained truer than liberal theology to the essentials of the Gospel, but by refusing to admit, or by admitting grudgingly, the rights of criticism, it had brought on itself the reproach of obscurantism. It had united itself with a dogmatic way of regarding Scripture as an objective presentation of doctrines divinely dictated about God and Christ, and had identified the authority of the Sovereign God with that of a Book. Contrary to the view of Calvin, that God cannot become an object of knowledge, it maintained that it could convey the direct knowledge of God, and make God intelligible, as an object to the mind; with the result that it tended to transform the Divine Revelation into a human possession, ignoring the crisis in man. "The weakness of orthodoxy," says Barth, "is not the supernatural element in the Bible; on the contrary, in that lies its strength. It is rather the fact that orthodoxy has a way of regarding some objective description of an element, such as the word 'God,' as if it were the element itself. But the fact is, that a man cannot believe what is simply held before him. He can believe nothing that is not both within him, and before him. He can believe nothing which does not reveal itself to him, which has not the power to penetrate to him. Only the God Who reveals Himself, is God."

Further, Orthodoxy, instead of being true to the Reformers' basing of faith in God, had sought to base it on reason, on Scripture, and on historical facts, as such. But its main departure from the Reformers had been its doctrine of verbal inspiration, a doctrine unknown to the Reformers, even to Calvin. By turning the witness of the Bible into the actual words of God, holy and sacrosanct, in word and letter, by breaking down the barrier between Revelation and Scripture, orthodoxy departed from the Reformed doctrine of the Word of God as a hidden word revealed only to faith, by the Holy Spirit, and turned Revelation into an open demonstrable item of information conveyed on a page of paper. "It was the beginning of the end," says Barth, "when in the seventeenth century men tore down the distinction between Scripture and Revelation, set up words as being immediately sacred in themselves, and with that, denied the hiddenness of the Word of God. God's Word cannot be otherwise given us than in hiddenness, not in a prompted or dictated form, but in a true human word." (1) This doctrine of inspiration, he says, produced a freezing and hardening of the relation between Scripture and Revelation, resulting in a rigid objectivity. Men no more knew that when one spoke of the "Word of God" one meant not the relation of man to God, but the relation of God to man, and lost all conception of the Word of God as a Divine proclamation. The Church, instead of being the place where the Word of God was proclaimed, became a private divine organisation for looking after the knowledge, faith, sanctification and blessedness of individual men; instead of being a place for the worship of God, it became a place for a

refined form of the service of men, God being the highest and most wonderful means to the end of their salvation. When one no more knew what "Word of God" was, it was not astonishing, says Barth, that the New Modernism which broke in found simpler and less wonderful ways for this service to men, and considered it a good work, well pleasing to God, to destroy this superfluous idol of orthodoxy. From the consequences of this catastrophic collapse of orthodoxy in the eighteenth century we are suffering, he says, to the present hour. (2)

A theology to meet the new post-war world has therefore to be sought, beyond Liberalism, while carrying forward the assured results of its critical and historical labours; and beyond Orthodoxy and Fundamentalism, while conserving the essential truths which these contain. The Barthian Movement, in its origin, might be described in Barth's own words, as an effort "to think through again the category of Revelation." It was a recognition that Revelation had become the most vital concern of the Church of our time. "We need," he said, "a new, a truer theology, and its truth and reality must consist in this, that we learn again to reckon with the category: *Logos tou Theou* (Word of God)."

Barth has rightly perceived that the problem of Revelation constitutes the central problem for our time; since Revelation has lost much of its original significance as an unveiling, or apocalypse, from the side of God, and is being stretched to cover all the perceptions and discoveries of man, which enrich human experience. Men speak of the revelation of science, of poetry, of art, as well as of religion. Religion is granted a place alongside the others, equally

valid with them in the search for Reality, but any claim to uniqueness is denied. The scientist has his contribution to make towards the understanding of Reality, likewise the poet and the artist, and in making his contribution the religious man has grounds for thankfulness if these other studies are found to be in accord with his own. "The researches of the scientist," says Mr. C. E. M. Joad, in his *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science*, "are equally valid with the perceptions of the plain man, the moral consciousness of the good man, the sensibility of the artist, and the religious experience of the mystic, as revelatory of Reality. Epistemologically, they stand on equal terms. If any of them gives information about a world external to themselves, so also do the others." This may be taken to express the general attitude to-day. "We are all engaged," says Professor J. S. Haldane, speaking to the Christian Evidence Society in London, "in the pursuit of truth, though of different aspects of it." Dr. B. H. Streeter, in his *Reality*, accepts this position, and sets religion alongside of science and art, as having at least an equal and valid right with these in the interpretation of Reality. Religion is to him a representation of Reality parallel to that given by science, religion being a representation of Reality in terms of quality, science in terms of quantity.

But if religion can claim to be no more than one of a number of autonomous activities, each with its own contribution to make towards the supreme object of the quest—Reality—can it hope to occupy anything more than a relative position? Can it establish itself in any absolute sense? Can it indeed be anything more than a spirit or temper, influencing

or seeking to influence all other activities? We think not. To agree with this view is surely to surrender the Christian Faith as a Revelation of God, which was given "once for all" in time, in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. x. 10). Jesus Christ is no longer *the* Revealer of God, since all aspects of life reveal Him. The ordinary world which we see and feel around us is a spiritual world of values, in which every man may find the manifestation of God. The knowledge of God, indeed, is a natural endowment of all human beings who set out seriously in the search for Reality. All that we can claim for Jesus is, that He is, to quote a phrase of Dr. C. E. Raven's, "a particular that truly expresses the universal."

The recognition that this problem of Revelation has become critical for our time, and that the very future of historical Christianity depends upon it, has led Barth and those associated with him, to set themselves against the whole modernist tendency in theology, and seek to bring the Church back to what they believe to be New Testament foundations. For the New Testament places in the foreground not an approach of man to Reality, but an approach of Reality to man, in answer to his quest. Man is sought and found of Reality. We are occupied in Christianity with a movement, not from man to God, but from God to man, in which it is simply impossible to equate Revelation with human discovery. For the New Testament is concerned, not with an evolutionary process of discovery, but with a revolutionary Act of God upon the world, in Jesus Christ. That does not mean that in other great religions there has been no approach of Reality to man, to which the name *revelation* in a general sense may

not be given. God has left Himself nowhere without a witness in the world. But in other religions, the events borne witness to, indicate no decisive coming of Reality to man, nothing which in the same manner brings the world and human life to a crisis. They do not signify an approach of Reality to man, in which Reality is seen taking the initiative in such a character as can only be described as unique. But such a coming of God to man is borne witness to in the Bible.

It is confusing to employ the word—revelation—to describe man's varied approaches to Reality, so, while allowing full value and place to these varied quests of the human spirit, Barth proposes to put the Revelation of God in Christ into a category by itself, as describing God's approach to man in His Word. This claim, that at a particular point in time and place God gave to man a Revelation for all times and places at once unique, and absolute, and one which "passeth knowledge" (literally transcends reason), presents a definite challenge to much modern thought, and it has encountered the anticipated opposition. For this modern thought cannot bear the idea that one single, historical event in time, should contain absolute truth. It maintains that we cannot thus confine the Absolute to any relative phenomenon, since all things stand in correlation. There are, we are told, no isolated facts or events which cannot be related to total reality. There can thus be no such thing as a *special* revelation. (3)

Further, modern thought will not allow any claim to set revelation above reason, since reason is not only the norm of all knowledge, but the organ of revelation itself. What can be higher than reason? it is asked.

Modern thought finds a still further stumbling-block in the claim that the witness to this Revelation is to be sought in the Bible, in what seems to it a mere collection of ancient literature.

Barth does not concern himself with an apologetic to conciliate the modern mind, and reconcile it with the claims of the Gospel. Nor does he consider it necessary to seek a foundation for his theology in any definite philosophy. He seeks rather to set this modern thought in the crisis of the Word of God, and bring its proud claims and assumptions before that judgment-seat. He is not so foolish as to think that he or any single individual, by himself, can do more than confess his own mind about the Faith of the Church. Theology is not a thing which can be created in a vacuum, it is a function of the Christian Church, and must arise as the fruits of the Church's reflection on the truths of its Faith. A Church's theology can neither be imported nor imposed, but must be the outcome of its own spiritual life, and in some continuity with its past. Nor can any old theology be reprinted, not even the theology of the Reformers, for they belong to a world that is past. Our occupation with them can only serve the purpose of having our eyes opened once more, through them, to receive a fresh understanding of the New Testament. But just as there came in the days of the Reformation, not a new truth, but the re-discovery of the old truth, so there is an urgent need in our time for a fresh interpretation of the Word of God, which is above and beyond time. It is the sense of this need which is the driving motive in Barth, and those allied with him, towards a new theological reconstruction. A theology to meet the

needs of a time which has lost its way in the bogs of psychology, and answer the pressing questions of existence, cannot be built on speculation, psychology, history, or even on Scripture. If it cannot claim to be founded on an Ultimate and Absolute—a Word of God—it can have no word for to-day. We must therefore go behind history and psychology, behind even Scripture, and build our theology where the Prophets and Apostles, and the Reformers also, built theirs, on the Word of God. It is with God as revealed, and not with God as surmised, or even as experienced, that we make our beginning. “The meaning and possibility of Dogmatics,” says Barth, “is not the Christian faith, but the Word of God. The Word of God is not founded and maintained upon the Christian faith, but Christian faith is founded and maintained upon the Word of God.” (4)

On this objective foundation, Barth proposes to build an evangelical theology which will prove adequate for our time. But there must needs be, first, a negative work of criticism and preparation. Barth and Gogarten agree that there is a work of pulling down to be done before theological rebuilding can proceed. The Christian Faith has been falsified through wrong thinking, and the first essential need of our time is right thinking. Gogarten, who has devoted himself particularly to this critical side, has directed a withering criticism against idealism, historicism, and psychologism, as the three influences which have betrayed the Christian Faith. From these theology needs to be liberated, and especially from the philosophical idealism, which has held it in thrall. (5) Theology is not philosophy, nor is it to be embosomed in, or controlled by philosophy.

Where the speculation of the philosopher ends, the belief of the theologian begins.

In seeking for his point of departure, Barth turns away alike from the liberal, and from the rational-orthodox interpretation of Faith, and seeks his starting-point in God Himself. It must be a theology, not an anthropology, nor a psychology. The search of the last hundred years has been to find God in man, in his reason, or conscience, or religious experience; and theology has tended to lose its distinctive character, and become anthropocentric and relative. This accounts for much of the prevailing uncertainty. For as a man can never feel sure of himself for two days on end, neither can he feel sure of a God anchored in himself. Barth does not suggest that reason and conscience are incapable of any apprehension of the Divine nature. But until illumined by the Holy Spirit they speak with uncertain voice, and therefore are untrustworthy as guides. In the interests of Christian certainty, therefore, we must begin from God, and not from man. This does not appear easy. We have become so accustomed to take hold of everything by the human end that we are apt to think there can be no other. If we are to find God at all, we imagine, we must proceed from here to there, from the known to the unknown. But how shall we find a starting-point in what seems a distant God? How can we come to know Him? Barth rejects as unsatisfactory the answer of Modernist theology which claims to arrive at a knowledge of God by way of personal experience. "What is a knowledge of God," he asks, "if in order to be certain of this knowledge I have to impute an *a-priori* content to my religious

experience, and if I have to recognise myself as the possessor of the special content of Christian experience? How can I say such things of myself which are simply not true?" On the basis of such experience, he holds, one does not reach God, but only an object to which one gives the name of God. God Himself is not a part either of history, or of personal experience. He is to be found neither *a priori*; nor *a posteriori*, except as He reveals Himself. That He is, must simply be believed. The existence of God is an axiom, a *principium* from which we take our beginning. The question "How do I know God?" Barth would answer in line with St. Paul and say "by being known of God before I knew Him, and by the fact that He has spoken to me" (Gal. iv. 9). (6) He makes no attempt to prove the existence of God, and would agree with Brunner that "next to the folly of denying God the greatest is that of proving God." Faith must precede knowledge. Not in the world around, nor in human nature, nor in the mystical experience, is God directly revealed. We cannot argue from the finite and temporal to the infinite and eternal, since there is "an infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity." God absolutely transcends our reason. Even religion is not a way by which we can arrive at God. Religion is the noblest pursuit of man. It is the passion for infinity in the midst of time, the longing for rest in the midst of unrest. But to be religious is one thing, and to know God is another. For religion belongs to this world, and can never enable us to overcome the limitations of our mortality. It is at best only a sign-post, pointing to the Yonder, the hidden Reality of God. At worst, it may become a great illusion

which hides God from us, or a narcotic, drugging instead of curing the soul.

There is no way from man to God. All so-called pathways to Reality fade out in the sand before they reach the goal. Since God is God and man is man, separated by so great a distance, not spatially or metaphysically, but epistemologically and spiritually, man is without hope of the knowledge of God, unless God come to him. As made in the image of God, he has the original possibility of receiving a divine revelation, but since this *imago Dei* has been destroyed by sin, he has no longer any natural faculty by which to receive it; it can only come to him by the grace of God. To man in his natural state God is become the *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden God, "to Whom no way, no bridge leads," says Barth, "of Whom we could say nothing, and would have nothing to say, if He had not met us of Himself as the *Deus Revelatus*. Only when man has grasped that as the meaning of the Bible does he perceive the importance of its statements that God reveals Himself." (7)

This doctrine of God as hidden and unknown, save as He gives Himself to be known, seems at first disturbing. It means the casting down of many idols, including that greatest of idols, mysticism, understood as the claim to an immediate and unmediated union with God; and the humbling of many imaginations. But thereby a way is cleared for God's Revelation of Himself in His Word.

We shall now proceed to look at the foundation-stones of the new edifice of evangelical theology to which Barth has set his hand, in his Church Dogmatics.

1. The first foundation-stone is his doctrine of God. Dogmatics, as Barth understands it, is "criti-

cal reflection on the content of the Church's preaching, or proclamation." True to his principle that the Word of God reaches us first through the proclamation of the Church, in creed, and sermon, he begins with the full Christian doctrine of God as it meets him in the Church, the doctrine of the Trinity, which, he says, still retains a place in the evangelical Church, ravaged though it be by Modernism. (8) The doctrine of the Trinity is not, as such, he says, the Word of God. It is the result of the Church's reflection on the true content of the proclamation. The Trinity is and remains a mystery, and there can be no talk of rationalising it, since there is nothing to rationalise. All that theology can do is to understand it so as to bring to view that it is a mystery. For the Trinity is revealed to us only in its activity; in itself it is incomprehensible. What the Trinity says to us is, that God is He Who reveals Himself, and that no other than God is Revealer. It tells us how far He Who reveals Himself to men, according to the witness of the Scriptures, can be our God. (9) It tells us that He can be our God because, in all His three revelations of His Being, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He is one and the same *Lord*.

According to the Scriptures, the One God reveals Himself first as *Creator*, that is, as Lord of our being, of life and death, Who is our Father. He is not Father because He is our Creator, He is Creator and Lord, because He is our Father. (10) In the event which the Bible describes as Revelation, God deals with man as Lord. Not as a Being of the same nature and order as that to which man belongs, does He deal with men, nor as a Being of Whom

man could just as well, on his side, be lord, but as One Who, as Creator and Father, has all power in heaven and in earth. God is the supreme court which, in contrast to all others, is for man absolute, and without appeal. Therefore the ruling name for God in the Old Testament is Lord, and in the New Testament also Lord (*kyrios*), the name, be it remembered, which, on the summit of New Testament witness, is given to Jesus. This doctrine of God as Creator, Father, and therefore as Lord, has nothing whatever to do with the Unconditioned, or the Universum, or the *ens perfectissimum*, or God as the Ground of all Being, of philosophy, whether or not it affixes to it the label of "Father." (11) It is a truth of Revelation.

At the basis of Barth's whole theology lies this doctrine of God as Lord: sovereign, transcendent, and unknowable, except as He reveals Himself. God is the Lord, the Holy, the Unexpected, the Coming One, revealed in His hiddenness, ruling in Nature, history, and human life, but supremely in Jesus Christ the Lord, yet hidden in His Revelation. "That we know nothing of God," says Barth, "that the Lord is to be feared—that is His pre-eminence over all other gods, that is what characterises Him as God, as Creator and as Saviour." God is not a transcendent X outside the world, existing in solitary being; He created this world, and in Him it exists. Metaphysically He is not far off, but His relation to the world is a transcendent relation. In so far as everything existent stands in relation to Him, He is *totaliter aliter*—the Wholly Other.

Barth is inclined to cast off words which he has himself coined, when they become worn by use, and

lose their early impression, and instead of speaking of God as the Wholly Other, or as *totaliter aliter*, he prefers now, as we shall see, to speak of Him in this connection simply as Lord, or as "The Other Who is the Lord." (12) This emphasis on the *Otherness* of God, or on God as *Lord*, for the two words mean the same thing, is not a new, but an old truth which has been submerged under the flood of an idealistic philosophy that has striven to efface the barrier between God and man, and establish between them an identity and continuity. It is a great and central doctrine of the Old Testament, rooted in the first commandment of the Decalogue, and emphasised in the teaching of the prophets, and in the Book of Psalms. "For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. xcvi. 5). Jehovah, as Moses taught, was altogether Other than the capricious Nature gods which were worshipped around, on which no sure basis for a moral life could be founded. Jehovah was transcendent, holy, and self-consistent, One upon Whom men could rely, One Who confessed Himself to men in covenant and in symbol, that He was their God, and yet One Who maintained a distance between Himself and His creatures (Eccles. v. 2).

It is an equally great truth of the New Testament, not in any way minimised by the fact that Jesus taught His disciples, when they prayed, to say: "Our Father." Any idea of continuity, or of identification of nature between man and God, was not in His mind. God was in heaven, and man upon the earth. The distance between man and God was not too great to be crossed by parable, as in the story of the lost son, or by symbol, as in the Lord's

Supper, but the "how much more"! was not to be forgotten. When tempted by Peter to take the line of self, Jesus flashed out in words reminiscent of Isaiah: "Your thoughts are not God's thoughts, but man's" (Matt. xvi. 23, Weymouth). Already in the Synoptics, and still more in the later witness, men are seen putting a distance between them and Jesus, as One immeasurably superior, and other than themselves. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8).

This doctrine of God as Lord, or Other, is at the foundation of the whole eschatological character of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. It received, as we have seen, fresh emphasis at the Reformation. But to-day God and the world are being confused, and all sense of distance between man and God, and with it the sense of reverence for God, are disappearing. In order to grasp this particular emphasis of Barth's on God as Other, or Lord, we need to understand it as a polemic against the prevailing identification of God and man, which was so strongly before Barth's mind when he wrote his *Romans*. (13) It is a protest against what he calls "the religious temerity which in the dizzy exaltation of its experiences talks of God and means itself." Barth does not deny that "in God we live and move and have our being," for He is our Creator and Preserver, but he does deny that we can, therefore, identify ourselves with God, and imagine that we are speaking of God, when we are merely saying Man with a loud voice. God is Maker of heaven and earth, but there is no natural continuity between Creator and creature; but a discontinuity. For God is Other than man, Other than the world, Other than the highest thoughts of religious

men concerning Him (1 Cor. ii. 9). But other does not mean alien. God is not alien to man, except in so far as man has alienated himself from God by sin (Eph. iv. 18). To Jesus as to Paul, the Otherness of God was the Otherness of inconceivable love, as revealed in the Cross.

As God the Lord, He dwells in the world and in our hearts. He works in the events of life, and against the events. He wakens and enlightens men, until they open their eyes and see the events in their terrible reality, and realise that their distress is the judgment which overtakes them, because they have forgotten God. Men play with God until He intervenes with a mighty hand, and reveals Himself as Lord "Whose is the earth and the fullness thereof"; and when the light of this knowledge breaks in upon the night of human life and men understand their need, then a new day floods over the world. As the Other, God is not the Ground of the world, but the Lord of the world. As the Other, He is also the Answer to all the questions of man, the Answer which no man, even in the highest flights of his religion, can discover.

The criticism is sometimes made, as we shall later see, that in his doctrine of God as sovereign and transcendent, Barth has no place for the divine immanence, but his theology is quite consistent with a true conception of immanence. He has no place, it is admitted, for a doctrine of divine immanence in which the lines of distinction between God and the world disappear in a vague mystical pantheism. God is and remains God, transcendent and other from the world of His creation, yet the hidden glory of His presence shines through, and His Works point and witness to the Worker (Rom. i. 20). God the

Creator is *in* the world, sustaining, succouring, and directing it, and in Him it exists; but He is not *of* the world, nor is the world a part of God. God is God, and world is world. "God does not," says Barth, "reveal Himself apart from His creature, but in the creature, and through the creature, but He does it in such a way that He, Who is revealed, is the Lord."

Paradoxical as it may seem, God is both near and far, transcendent and immanent, hidden and revealed. Only in this zigzag, dialectical manner of seeking truth, like a climber on an Alpine ridge seeing now one aspect, now another, can the full truth be envisaged. We cannot settle in definite positions, positive or negative, for neither the affirmation alone, nor the negation alone, expresses the full truth. It lies beyond Yea and Nay. The Word of God is and remains a mystery, in its totality. We can never grasp it as a synthesis, or system, either in theory or in practice. While one side of it is revealed to us, the other side is hidden; not withdrawn, but hidden. The connection of the two, we cannot perceive; if we could, the Word of God would no more be a mystery. Because of this "one-sidedness" of the Word of God, as Barth calls it, what God says to us remains what it is, a mystery. His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. (14). (Isa. lv. 8.) While we have reason to rejoice, says Barth, that the great words, God, Spirit, Word, Revelation, have again come into our field of vision, he would warn us against being too confident and brisk, in taking these great themes on our lips as if we could analyse or construct them, since they are never at the command of our constructions,

or even of our deepest Biblical knowledge. (15) We must be on our guard against over-assurance.

The ultimate undialectical truth about God, which could never have been discovered had it not been revealed by Jesus Christ, and which needs to be revealed afresh to every heart, is that God is the Eternal Father (Matt. xi. 27). He is not our Father because He is our Creator, He is our Creator because He is our Father. He is Father in Himself "from Whom every family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15, R.V.), and from Whom it receives its meaning and dignity. The Fatherliness of God is the *fons et origo totius divinitatis*, that quality of being out of which every other manner of being springs. (16)

Barth counsels us against the objectification of this idea of God as Father, after the manner of rationalism, ancient and modern. This is to make of God the Father a common truth of which Jesus is the symbol, bearer, and witness, with the result that the first Person of the Trinity vanishes into a mere name for the idea of all good, and the relation of God to man ceases to be a revelation. Barth will recall his generation to the sovereign and exalted Father of the Lord Jesus Christ before Whom we must bow in reverence. In our insolent pride we have been pushing too closely up to God; Barth will, to use his own expression, "reinstatate the distance" between God and man. He Who is our Father is the transcendent God, Whose throne is in heaven, Whose footstool is the earth (Matt. v. 35), before Whom the only right attitude is humility. Yet He is none the less, but only more, the Father.

According to the Scriptures, the One God reveals Himself, secondly, as *Reconciler*, that is as Lord

in the midst of our enmity against Him. In order to reconcile us to Himself, He is come as Son, or Word of God. The truly incomprehensible thing in Revelation is the work of the Son of God as *Reconciler*. (17) It is not identical with the love of God to the world which He created—between which and our world lies sin and death—there is revealed in it the love of God for a lost world, for men who are in guilt and sin; a world whose continuity with that original world is completely hidden from us (John iii. 16). Therefore the Reconciliation is not a continuation of the creation, but an incredible new work of God, reaching out beyond it. This is the work of the Son, or Word of God, not without the Father, it is true, yet the Son is not the Father. This wonder could not be the work of a superman, nor of a demigod, but only of God Himself. It presupposes the Godhead of Jesus. The unheard-of nature of the love of God would be undervalued if one were to question the true Godhead of the Reconciler. The character of Almighty grace, which has done this work, demands the recognition that its Subject is identical in the full sense with the Father. Jesus is Son, or Word of God for us because He is first such in Himself. As the Son, or Word of God, Who has come to us, He is Lord and this Lordship He has from Him Whom He calls Father.

Jesus Christ as the Eternal Son of the Father, can thus reveal the Father, and reconcile us with the Father, because He is what He is. He does not *become* Son, or Word of God, in the event of Revelation. The event of Revelation has Divine truth and actuality because Jesus reveals Himself as what He was before, and is in Himself. In the deeps of God-

head is God the Son, as there is God the Father. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God Himself, as God the Father is God Himself. It is not the Revelation and Reconciliation which create His Godhead, but His Godhead which creates the Revelation and the Reconciliation. (18)

This dogma of the Godhead of Jesus, says Barth, is not found, as such, in the Biblical texts. It is an interpretation. But we can convince ourselves that it is a good and relevant interpretation of them. "Therefore," he says, "we close with it: the Godhead of Christ is true, eternal Godhead."

We shall return to Barth's Christology in dealing with his critics.

According to the Scriptures the One God reveals Himself, thirdly, as *Redeemer*, that is, as the Lord Who sets us free. He is, as such, the Holy Ghost, through Whom we become the sons of God, because He is the Spirit of the love of God the Father, and of God the Son, first in Himself. Once more, we start from the New Testament witness that Jesus is the Lord. (19) But how do men come to say this? They do not say it as a result of their own reflection. They do not say it at the end, but at the beginning of their thinking about Him. How comes this content into this vessel? Can men then believe? The answer of the New Testament to these questions is: Revelation. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee" (Matt. xvi. 17). The possibility of faith is not given simply with the fact that Jesus is the Revelation of the Father. The possibility is given by the Holy Spirit, Who is "the subjective side in the event of Revelation." The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments is God Himself, in

so far as, in an incomprehensible but actual manner, and without being less God, He becomes present in the creature. By the power of this presence He can realise the true relation of the creature to Himself, and by the power of this relation to Himself He can give life to the creature. The creature needs the Creator in order to live. It needs also the relation to Him. But this relation it cannot itself create. God, therefore, creates it through His own presence in the creature. This God, in His freedom to be present in the creature, and with that to be the life of the creature, is the Spirit of God. God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, particularly in Revelation, is God Himself, in so far as He not only comes *to* man, but is *in* him, and thus opens man for Himself and makes him ready and capable, so that He can carry out His Revelation in him. Man needs this Revelation, without which he is lost. He needs that he be made open for the Revelation, for he has no possibility in himself. It can only be God's actuality when it takes place, and only in God's own possibility can it take place. It is God's actuality, in that He Himself becomes, subjectively, present to men, not only from without, or from above, but from within. It is also His actuality, in that He not only comes to man, but actually meets Himself in man. God's freedom to be thus present in men, and to bring about this meeting, is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, in Revelation. (20)

The Holy Spirit is not, says Barth, to be identified with Jesus Christ, with the Son, or Word of God. Even such a word as 2 Corinthians iii. 17, often quoted to prove it, does not deal with an identification of Jesus Christ with the Spirit, but with the statement

that Lordship belongs to the Spirit. The Spirit is Lord. Where the Spirit is, there is the Lord Who is God; there also, is freedom from every veiling of the heart.

The Third Person of the Trinity, accordingly, is the Eternal Spirit. He is not a mere name for a special deep and earnest conviction of a truth or experience. God the Spirit is as God the Father, and God the Son. The Spirit poured out at Pentecost is the Lord God Himself.

To the Spirit, in the faith and experience of the Church, we shall return.

2. The second foundation-stone of Barth's evangelical theology is his doctrine of man.

As we have seen, he disclaims all intention to construct an anthropology, and refuses to think of man "from man outwards", which once more, he says, would be going in the track of Schleiermacher. (21) There is a way from a Christology to an anthropology, but there is no way from an anthropology to a Christology. (22) He will view man only in the light of the Word of God. The Bible gives us no abstract idea of sin, but it tells the story of sinning, rebellious man. The Fall of man is not to be confused with a temporal event; it tells, not the story of Adam, but the story of each of us. Just as Creation is not to be thought of as an event in the past, but as a *creatio continua* proceeding out of eternity into time, so it is with sin. The original Fall of man, which conditions human life, becomes ever again a present event, in which the world as a whole and in every moment separates itself from God, a condition from which man can neither escape nor be exculpated, since by his will he identifies

himself with the sin of Adam. He cannot withdraw from responsibility since it is always again an act of disobedience by which he separates himself from God.

Man, as Barth sees him, has fallen out of his original relationship to God the Creator, and has in consequence, come under the law of sin and death. The world to which he belongs is a fallen world, the life-force which rules it ends in death. (23) The divine creation itself lies for man under the veil of sin. Not only that, but man actually throws up between himself and God illusions behind which he hides himself, often making his very religion to be a veil between him and God. Through his sin man has thus lost all capacity of his own to receive the Word of God, unless God first open his heart to it by His Spirit. This is Barth's doctrine of man. We cannot dispense with anthropology, he says, for we must speak of men ; but all theological anthropology, all doctrine of man, to whom the Word of God is revealed and by whom it is received, must stand under the sign and proviso of the Holy Spirit. (24) In the event of Revelation God is the Lord. He Who is Lord of the speaking is also Lord of the hearing. The Lord Who gives the Word is also the Lord Who gives faith. This Lord of our hearing, the Lord Who gives faith, the Lord by Whose act man's openness and readiness for the Word are true and actual, is God the Holy Ghost.

According to the Modernist view, sin is not to be denied, but it does not need to be taken too seriously. It is no more than a "not-yet" ; it is not a canker at the root of life. There is no radical severance of relations between God and man ; if man goes deep

enough into his own nature, the continuity with God will be found to be unbroken. He has, therefore, the capacity in himself to recognise and receive the Word of God. There has been, says Barth, an almost overpowering development in Protestant theology, since the Reformation, in the whole tendency of the Church which we know as Modernism, towards an impressive affirmation of this view. (25)

According to the Barthian view, on the other hand, sin is a rebellion which has caused between God and man a breach so deep and desperate that it cannot be restored from man's side. Man is a rebel who wantonly has forsaken the fellowship between him as creature, and God as Creator, and placed himself in a position where this fellowship is impossible. Of the Fall of man itself we have no knowledge. It does not belong to history. But man, in the only condition in which we have any knowledge of him, is a fallen and disobedient creature. His sin does not consist in the fact that he is a creature, and as such is at a distance from the perfection of God. It consists in the fact that he has ignored the distance, and has sought to be like God (Gen. iii. 5). This dualism, which is not cosmological but moral, being caused by sin, renders all idealistic and modernistic optimism untrue. For the result of sin goes beyond man, it affects the universe. On it is pronounced the everlasting No of God.

But this separation between God and man, Creator and creature, cannot be final, for then God would not be God. A meeting must be possible, since God is the Lord. This meeting has been made possible by the grace of God which alone could surmount the obstacle of sin. Grace, as Kierkegaard defined it, is

the expression at once of God's endless love, and of His endless sublimity. It puts God endlessly far from us, at a distance beyond what any meritoriousness could reach. But it brings Him also endlessly near to us, so that God and man can meet in grace, while yet the distance of utter reverence is maintained.

Barth starts, then, not from the glory of the heavens, or the capacity of man to receive the Word of God, but from man as a sinner who has "come short of the glory of God." He is awake to all the relative values of life. To call him a pessimist, as some have done, is seriously to misjudge him. For Barth says Yes to life, even to the life of the order of Nature. He himself knows the happiness of the natural world, of home, of wife, and children, and friends, and looks out upon the world through eyes and glasses that gleam with humour. His outlook on life may probably be found expressed in Ecclesiastes ix. 7-10. He is a pessimist only in so far as he feels constrained to condemn any view of life which is not based on the recognition of its present, relative, and problematical nature. He sees man as he is, characterised by a deep restlessness, standing as he does "on a middle ground between angel and animal, which he calls humanity." Nowhere is there peace. Everything appears as determined by the inevitable necessity of death, the final law of the world. This view of life, Barth bases not on the ground of any judgment of his own, for he disclaims any philosophy of life, but on the ground of God's judgment on man, as revealed in His Word.

Since God is the Lord, and man is removed from Him, not merely by the distance between Creator

and creature, but by the gulf which has been dug by human sin, it would be presumptuous for man to assume the place of God and speak directly of Him, after the manner of the dogmatist. Hence this theology, instead of speaking of God in the assured way of orthodoxy, or in the rationalistic way of liberalism, makes room for God Himself to speak, while man, standing afar off as the publican, receives the Word humbly and brokenly, with a "God be merciful to me a sinner." For this reason, the Theology of the Word, as we would prefer to call it, is sometimes spoken of as the "Dialectical Theology." It has also been given the name of "the Theology of Crisis," which comes nearer the heart of it, because it lets us see man in his relation to the living God, and in the crisis of the individual before God, which is brought about by his contact with Him.

The word *crisis* is employed in various nuances, in this theology, but particularly to indicate the *moment* of judgment, in which man is set by the Word, and forced into a decision for God or for the world. Since God the Lord is the speaker, and man is the hearer, the Word of God when it comes to a man always sets up a radical crisis in his heart; and since the Word of God is contemporaneous, man is always faced with this possibility. Not every crisis in a man's heart, not every radical crisis, is a crisis of the Word of God. In the other crises of life the choice of what he may or do lies with man. He himself completes his decision. But in the crisis of the Word, it is a decision in which he is placed by God, a decision of faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience, in which he finds himself in a new situation. (26)

Human life itself has no answer to its own questions,

and sooner or later a man comes to a point when all is lost unless he meets God in His Word. He is compelled to look to a Beyond if he desires to know the Whence and Whither of his existence here. But whenever man's existence in time becomes a question to him, God draws near, and in the crisis of human and earthly values, when their vanity is realised, God's Reality is disclosed. For the crisis of all that is temporal points to the Eternal. In the moment of death, man becomes aware of the meaning of life. He can no longer live in the naïve, self-sufficient way of the order of Nature, which has hitherto seemed good to him, after there has broken into his soul, as it did in a momentous hour for Thomas Chalmers, "the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity." He ceases to be an objective observer, or spectator of life; his whole existence is now involved, and he thinks and acts as if it were his last hour, which in a sense it is.

It is to this encounter with the Word of God in the moment between time and eternity, which sets before a man the alternative of "either-or," and requires of him immediate decision, that this theology gives the names *crisis*. This conception, as Bultmann has shown, is deeply embedded in the teaching of Jesus, Who knew Himself as constituting the supreme crisis for every man who met Him. His very presence among men in word and work was, according to St. John, their crisis for life or for death (John ix. 39). "The God of Jesus," says Bultmann, "is a God of the Future who yet encounters us in the Present." (27) The note of crisis, with its repeated emphasis on NOW, and TO-DAY, which sounds like a bugle-note all through the prophets, and through the New Testa-

ment, and through the works of the Reformers, is being sounded forth once more in this theology and imparts to it, its note of urgency. So long as man remains in his pride and self-assurance he feels no need of a Mediator, but when the knowledge of his sinfulness comes home to him in an eternal moment in the crisis of the Word, he is made ready for the Gospel of the God-Man. (28)

3. The third foundation-stone of Barth's evangelical theology is his doctrine of Christ, as God-Man and Mediator. Barth has not yet developed his view fully, as Brunner has done in *Der Mittler*, which so far is the best exposition of the atonement from this standpoint, but we know, in general, his line of thought.

Barth and Brunner alike hold that the Cross of Christ is a mystery which man cannot fathom. Each one of the similes and metaphors of the New Testament illumines the problem, but they are like the radii of a circle, or the spokes of a wheel, which all point to the centre, but at the centre there is a hole—an emptiness. God cannot be expressed. The defective Systematic of Luther at this point, says Brunner, is the true Systematic. But while we cannot understand the mystery, we must, as with the Trinity, seek to understand what the Bible means by the mystery. (29)

Barth and Brunner both commence from the fact of sin, from the disturbed relationship between God and man, which is the presupposition of the atonement. Reconciliation assumes previous hostility between two. Man is at enmity against God, and God's holy reaction is His anger. For sin involves not the mere overcoming of distance between man

and God, which would be only negative; sin is something real and positive, which has come between God and man, and blocks the way, and which man himself cannot thrust aside. Sin has thus importance to God, it is rebellion against Him as Lord. The wrath of God is not an imagination, but truth. It is not the last word about God, as it is not the first, it is God's averted face. But as sin is not an illusion, neither is God's anger an illusion. (30)

In the Revelation of God in Christ, however, the Divine Love breaks through the anger. The self-movement of God towards man, which is the theme of the Bible, completes itself in the place of strongest opposition, that of man's sin and guilt. It is in the propitiation, in which the overflowing love of God becomes revealed, in spite of the activity of the Divine anger, that the full meaning of the Cross is discerned. The Cross had to be, since reconciliation could take place only through a changed situation, and God Himself must rear the Cross, and Himself suffer there. The Cross is the place where the loving, forgiving, merciful God is revealed, while at the same time acknowledgment is made that God is holy. The absolute Holiness and the absolute Mercy of God are at one. The propitiation is the presupposition of justification by faith. There could be no such thing as justification by faith possible, had there not been a propitiation to make it possible. Justification is the most incomprehensible of all things that exist. Other wonders are on the periphery, but this wonder stands at the centre. It is the incredible thing, the unheard-of *novum*, whose certainty can only rest on a Divine act in which Christ stood in our place, and we in His place.

Jesus Christ, as the God-Man and Reconciler, is therefore the centre of the Christian Faith, and the chief corner-stone of evangelical theology. He is Himself the Revelation and the Reconciliation. He is the bridge which God has thrown out to man in his sin and need, over which He comes to us. (31) The grace of God meets us in the place of greatest terror. God does it, God suffers, God takes sin on Himself, for only God by His sacrifice can atone. The suffering of Jesus did not begin with Gethsemane and Calvary, it did not begin in history, but on the border between time and eternity. It began with the humiliation, when He took on Him the form of a servant and entered into the contradiction of our human existence, and assumed the "flesh of sin." The incarnation was no gesture, but bitter reality. As Luther said: "*nostra assumpsit ut nobis sua conferret.*" He made Himself one with sighing, sinful humanity in a complete solidarity, identifying Himself even with the dregs of humanity, publicans and sinners; and His solidarity culminated in His vicarious death. As the second Adam, the original Man, not touched by the Fall, but Himself the image of God, He drank the cup of our sinful existence, refusing every privilege which was His as the Son of God, and uttered to His Father the Amen of a perfect obedience (Phil. ii. 8). His solidarity with God as the Son or Word of God was the foundation of His solidarity with men. (32)

On Calvary, reconciliation was made once and for all, in time, but the reconciliation is not itself a fact which took place on the plane of human history. It lies in a dimension which no historian *qua* historian knows. What took place on Calvary is an event

only for the believer. It is once and for all, but this is a truth which faith alone can perceive. The world is not redeemed. It is not Christian. But there is a reconciliation waiting for the world. (33)

Since it holds so strongly the doctrine of Christ as the God-Man, as a foundation-truth of the Gospel, one can understand the reaction of the whole Barthian Movement against the romantic preoccupation of liberal and modernist theology with the personality and self-consciousness of the Jesus of History. Books still pour from the press, in different countries, presenting attractive pictures of Jesus as a great "confidence-inspiring personality," as a recent American writer (Purinton) describes Him, but while they profess to tell us much about "the Religion of Jesus," and "the meaning of Jesus in the life of to-day," they fail completely to interpret the Christ of the New Testament. Not only does the Theology of the Word regard this Jesus of History as a purely modern and subjective creation, untrue to the New Testament witness, it holds that this growing interest in the Christ "after the flesh" is identical with a disappearing understanding of the "Christ in the flesh," to use Brunner's distinction, the Christ to Whom the New Testament bears witness. (34) The New Testament witness also believed in a "Christ in the flesh," a historical Jesus. The knowledge of the historical Jesus is the necessary presupposition, but not the sufficient foundation of the knowledge of the Christ. Christian Faith does not arise out of the knowledge of the historical picture of Jesus, as the Church has always been aware, and as the Reformers emphasised. It arises only out of the Christian witness. From the first days the Church has regarded

the Christian witness as the one adequate ground of Christian knowledge. It belongs to the very nature of Revelation that one should come to faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, not through the historical picture of Jesus, but through the witness of the Church to the Risen Christ, as given in the Scriptures. Occupation with this "Christ after the flesh," says Brunner, is what remains, when one has nothing more decisive to say regarding Jesus as the Christ. For the Church it can mean nothing other than a growing disintegration, in so far as the Church is understood as the fellowship of believers in Christ.

The result must be in the end equally disastrous for what we call the Christian life. The Christian life, as the New Testament witness understands it, is not the following of the Jesus of History, or of the Religion of Jesus; it is not believing *like* Jesus, but believing *in* Jesus. The Christian life is the life which God in Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. To quote Barth: "The Christian life, in its true and proper sense, is something which we do not live. A different person altogether lives this Christian life, God in Jesus Christ." It is true, certainly, that our life is "hid with Christ in God." But, as St. Paul indicates, this is an eschatological conception whose full realisation lies in the future. For the present, this life is hidden, and is ours only in promise, until "Christ Who is our life, shall appear" (Col. iii. 4). But here and now, while we live in the world, Christ lives in us. This means that conflicts are set up in the heart of man between his natural pride and his desire to be a creator, and the grace of God; conflicts which are only solved by complete surrender to God, for grace prevails only as the natural man yields to it,

and becomes less and less. It means also that absolute standards are set up for us which are not ours but God's. Here is where the life of the historical Jesus, a life lived on our human plane, asking no privileges or advantages, is of indispensable significance for the Christian life. He made Himself one with us. But if Jesus were no more than one of us, He would have nothing decisive, nothing fundamental to say to us, for He would know as little as we do. A man, even were he the greatest of world history, has fundamentally nothing to say to his fellow-men. A great man is only one who has a deeper consciousness of the poverty and sickness of all, and can give better expression to it. A man, whether he be great or small, is one who is bound, but never one who can open his prison-house. He is one who needs fulfilment, and redemption, but not one from whom they come. But Jesus began His ministry by saying: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 21). With that He claimed to be the Fulfiller, saying, by implication, that He was more than man, that in Him God Himself had come to us. He came as He said "not to destroy the law but to fulfil it," and having fulfilled it in a perfect life of love and obedience, He completed its fulfilment on the Cross, by "being made a curse for us." The law remains for the Christian, in an even more absolute sense than for the Jew, as set up in the life and teaching of Jesus, in its standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, love, and such-like, no longer as a burden and a curse, but as a blessed fruit of faith which becomes a joy in the fellowship of the Spirit. "The law keeps its place beside the Gospel as another, a second reality,"

says Barth, "equally true, equally commanding and necessary, because the one God stands behind both, because the one Holy Spirit imparts both to men."

4. The fourth foundation-stone of Barth's evangelical theology is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

It has sometimes been suggested that this theology, with its emphasis on the distance between man and God, and its depreciation of religious experience, can have no proper place for the Holy Spirit. But on the contrary, it is its crowning doctrine, for in the doctrine of the Spirit the theology of the Word finds its completion. "He who says Holy Spirit," says Barth, "in sermon or in theology, speaks always a last word. He speaks then, whether he knows it or not—though it is good to know it—of the event in which God's Word to men is not only revealed *to* man but also believed *by* him." (35) The Christian Revelation calls for the Spirit, without Whom it can neither be received, nor understood. The Word of God would not have become a saving Word to the world, if the movement of Reality towards man in Jesus Christ had not been accompanied by a corresponding movement in the consciousness of man, attesting the Word as true. This has been the work of the Holy Spirit, as the subjective side in the event of Revelation, to prepare the world and the Church to receive the Word, and to bring the truth home to the individual through His inward witness. (36) The Holy Spirit, says Barth, exercises a threefold function.

He guarantees to man what man cannot guarantee to himself, his personal participation in Revelation. The work of the Holy Spirit in Revelation is

the Yes to God's Word which is spoken through God for us, and not only to us, but in us. This is the secret of faith, the secret of the knowledge of God's Word, the secret also of a willing obedience, well-pleasing to God. In the Spirit, man has everything ; faith, knowledge, obedience.

Secondly, the Spirit gives to man teaching and direction which he cannot give to himself. For the Spirit is not identical with ourselves. He remains the Absolutely Other, the Superior. As our Teacher and Leader, He is in us, but not as a power by which we can ourselves become lords. He is Himself the Lord.

Thirdly, and most decisively, and centrally, the Spirit is the great possibility by the power of which men can so speak of Christ that their speech becomes *witness*, and thus the Revelation of God in Christ becomes once again actual and contemporaneous through it. The Holy Spirit is the capacity to speak of Christ, the gift of witness concerning the "wonderful works of God," the equipment of prophets and apostles. It is no exposition of the story of Pentecost, says Barth, if it is not brought out that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consisted concretely in the fact that *tongues* of fire sat on each of the disciples, that "they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance," and that those present from all possible distant lands heard them speak, each "in his own language" (Acts ii. 6). (37)

The story of Pentecost, and the sending of the Spirit, fascinates Barth, and he returns to it again and again. He reminds us that the Holy Spirit is seen in that event, acting throughout as Subject.

On all alike, without distinction of intellect, or character, or preparation, or measure of cooperation, the Spirit comes. Here is something quite different from the spirit of man, or religious genius, or what we call religious experience. God is still God, and man is man. The God Who descends on man at Pentecost is not something divine which man can carry in himself, and which in some way belongs to the nature of man. He is God the Lord. Certainly God and man belong to each other, but they belong as Lord and servant. The Spirit, so to speak, maintains His identity while He dwells in man. But something bars us off from the full understanding of Pentecost, for it lies on the extreme limits of what we can grasp, on the border line of the mysterious and incomprehensible. It is the last and deepest secret of Christianity. The miracle of the Holy Ghost is that He makes Jesus present to us, and places Him in the centre, as the Truth Who becomes ever again true. No space or time any longer parts us from Christ. He is the Great Contemporary, ever in the midst of us. There is for Him not only a once and a yesterday, but also a to-day and a to-morrow. What He says to us is not a mere accidental truth of history, of value for a certain time and place; the truth, as it is in Jesus, is as true to-day as it was a thousand years ago, and it will still be as true a thousand years hence, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus lives in the message of His witnesses, as an ever-present Christ. In the gift of the Spirit, therefore, the Work of Christ in time reaches its completion. To be a Christian is to trust in the power of the Spirit, to believe in the victory of the Spirit, to work for the cause of God with the gifts of the Spirit, and to make room for the

Spirit in our heart. The Holy Spirit is indispensable. Through the witness of the Spirit, the Bible becomes for us the Word of God ; the Jesus of History becomes the Christ of faith ; the Cross and Resurrection become present realities ; through the Spirit the new man is created, justified, sanctified, and lives daily in the promise of a coming Redemption. All that is to be said of men who have received the Holy Spirit, if it is to be said in the meaning of the New Testament, has to be said eschatologically, that is, in view of the end, and the eternal actuality of the Divine Fulfilment. (38)

In the Word of God, become a present word through the Holy Spirit, and expressing itself in the life of the Church, in faith and experience, Barth lays, then, the fourth foundation-stone of his theology. The knowledge of the Word of God becomes possible, to men, as we have seen, only in the event of Revelation. This possibility of knowing the Word of God is God's wonder done in us, the name of which is " faith " ; a wonder before the eyes of every man, profane and pious, Greek and Jew. Faith, we said, cannot be explained psychologically, since it is not a psychic process, any more than it is a natural endowment of the soul. It is not merely an organ which takes up that which comes from beyond, it is itself from beyond, a miracle, the end of all that is human, and the beginning of all that is Divine. Faith itself is Revelation. It is the gift of God, *donum Dei singulare*, as Luther calls it, the primary gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 9). (39) The coming of faith does not lie with us, for faith is an event from the side of God. The assurance of faith does not lie with us, only the waiting upon God. Faith

has not only its existence, but its nature from the Word of God. It is true, as Barth says, that the man within must open the door to the knock of Christ (Rev. iii. 20), but the doing of this, both as concerns act and power, is the work of the Christ standing outside. That other word remains true, he says, without limitation that the Risen Christ goes through *closed* doors (John xx. 19).

In the event of actual faith man is, so to speak, opened from above. This opening from above, which fulfils itself in the event of true faith, remains for us as hidden as the experience itself, and as God Himself. What faith actually is, we do not know. As one has put it: "I do not know whether I believe, but I know in Whom I believe." A man does not create his faith himself, the Word creates it in him through the Spirit. He does not come to faith, but the faith through the Word comes to him. He does not himself appropriate faith, but faith is bestowed on him as a gift through the Word. From first to last, the work is God's not man's. (40) Much is written to-day about the point of contact between God and man in the event of Revelation. Brunner would ground it in man's power to hear and understand. But, according to Barth, it is not to be sought in any property of man, native or acquired, it is a gift of the grace of God. Man can know the Word of God, but he knows it, in that he is known of God. This Theology can be expressed in terms so simple that a child can understand them. God speaks and man hears. He hears because God speaks, and thereby makes it possible for him to hear. As Thurneysen says: "The statement 'God speaks' is identical with the statement 'Man

hears'." But George Macdonald has put it even more simply :

Where did you get that pearly ear?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.

When Barth comes to deal with the Content of Faith, he quotes Calvin's word : *Non in ignoratione sed in cognitione sita est fides*. Faith has its seat not in ignorance but in knowledge. It has its origin, as Luther said, in *fiducia*, i.e. in trust, or confidence. But this *fiducia* or trust reaches out beyond itself to the object in relation to which the trust is, and leads to *notitia* and *assensus*, to knowledge, and assent, which, says Barth, are also constituent elements of a true faith. "How could it be *fiducia*," he asks, "without at the same time being also *notitia* and *assensus*?" (41) When a man really and truly believes, he says, the object of faith is first present to him. Then he puts himself alongside the object. Then, as a consequence of this, he becomes a believer, through and through, in the object.

It is here we encounter the criticism of Wobbermin, to which we have referred, that Barth has departed from the Reformation doctrine of faith as *fiducia*, trust, and has substituted for it the idea of belief, or assent to an objective truth or doctrine, the authority for which must ultimately lie with the Church. He is thereby, Wobbermin holds, re-introducing into the Protestant Church the unhistorical, unpsychological idea of dogma, which leads back to Scholasticism, and, ultimately, to Rome. This criticism ignores the distinction between assent to a proposition, which Barth never proposes, and assent to the Word of God which is addressed directly to us,

and which must be answered with the Yes of faith—the Yes of simple obedience.

But it will now be asked: "What place, if any, does Barth give to religious experience?" In recent years the popular theology has been the so-called Theology of Experience, which has chimed in with the general tendency towards the psychological and subjective. Theologians have set out, almost as a matter of course, to develop their theology on the basis of the religious consciousness. They have laid supreme stress on the value and validity of religious experience as the only possible starting-point for theological reconstruction. Idealistic philosophers have lent their strong support to it. "The man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness," says F. H. Bradley, in *Appearance and Reality*, "seeks he knows not what." But doubt has been growing in our time, which has become much more realistic, as to whether the religious consciousness can be made to carry this burden; and the desire has arisen for an Absolute outside ourselves on which faith can rest.

At this point the Barthian theology makes a distinct breach with the prevailing theology, the father of which was Schleiermacher. We shall deal later with the criticisms which Barth encounters at the hands of the exponents of this theology. But let it here be said that Barth does not deny that men can have experience of God through His Word. He makes the relation of the Word of God to experience abundantly clear in his new Dogmatics, and insists that our assurance that we can know and experience God's Word cannot be great enough. But he distinguishes between two kinds of experience; experience as a

meeting with God in His Word, and experience as a human psychic consciousness.

In addition to the opening from above, in the event of actual faith, of which we spoke, there is an opening also from below in human experience which is visible, seizable, and analysable, as a consciousness of faith. But this is not actual faith, and it may become filled with something quite different from the Word of God. The truly believing man, says Barth, will not refuse to acknowledge that his consciousness of faith, as such, is human darkness. (42) Faith in itself is a human experience, a concrete determinable act of this or that man, to which a definite human attitude will correspond, and which will find expression in definite human thoughts. But this experience is not necessarily actual experience of the Word of God. Of no human experience as such, however complete its form, can one assert that. That this experience is the experience of faith, this attitude the attitude of faith, and these thoughts the thoughts of faith, is determined not by the belief, but by the Word that is believed. (43) What makes faith to be faith, actual Christian experience, is the object—in this case, Christ—to which the faith is related. Because Jesus Christ gives Himself to be the object of faith, He makes faith to be faith, to be actual experience. The experience of the Word of God is to be sought, then, not in the opening from below, which is explored by the psychologist, and students of religious phenomena, but in the opening from above which is beyond all psychology. When a man is determined in his existence, in the totality of his self-determination, through the Word of God—that is experience. “We understand by a man’s experi-

ence of the Word of God," says Barth, "the determination of his existence as a man through the Word of God." (44) Let us see, then, what he means by experience of the Word of God.

Experience of the Word of God means that we come ourselves to know it, since it is a Word, a communication from Person to person, Reason to reason. We know it also as the Word of Another, the Person of God to Whose authority we must bow.

Experience of the Word of God means that we recognise this Word as coming to us, in its contingent contemporaneousness, a Word spoken there and then, which becomes for us a Word spoken here and now.

Experience of the Word of God means that we know the Word of God as Power; as the Power of truth, of promise, of claim, of judgment, a Power that is superior to us, whether it comes as law or as gospel, command or promise. It comes in such a way, that, without breaking them, it actually bends man's conscience, will, intellect, and feeling into conformity with it.

Experience of the Word of God means decision. The coming of God to man is an Act of Divine freedom and choice; but it is always at the same time an experience of decision for man, for belief or unbelief, obedience or disobedience.

Experience of the Word of God means a pausing before it as a problem, an acceptance of the fact that it does not come to us openly, but hiddenly and indirectly, and in a worldly shape. It never comes to us other than in this problematic fashion, compelling us to respect and acknowledge its mystery.

Experience of the Word of God means also the

recognition of an act of man, of a movement which must not be allowed to deteriorate into a mere attitude. The experience of the Word, when it is actual, always leads to such a movement, due to the "one-sidedness" of the Word of God, to which we have referred. Acknowledgment of the Word of God, in view of this fact, means that we must ever again allow ourselves to be led, that we must always again be in movement from one experience which we have had, and from one thought which we have grasped, to the opposite experience, and opposite thought. In this movement, which finds rest in no synthesis, a man recognises the mystery of the Word of God, and has Christian experience. (45)

If by "experience," then, is meant some inner feeling which becomes for the believer the foundation on which his faith ultimately rests, Barth will not allow that this can provide a sure foundation. For such feeling, or experience, belongs to this side of things, and not to the yonder side. But if, on the other hand, we mean by "experience" the event that takes place in the heart of a man by contact with the Word of God, under the power of the Holy Spirit, and to his response its demand, there can be no quarrel with the word. "Faith is a passion," as Kierkegaard said, a suffering, but the man who suffers himself to be broken by the Word of God is blessed. This is true Christian experience. We come to know God's Word in the moment when it breaks in upon our lives, striking often on our rebellious wills, as the Word of Another, and setting up a reaction, an event of faith (*Widerfahrnis*), which we may rightly call experience. We dare not claim that our human experience can be made the basis for our understanding

of God's mind and purpose, but a true Christian experience may be the ripe fruit of that understanding. The Word of God is not based on Christian Faith. Its foundation is in itself, that is in God. But Christian Faith is based upon the Word of God.

The distinction is vital for an understanding of this Theology over against that of Schleiermacher and the School of Religious Experience. If the differences are fully grasped, it may be possible in time to come, when the Barthian corrective has done its work, for the stream of what is true and abiding in the contribution of Schleiermacher to unite with that of the Barthian Movement. It is really unthinkable that the labours of Schleiermacher, and of those who followed him, should not have in some way enriched the understanding of Christian theology. Neander uttered a truly prophetic word to his students on the day of Schleiermacher's death, when he said: "From this man a new era of Church history will take its beginning." After a hundred years, we still speak of theology, before and after Schleiermacher. Barth himself, while a searching critic, reckons Schleiermacher as one of the mighty among theologians, and blamed Brunner's book on Schleiermacher—*Die Mystik und das Wort*—for being too slashing and confident. (46) If the whole theology of Schleiermacher, he said, could be described by the word *Mysticism*, he could not understand how a whole century had lived, theologically, from his heritage.

The attack by the Barthian writers on Schleiermacher has brought forth a phalanx of writers in defence of the "father of modern theology." The usual line of defence is, that the Barthians attack the early Schleiermacher of the Addresses (*Reden*), and

ignore his later and more mature thought, when he overcame his youthful romanticism. There is perhaps some truth in the criticism, but it has to be borne in mind that it was the early Schleiermacher whose influence has been most powerful in nineteenth-century theology. In his ripe *Glaubenslehre* (which, however, was still a Doctrine of Faith, not of the Word of God), he plainly had the intention to put behind him the idealistic utterances of his romantic period, and return to the Christian verities, but what he had written he had written, and its influence can be traced right down to the liberal, romantic, psychological theology of the present day. Barth, as we have seen, can for the present see only the clear destruction of Protestant theology and of the Church in any conceivable continuation of the line Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Herrmann. But there may later arise some hope of an understanding between the Theology of Experience and the Theology of the Word when once the differences are clearly recognised and grappled with.

One last question. What of the doctrine of Christian assurance? Barth has been blamed both for taking away men's assurance, and for setting up a new assurance. Both are true.

No form of self-assurance either by reason of one's faith, or one's works, can provide any real assurance. A man can have no assurance or certainty in himself. His assurance must have its seat outside himself, in the Word of God. Certainly it is *his* assurance, but it is so, in that the Word of God is present with him. When the Word of God is present to us, it means that we are turned away from ourselves, and turned to the Word of God, and directed upon it. We

stand in faith, which means that we are called to new faith. We have the Word ever before us, and live in expectation of the grace of God, clinging to the promises, and looking ever for the future event of faith, in which the possibility of the knowledge of God comes in sight. The assurance of grace, of faith, of baptism, is the assurance of an ever-forward-looking, hoping faith. (47) It can be no other than a deeply imperilled assurance, in which man lets go and abandons all his own self-assurance. It must needs be a trembling assurance, for faith is only found in the actuality of decision, as a man obeys the command of God. No objective proof can be offered that faith, and not scepticism, is right. Thus unbelief always dogs the steps of faith. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief," must ever be the believer's prayer and the Church's prayer. Faith needs always again to be wrested from unbelief. The way of faith, as Barth reminds us in an early metaphor, does not lead along soft valley paths, but up steep knife-edge ridges, with precipices on both sides, down one or other of which we are in danger of falling. The faith, which is sure of itself, is not faith in God. The assurance of Christian Faith rests ultimately, not on itself, nor on experience, for faith has sometimes to stand forth against all experience, but on the Word of God, and is attained only in the path of obedience, through the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IX

ETHICS OF THE WORD

AMONG the misunderstandings which the Barthian Theology encounters, one of the most common is the notion that it has no room for Ethics. If it be meant that it has no room for a natural Ethics, or for an Ethics of conscience, that is true. It has no place for any scheme of objective Ethics. It holds that it is not possible to speak of an ethical theory, since God demands the obedience of the moment, whatever may be the mind of a man to whom the call comes. A material or formal Ethics is therefore impossible. The Word of God, as it cuts across the will of man, puts all systematic Ethics out of count.

But while that is so, the ethical problem, which was one of Barth's first interests, remains with him a chief concern. (1) He regards it as our first Christian duty to take with the utmost seriousness the environment in which God has placed us, and out of which His Word comes to us. The ethical question arises immediately when we ask: "What shall we do?" The question is unavoidable, for even if we put it from us as a question, we answer it unceasingly by our actions. So long as we live, we are faced with practical decisions, every one of which is an ethical decision. The Word of God and Ethics are therefore inseparable. Ethics is applied religion; it is

the field in which faith verifies itself. Barth, Brunner, and Gogarten all bring their Ethics into closest relation with their Dogmatics ; and their view of God and man, and of the relation of God and man, are the same in both fields. "Under so-called Ethics," says Barth, "I understand the doctrine of the Command of God and do not consider it right to treat it other than as an integral part of Dogmatics." (2)

Among all the pressing problems of the Christian Faith in our time there is none more urgent than that of Christian Ethics, for the epoch of the old Ethics is gone, and the problem presents itself afresh. The war, which marked the end of a period of history, has wakened man out of his fond dream that he has been given an endowment of talents and capacities, in virtue of which he can count himself a sovereign lord over the world. His cherished idea that he can be the maker of his own happiness, creator of his own perfection, and judge of his own values, has turned out to be the baseless fabric of a vision.

There lies at the foundation of this idealistic Ethics of self-culture, which has so deeply affected both preaching and teaching, the belief that man is able, by his own activity, to overcome the chasm between him and God. There is indeed no chasm, he believes, but an unbroken unity and continuity. (3) In himself he has the good, in his moral activity he realises himself. Idealistic Ethics has, as its goal, the building up of the personality. Its last word is autonomy, its ultimate aim is self-expression. This accounts for the fine egotism of idealistic Ethics. The good is man's good. He is a partner of equal rights with God.

According to this idea, the final basis of Ethics is

to be sought, not in any act of Divine Revelation of a Sovereign God, but in humanity itself, which certainly has something of God in it—His buried and forgotten image—but which knows no god outside of it. Thus man claims to be lord in virtue of the divine within him. But we have now entered on an age in which the sovereignty of man as divine is no longer held as so indisputable. The doctrine which lies behind this whole self-confidence of modern man is severely shaken, and the idea is no longer to be scouted as childish that man stands under an alien power. The problem of the understanding of evil, which modern thought has avoided, is being forced once more upon us.

1. Thus the question emerges again of a Christian Ethic. We must ask what it means for man that he is not at all so mighty as he imagined, that, on the contrary, he is bound and a sinner, with no means of saving himself. To naturalistic Ethics, man is an animal of the natural world, and what we call spirituality is nothing other than transformed or sublimated instinct. Responsibility and guilt are only appearances. To idealistic Ethics, man in the core of his nature is good, and what appears as bad can only be regarded as a "not-yet," something short of perfection. But according to Christian Doctrine, man is neither animal, nor divine, but a being created by God, who has fallen into sin, and is therefore guilty, with his freedom lost and a contradiction set up within his nature. He suffers from what Kierkegaard described as "a sickness unto death." Not only is he separated from God and his original nature, but his relation to his fellow-men and to the world has become wrong. In his very nature he is "prone to

hate God, and his neighbour." As soon as he begins to ask about the good he condemns himself, for the only possible answer is, that he is not good, and from the point of view of the good he is powerless. For man is not only sinful, he is a sinner; his person, and not only his behaviour, is opposed to God. Therefore the evil in him goes with him into all his deeds, and he can be free from it no more than from his own shadow. Seated in his personality, in his ego, it poisons every act of will. What we describe as sins, the evils in the lives of individuals, and the evils that are writ large in our social life, are but the symptoms of the disorder that lies in the human heart. In the light of this knowledge, the thought which rules all idealistic Ethics of the gradual self-completion of man, the idea that in some way or another he can come to the good, that is to God, is seen to be not only an illusion, but the activity of a false freedom.

Herein lies the hopelessness also of all legal morality, the belief of man that he can reach the goal through his own works. This is what the Bible describes as "the curse of the law," the cause of the unhappy and despairing life. It is the tragedy of the Wandering Jew who can never find rest, the tragedy of every man who seeks his peace through his own efforts. For where God's attitude to us is dependent on our doing, we can have no hope of rest. We may ease the situation somewhat for ourselves by reducing the demands of the law to a less unbearable measure, but the restless conscience, from which this offers no escape, is a sign that God does not agree with this half-way house of compromise. We cannot, by any effort of our own, lift the curse of the law, and we

are helpless in its bondage; for legalism is servitude. God only can make the curse of the law to cease for us, by coming to us in unconditioned love, and establishing a new relation, in which He is the giving One, and we are those who receive. This takes place in what we describe as justification by faith, the great Reformation doctrine so largely lost sight of to-day which, in the view of Barth and his friends, is the one true starting-point for Christian Ethics. Christian Ethics must be an Ethics of grace. (4)

The key to a true Christian Ethics, then, and its only possible foundation is to be found in the doctrine of St. Paul (Rom. vi, vii and viii). (5) The Sermon on the Mount is the necessary presupposition, but not the foundation of Christian Ethics, for apart from the gospel of forgiveness its demands are impossible of achievement. Man cannot place himself in this new position. Not unless God Himself breaks the ring of legalism, and sets man free, can the curse of the law be lifted. But in the way of grace, God meets the man with His Word of Reconciliation, and gives him a new standing-ground. This is the great transformation of man's existence by which the Christian Gospel is distinguished from all religions and philosophies of mankind. Whereas man's life was at best a life towards God, now it is a life from God and in God. God is now behind him instead of in front of him; he does not need any more to strive for a place, he is placed. His will is no longer on its way towards, but on its way from salvation, working it out with fear and trembling (Phil. ii. 12).

This new standing in grace reveals itself in three particulars.

It reveals itself, first, in the fact that man has

his life no more through his own striving, but in God's gift. He seeks his good no more in himself, but in God; he ceases to have a life centred in himself, and has a new life centred in God. No longer claiming, as it were, to be a self-illuminated fixed star, he is a planet whose light is borrowed from Another. He has his righteousness now as something that is not his own; Christ is his righteousness. The man who comes out through the door of reconciliation is the same erring sinful man who went in to the holy place; but something has happened, secret and imperceptible, which has made him to be another: *peccator et justus*—a sinner justified, while yet a sinner. His heart has been opened to a reality which before he did not know—the reality of the God of Grace.

“The believer,” says Barth, “is entirely the same man, the same ungifted lazy man, or the same gifted excitable man, as he was before as a non-believer. It is not a question of the elevation or lowering of his existence, but of the grace and the judgment of God over his existence.” (6) But the new man in Christ, while still the same man, has a new standing in grace which makes him a Christian. What this means for him, in the place where he is, is the subject of Christian Ethics. (7)

This new standing reveals itself, secondly, in man's new relation to God, which is no longer the old slavish legal relation, but the free personal relationship of a son to a father. God no more stands over him with a demand which cannot be satisfied, and which only leaves him with a bad conscience, but as the giving God. He has no more to do with an outward law, but with a Person, with God Himself, the God of Grace, Whose love is not a conditioned,

but an unconditioned love. The evil conscience is no more. It is not merely quieted, it is brought to peace. The man is a free man in Christ Jesus, free not only from the curse of the law, but from all unrest.

This new standing reveals itself, thirdly, in man's new relation to the world, and to his neighbour. He who has his life in faith, being no more under the pressure to realise himself, since God has realised him, is therefore free from himself, that he may be free for others. His life-movement is now changed round, and redirected, and given the same movement as that of God, outward towards the world. The mainspring of his activity is now love to God and to his neighbour, for he who lives in the gift of God must live as one who gives.

Such was the new evangelical way out of the problem of moral need and guilt which the Reformers rediscovered, that of *justificatio impii*—the justification of the sinner. No other religion has ever had the boldness to conceive such a doctrine of sheer forgiveness of the sinner, apart from all thought of merit of works. It was soon again forgotten, as it was in the early Church, and Roman Catholic and Greek Ethics found their way back into the Protestant faith. Man's love of works would seem to be almost ineradicable.

It is to the credit of the Theology of the Word that it has set itself to consider afresh the evangelical doctrine of right action. The initial impulse was given by Barth who, one might say, is the first Reformed theologian since the Reformation to envisage a true *Christian* Ethic, that is, an Ethic based on justification by faith. Brunner tells us how, in the

course of his study for his recent massive book on Ethics—*Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (*The Command and the Ordinances*)—it came home to him with astonishment that since the Reformation no single work on Ethics, starting from the evangelical faith as a centre and motive, had appeared. Barth, Brunner, and Gogarten propose to take us back to what they consider the only real basis of a Christian Ethic, and the only pure fountain of a powerful ethical activity. For there is no other actual goodness but that which is the fruit of faith. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. xiv, 23). Moral idealism does not remove the source of the evil, since the stronghold of the ego has not surrendered. That surrender can only be brought about by God Himself, when He breaks through the inmost bulwark and takes the human will captive, not by force, but by forgiveness. The acceptance of God’s gifts of forgiveness through faith is the creation of the new man—the second birth. In place of an Ethics of law, or of conscience, or any other Ethics which begins from man and sets good in the centre, we are to seek an Ethics which starts from God, and sets grace in the centre. The ethical activity of man can only arise from the previous activity of Divine Revelation. Christian Ethics, therefore, is to be grounded not in the legal relations of man to God, but in the gracious relationship of God to man. Its true beginning is not in obedience to law, but in the Word of God in Jesus Christ, which is at once a gift and a command. The Word of God is thus the principle of Christian Ethics, as well as of Christian Dogmatics.

2. We come then to the Word of God as ethical Command. Here also Barth, as Brunner says, has

spoken the decisive word. (8) To the question "What shall we do?" there is no other answer, he says, than that which Jesus gave to the Young Ruler: "Keep the commandments," an answer which affords the best introduction to Christian Ethics (Matt. xix. 17). Jesus perceived that the Young Ruler was occupied unduly with himself, with thoughts of the cultivation of his own goodness, and the enrichment of his own personality. But Jesus discouraged all form of introspection and self-culture, and from this preoccupation with himself, and his soul, He proceeded to draw the Young Ruler away, for He called His would-be disciples not to inward ecstasies, but to obedience. "If thou wilt enter into life," He said, "keep the commandments!" (9)

The Word of God, 'as it reaches us in an ethical Command, is, first of all, a concrete command. Jesus teaches no such thing as a general ethic for man as to what he shall do, or not do, in all circumstances. Such a theory would presuppose an understanding of man as a being with definite plans and goals. But man does not have his life in such a way at his disposal. He lives in a state of uncertainty in face of what meets him from day to day, involving decisions, and every decision is a new decision. (10) Ethical truth is distinguished from other forms of truth, such as mathematical truth, by the fact that it is never self-evident. It only becomes evident in the concrete situation, when the Word of God reaches us as the Word of a "Thou" to an "I." Christian Ethics is not a conversation of man with himself, but a dialogue, a conversation between two, in which God speaks and I answer. The actuality of our present situation, whether we see it or not, is always a decision,

set before us by God, which we have to make, and the ethical truth which appears is not a general, but a particular truth. Our Lord did not say to the Young Ruler: "You know what you ought to do," but: "You know the commandments." Yes, but which commandment? "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor." That was not a general ethical law, applicable to all cases, which Jesus laid down, but a concrete command, in a particular situation, to a particular man, to meet his particular need. And such are God's commands always, concrete commands. He does not command the fulfilling of a programme; He commands me, and you, to put ourselves at His disposal for some particular thing. If anyone asks me what he should do in a particular situation, I cannot tell him. No one, not even an apostle, can tell him, but God Himself alone. Such is the freedom of the Christian man. He is free from law, programme, pattern, free in movement to do the will of God, as he is guided by His eye day by day (Ps. xxxii. 8). There is no such thing as goodness in itself which can be held up to us as a pattern. To hypostatise a human idea of the good is to separate it from its origin. "There is none good . . . but God," said Jesus to the Young Ruler. Goodness is what God is, and what God commands, not what we conceive or picture as goodness. Neither is there any moral law as such. The law has only meaning as pointing to the law-giver whose command it is, for the law always presupposes the law-giver. God's commands are orders or commissions, not paragraphs of a *corpus juris*, but the absolute, living, personal will of God, and the decision, in which we are placed through the command, falls for or against Him. We live from

God the Law-Giver and not from the Law, which in itself has neither authority nor justification, and this Law-Giver gives the Law only for the concrete situation. All talk of the Command apart from here and there, you and me, tells us nothing about God. He demands of us our whole existence, for His commands cover every moment, and there are no moral holidays. But only in the concrete situation can we know what the guiding Will of God is for us. It is not to the moral law, nor the will of the good, nor the categorical imperative, nor the Divine Will in general, that we listen in the actuality of decision. It is always a matter of obedience or disobedience to this or that concrete command. The Word of God reaches us in the form of separate commands, e.g. in the Decalogue, in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the double commandment of love to God and to our neighbour. It is in His condescension to our weakness that God gives us His Word, not in one command, but in many commandments. These different commandments we are to regard as witnesses to the ethical Command of God, and therefore as authoritative expositions of that one Command, under which we go, step by step. "For there are not many rules of life," says Calvin, "but one, which is perpetually and immutably the same."

The Word of God, as it reaches us in an ethical Command, is, secondly, always the Word of the moment. It comes to a man in some claim of duty which makes itself very clear to him amid the different opportunities of his life. A man knows only what he has to do now, not what he may have to do in the next quarter of an hour. Therefore he must live "from every word that proceedeth out of the mouth

of God." For a man to profess to seek the Kingdom of God, and to fail to hear the call of the hour is to miss the way.

The Word of God, as it reaches us in an ethical Command, is, thirdly, a word *ad hominem*—addressed to the individual. It does not call all men, but each man, and each man it may be to something different. Not from all, or at all times, is the same demanded. Each man stands under the claim of God, as he stands under the providential guidance of God, but on each God makes His particular claim. There can therefore be no such thing as a system of individual or social Ethics. The Sermon on the Mount, e.g. : is such a Word of God for the individual man, and to treat it as a general Ethics, or as a body of laws applicable to all circumstances of society, can only lead to disillusionment and disaster. The old world can, as little as the old man, be ruled by the Sermon on the Mount. It is the Ethics of the new man, and of the new world.

The Word of God, as it reaches us in an ethical Command, calls for the obedience of faith. In a sermon on the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. xx. 1) (11) Barth points out that faith is there represented by our Lord as an obedience, a working in the vineyard, an effort of will and deed which takes place in time, and in which the self is entirely forgotten. It is not a lively emotion, nor a profound thought, but a sacrificial work, a passion. Even if one says with Peter : " We have left our all " (Matt. xix. 27), it is the faith and obedience that matters, not the leaving all, but the leaving all in Christ's name. There is much heroism and self-sacrifice in the world, even the devil has his martyrs,

but it is the sacrifice for Christ's sake that alone counts. First and last are to be treated alike. The reward of faith for all who do this work is to be the same—each gets his penny, no more and no less. If the man who has toiled all day receives no more than the man who has wrought but one hour, there is no cause for murmuring. For we are to regard our work in the vineyard of the Lord, not as something done for which we are to be paid, but as a gracious privilege granted, for which we are to be profoundly thankful, as we are to be thankful also for the penny it is our Lord's pleasure to bestow. Even if we were the greatest heroes of the faith we must be "lost in wonder, love, and praise," not that this reward should be given to others, but that it should actually be given to us. That God should place us, in spite of our imperfections, in a corner of His vineyard, and give us His commission as His servants, is the wonder of His grace. To be messengers or doorkeepers, to be hod-bearers not knowing, it may be, what God is building through our labour, or for what He may use us tomorrow, that is all which ethically we can be, but it is gloriously worth being.

We cannot speak of ourselves as partners of God, or as organs through which He does His work. *Our* activity is never to be set alongside *God's* activity. Man can be the servant of God in word and work, but his words remain his words, and his works remain his works, for which he is responsible. He is never the organ or tool of God in the sense that God speaks or acts *directly* through him. God requires us for His Work, but what we do remains our work. He does not give Himself into our hands. All our activities, good and bad, are only material out of

which He shapes His ends. "Out of my greatest stupidities," said Kierkegaard, "God has brought the best." The honour remains always with God. No word that we say is actually God's Word, no deed that we do is actually God's doing. But in, and with, and under, and in spite of, our words and deeds God speaks to men. It is not possible, therefore, to say of history, "See here! or see there! is the Kingdom of God." For no part of the history of the world, or of the Church, is the direct history of God. The Word of God enters into history, but it does not arise out of history. It constitutes thus the crisis or decision of history. (12) So also with the activity of the individual. The succour which God bestows on a man is not something that is added to his own considerable but still deficient strength. It is when he is weak, when he surrenders himself utterly to the grace of God, that he is strong. God's strength is made perfect in his weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9).

It ought to be said that at this point there is a divergence between the views of Barth and of Brunner. Barth, more strongly Calvinist and Pauline, holds that, while God uses man as He thinks fit in the work of creation and of redemption, there is no *direct* continuity between the activity of God and of man. Brunner, on the other hand, maintains that God does His creative and saving work *directly* and immediately through men as His tools. (13) The man who works inside the ordinances of God becomes, he says, a creator in the world, and in the Kingdom of God. The difference may not appear to be great, but it may have great consequences. For if God does His creative and saving work directly through men, then man becomes the partner of God, and the door is

opened for all the pride of works to come sweeping back, since now "God has no hands but our hands."

He could not make
Antonio Stradivari's violins
Without Antonio.

Barth, who stands ever watchful at this door, perceives the danger of Brunner's position, for it was just there that the difference emerged between Luther and Melanchthon which had such far-reaching consequences. Melanchthon became a synergist, chiefly because he thought that only thus could the capacity of man for culture and social responsibility be preserved. This turning away from the view of Luther led to the rearing again, inside the Protestant Church, of a whole edifice of a doctrine of morals. For grant that a man can help, in however small a measure, in the work of salvation, and he will call in Ethics, ancient and modern, and what not? to his aid. But say that he can neither save himself, nor any other, that God only can save, *sola gratia*, and he is completely thrown upon grace. It was through this synergistic bent given to Lutheranism that the distinctive ethical discovery of the Reformation—justification by grace—was again lost sight of, and Roman Catholic ideas of justification by works found their way into the Protestant Church.

The true Reformation teaching, as well as that of the New Testament, would seem to lie with Barth rather than with Brunner who, with his strong apologetic interests, makes here a concession to modern views. St. Paul's much-quoted phrase in this connection that we are "labourers together with God," from which the word "synergism" is derived, cannot

carry the burden of the usual interpretation. It means no more than "we labour together in God's service" (1 Cor. iii. 9, Moffatt). St. Paul at any rate has no doubts about "the old man and his deeds." There is nothing to be done but to "put off the old man." No infusion of grace into the old man, no refining or improving, will bring him nearer to the "new man." The old man cannot be improved, he can only be kept in check, and that with difficulty. So it is with the old world. Under no conditions can it be made by man into a new world. It is destined to perish, unless it come under the power of God's Lordship, through death and resurrection. Christian Ethics is not an Ethics of progress and improvement, but of death and of life.

The Word of God, as it reaches us in an ethical Command, is a gift before it is a command. So long as we know only a God Who commands, He is not fully known to us. He commands because He has already given. We do not understand the decision in which we are placed by the Word of God if we do not understand that we are loved in it. "He commands what He wills, but He gives what He commands." Law-giving takes place because covenant-making has already taken place. In virtue of the Covenant which He has made with us in Christ, God draws near us in His Word, and makes His claim upon us. But in doing so He treats us not as slaves of some alien fate, nor as organs of a moral order, but as objects of His unconditioned love.

3. But now, how does the Word of God reach us with its ethical Command? The voice which Barth hears in the ethical Command is the same voice which he hears in his Theology; the voice of God the

Creator in the order of Nature ; of God the Reconciler in the order of Grace ; and of God the Redeemer in the order of Glory. We shall now observe the Word of God as Command active in all these orders.

(1) The ethical Command of God meets us, first, in the order of Nature, as the Word of God the Creator and Lord of all being, Who made the world and upholds it by the Word of His power, and Who is as such our Father. The first article of the Creed : "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," is fundamental alike for Theology and for Ethics. But when we speak of the Creator, we must not for one moment forget that we know the creation only in its brokenness through sin, and since sin veils the creation we do not know the Creator through the world, but only from Revelation. The knowledge of God as Creator is an article of faith. Therefore God's Word to us out of creation comes only indirectly. While there is nothing in the world that God does not want, there is nothing which He wants as it is. He will have it, so far as it is His creation ; He will not have it, so far as the created form is marred by sin.

The Word of God as Creator meets us first, as the command of life (Gen. i. 28). And because the Creator has given to us the world of living things as the witness of His Word, He demands of us reverence for all creatures. By that is not meant, as Brunner points out, that "reverence for life" as divine in itself—the mystic principle that moves the heart and work of Albert Schweitzer and constitutes the central thought of his philosophy—but reverence for all creatures as the creations of God, with a claim for our regard. (14) Even for the life of the criminal,

the cripple, and the idiot, we are to have reverence, for they are all God's creatures. This world in spite of all is God's world. It is what it is through His will. He has not only willed it, He wills it, and sustains it. He, the distant God, Who does not belong to this world, is also the near God. He is the Creator of this world of men, and rules it throughout by His daily providence, so that "not a sparrow falls without the Father." Is the world right for God? so must it be right for us. We too as Christians must say "Yes" to life and serve in the order of Nature. Will God maintain the world? So will He also claim our obedience in the work of maintaining it.

The Word of God meets us, in the order of Nature, secondly, as the command of order. That to which God calls us—for the Word of God reveals itself already as a calling—is the establishment of order. According to the earliest Bible witness, man was put into the garden to till it and to keep it, or guard it against the natural tendency of a neglected garden to run wild (Gen. ii. 15). The Will of God is fundamentally a conservative Will, a Will of order, and His affirming, constant Will stands behind all creation. The world is not an amorphous mass which we have to reduce to order. Long before we appeared on the scene it had been given its ordinances which we have to obey, and inside which we have to live. The first fundamental command is that we should have respect to what is, because it is God's.

Modern idealistic thought has been teaching us to think of the world as unformed stuff which we have to master and fashion. Knowing nothing of God's ordinances, which are known only to faith, the modern man sets about at once ordering the world according

to his will. Can he do other than increase its chaos, even although his mind be filled with high ideals, if he does not start from God as Creator, and from respect to His ordinances? Here we touch the root of much of the social and moral disorder of our time. Not only the selfish life of the present, but the finer understanding of life, expressed in our moral, social, and cultural ideals, is ruled by the want of respect for the given ordinances of God, the Creator. All authority, even of God, is under suspicion, and freedom alone is reckoned as good. Modern man, taken hold of by this madness to be himself a creator, no longer recognises his own creatureliness, and fails to realise that the basic presupposition of life is subordination to the Command of God in His appointments. God wills that we take our place in society in obedience to certain ordinances. Out of the created world His Command reaches us which we must obey, and our particular vocation is determined by our place in society. For *sequi Deum vocantem*, as Calvin says, to follow the God Who calls us, is the first rule of all our actions.

But between us and the Creator is the denial which we call sin. "We must not for a moment forget," says Brunner, "that we know the creation of God only as marred by sin, and created men only as sinners." (15)

The ordinances of God, therefore, do not lie in actuality before us in the world, but only in their present brokenness. We know no other world than a sinful world, no other ordinances than sinful ordinances, for what we see is not the expression of the creative will of God, which is rather to be sought for, in and under what we see. In the Word of God the Creator,

which comes to us out of things and men as they are, we discern rather the distortion of the order of Creation, and the horrible disfigurements of the divine image. Our reverence for the gift of God in creation must therefore always be accompanied with anger—a reflex of the anger of God—against the perversion of these divine ordinances. For all creative ordinances are, at the same time, says Brunner, revelations of human sinfulness, and show us the dreadful caricatures which man has made of them (Rom. i. 28).

One of the most important of those ordinances which he discusses is the relation of man and wife. A man is a husband through his wife, a woman is a wife through her husband. The pointing to a life together in fellowship is already laid in the natural instinct of both, even if it be known only in the sinful brokenness of erotic desire. So also with the creative ordinances, father, mother and children. What we are, we are through others. A man is a father through his child, and a child is a child through his father. This means that our relation to the other must always complete itself in a receiving from the other. The whole of human existence is built upon the fact that man cannot live as an individual, and for himself. There is no situation in life in which a man is for himself alone, he is always bound to the other. (16)

The first word of Christian Ethics, then, is that we are to live in obedience to the Will and Word of God the Creator, inside the order of Nature. "How can the thought of God come into your mind," says Calvin on an early page of his *Institutes*, "without your being compelled at once to think that you, as

a creature of God, through His right of creation, must be subject to His authority and subordinate to Him; that you are indebted to Him for life, and that all your actions must be done in reference to Him? If this be so, it follows that your life is miserably corrupt unless it is regulated in obedience to Him. *For His will must be the law of our life*" (Inst. i, 2, 2). In that last sentence lies the whole of Reformed Ethics.

Gogarten and Brunner are agreed in treating the whole ethical Command of God under the idea of "creative ordinances," in which the Word of God has, as Brunner puts it, made a channel for itself within the world, like water in the bed of a stream. Brunner brings all that we are accustomed to call Social Ethics inside this category of creative ordinances, and discusses at length the problems of marriage, work, civilisation, industry, the State, and the Church. The life of the family, the people, the State, is unthinkable, he says, without those ordinances which constitute the skeleton, on which the life of humanity is supported. These ordinances also provide the framework within which our service to our neighbour is to be fulfilled. For it is the Will of God that we take our share seriously in the life of society. Not only does this idea of ordinances, according to Brunner, link us on with the Ethics of the Reformation, it provides the proper theological category by which faith can take hold of the life of society to-day. He describes his important book, accordingly, as *An Outline of Protestant Theological Ethics*.

Gogarten, who has been the pioneer in this conception of the divine ordinances, has given to it an even more central place than Brunner, (17) and it

has been taken up vigorously by a new school of pedagogy, under Frau Dr. v. Tiling, in which education is built on the authority of God as Creator. But Gogarten tends to regard present ordinances as if they were actually the creative ordinances of God, and takes too little account of the hiddenness of the creation, and of the relation of the believer to the coming Kingdom of God. He inclines therefore to a conservatism which would leave no place for any revolutionary element in Christian Ethics.

While Barth uses the term "creative ordinances," he does so with much greater caution than either Gogarten or Brunner, and he does not propose to set up a fixed doctrine of divine ordinances. He is suspicious of any way of regarding existing things as if they had thereby some prescriptive right to acceptance, as expressing the will of God. Such a conservatism as that of Gogarten, e.g., would in his view be compelled to regard revolution in any form as the triumph of evil, and to identify what is anti-revolutionary with the will of God. (17) "An Ethic," he says, "which thinks it knows and can dispose of the living Command of God the Creator, sets itself on the throne of God." Barth knows, as he says, that there must be order. He knows that there are certain definite ordinances, such as work, marriage, family, which are for him, in the present moment, valid and authoritative ordinances of God. But the veil of sin which rests on creation, and the want of continuity between Creator and creature, is such that no objective knowledge of the creative ordinances is given us. Neither the State with its upper and lower classes, nor marriage, nor the articulation of society, nor the distribution of the

good things of life, can be co-ordinated as they exist, with the creative Will of God, but must rather be regarded as arrangements, than as stable ordinances. God remains Lord over His dispositions. Just as Scripture has no sum of views, no ethical repository, but yields the Word of God only from day to day, so it is with the Word of God, the Creator. We have no sure knowledge of the divine necessities of our creation, we can appeal to no declared truths of creation, we can only know what life for us in work, marriage, family, is for the present. We know things as they are in the created world, we know that God is speaking to us out of the manifoldness of created life, we know what His Word for us is now, in the present concrete situation. But in the Word of God the Creator, we have not, any more than we have in Scripture, a divine *datum* for all time which we can master. In Ethics, as in Theology, we must wait on the Word of God, since our knowledge can only be the gift of God. It can be no natural knowledge, but a wonder of His love.

If we are to accept Brunner's doctrine of ordinances, in which he claims to have carried Barth's own teaching a stage further, it must be under the proviso that, as we cannot place ourselves on the throne of God, neither can we with our blinded eyes know with any certainty the Will of God in His hidden ordinances. But in those age-long natural arrangements we may see a shadow at least of that order under which God placed His Creation, when "He saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31).

(2) The ethical Command of God meets us, secondly, in the order of Grace, as the Word of God

the Reconciler, God the Son, in the midst of our enmity against Him.

As Creator He upholds the world in His long patience, but as Reconciler He intervenes in the work of Redemption, which is to make all things new. Therefore His Will, while a conservative Will, is also an overthrowing, revolutionary Will. Reconciliation is the first step to complete Redemption. It is a "No" to the world as it is, that the "Yes" of God may be ultimately affirmed of the world as it will be. Therefore in Christ there enters a radical disturbance into the world, bringing with it the new birth, the new creature.

The ethical Command of God, in the order of Grace, comes to us in the commandment of the law, and reveals itself as authority claiming obedience.

It reaches us, first, in our calling, our profane worldly calling. God gives to each man his calling, and claims its fulfilment in obedience. His command is unconditionally personal, and unconditionally concrete. He does not demand something in general, but He orders you, me, a definite person to fulfil a definite calling; He commands each of us in our place here and now to do His Will. This Pauline-Lutheran doctrine of "calling," says Brunner, is one of the most important thoughts of Christian Ethics. (18) It was an act of world-shaking significance when Luther brought it out from under the rubbish of ecclesiastical morality, and set it forth as the first ethical task of the Christian. The idea of the worldly Christian "calling" became the most pregnant expression for the new view of life. To sinful man, in his sinful actuality, God gives this privilege of a calling, through obedience to which

his service, in itself sinful, is accepted and sanctified by Divine grace.

The ethical Command of God, the Reconciler, reaches us in the order of Grace, secondly, as a command to love our neighbour. The idea of the neighbour receives its definite content through the thought of the calling. My neighbour is the man who meets me in the situation in which I am called. He is given to me in my calling. I do not need to seek him, any more than I need to seek my sphere of service. My sphere of service is given me, and with it my circle of claims, including my neighbour. God's Word in Christ not only calls on us for the fulfilment of our calling, but for the adoption towards our fellow-men of an attitude of love, which shall be a reflection of the love of God towards us. The Word of God relates us, at one and the same time, to God and to our neighbour. It calls us away from ourselves and from all Ethics of self-culture. Ethics, in the old sense, directed a man on himself, occupied him with himself, kept him ever dancing round himself, that he might construct a moral character, and build, as Goethe said, the pyramid of his life. In the Ethics of the Word, man is called to think, not of himself, but of the other, the neighbour, who is in some particular need. God comes to us in our neighbour, and our faithfulness in Christ is tested by our willingness to meet the claims of our neighbour, whose coming as a claim-bearer sets us in a crisis, and discovers to us, it may be, our sin. The enemy is also our neighbour. Our Lord's word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," contains the whole of Christian Ethics. The neighbour whom I am to love is not this man or that,

who draws out my sympathy, he is every man; but he is not every man in general, but that man who is presented to me in a concrete situation.

Every man, says Barth in a sermon, finds himself at some point in the place of Dives, face to face with Lazarus. Lazarus is the one in my life, or the one whom I encounter, who needs God's help, just where God through some other has helped me. He is the fellow-man who is lacking wherein I abound. He is the man in comparison with whom I am rich. Lazarus is found in all ranks of society, and confronts rich and poor. There is no doubt but that our Lord means him to have a claim upon us. How to discharge it must lie on our heart, for it is the ethical problem in a nutshell. The first thing is not doing but seeing, realising, being made awake to feel both the appeal of Lazarus, and our own sense of responsibility. All action flows out of that vision. If we begin to act before we see, we may do harm. But let this at least be clear, that Lazarus, in so far as we encounter him, or find him placed in our way, is the man with whom no other than God, with all that He has to give, is to be found. (19) The problem of the neighbour constitutes the first and last problem, as well as the supreme crisis, of the Christian. Our neighbour is the great "Thou" with whom God confronts us in life, and whom we cannot avoid. Christian Ethics develops no programmes, but deals, as Christ Himself dealt, from case to case. It uses no high-sounding language, about the uplift of humanity, or the creation of a better social order, but gets down to real and simple things, to the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the bearing of one another's burdens.

It will be seen that inside this order of Grace there is not only a place, but a call, and an opportunity for an abundant ethical activity. In the earthly calling, in love to the neighbour, in the work of the Church, and of the State, in culture and civilisation, we are to find the means of grace, earthly and relative, it is true, but blessed of God, and accepted by Him as faith and obedience.

It may be asked: Does the Christian who has received the Word of Grace, and is thereby become a new creature, still need the guidance of the law of God, in his daily life? What of the word of St. Augustine: "Love and do what you like?" Barth, like Calvin, has no doubts on the matter, but holds that the Law maintains its place alongside the Gospel in the Christian life. "The Law," said Calvin, "is an excellent instrument to give men from day to day a better and more excellent understanding of the Divine will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the knowledge of it" (*Inst.* ii, 7, 2). Inside the order of Grace the Christian lives out his ethical activity in the obedience of sanctification. Sanctification, like justification, is the gift of God, but a gift with obligations attached to it, which affect the whole Christian life. The Christian life, in its entire extent, lies under the claim of God, Who in reconciling it, has also claimed it, or sanctified it, that is, proleptically. "The end of regeneration," however, as Calvin reminds us, is "that the life of believers may exhibit a *symmetry and agreement* between the righteousness of God and their obedience; and that thus they confirm the adoption by which they are accepted as His children" (*Inst.* iii, 6, 1).

The life of obedience in the order of Grace is a

warfare in which the Kingdom of Christ stands in the midst of foes. But by the gracious hand of God Who gives him His Word to be his daily bread the believer can prevail, and even know that *hilaritas*—that joy of which Luther spoke, a daily thankfulness to God for His mercies, and especially for the mercies of God in Christ Jesus. The whole ethical activity of man, in the order of Grace, is to be viewed under the point of view of offering or sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1). The earthly calling, the conduct of business, the stewardship of money, the treatment of subordinates, indeed the whole life of man, stand for the Christian under the claim of God for service and sacrifice. The Christian, in the whole circumference of his life, shall honour God through obedience to His Will.

(3) The ethical Command of God meets us, lastly, in the order of Glory, as the Word of God our Redeemer, God the Holy Spirit; for as Christians, we live at one and the same time in all three orders, but in this last, only in promise. While the first word of Christian Ethics is obedience to the Will of God here and now, it is not the last. For God the Creator will lead His creation beyond itself to the consummation of all things. He maintains the world not simply for the sake of maintaining it, but that He may perfect it. Therefore He demands of us not only that we obey, but that we look for and press to that which is to be, and in which by faith we shall share, the consummation of the world. This is not man's future—Christian Ethics knows no future pertaining to man, as man—but only God's Future for man. This future exercises a powerful influence on the ethical activity of the life that now is. For a Christian is a man who not only hopes

for the Redemption, but, because he hopes, already does something which otherwise he would not do. He indulges neither in lazy quietism, on the one side, which regards the world as unalterable and therefore hopeless, nor in airy optimistic, or chiliastic, dreams on the other, but looks for, and hastens unto the coming of the Day of God. The idea of one's "calling" e.g., which to-day is become for many little more than an economic term, having lost its real significance, can only be safeguarded from secularisation if it retains its eschatological basis. "Calling" (*klesis*), in the New Testament, always means having a part in the heavenly inheritance. God calls men into the world, but also out of the world, into His heavenly Kingdom. Here and now on earth, we are to fulfil our calling in our place, but as those whose citizenship is in heaven. The here and now secures to it the necessary narrowness and concentration to save it from dreaminess; the vision of the heavenly Kingdom provides the necessary width of horizon, to make it a true fulfilment of the Christian calling. So also with the duty to the neighbour. Not without reason does Jesus, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, open to us a vision of the heavenly life, for we can only love the brother, if, when taking our share in the work of the world, we keep in mind our heavenly relationship. Only as we see our neighbour as a brother for whom Christ died, and as belonging to Christ's Kingdom, can we rightly love and serve him. For we can understand our place and calling and duty here only as we see them set against the wide horizons of the Divine Purpose.

Christian Ethics is for the time that now is, it is

the Ethics of the *homo viator*—of man on his way home. But as such it is the true Ethics, because it knows of the future judgment, and how to take in earnest the present time, as a time of decision. One might, indeed, write over the whole of Christian Ethics the words of St. Paul: "This, I say, brethren, the time is short" (1 Cor. vii. 29), for they rightly describe the way of one in the world, who is at the same time in Christ, and thereby in the new world.

Christian Ethics is through and through eschatological. It is the Ethics of the coming Kingdom and the coming King. As Michelangelo's works are fragments, promises of a something quite other and grander than themselves, our Christian activity is but a fragment, a promise begun here, but never to be fulfilled here. It is this living "between the times," or rather between time and eternity, which accounts for the tension of faith, and for the intense moral activity of the true Christian life. To-day, and so long as history endures, man lives in an ethical moment which is decisive for his life. If he would live truly, he must live eschatologically. Idealistic Ethics lacks entirely the urgency and seriousness of the eschatological Word of God the Redeemer, which a true evangelical Ethics carries with it. The true Christian conception of history, as Brunner reminds us, is far removed from the idealistic faith in progress, which has been the staple teaching of the last two generations. It is serious, because it believes in decision and in judgment. An idealistic faith in progress, which knows how it will all end, can experience no seriousness of decision; but just because the Christian Faith does not believe

in progress, and does not know how it will all end, it takes history seriously. (20)

The Word of God the Redeemer, then, is a Command which contains also a Promise. We are born again to a living hope. We are blessed, but in hope. Even now, we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For in the present, our Divine Future, our final actuality, willed of God, is already with us through His Word, which reveals itself to us in a new knowledge of God, the knowledge of a child who knows the will of its Father, and looks beyond the present to the coming Kingdom of God. To live eschatologically, that is, in the promises, as a child of God, praying, hoping, hastening, praising, is to live the full Christian life. It is to live also a life of intense ethical activity in the present. Occupation with the Parousia may become an obsession, leading to idleness and restlessness of mind, as it was with the first Christians whom St. Paul had to enjoin to "keep quiet, to do their work, and earn their own living" (2 Thess. iii. 12, Moffatt). But ethical living, raised to its maximum power, must be eschatological living: "until He come."

In Ethics, as in Theology, the Barthian Movement will thus lead us back to the springs of the Reformed Faith, and especially to the ethical teaching of Calvin, who also lived in a day of crisis of which he wrote: "If God does not hasten from heaven to our help in some wonderful way, it appears to me that barbarism threatens the world to the utmost extent."

Reformed Ethics also started from God and not from man, and can only be understood in the light of the Divine Revelation. Not only the Ethics of the individual Christian life, but also social and political

Ethics were referred always again to the sovereign power and guidance of the Lord of life, and Lord of history. The tremendous moral impact of Calvinism had its explanation in the fact that its Ethics had its sure foundation in its doctrine of God as at once a God of law and of grace.

Reformed Ethics was also marked by sobriety. Of the optimistic recklessness of much modern social and Christian activism, which is ever breaking forth right and left into programmes of world reform, making enthusiastic demands on men, we find nothing. What we find is a great concentration on obedience to the Will of God which embraces the whole life of man, and a call for surrender of one's own will to the Lord and Master Who is over us, and over all the darknesses of the world.

Reformed Ethics was also, through and through, eschatological. The eschatological perspective is of supreme importance in understanding Calvin's whole Christian outlook. All the need and distress of the present world arises from the cleft between the perverted wills of men, and the Holy Will of God, and so it is the fixed and final Goal of God's gracious purpose, according to His good pleasure, to restore the broken unity. The *aeterna voluntas Dei* will not rest until it has fulfilled its purpose that we shall be holy, because He is holy (1 Peter i. 16). (21)

In conclusion, then, we see that the Barthian Ethics (like the Barthian Theology) is concerned with man as the lost son, calling the "old" man to judgment and repentance, and the "new" man to obedience, in the service of the neighbour, to the glory of God.

CHAPTER X

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

WHEN it first appeared amongst us the Barthian Theology was looked upon as something strange, foreign, and uncouth, and possibly as a passing phase of post-war neurosis. It has now entered on a further stage of its course, that of being criticised. A theology whose starting-point is a criticism of Modernist theology expects and invites criticism. Such criticism is both good and necessary, and no one welcomes criticism more than Barth himself. He has repeatedly expressed his indebtedness to it, and in the new edition of his *Dogmatics*, in which he answers his critics, he generously allows in places the justice of their criticism.

At present, there is a threefold attitude to the Theology of the Word. There are those who believe that it offers both a corrective to much Modernist theology, and a fresh presentation of the Christian Revelation to our time. It has brought theology back to its true meaning and basis in the Word of God, and has set it again to its true task, the explication of the Word.

There are those who, while sympathetic in general, find themselves confronted with certain stumbling-blocks, notably the separation which it makes between God and man, eternity and time, and the

depressing view which it appears to take of human nature, as being incapable of receiving the Divine.

Lastly, there are those who admit that there are elements of value in it, but who strongly differ from some of its main positions. These belong for the most part to the liberal and Modernist School who feel, and rightly, that their whole position is being challenged by it.

I propose to deal, chiefly, with the criticisms and reactions of the Modernists and liberals.

1. *What the British critics say.* Principal Garvie describes the movement as "a lamentable reaction against the theological progress of the last half-century," in which he has himself taken an active share. (1) Professor C. E. Raven cannot accept it as "contributing anything beyond a protest against conforming Christianity to the spirit of the age." Canon F. R. Barry writes of the "menace of Brunner" (2) and complains of the "wild and almost inarticulate paradoxes of Karl Barth's Christology." Canon Quick sees in the theology of crisis "a gesture of intellectual impatience with the long search for truth, and a grasping at the practical need for certainty." Carl Heath, speaking for the Quakers, regards Barth as "the most challenging and prophetic spirit of the day," but finds himself "at variance with him on a most fundamental issue, that of the nature of the relationship between God and man." I shall take up these and other criticisms in detail, and give, so far as possible, Barth's answers to them, which will involve a certain amount of unavoidable repetition.

"This Theology suffers from the dead hand of Kant, and from all the paradoxes inherent in the

Kantian philosophy." So writes Canon F. R. Barry. Kant's theory of knowledge, with its distinction between revelation and discovery, the Divine and the human, vitiates for him the whole presentation of Barth's theology, and makes the Christian Revelation inconceivable. Dr. A. S. Zerbe, an American Fundamentalist, joins him in this criticism. But to assail Barth on philosophical grounds is to fail completely to understand him. It is not in our power, he says, to ward off the irruption of philosophy into Dogmatics, but he is determined that philosophy shall be kept in its proper place, alongside theology, and shall not be allowed to control it, as it has done in the past. Too long has theology been regarded as a branch of philosophy, without independence of its own, unable to maintain its own ground, and compelled to appeal to philosophy to provide it with a foundation. Once the queen of the sciences, it has become the handmaid, looking to philosophy to secure to it the right to live. Philosophy, says Barth, has always proved a dangerous neighbour of which theology needs to be watchful. (3) For like Aaron's rod, which swallowed the rods of the Egyptians, it has too often done the same with the rods of the theologians. Barth himself repudiates any such bondage to Kant. If it can be shown that he follows Kant up to a point, it can equally be shown that he diverges from him. In Kant the moral consciousness postulates a world of ideas outside the bounds of pure reason, whereas Barth makes no suggestion that man, as subject, postulates anything beyond a belief in the existence of God. On the contrary, he holds—it is fundamental to his whole teaching—that God acts through-

out as Subject. The moral consciousness is seen as invaded in a new way from beyond, and man is brought into a crisis. The knowledge of God, which comes from beyond in His Word, is not knowledge of an object, but the knowledge of being known by a Subject. We know only as we are known, a paradox, says Barth, which we can as little avoid as St. Paul. In the act of religious knowing, the autonomous reason does not create the object, on the contrary, the autonomous Subject (God) creates our knowledge, through which alone He becomes known. Barth rejects all theories of knowledge save one, which he regards as the only theory of knowledge of Revelation. "In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9). "God remains Lord," he says, "and He does so, just by coming Himself into our hearts and 'fulfilling' us. No other answers but Himself. No other answers for Him within us but Himself. No other speaks out of us, by speaking through us, but still again Himself." (4)

In his new Dogmatics, as we have seen, Barth explicitly renounces all reliance on philosophy for support or justification of his theology, separating at this point even from his friends, Gogarten, Brunner, and Bultmann. He dissociates himself particularly from any attempt to seek a foundation in Existential Philosophy before whose altar he had sprinkled a few grains of incense in his first edition. Philosophy, science of history, psychology, he says, have never served any other end than the degeneration and devastation of the Word of God. A *philosophia christiana* there has never been in actual fact; if it was philosophy it was not Christian, and if it was Christian it was not philosophy. (5)

If we are to press for the philosophy of this Theology we shall find it in the place which it assigns to judgment, in the ruthless putting in question of all that is purely human, of all knowledge which does not arise out of faith, and therefore of every alleged philosophy.

“This Theology,” says Canon Barry, further, “isolates the Christian experience from the Revelation of God in the homely goodness of plain men, and leads to an exaggerated otherworldliness, which is irreconcilable with the genius of Catholic Christianity.” Still further, he holds, and Canon Quick agrees with him, that this Theology makes Christianity almost exclusively a Gospel of Redemption, and forgets that God is Creator as well as Redeemer, which is the only basis for the Incarnation. But Canon Barry’s ultimate quarrel with this Theology, he says, is that it “introduces an absolute separation between our knowledge of God and all other activities of the spirit, and narrows the base of faith, making the Gospel a divine disclosure to the twice-born and temperamentally religious, whose ultimate security rests in some feeling of security, such as happens to some people. It makes Christianity the religion of the privileged.”

In this criticism, which I have somewhat condensed, there is much real misunderstanding. It is incorrect to say that the Barthians make Christianity exclusively a Gospel of Redemption. To all of them, God is first of all the Creator, apart from the knowledge of Whom God as Redeemer cannot be understood. This is indeed a foundation-stone of the whole theology. Brunner may think that Gogarten makes too much of the Creation, and that

Barth makes too little, while he himself steers, as he believes, a middle course, but all three start from the doctrine of God the Creator. This is not, however, to be regarded as a common truth which we know of ourselves, or can discover, but is a truth of Revelation.

Again, Barth does not "differentiate faith from knowledge, and all other activities of spirit." On the contrary, he protests against those who would make the will, or the conscience, or the feelings the exclusive seat of the experience of the Word of God, as if this or that must be the chosen receptacle of experience. "We can calmly understand the will, and the conscience, and the feeling, and all other anthropological seats which come into consideration," he says, "as possibilities of human self-determination, so as then to understand these in their totality as determined through the Word of God, which concerns the whole man." (6) It is not even necessary, he says, to regard with distrust and suspicion, as has been done in recent days, the intellect of man, his capacity of reason and thought, as a place of possible religious experience of the Word of God. Nor is it necessary to seek out, or maintain that there must be some exceptional hidden anthropological seat as the basis for the possibility of the human experience of God. There are, he adds, unconscious and subconscious, occult and half-occult possibilities of the human soul. Beyond the discursive reason, also, there is such a thing as an intuitive power of taking hold of subjects. There are also the possibilities of specifically pious sensibility and behaviour. None of these would Barth exclude as possible seats for the experience of God. He refuses to take any interest in those attempts of

theology since Schleiermacher due to philosophical presuppositions, to determine the specific "province" in the human spirit in which religion is at home.

The last thing which Barth dreams of, is to make Christianity "the prerogative of the privileged," or confine it to "the temperamentally religious," or "drive a wedge of cleavage between religious and non-religious." For a Gospel based on justification by faith, the distinction of religious and non-religious ceases to have any decisive meaning. The Christian life is not a "religious" life at all, in this sense. It does not belong to any particular part of life, but is, as Luther taught, the profane or common life which each man has to live in his own station, and for which every man is claimed, or sanctified, in his baptism. Its ultimate security rests not "in some feeling of security such as happens to some people," but in God alone. Barth's whole polemic is directed against the assumption that religious experience of any kind is a way to God, or that a religious temperament has an advantage over any other temperament, in finding God. He does not despise "the homely goodness of plain men and women." Far from it. He prefers it greatly to religiosity, and pietistic soul-culture, but he prefers to see in it the grace of God, rather than a native growth of the human heart.

"This Theology denies the universal self-revelation of God in the reason and conscience of mankind." Such is the criticism of Canon Quick, in which he is joined by Professor C. E. Raven. (7) Faced with the question how can man know and obey that which he cannot at all recognise as akin to

his ideals, the Barthian has, says Canon Quick, no valid answer. It is ridiculous, he insists, to preach the Gospel to those who are inherently incapable of recognising it as good. Here the critics begin to get to grips with Barth, and they have attacked him at a point at which he is found to be still more unbending in his new Dogmatics, than in his earlier volume. For his own mind has clarified in regard to the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. The divine image, in the natural man, as he perceives now, is not only disturbed, it is destroyed, and the natural capacity for God is really lost. Nothing remains in man but the *recta natura*, to which, however, we cannot ascribe even a potential *rectitudo* in the natural man. It follows, then, that man in his natural state is not capable of receiving God, for only in faith can he have experience of the Word of God, which faith is not a natural possession of man, but a gift of the grace of God. There is therefore no immediate point of contact in any quality of man with the Word of God. It can only be established by the grace of God. (8) Man hears *because* God speaks, and imparts to him in the act of the Word the gift of faith by which alone he can hear and recognise the Word of God. The possibility of knowing the Word of God is then the miracle which God works in us. Man's only point of contact with God is to be found inside faith. In faith, he becomes capable of receiving the Word of God. In faith, he is recreated through the Word of God, and for the Word of God. In faith he receives that criterion or power of judgment, which Barth's critics desiderate, but it is not a criterion over which he has power, but a criterion which has power over him. Our ideals are not the criterion

of the Word of God, but God's Word is the criterion of our ideals (Rom. x. 17).

Man, according to Barth, was once in the Father's House, and though now held in the bondage of sin, suffers from a home-sickness of the soul. He is restless, seeking he knows not what, for all recollection of that Home is blotted out. He does not even know that he is lost, for "only the son who is again thinking of the Father's House knows that he is a lost son," but what in all his wandering he is seeking is God. (9) For down in his heart, deeper than his sin, is the *imago Dei* which, though lost, buried, destroyed, can never be wholly effaced without his ceasing to be a man. The Word of God the Father, then, need not sound so strange and unrecognisable when heard by man the prodigal son, as the critics suggest, for it carries its own authentication. "God," wrote Barth, in his *Romans*, "is the hidden Abyss, but also the hidden Home, at the beginning and the end of all our ways. If we are untrue to Him, we are untrue to ourselves."

The real question at issue between Barth and his critics concerns their attitude to the limits of natural revelation, and the extent to which the divine image has been effaced. Modernists, like Raven and Barry, hold that man is inherently good, not very good, not uniformly good, but on the whole good. In his natural condition, in his reason and conscience, he enjoys the universal self-revelation of God. Accordingly, he can, says Canon Quick, "test and exhibit the value of the divine facts presented to him." (10) If granted, as in Christianity, a special revelation, reason and conscience will be "loyal to their own nature in accepting them." But of all

new facts of Divine revelation breaking in upon the normal tenor of men's rational and ethical ideas, even of the Gospel itself, reason and conscience must "test and estimate the value of them," even although they may "find their judgment as to what is true and right transformed by really fresh data."

Barth will not allow that reason and conscience in the natural man can be the test and judge of Revelation. Reason has very definite limits. Even though not definitely incapacitated from apprehending the Divine will, it is untrustworthy. The conscience of the natural man speaks with equivocal voice. Only in the conscience of the new man, illumined by the Holy Spirit, is the voice of God clearly heard. He holds with St. Paul as against the Modernists, that man is "dead in trespasses and sins," not merely a little dead, or half-dead, but wholly dead; and he needs to be quickened by God's Spirit, before he can come to the knowledge of God. This also was the teaching of the parable of the prodigal son. "For this thy brother was *dead*, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke xv. 32). The man who has come again to life in faith is, says Barth, "a miracle to himself, he is another man."

"This Theology makes of God a distant, transcendent, and Wholly Other Being, and ignores the Divine immanence." We meet here a very frequent criticism. Dr. Garvie finds that "God's moral and spiritual immanence in the world is denied, and his transcendence affirmed in a quite unbalanced way." Carl Heath misses "the recognition of the immanence of the Eternal Spirit in the eternal souls of men."

The Barthian doctrine of God as the Wholly Other—*totaliter aliter*—has clashed with a favourite

truth of our time, that of the Divine immanence, and has proved one of the chief stumbling-blocks which this Theology has encountered. Is not God present in Nature, it is asked, is He not present in man, is He not the ground of all being? It may be that in the early days of the movement, which set out to be a corrective, the doctrine of God, as the Wholly Other, was expressed with a one-sidedness which gave rise to some criticism that was justified. But few of these criticisms will survive a reading of Barth's new Dogmatics. Apart from Revelation, as he says, God is incomprehensible—a *Deus Absconditus*. Even to describe Him as the Other assumes a knowledge of Him which by nature we do not possess. The word therefore is ambiguous. Barth now seldom uses it, although what it stands for represents still a very distinctive feature of his theology. He chooses rather, in speaking of the transcendent aspect of the Divine nature, to employ the simple Bible word: "Lord."

While the Barthians all begin from the moral dualism of the Bible, and oppose a monistic interpretation of the universe, they have never entertained any idea of a cosmological dualism. Barth does not deny "God's moral and spiritual immanence in the world." What he contends against is the particular notion of immanence, the philosophical doctrine of identity between God and man, which confounds God with the world, and the world with God, and is nothing other than a disguised pantheism. God *is* immanent in the world, according to Barth; but it is as God the Other, Who does not cease in His immanence to be God, the Lord. It is not enough to assert the Divine transcendence, if we

proceed at once to reduce the thought of God to that of a mere Over-Soul, Who is at once over, and continuous with, the world. God is not, as already the Old Testament prophets had learned, a part of Nature. What we see in the world is not a luminous revelation of God, "broken lights of Thee," but a creation pointing to a hidden Creator. It is God's *invisibilty*, says Barth (commenting on the paradox of Romans i. 20), which is visible in His Works; Works that "are sheer questions to which there is no direct answer, to which God alone, only God Himself, is the answer." God is transcendent, Lord over life and death. Our being is maintained by Him over the abyss of not-being, without actuality of its own, either in its security of life, or in its menace from death. It has an Author from Whom, as such, it is absolutely different, yet to Whom it is absolutely related, but not in such a way that this relation is one of necessity. It has a Creator Who of His own free will and plan and goodness calls it into life, and maintains it in life. This Author and Creator of our being is He Whom Jesus reveals to us as God the Father. (11)

This God is also immanent in the spirit of man, but it is as God the Other, God the Lord, Who is not to be identified with our religious ideals, or with our better self. Barth holds that the mystical self-deification of man, of which there is much in current thought, rests on a fundamental error. The pride of man continually dims his perception of the reality of his existence, until he imagines he can regard himself as a creator, whereas he is only a poor creature who returns to the dust whence he came.

There was granted to Barth in the early days a

double insight, which he has struggled more or less successfully to express. The first insight was, that God is God, and man is man, and that man the creature is not the same as God the Creator. Kierkegaard, his early master, taught him to perceive that "there is an infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity." Eternity may enter in time, but time cannot become eternity. God may become man, may take up man into Himself, but man cannot become God. The far-off God draws near, and enters into man, becomes immanent, but still remains God, the Other. "The inner man," he says, "is the Other in us, Who is not the world in any sense whatever, but the Deeps of God Himself." There is thus a boundary between Creator and creature which the creature cannot cross, which only the Creator can cross by entering into us, as the Other. Creator and creature meet in the Word, and in the heart of man, through the Holy Spirit, but they do not merge, the one into the other. God is Other than the highest thoughts which the most spiritual mind can possibly conceive of Him.

The danger lay near, to allow this philosophical concept of *finitum non capax infiniti* to suggest that man's present distance from God was due to his finiteness, and thus to identify man's sin with his finiteness, which would have offered a truly hopeless outlook. But this danger was checked by the second insight granted to Barth, that this original relation of Creator and creature, Infinite and finite, had been disturbed by something which ought not to be, by human sin. Sin is more than distance between Creator and creature, it is a positive stumbling-block between God and man, an obstacle for God Himself

which must at all costs, even the cost of a Divine Sacrifice, be removed. Man's sin is not due to the fact that he is a creature, and therefore is at a distance from the Creator. It is due to the fact that he has ignored this distance, and has yielded to the temptation to be like God. This pride is to Barth, as it was to Luther, the crowning sin. Man is no more what God the Creator meant him to be, but a fallen creature, so that God and man can only meet in grace; that is, through the gracious forgiveness of God (Eph. i. 7). Barth's preference is now for Christian rather than philosophical terminology, and instead of saying *finitum non capax infiniti*, he would prefer to say *homo peccator non capax verbi domini*. Man as sinner is incapable of receiving the Word of God. But even this sentence is annulled by the mystery of the Revelation of God, the Son. (12)

That there is then a difference between Barth and his Quaker critics must be granted, a difference which goes back to the Reformation. Barth's spiritual ancestry is found in Luther and Calvin running back to St. Paul. That of the Quakers, as they acknowledge, is to be found among the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, and particularly Hans Denck. But the difference may not be so great as appears. The Quaker, with his unconquerable idealism and mystic activity, goes to seek the Shining God among the rubbish heaps of humanity, and finds Him, for he carries Him already in himself. Barth, thinking of man along quite other lines, the pride of his achievements, and of his religion, sets him in the light of the Cross, and shows him as one who has "sinned and come short of the glory of God." He does not deny that the Word in some measure is in

all men; "the Deeps of God," he says, "that is the truth of man"; but he does not see in the natural man the Shining God of George Fox. The difference lies in the attitude to the limits of natural theology, a question over which there is difference of opinion inside the Barthian group itself. Brunner, e.g., finds the point of contact for the Word of God in the humanity and personality of the sinful man, while Barth regards these also as lost by the fall, and only recoverable by grace. By no power of humanity or personality, or aught that he has from his creation, can man hear the Word of God. The one point of contact for the Word of God, according to Barth, is the divine image in man, when awakened by faith from death to life. (13)

"This Theology threatens to take away from us our Heavenly Father." Garvie, Raven, and others unite in this criticism. It is a point at which the feeling towards Barth seems to gather into something like anger, for he appears to be threatening what has become very dear, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, a doctrine which it was the proud claim of last century to have rediscovered. It seemed to bring God near, and make Him tender and lovable. But Barth's teaching appears to remove Him out of this tender, Fatherly relationship with men to an infinite distance. Dr. Raven complains of Barth's neglect of "the witness of Jesus to the universal love and care of the Father for His creatures."

Barth does not deny that God is the eternal Father. On the contrary, he asserts, as the very *fons deitatis*, that God is Father. He is Father in Himself, Father of His only Son Jesus Christ. The Fatherhood of God is to Barth the central truth of Revelation,

apart from which there can be no knowledge of it. It never can become a common religious truth. It is a truth, moreover, which needs always again to be revealed to each individual. "Neither knoweth any man the father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27).

But this faith in God the Father must be so preached that it shall be imprinted on the hearts of the hearers without confusion through the recollection of human and natural fatherliness. For Who is this Father of Jesus Christ? The answer of the New Testament, says Barth, is very different from the usual sentimental, edifying exposition of the Fatherhood of God. The will of the Father, as made known through Jesus, does not lie in the direction of a good-natured affirmation of protection, and security to man, but much more in a radical putting in question and annulment of human existence. "Every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13). In calling God *Father*, says Barth, the Bible takes up a human analogy, and immediately breaks through it. The Father demands the death of His Son. His obedience is an obedience unto death. Beyond the death of the man Jesus of Nazareth lies the place from which the light falls on Him, which makes Him to be the revelation of God the Father. So with the discipleship of Jesus. It is beyond the narrow gate that absolutely everything lies which the New Testament describes as "newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). Only through death and a new birth, only through a humanly incomprehensible new grounding of his natural being beyond its annulment, is a man set in the sonship of God (John i. 12 ; iii. 3). (14)

What does this mean for our question? It means that God the Father in no way identifies Himself with what we know as our life. His will is superior to our will to live, and stands over against it with an absolute power of disposal. It is not only impossible for us by way of understanding, or analysis of our existence, to determine what God the Father wills for us. It cannot even be hidden from us that our whole existence, down to its deepest foundations, and powers, is set in a radical crisis through the will of God, that it may become new. God the Father will have neither our life, nor our death in itself; He will have our life, that He may lead us, through death, unto eternal life; He will have our death, that He may lead us also, through it, unto eternal life. His Kingdom is this new birth, and new life. All this we put in a word when we say that God the Father is Lord of our being, Lord over the life and death of man. (15)

Barth's complaint is, that this tremendous truth of Revelation has been cheapened into a general religious idea, of which Jesus was once the bearer and symbol to men, but which is now become a common, timeless, and impersonal possession of mankind. It has ceased to be a particular personal truth of Revelation, revealed only to faith by the Spirit of God. Further, it has been divorced from the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty in a way which Jesus never intended. For if He spoke of God as Father, He spoke of Him also as Lord, Whose throne was in heaven, and Whose footstool was the earth. The Fatherhood of God has been a popular doctrine of our time because it seemed to abolish distance. But the word which Jesus taught us to pray, "Our

Father *which art in heaven,*” is a word of infinite distance, and lifts the doctrine far above the merely human sentimental level to which it has been allowed to sink. Barth will not allow us to be on terms of easy familiarity with God, but will “reinstatate the distance” between us and God. The first thought to come into our minds must not be, “How like man God is!” but “How unlike man God is!” It is this lost aspect of the divine Fatherhood, its majesty and infinity, which Barth will recover for our time. So far from minimising it, he will restore the revealed New Testament truth of the Father, Who is at once “endlessly far and endlessly near.” If he does not say all that we look for about the Fatherhood of God, he says the things which perhaps we do not look for, but which we need to hear.

“This Theology leaves us in doubt as to how we can know and recognise the Word of God.” Another common criticism. Barth shirks the problem, says Canon Quick, as to whether, however singular the facts of Revelation may be, we have any grounds, or criteria, for recognising that they are God’s Word. If the Word of God is not the actual letter of the Bible, which Barth denies, if the Bible is only the witness to the Word of God, how are we to know the Word of God? This question comes from different sides, and indicates a real perplexity. Barth acknowledges its importance, for the knowledge of the Word of God is the presupposition of the Church, just as the Church is the presupposition of the knowledge of the Word of God. In an important section of his new Dogmatics he sets himself to answer: “how the Word of God is to be recognised?” (16) We cannot, he says,

put the question, "How *do* men recognise the Word of God?" The question must be put, "How *can* men recognise the Word of God?" For we have no natural faculty by which we can recognise the Word of God. There are no tests, or criteria, which we can apply to it. The knowledge of the Word of God by man must consist simply in the recognition of it, and this recognition can take place only through itself, and from itself. It does not come to man in general, but concretely and distinctly to the individual as a divine call, and this call reaches a man only in the Christian Church. The question "What is the Word of God?" says Barth, is completely hopeless, if it is a question concerning the category under which the Word of God may fall, for it presupposes that the Word of God belongs to the general, existing, determinable, and created actualities. All such ideas suppress the essential, that the Word of God becomes actual only in its own decision. (17) In the actuality of the Word of God, as it becomes an event in a man's heart, he knows without any question what the Word of God is.

There were people in the day of Christ who said to him: "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (John x. 24). But He refused, for they were asking the impossible. He passed *incognito* among men, becoming known only to those who believed on Him, and to whom the Holy Spirit revealed Him. In the same way must we decline to answer, as a general question, "What is the Word of God?" for it rests on the supposition that there is some objective body of sayings which can be thus labelled. But the Bible is not a book, the truth of which can be grasped as Word of God, by mere reading or exposi-

tion. The actual discovery of the Word of God is no simple matter, and even with the Bible in our hands we must often find ourselves in perplexity as to what the Word of God is for us, in some particular situation. Each man must in the end, through faith and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, come to know the Word of God for himself. He will discover it only in his own concrete situation, and as he surrenders to the claim of God, from day to day. It will come to him *incognito*, veiled in the flesh, often in his neighbour, behind whom God stands invisible, and it will always come as a living present Word, which says: "To-day if ye will hear My voice." This *to-day* is as inescapable as the voice itself, for only in the act, and in the moment, does it become the Word of God to us. The marks of the Word of God, which Canon Quick desiderates, are to be met with, therefore, not in any rational objective examination which we make of it, but in the Word of God itself, and in the searching examination which it makes of us, as a living Word, "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. iv. 12).

"This Theology depreciates the value of human experience." We have here a favourite criticism of those who hold by what they describe as the Theology of Experience. We cannot jump out of our skins, they say, nor can we know anything save through human experience. That is undeniably true. The Word of God can only be known to us, as it is experienced. Barth nowhere depreciates experience. "The Word of God," he wrote, in the first edition of his *Dogmatics*, "must legitimate itself as a thought of experience." In his new *Dogmatics*, he develops

the idea at greater length in a very important section on "The Word of God and Experience." Formerly he was chary in his use of the word "experience" because of the abuses to which it had been put, but he is weary of being told, he says, that he deals only with the *fides quae creditur*, the faith which is believed, without regard to the *fides qua creditur*, the personal conviction and experience of faith, and he now employs the word freely. He would not even exclude, he says, the use of the word, "religious consciousness," so long as we regard it, not as something which a man has as a possession, but as something which he can and may have as an event of faith. (18)

Man does not exist abstractly, but concretely, he says; he lives in experience, that is, in the determination of his existence through a variety of objects which come from without. If knowledge of the Word of God is possible to faith, it means that men can have experience of it, they can be determined through it to be what they are. Barth understands by experience of the Word of God, therefore, an event which determines man's existence. This is not to be confused with some self-determination which a man can himself give to his existence. Experience of the Word of God eventuates certainly in an act of self-determination, but not as this act is it experience of the Word of God. No determination which man can achieve for himself is, as such, determination through the Word of God. Experience of the Word of God is the determination of the whole self-determined man, in the totality of his being, an experience which must affect mind, will, feeling, and conscience. For in the experience of the Word of God we are dealing with a concrete,

personal experience, in which our whole human existence is involved. Experience can be viewed from different angles, as an act of feeling, or will, or mind; it can also be viewed psychologically; it is, however, a determination of the *whole* man, without the prominence or displacement of this or that human possibility.

So far from depreciating experience, Barth, in his new Dogmatics, is found writing thus: "What we experience, what changes, enlarges, develops us, quantitatively or qualitatively, upwards or downwards, what moves us forward, whether in a straight path or in a spiral, what can be made the theme of the anthropology, psychology, biology, of the believing man, is the human sign that God has given Himself to us in faith through His Revelation, and is not lightly to be esteemed. It would be strange, indeed, if such signs should not be visible. Yet here also it will be true that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18). (19)

But Barth makes a distinction between two things that differ, between experience as fruit or event of the Word of God, a *reactio* to a Divine *actio*, which is the New Testament conception, and experience as a religious human feeling, or sensation, of soul, which is the Modernist idea. It is against a theology which not only bases faith on such experience, but makes its religious experience the test and criterion of faith, that he directs his criticism. Although we may know God through our experience of Him, we dare not claim that our human experience can be the test and measure of His meaning, or any adequate basis of our faith in Him. After all the highest and

best we can think or know about God, we must still say to ourselves: This is not He. He is so much more! Faith in God may sometimes be the opposite of experience of God. It was so to Luther and the Reformers. Therefore they set the Word of God against everything, even against the experience of their own hearts, as they said: *verbum solum habemus*. We have only the Word to lean on. To have faith in God, in the true evangelical sense, means that, notwithstanding the fact that there is a separation between man and God, that no way leads from man to God, that there is no part of our nature which is not sinful, least of all the innermost places of our hearts, and that we have no experience, *nevertheless*, faith apprehends that we are one with God, because God so wills it (Ps. lxxiii. 23). Faith, as Brunner reminds us, (20) is an unheard-of bold enterprise, and from the point of experience must sometimes appear as madness. For it must stand against all experience, as it stands against death and the devil, relying simply on God's Word. It is on God as revealed, and not on God as experienced, that we must ultimately rest. The Gospel is not something which wells up within us, but is a self-revelation of God which is to be received with faith and obedience. Our base and starting-point, therefore, is not experience, but the incredible Word of God in Christ which transcends experience. But the way of the Christian life, not to speak of the goal, is a way of daily experience of the grace and mercy of God, which Barth sees illustrated in his favourite story of the manna (Exod. xvi). "In faith," he says, "men have actual experience of the Word of God, and no *finitum non capax*, also no

peccator non capax verbi divini, dare now hinder us from taking this statement, with all its consequences, in utter seriousness." (21) Before the reality of the experience of the Word of God every philosophical proposition must give way.

"This Theology eliminates all place for human effort." This is another frequent criticism. "It destroys," says Dr. Raven, "the whole possibility of human effort." (22) As an activist, and semi-Pelagian, he fears that Quietism lurks in this Theology, and his fear is shared by others. Are we simply to wait, they ask, until God begins to work? Is man to do nothing? This Theology does not eliminate all place for human effort, it calls for "works of faith," whether man's efforts are to be regarded as the work of God, as Brunner would put it, or as the works of man which God uses, as Barth prefers to put it. But it takes the line neither of a fussy activism, nor of an indolent quietism. It proclaims the worthlessness of mere human effort to heave up unredeemed humanity to a higher level. Humanity can be redeemed only by a power from on high. But while all human effort is worthless for salvation, there is no limit to the moral activity of the man in grace, in the exercise of his Christian obedience. His whole ethical activity, as a member of society, in Church, State, and in the family is given effect to, as he accepts the burden of the various claim-bearers whom he encounters. The fulfilling of those demands becomes for him a means of grace, as he works out in concrete fashion the obedience of sanctification. There *is* such a thing, Barth would admit, as a *Christian* resignation. The Christian is a man who awaits redemption, who looks for a

world to come, and because he looks for another world to be created by God, he can wait with the patience of hope, but this is something vastly different from what the world means by resignation.

The argument that, because God is everything and man is nothing, the result must be Quietism, is logically correct, but psychologically its consequence is found to be just the opposite. Logically, Calvinists ought to be quietists, actually they have been the most active Christians the world has seen. Calvinistic Protestantism, as Count Keyserling has pointed out, has been the "religion of action, *par excellence*, the greatest stimulus to initiative and to progress which has ever existed." (23) All history, indeed, like all experience, is against the argument that to emphasise God's part in human history is to lame man's moral activity. For it is a paradox of the faith that to be willing to be nothing is to possess the power of Almighty God to do all things. "The times in which men expected nothing of themselves," says Brunner, "but everything of God, were the epochs in which the greatest deeds were done."

"This Theology brings back an eschatology which a more enlightened Christianity has discarded." This is a peculiarly Modernist criticism. The universe, as the Modernist sees it, is dominated by evolution. It displays God's perpetual self-giving in the evolution of His creatures towards union with Him. Dr. Raven asks us to see in Jesus Christ, "the emergence of a true unity between God and man, a unity toward which all creation moves, which, however incompletely, is already manifest on all levels of being." (24) But this Theology, say the Modernists, abandons the clear intelligible view

of the Kingdom of God as the great task of the Church, and of humanity, for an eschatological Will-o'-the-wisp.

Modern rationalism has, it is true, abolished eschatology, and substituted for it an evolutionary conception of the Kingdom of God, as coming along the lines of moral and social progress. But we cannot so easily dispose of the essential teaching of the Scriptures, for the Kingdom of God, in the only sense in which the Bible uses it, is an eschatological conception. It is something which comes from above, and which God, and not man, brings in. The theme of the Old Testament is not the development of civilisation through the blossoming of the innate possibilities of man, but the *magnalia Dei*—the mighty works of the sovereign God of Grace Who comes down in mercy to save His people. Salvation is of the Lord. The theme of the New Testament is not an earthly Paradise to be slowly built up by education and legislation, but the breaking in upon the world of the supernatural order, viz. the Kingdom of God. "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke xvii. 21). It is God's Reign, and belongs to the future, but it determines the present, in that it compels men to make present decisions. Even now it is undermining the old world from within. Idealism knows no brink, no crisis, no imminent threat of a new life bursting in, but the Christian Faith knows of nothing else. The Christian believer is always on the brink not of death but of life. He is called to live eschatologically, with a clear sense of a crisis, "an arm of the Lord to be revealed," a life which threatens "to swallow up our mortality." "The New Testament," says

Barth, "speaks eschatologically when it speaks of the believing man as being called, reconciled, justified, sanctified, and redeemed, and just because it does so, it speaks actually and truly. Man must understand that God is the measure of all actuality and reality, must understand that Eternity is first, and then time, and therefore the future is first, and then the present, as certainly as the Creator is first, and then the creature. He who understands that will not here be offended." (25)

To speak eschatologically is not to speak in any unreal way, it is to speak in reference to the *eschaton*—to that eternal reality of the divine fulfilment at the last, on which we look out from our present position, but which is beyond our experience or power of comprehension. Other than eschatologically we cannot truly think of ourselves. Other than eschatologically we can think of none save God Himself, Who alone is without relation to a beyond, a future.

Canon Quick blames Barth that, while he emphasises the eschatological element in the New Testament, he no longer understands it in its natural and temporal sense. (26) But how does Canon Quick know that this natural temporal sense is the true sense? May it not be that this Theology, by a deeper insight, is recovering for the Church the true significance of New Testament eschatology? The Bible is unable, except in a figurative and imperfect way, to convey any idea of what lies beyond time, because it is impossible for man in time to form any intelligible conception of eternity. But the Bible makes it at least clear that eternity is not endlessly prolonged time, but something qualitatively

different. What we call death is not a transition of merely apparent insignificance in the *continuum* of time, it is an end, and a new beginning of another and utterly different quality of life, of which we can as little form any conception as the unborn child can of the life which awaits it after birth. As birth is a pain, a rupture with existing ties, and a new beginning; so also is death. Instead of being a nothing, as it is often described, death is the greatest crisis which man encounters in time, a crisis which must affect and qualify his whole present life.

The new and different conception of time, as finite and relative, now being taught by our mathematicians and astronomers, must also gradually affect all doctrines of the future—such as spiritualism—which regard it as a mere continuation of time, and add fresh confirmation to the eschatology of the Bible.

“This Theology fails to make room for a real incarnation.” To quote Dr. Raven, it introduces Christ as a “Divine Invader” brought in from beyond to be our Saviour, but not as One “who took on Him the seed of Abraham,” and Who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (27) “This Divine Invader,” he says, “Who came in the flesh is not Jesus of Nazareth. His incarnation is a theophany. It belongs to the region of mythology.” We reach here the most critical question raised concerning the Barthian Theology, and therefore of all questions, the one to be taken most seriously, for a real incarnation is vital to the Christian Faith. If God could be manifested in a human life, then human personality must be sufficiently akin to God to make it possible. But if that be so, what becomes, it is asked, of the awful distance which

Barth sets between God and man, Creator and creature? The difficulty arises in men's minds because they imagine Barth to make God and man so disparate, so utterly unrelated and heterogeneous, that a miracle of sheer omnipotence would be needed to unite them. But "there is no absolute opposition between spirit and nature, soul and body," says Barth, "such an idea does not come from the New Testament." The obstacle between God and man, as we have seen, is not a condition of man's finiteness, but a condition caused by man's sin, and therefore it is removable.

Dr. Raven accuses Barth of reaffirming the ancient heresy of Apollinarius, who taught that while the body and soul in Jesus were human, the place of the human spirit was taken by the Divine Logos, a view which, the Church held, denied a real incarnation. In the first edition of his *Dogmatics* Barth did lay himself open to this criticism, as Brunner has done also in *Der Mittler*, by drawing a distinction between the "personality" of Jesus which was completely human, and the "person" of Jesus in which dwelt the Divine Logos. In his second edition Barth has not reached the doctrine of the Incarnation, and we do not know whether or not he still leans to this view.

His first concern, in his new volume, is to maintain in its fulness the Godhead of Christ. He rejects the view that the Godhead of Jesus was arrived at by the gradual apotheosis of a great man, out of which arose the enthusiastic impression that: "here is God!" Equally he rejects the view which makes Jesus a theophany, a myth, the personification of the idea of Godhead, and which puts in question

the concrete humanity of His earthly existence, and even His historical actuality. He sees no possibility, on either of these ways, of ending other than in an aporia. (28) If the early Church had described Jesus as the Son of God in the sense which those two conceptions presuppose, then it would have rightly been expelled from the fellowship of the Old Testament Church. For what could the idealisation of a man, or the personification of an idea be other than just what the Old Testament understood as the setting up and worshipping of an idol, as an unworthy rival to Jehovah? "The content of the New Testament, at any rate, is this," says Barth, "that in Jesus *God* is to be found, while Jesus Himself, as other than God, is not to be found at all."

In the phrase "Jesus is Lord" (the word used in the Old Testament of Jehovah), Barth finds the bridge to the New Testament doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus. Jesus is Lord because He has it from God, Whom He calls His Father, to be Lord; because He is one with His Father, as the Son of His Father. In contradistinction to the view of the deification of a man, or the humanising of a divine idea, the proposition of the Godhead of Jesus is to be understood thus: Christ reveals His Father; and His Father is God. He Who reveals Him reveals God. But Who can reveal God but God Himself? Neither a man who is elevated, nor an idea that has come down, can do that. Both are creatures. True! the Christ Who reveals the Father is also a creature, and He does a creaturely work. But if He were only a creature, He could not reveal God, since the creature cannot take the place, or do the work of God. If Christ reveals God He must be wholly

God, without deduction and reservation, not an "almost" or "in some way" God, for every such reservation would be a denial of Godhead. He who confesses Jesus Christ as the Revelation of the Father confesses Him as of the same nature in the Godhead as the Father. (29)

But Barth is equally concerned to preserve the true humanity of Jesus. The *humanitas Christi*, he says, presents the most difficult question in Christology. The problem is not whether Jesus had a perfect humanity. That is taken for granted. But can the incarnation of the Word, according to the view of the Biblical witness, mean that the existence of the Man Jesus of Nazareth was, in its own power and continuity, the revealing Word? Does the God-Sonship of Jesus signify that God's self-revelation transferred itself, and became identified with the existence of the Man Jesus of Nazareth? In his new Dogmatics this has become much more a question to Barth than it was in the first edition, where he spoke of the sweet Lord Jesus of the Mystics and Pietists, and the Jesu-olatry of Zinzendorf as "an empty throne without a King," a deification of the creature. But he still regards it as at least doubtful that we should think we can understand the presence of God in Christ by the help of images taken from humanity. We have to beware of profanation and secularisation. In the New Testament doctrine of the *humanitas Christi*, he says, the power and continuity in which the Man Jesus of Nazareth was in very deed the revealed Word of God consisted, not in the power and continuity of the historical figure of Jesus as such, but in the power and continuity of the activity of God Himself.

The Godhead of Christ, he says, while immanent in the humanity, was not so immanent that it should not also be transcendent. The immanence was such that it did not cease to be an event, always again a new thing, an actual coming into being, ordained of God, in particular occurrences. (30)

Whether or not the hint of an ancient heresy can be discovered in Barth, he is seeking to give due weight both to the Godhead and Manhood of Christ. But it cannot be said of Modernist theology that it takes either of these in their New Testament seriousness. The reproach that Barth fails to make room for a real incarnation can be levelled with greater force at the Modernists themselves. It has been the pathetic delusion of modern theology to have convinced itself that it has discovered, for the first time in history, the true humanity of Jesus. With this conviction it has taken up a position of antagonism to the Christ of the Creeds, and has proceeded to destroy piece by piece the ancient doctrine of the Person of Christ. (31) But it must be seriously questioned whether that which it calls the humanity of Jesus can really be called "humanity" at all. For this Modernist theology, which has its roots in the Renaissance, and in Humanism, and is embedded in philosophical idealism, has, at the basis of its thought, the conception that man is a being who carries the Divine in himself. It maintains the view of the immanence of the Divine in every man. But if one sets out from this presupposition, then the whole Christological position, at least as the old dogmatists stated it, falls at a stroke. If all that Jesus does is, as Dr. Raven says, "to express the fulness of that which we can trace in varying degrees

at every level," if what we have in Christ is nothing more than a moral and religious perfection, then no Christological problem remains. The union of the two natures in Christ, the union of the Godhead and the Manhood, ceases to be a question; at any rate it is essentially the same question in relation to Jesus, as it is in relation to any other man. For what now distinguishes Jesus from another man is only the degree, the intensity, of the Divine in Him. The union of Godhead and Manhood in a single person is no longer in any sense peculiar, for such a union constitutes the nature of every man, since all men are divine. Godhead and Manhood are become nothing more than two sides of one and the same thing. There is now no meaning in speaking of Christ as the God-Man, since every man is a god-man, in a greater or less degree.

All such attempts as those of Dr. Raven and others to depict Jesus as "the full incarnation of God in humanity," not as an incarnation that is unique in Jesus, but only as an incarnation that is superlatively illustrated in Jesus, come to grief because Christ's appearance in history cannot be so explained. They destroy the once-for-all-ness of the Incarnation, as the New Testament understands it, and turn it into the highest expression of a general religious truth, that God incarnates Himself in every man.

This view does not take the Godhead of Christ seriously, for of the mystery of the Christ, which Luther said was so unspeakable that the angels could not comprehend it, nothing remains. Such is not the Godhead of Jesus, as the New Testament understands it, nor as the Church has understood it. The

Christian Church has known from the beginning, and all through the centuries has confessed, as the foundation on which it stood, the full Godhead of Jesus. It has never been satisfied to say merely what is held by Modernism, that Jesus is divine, or that His Godhead was something which He Himself acquired through His earthly obedience. (32) "It is not the revelation and reconciliation that makes His Godhead," says Barth, "but His Godhead that makes the revelation and the reconciliation."

Neither does Modernism take the Manhood of Christ seriously, because it has no place for the uniqueness and apartness of the Man, Christ Jesus. The Manhood of Christ cannot be understood except as the humanity which the eternal Son took on Him in His condescension, when He came under the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that He might redeem us (Gal. iii. 13). But that is something quite different from what writers like Dr. Raven mean when they speak of the humanity of Jesus. They mean no more than His historical actuality.

The answer of Modernist theology simply evades the problem which the theologians of an earlier day saw, and sought to solve. The Barthians, especially Barth, Brunner, and Gogarten, have once more taken up the problem, recognising in it the nucleus of all theology, and they have gone back to Chalcedon where the serious study of Christology reached the door of mystery, and halted with the imperfect formula of the two natures. It remains the unsolved paradox of the New Testament, that One, Who lived on earth a truly human life, should be at the same time the Divine Son of God. Barth has not solved the problem, but he has again seen it,

and brought the Divine aspect, which has recently been ignored, again to consciousness. "We stand before the riddle of the actuality of God," he says, "if we do not have to solve it, we have to come to terms with it, in order to make clear to ourselves how far it is a riddle, and how far we cannot solve it." (33)

The problem needs therefore to be taken up. Modern Protestantism, relying on a phrase of Melancthon's: *hoc est Christum cognoscere beneficia eius cognoscere*, has sometimes imagined, says Barth, that it can treat the confession of the Godhead of Christ as "untheological speculation." (34) But this is a delusion. While the Reformers, engaged in their own particular battle, simply affirmed the earlier doctrine of the Person of Christ, they never dreamt of allowing the Christology to disappear in the "benefits of Christ." It is the denial of the Godhead, and not the Church dogma, says Barth, that is "untheological speculation." Yet he and Brunner alike deprecate, as Luther also did, making the Person of Christ a subject for disputation, for that is to turn the miracle of the Incarnation into a metaphysical problem.

2. *What American critics say.* In America, the Theology of the Word is still in its first period of strangeness and, with few exceptions, can hardly be said to have reached the stage of understanding criticism. In his interesting book, *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, written from the Barthian standpoint, and with a fine understanding of it, Dr. Lowrie feels himself as a "voice crying in the wilderness." The Americans, at home in their two schools of liberalism and fundamentalism, are genuinely perplexed by Barth, some asking: "Is Barth a prophet of destruction, or some sort of Nihilist?" To the

humanistic, scientific, and psychological school, as well as to the activist "Social Gospel" type of Christianity he appears to deny much, which hitherto has been counted good and great. Yet with the dawning sense that the world is not to be saved by activism, or by religious pedagogy, and helped by the present distress, America is being prepared for the message of Barth, and voices like that of Dr. Lowrie are being heard, which shows that the Theology of the Word is entering on its second phase of fruitful criticism.

Two considerable books have appeared. From the Fundamentalist School has come *The Karl Barth Theology*, by Professor Em. Dr. A. S. Zerbe, a book of great industry by an octogenarian who claims to have read nearly a hundred books and pamphlets on the subject in four different languages. But even so, he has not earned the right to be so critical of Barth, because he has not understood him. The whole book is vitiated by the error of thinking that Barth is to be approached through his philosophy. As a criticism, the book cannot be taken seriously, but it serves to show how hard it is for an American Fundamentalist to get inside the Theology of the Word.

A stronger book has come out of the Liberal School, entitled *Karl Barth, Prophet of a New Christianity?* by Dr. Wilhelm Pauck, of Chicago Theological Seminary, who says that he is unable to declare himself "either wholly for, or against Barth." He shows an accurate knowledge of the origin and development of the Movement, and especially of its implications for America. He recognises the pass to which Humanism has brought the American Protestant Churches, and regards Barth's rediscovery of the transcendence of God, and of the eschatological

nature of the Christian life, as expressions of a truly profound and genuine view of life. The theologians, he says, will have to accept Barth's correction, and take the significance of the religious *crisis* into consideration. Barth's criticism of liberal Christianity, he says, "can hardly be refuted." But he criticises Barth for what he regards as his antiquated conception of Revelation, his too blunt supernaturalism and Biblicism, his undue attachment to historical theology, and to the traditions of the Church. He maintains that the Church, in whose name Barth speaks, is the Church of the past. In consequence, Barth is not in a position to speak the saving word of the present. He is too little modern, too burdened with the past, too tied to dogmatic expressions, too academic in his language, too little concerned to make terms with the thought of to-day and to express his theology in terms of the twentieth century. "We deny," he says, "that it is necessary for a new expression of the Christian Faith that we occupy ourselves with the Trinity, and Christology, as if it were really a matter of life and death that as members of the Church we should accept the doctrine of the Trinity." Dr. Pauck is plainly disappointed that Barth has not thrown off the shackles of the past, and stepped forth as the Prophet of a new Christianity. He shares with Dr. Zerbe in the misunderstanding that Barth starts from certain presuppositions of neo-Kantian philosophy which control his thinking; only his attitude is the opposite of Dr. Zerbe's. Dr. Zerbe is annoyed over Barth's philosophy, and more than suspicious of what remains of theology. Dr. Pauck, on the other hand, is rather pleased with what he takes to be Barth's philosophy, but regrets that in

his Dogmatics there are still traces visible of traditional theology. "I must say to both," Barth remarked to the present writer, "that they have rung at the door of the wrong house." Referring to a remark of Dr. Pauck's that American preaching deals generally with "religious topics," rather than with expositions of the Bible, Barth writes that if that is so, the confronting of the Church with the Bible can be no more, or scarcely any more, an event. He can therefore expect, he says, neither interest nor understanding for his book among the successors of the Pilgrim Fathers. "But perhaps," he adds, "there is there at least a dark memory that the preaching of the Church *could* stand in some excellent relationship with the Bible. And surely the time will come again when the 'religious topics' become so stupid and insipid, that out of that dark memory, a bright memory may once more arise." (35)

3. To answer the question: *what continental critics say?* would require a book for itself, and we shall not even attempt it. A whole literature has arisen in Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and other countries, even Russia, which shows that the message of Karl Barth is working with stimulating results upon the life of the continental Church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. We would refer those interested to Dr. Adolf Keller's admirable survey in *Der Weg der dialectischen Theologie durch die Kirchliche Welt*.

A Theology which creates so much interest, and raises so many reactions and criticisms, must have something vital to say to this generation, and it has already done not a little to quicken the thought and life of the Church.

Its prophetic note, its call to the Church to repent and surrender to the Sovereign God, has been, to use Barth's own figure, like the ringing of the Church bell at night; it has startled men and made them listen, and ask questions. It has also recalled the Church to its true work, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

It has given a fresh impetus to the study of the day of the Reformation when, in the language of a disciple of Barth, "the Western Church last looked back to the original Church, and in the mirror of Scripture saw the true Church."

It has brought to a halt the encroachments of historicism and psychology, and the whole relativism of the historical method, which were working with disintegrating effect upon theology, while at the same time it allows to history and psychology their due place in scientific research. It has reminded us, with one-sided forcefulness, perhaps, that religion has to do in the end, not with conditions of the soul, but with God.

It has set a boundary to the pragmatism, empiricism, and humanism which have been flooding in, especially from America, and robbing Christianity of its supernatural character. It has reinstated the claim of the *verbum alienum* over against the widespread emphasis on inwardness and autonomy. It has made us again critical of all attempts to attain an immediate knowledge of God, and has brought us back to the Gospel of the Word of God as Mediator.

It has recovered the eschatological character of the Gospel, and taught the Church a new understanding of it, as something which belongs to the very nature of the Christian Revelation.

It has shown how it is possible to combine complete freedom in the handling of the Biblical text with the utmost loyalty to Scripture, as the witness of the Word of God.

It has, by its decisive separation of culture from Christianity, and by its note of judgment, not only dealt a blow at the social optimism of so much Christian teaching, but it has also secured an independent place for theology over against the claims of philosophy, and human culture. It has brought back theology to its *theos*.

It has shown up the inadequacy of the "Jesus of History" School, as an interpretation of the New Testament, and of the Christian Faith, while at the same time it has stood firm for the essential historical truth of the Christian Revelation.

There have been other gains. It has brought theology and philosophy together again, and opened conversations between them on terms of equality. Not for long, indeed, has philosophy taken so deep an interest in any theology. Heinemann in his *New Ways in Philosophy* describes the Barthian Theology, with its undertaking of an absolute task, and its doctrine of the qualitative difference between God and man, as "one of the greatest manifestations of Protestantism." There has been in recent philosophy, parallel to this Movement, a distinct turning towards objectivity, and realism, a breaking forth from the dimension of the "I" into the dimension of the "Thou," which has made possible a new understanding between philosophy and the Theology of the Word. Christianity is in consequence receiving a new evaluation at the hands of philosophy.

But above all, theology, through this Movement,

has recovered its soul, and once more become conscious that it has a concern and responsibility for eternal things. If its adherents speak with a conviction which is sometimes mistaken for dogmatism, it is because they believe that they have been given a witness to bear. Even scientific scholars, overleaping the old barrier between class-room and pulpit, are becoming the active allies of the ministers in the service of the Word. This Theology is no longer concerned merely with the numinous, or the holy, but with the living, sovereign, ever-present God. Someone has called it, with truth, a knightly theology. It has come forth from the Word, it stands for the Word, and it goes forth "with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," to confront every power or authority of man that may oppose.

Barth's renunciation of any claim or wish to be regarded as the spokesman of a movement, or the founder of a school, does not mean that the Movement which, to his own surprise, he initiated, will not go on, or that it will lose his inspiration. In every country it must go on, for a time at least, before it catches up with him, for he is a long way ahead of most of his followers. The so-called Barthian Movement is not a movement outside the Church, or beside the Church, but of, and in, the Church, and for the larger good of the Church. If it does its work well it will end, as the Barada ends in the flower-gardens of Damascus, by giving up its own life to fructify the life of the Church. Our prayer is, that both as a Theology, and as a stimulus to Christian faith and life, it may be used, under God, to make the desert "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

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CHAPTER X

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