

That there is a renewed interest in Christian eschatology in these days there can be no doubt. We owe this perhaps more to the atomic bomb than to any deep spiritual awakening, if Emil Brunner's assessment of the situation be correct! He assures us that 'the sudden end of human history, which until recently seemed only apocalyptic fancy, has today entered the sphere of the soberest scientific calculation'. But Christian eschatology deals with more, very much more, than merely the end of the world, and it is this content of eschatology that makes it worthy of our careful study.

Bibliography:

- Amillennial: William Masserlink, *Why Thousand Years?*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1930; W. J. Grier, *The Momentous Event*, Evangelical Bookshop, Belfast, 1945.
- Postmillennial: David Brown, *Christ's Second Coming*, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1858; R. J. C. McKnight, *The Second Coming of Christ*, Wilkensburg, Pa., 1915.
- Premillennial: W. E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, Pickering and Inglis, 1908; James H. Brookes, *Maranatha*, Pickering and Inglis, 1889.
- Adispensationalist: O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., U.S.A., 1945.
- Neo-liberal: C. J. Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus*; Lutterworth, 1941; E. Brunner, *Eternal Hope*, Lutterworth, 1954.

TWO STUDIES OF KARL BARTH

By the Rev. COLIN BROWN, M.A.
Lecturer at Tyndale Hall, Bristol

KARL BARTH enjoys the unique distinction of being the most talked about and least read contemporary theologian. The fault is not entirely ours. Much of his work is written in a theological jargon which for the uninitiated is like a new language. His *Church Dogmatics* already sprawls out over twelve hefty tomes with the promise of more to come. But two books published recently in America offer guidance across this dark and (for those accustomed to the backwaters of English theology) forbidding continent.

Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture by K. Runia (Eerdmans, 1962. 225pp. \$4.00) is a serious attempt to grapple with a serious subject. Despite its vast ramifications Barth's thought is basically simple. It rests on the twin axioms that God is sovereign and that all His dealings with men are effected through Jesus Christ. When applied to Scripture, the result is a brilliant, if forlorn, attempt to combine the insights of Reformed orthodoxy with certain postulates of critical scholarship. On the one hand, Barth wants to say that men have no knowledge of God apart from God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ mediated through Scripture. On the other hand, he wants to regard the Bible as a fallible human book.

According to Barth, all revelation is revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the witness of the prophets to Christ; the New Testament is the witness of the apostles to Christ. When God speaks to men today, He speaks through their word. For their witness is such that when we receive it we also receive Christ (cf. Mt. 10: 40). Barth develops this in two ways. On the one hand, he rejects all natural theology, since it short-circuits Scripture and seeks an alternative route to God apart from Christ (cf. Mt. 11: 27; Jn. 14: 6; 1 Cor. 2: 6-16; 2 Cor. 3: 12-4: 6). On the other hand, Barth insists that we take seriously every word of Scripture as the Word of God. For Barth is well aware of the passages which make this identification (e.g. Mt. 5: 17-19; 1 Thes. 2: 13; 2 Tim. 3: 15-17; 1 Pet. 1: 24f.; 2 Pet. 1: 20f.), and he fully realizes that his rejection of natural theology cuts the ground from under the feet of anyone who sets himself up as a judge of the truth of Scripture. Consequently, Barth makes the twofold claim that all his teaching is the product of straightforward exegesis of Scripture, and that preconceived ideas should always give way to the teaching of the Bible.

So far, Barth might pass for a 'fundamentalist', and his more radical continental colleagues might well be pardoned for taking him to be just that. But alongside this high doctrine of revelation Barth teaches a low doctrine of inspiration. And oddly enough, he takes the same starting point as the conservative Evangelical. But whereas the conservative Evangelical traces his doctrine of infallibility to the sovereign work of the Spirit in the inspiration of Scripture, Barth assumes that infallibility and sovereignty are irreconcilable opposites. Because God is sovereign, His revelation cannot be deposited in a fallible book by fallible men. Because revelation takes place when and where God pleases, inspiration is not to be confined to the printed page but is stretched to cover the whole process of illuminating the mind of writer and reader alike.

Whilst granting that there is much of tremendous value in Barth, there is no denying that his teaching also contains some remarkable pieces of double-think. The older liberals believed that by paring away the alleged errors in Scripture they could get down to a solid core of truth. But Barth requires Scripture to be both true and false at the same time. It is true in so far as it becomes the Word of God in the event of revelation, but it is false in so far as it always remains the fallible word of fallible men. Barth's treatment of the canon is hardly more satisfactory. How do we know that Scripture is the Word of God? How, in particular, do we know what books are the canonical Word of God? Barth's answer is twofold. He rightly says that Scripture is self-authenticating. Historical and archaeological evidence may corroborate points of detail, but the divine origin of Scripture can only be proved from Scripture itself by examining its claims and hearing its voice. But when Barth claims that Scripture is Scripture because it is the witness of the prophets and apostles, and then leaves open the question of authorship and composition of certain books, we are left wondering how seriously he intends us to take this principle. Why accept the Gospels and reject the Didache and 1 Clement? From the point of view of apostolic authorship or backing they are all on the same footing according to many scholars. On the question of inspiration Barth appears to be doing precisely what he forbids others to do. He starts with the preconceived assumption that sovereignty cancels out infallibility. And when he comes to a text like 2 Timothy 3: 16 he glosses over what the verse actually does say in favour of an exposition in terms of his preconceived notion of revelation. The net result is that *theopneustos* is robbed of its particular significance and is reduced to being just another name for revelation.

Dr. Runia's exposition is not without its blind spots. A subject index would have greatly enhanced the value of his book, particularly as his chapter headings, though clear in themselves, give no clear indication of the wealth of material contained in the chapters. Dr. Runia himself is guilty of a piece of double-think when he tries to distinguish between *infallibility* (which he wishes to predicate of revelation) and *inerrancy* (which he wishes to deny to Scripture). But his book may justly claim to be the standard treatment of Barth's teaching on revelation and Scripture. And it deserves a place on our book-shelves alongside B. B. Warfield's *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* for taking up the question of revelation where Warfield left off. Not that its treatment is definitive, but at least it reminds us that the question of revelation remains even when Warfield has settled that of inspiration and authority.

The Significance of Barth's Theology by Fred. H. Klooster (Baker Book House, 1961. 98pp. \$2.95) is more ambitious in its title but more slender in its treatment. The first of its three chapters is devoted to opinions about Barth and a sketch of his development. The remaining two chapters spotlight two key themes of the later volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*: election and reconciliation.

Again Barth's starting-point is the twin axioms that God is sovereign and that all His dealings with men are effected through Jesus Christ. The result is a novel combination of supralapsarian covenant-theology and double predestination. In view of the union of divine and human nature in the incarnation, Barth teaches that God has taken mankind into covenant part-

nership with Himself. The covenant is decisive for the being of both God and man alike. For God would not be the God He is without the covenant which commits Him to be man's partner, and creation, reconciliation, election, redemption and man's very constitution all depend on the covenant. When God creates man, He is creating a covenant-partner. When God creates the world, He is creating a place for His covenant-partner to live in. When man sins, he is trying to wriggle out of the covenant. And when God reconciles, He is putting away His wrath for the sake of the covenant. But the covenant for Barth turns on election, and election for Barth turns out to be a new form of double predestination. Jesus Christ is *both* elect and reprobate. As reprobate He died for all. As elect He restores all to the Father. If this brings Barth to the brink of universalism, he hesitates to take the final step. For Barth is well aware of the passages in both Testaments which speak of judgment. And he shrinks back from thoroughgoing universalism lest he should compromise the sovereignty of God. But one thing is certain, in view of Christ's finished work and the permanent nature of the covenant, sinful man will never taste the desolation which Christ tasted on the cross. The worst he can do is to try to live as if he were not reconciled to God.

As with Barth's teaching on Scripture, so with his doctrines of election and reconciliation we may admire the breadth of his learning and learn much from his treatment of points of detail, but it is difficult to take his theology as a whole as a serious piece of biblical exegesis. It is ominous that when Barth first unfolds his doctrine of the covenant in connection with creation (*Church Dogmatics*, III. 1), he manages to do so without referring to the covenant in its historical forms. But the crucial point is election. When Scripture speaks of election, it speaks of the election of believers in Christ (Mt. 11: 27; Jn. 6: 37, 65; 17: 6, 9, 24; Rom. 8: 29f.; Eph. 1: 4f.). What it does not speak of is the election of all in the election of Christ. And unless Barth can demonstrate the point exegetically, the whole of his covenant theology is robbed of its foundation.

Dr. Klooster's book is the fruit of a year's study on Barth under Barth at Basel. What it lacks in size it makes up for in incisiveness. Like Dr. Runia's work (a by-product of the latter's Th.D. thesis on Barth), it is clearly written. And it clearly shows that neo-orthodoxy is no substitute for the genuine article.

AN EIRENICON FROM ROME

By O. R. JOHNSTON, M.A., *Sheffield*

THE PURPOSE of this article is to comment on a book which is at present receiving considerable attention in both Protestant and Roman Catholic circles — *The Council and Reunion* by Hans Küng (Sheed and Ward, 1962. 307pp. 11s. 6d.). The book is attractively written and has received lavish praise in many quarters. The author is the Swiss-born Professor of Catholic Theology in the University of Tübingen. His subject is the council of Roman Catholic bishops from all over the world which assembled last October and the bearing this council might have on the prospects for the reunion of all professing Christendom. The tone of the book is friendly and conciliatory towards Protestants, who are usually referred to as 'separated brethren', 'non-Catholics' or 'other communions'. The approaches are so irenic and the concessions so sweeping that many a Protestant will rub his eyes on occasions and look again for the *Imprimatur*.

Our first questions will naturally be 'Does this book bring us significantly closer together? Are there, for instance, the admissions and apologies which, to Protestants, are glaringly necessary if any real rapprochement is to be achieved without flying in the face of history and conscience?' On the face of it, the book might be said to give the answer 'Yes'. Küng speaks of the 'historical mistakes' of Rome (p. 25), of her tendency to defend the good with evil weapons (26), of the ever-present danger of becoming 'churchy' (31). He admits that there have been deformations, deviations, sinful perversions, mistaken developments and attitudes in the