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Karl Barth Reader (Book Review)

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post-70 crisis in Judaism as the catalyst for Jews disavowing their faith. Ironically, earlier in the same chapter Dart used evidence of Gnostic ideas in *GT* as a basis for considering some sayings as later additions to this document.

Another problem with the book is a confusion of Doceticism and Gnosticism (93, 101). Doceticism is a Christological heresy which denied that Christ really became a human being and which is reflected in the New Testament (see 1 John 4:2-3). Not all Docetists were Gnostics and not all Gnostic were Docetists, though some were. Dart depicts Ignatius, a church Father who was martyred in about 115, as contending with Gnosticism when

A Karl Barth Reader, Rolf Joachim Eiler and Reiner Marquard, eds. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986). 128 pp. \$6.95. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Professor of Theology and Philosophy.

After having become a famous twentieth-century Protestant theologian in the West, Karl Barth commented on how he saw himself and his work as a biblical theologian:

I also admonish you in all seriousness, don't make a myth out of me, for the angels will certainly not like that, and the perspicacious will see through it to my shame I do not want the result of my life to be the formation of a new school. I want to tell everyone here who will listen that I myself am not a "Barthian," for when I have learned anything, I have wanted to remain free to learn more. Understand what I say: Make as little use of my name as possible Good theologians do not live in houses of ideas, principles, and methods. They pass through every house and out again into the free world. They keep on the move If it ever comes to light who has been the greatest theologian of this century, then perhaps some little man or woman who has very quietly taught a Bible class somewhere will be discovered and will actually prove to have been the greatest theologian of this century. (111-112)

As a "member of the Christian church" who crusaded against theological liberalism, Barth viewed his own achievements as "no more than a molehill" (113). The last word he had to say was not a "concept like grace" but only a "name [like] Jesus Christ," who "is grace" and "the ultimate one beyond world and church and even theology" (114).

This selection of Barth's sermons, letters, addresses, and published writings was prepared for the 1986 celebration of the centennial. For students and nonstudents, it provides a devotional and inspiring introduction to his life and views.

Barth was not first of all a biblical theologian but a critic

he actually was fighting Docetism. A complete lack of any reference to Gnosticism in Ignatius' writings continues to be a problem for those who postulate a first century Gnosticism.

Nevertheless, Dart's book is worth reading. His writing style is engaging. He has a knack for telling stories with an element of suspense. His book is valuable as it retells the story of the Nag Hammadi discovery and as a superb non-technical introduction to some key Gnostic concepts. It is also valuable as a report on a segment of scholarship, providing it is read as reporting on only a segment.

of a Western culture which had succumbed to human autonomy, become arrogant in denying God's revelation to humanity, and reduced God to a product of human projection. To express this critique, he used theology as an instrument.

Despite his intention not to establish another "school," he did leave behind in his numerous speeches, letters, and writings a distinct way of thinking and witnessing. This is evident from his views on such things as faith as decision in the present moment, theology as faith, church as context for theology and faith, free God and free man, God as the unknown Other, tension between Gospel as God's Word in Christ and Law as creation, principles, and structures of society, the dialectic between God's YES (in Christ) and man's NO, and Scripture as witness in relation to Christian faith.

Barth's peculiar way of thinking, living, reading Scripture, preaching the Gospel, warning against evils, and providing pastoral care for victims of evil, especially prisoners, reflects the tremendous formal and substantive impact of existentialism upon his critique of Western rationalism and, in this connection, his understanding and use of theology.

Despite these questionable thought-patterns that are present in this selection of his sermons, addresses, and letters, and for which he has been severely criticized by Reformed and other Christian thinkers, there is nevertheless a biblical thrust to his work. It is as though one can not only feel in Karl Barth Esau's hairy arms (e.g. compromise with existentialism) but also hear, albeit in muffled form, Jacob's voice (e.g. Scripture's witness to God's sovereign grace). At a student conference in Switzerland on August 7, 1934, Barth responded to an objection that he had not taken real life into account:

I was a pastor for ten years and had the task of preaching the gospel. I came up against the problem you all know well, that is, secularism, a

modern world that finds a place for the church but follows different rules than the Christian rule we think we see in Holy Scripture . . . and I also found in this secularized Christian world a church or Christianity that for all its earnestness and zeal and inwardness and active and loving effort was much too closely related to this modern world One day I had a shock, for I found something different in the Bible, unlike the godlessness of the world and the godlessness of the church and Christianity (51)

This positive feature of his life and work, in direct opposition to the tidal waves and undertows of humanism, is perhaps one reason why many evangelical Christians have shown increasing interest in Barth's work and why *A Karl Barth Reader* has been translated into English in commemoration of his birth in 1886. We do well to keep

Theology in Turmoil: The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative-Liberal Debate in Modern Theology, Alan P.F. Sell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986). 199 pp. \$9.95. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Professor of Theology and Philosophy.

Alan Sell, secretary of World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and author of *The Great Debate*, which deals with the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, describes in *Theology in Turmoil* the roots, course, and lessons learned from the debate between conservatives and liberals. It is his hope that "general readers and students will gain a bird's eye view of a fascinating period of shifting landmarks in theology" (8).

Sell reviews the rise of immanentism, higher criticism, evolutionism, and Ritschlian liberalism. In chapter 1, "Immanentism and the Gospel," he describes the "suggestive" and "elusive" views of Kant (1724-1804), especially the distinction between "phenomena" and "noumena" the belief that man is law-giver, and the postulates of autonomous reason concerning God, freedom, and immortality.

He points out the anti-supernatural views of Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his "attractive" and "disturbing" theory of "pious feeling" as source of religious consciousness or means to become immediately aware of spiritual absolutes.

Finally, he describes the dialectical philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831), and its impact on British neo-Idealistic thinkers like E. Caird (1835-1908), T.H. Green (1836-1892), F.N. Bradley (1846-1924), B. Bosanquet (1848-1923), and several other romantic thinkers.

According to Sell, through immanentism in general God has come closer to human beings, and through romanticism in particular the limitations of naturalism and deism are avoided, but both introduce erroneous views on human beings and history and distort the distinction between

in mind his statement in 1959, during a discussion of "Pietism and Theology":

My advice to you is that you drop the name Pietism. All words that end with "ism" are bad. Calvinism! I do not want to be called a Calvinist. Lutheranism is even worse. We should not espouse any "ism." Simply stand for an evangelical Christianity. Servants do not have to become "fathers." What counts is the person of Christ. (61)

This book reminds, or teaches for the first time, about the mystique, limitations, sensitivities, and power of Karl Barth as a major twentieth-century critic of Western culture and theologian. It shows his intentions were biblical but his actual thinking-patterns, irony of ironies, were influenced by religious assumptions against which he fulminated, even thundered. Thus *A Karl Barth Reader* is a helpful publication.

Creator and creature, the uniqueness of Christ, and the real nature and effects of sin.

In chapter 2, "The Rise and Reception of Modern Biblical Criticism," Sell briefly summarizes the biblical criticism of such liberal thinkers as Spinoza (1632-1677), J. Locke (1632-1704), H.R. Reimarus (1694-1768), F.C. Baur (1792-1860), D.F. Strauss (1808-1874), R. Whately (1787-1863), W.R. Smith (1846-1894) and others, and by such conservatives as F.A.G. Tholuck (1719-1779), E.W. Hengstenberg (1802-1869), F.J. Delitzsch (1813-1890), and B.B. Warfield (1851-1921).

Similarly, Sell briefly surveys in chapter 3 the theory and theme of evolution. Basic to the views of C. Lyell, H. Spencer, C. Darwin, H. Bergson, A. Whitehead, C. Hartshorn, S. Ogden, and J. Cobb, are the underlying themes of optimism, progress, and evolution as God's way of revelation.

In chapter 4, the author describes the contribution of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), a neo-Kantian theologian. Though critical of positivism, materialism, Hegelianism, etc., Ritschl placed the subjective before the objective, fruits before roots, reconciliation before redemption, consciousness of values before divine rules, and kingdom as humanity's moral end before kingdom as God's gift. Sin as not rebellion but ignorance, and the "work" and "person" of Christ, must be viewed in terms of Kant's distinction between, respectively "phenomena" and "noumena."

Finally, in chapters 5 and 6 on "Conservatives and Liberals in Theology" and "Conservatives, Liberals and the Gospel," Sell links "a confused, and sometimes, con-