THE EPISTLE
TO THE
ROMANS

BY KARL BARTH

TRANSLATED FROM THE
SIXTH EDITION

BY
EDWYN C. HOSKYNNS

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE
TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The unselfish and laborious task of translating this book into English has been undertaken by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. Partly owing to my insufficient familiarity with the English language, and partly because my time has been so fully occupied with other work, I have unfortunately not been able to go through the whole of the translation in detail. Sir Edwyn has, however, laid before me a fairly long section of his work, and, after comparing it with the original German, I am persuaded that he has performed his task with great skill. He has combined fidelity to the text with a considerable freedom of presentation; and that is, surely, the mark of a good translator. Though a translation, however skilfully made, must be in some degree a transformation of the original, yet I feel certain that those who think and speak in English will have before them what I wished to say. I should like therefore to take this opportunity of thanking him publicly.

In its English dress my book is now set in a new context; and I cannot refrain from asking those who propose to read it to bear with me whilst I make of them certain demands which seem to me to be important.

1. I beg my English readers to remember that this book was written eleven, or, to be precise, fourteen years ago. When I first wrote it—the First Edition only the Preface now remains!—it required only a little imagination for me to hear the sound of the guns booming away in the north. The man who sat writing his commentary was then just a young country pastor, only vaguely aware of what responsibility in ecclesiastical and scientific matters really means. Altogether ignorant both of the forces which were ranged against him and of those upon which he might call for help, he tumbled himself into a conflict, the inward and outward significance of which he could not foresee. Nor was the situation

1 See p. 2.
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materially different when in 1921 he rewrote the whole book, and let it go out in its second and present form. When, however, I look back at the book, it seems to have been written by another man to meet a situation belonging to a past epoch.1 Those who now read it— and this applies, perhaps, even more to English than to German readers—ought therefore to remember that they have in their hands what is, in fact, the beginning of a development. They ought not to bind the Professor at Bonn too tightly to the Pastor of Safenwil, nor to assume that the present state of theological controversy in Germany can be directly gauged from this book. When they come across opinions expressed in it which seem to them to be open to very grave criticism and to raise very delicate problems, they must not assume too readily that the author is unaware of them. Indeed, it is most improbable that criticisms suggested by a first reading of the book will not already have been made by the author or by his friends or by his opponents, and will not already have been reconsidered and rediscussed in his later publications. For English readers the book is therefore an introduction. It invites them to take a part, according as they are best qualified, in the further work which has opened up as a consequence of the publication of this commentary.

2. It is both an honour and a pleasure to me to know that already many English theologians are not wholly unacquainted with my work. This translation has been preceded by the publication in English of a collection of addresses and of some of my more occasional writings. I have had in my hands a number of books and articles—some good, some less good— which have been written about me both in England and in America. I have also been in touch with the endeavours of Adolf Keller to make use of my theological work in order to further the cause of 'Oecumenical' Christianity.2 Lastly, I know

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1 See the Preface to the Sixth Edition.
2 Dr. Adolf Keller is one of the Pastors of the Reformed Church in the Canton of Zürich. He was for some time secretary of the Life and Work Movement. In 1924 he contributed two articles to the Expositor under the title 'A Theology of Crisis', and in 1931 his book Der Weg der dialutischen

Theologie durch die kirchliche Welt was published by the Kaiser Verlag in Berlin. An English translation of the latter work is now being prepared by the Lutterworth Press. [Tr.]
great a benefit from it, that they will be compelled to go on reading it to the very end. But I know what Sir Edwyn means; and he is quite right. There have been in Germany those who have read and reviewed the book after skimming through, I am quite certain, no more than the First Preface and a few other pages selected at random. They have then for years afterwards behaved as though they had read the book and knew what was in it. Some of them have approved of it, others have subjected it to severe criticism, but all of them have acted like bulls in a china shop. There are also those who have loudly asserted that there are very significant omissions in the book. They would, however, have discovered, had they taken the trouble to look for them in the right place, that these significant things were not in fact omitted. A great deal of tilting at windmills would have been avoided if reviewers in Germany had followed Sir Edwyn's acute and quite simple advice. The truth is that it is the Epistle itself which cannot be split up into fragments. Chs. I and II must not be read apart from Ch. III; nor Ch. V apart from Ch. VI; nor Ch. VIII apart from Ch. VII; nor Ch. IX apart from Ch. XI: and above all, Chs. I–XI must not be separated from Chs. XII–XV. If this be so, is it really defensible for an interpreter of the Epistle to do otherwise than preserve with great care this interlocking of the whole? Since the Epistle can be understood only as a whole, it must clearly follow that any proper interpretation of it must also form one whole. I cannot, of course, communicate to my readers the incentive to busy themselves with discovering this unity; but I am bound to remind them that, if they are possessed of any sense of responsibility, they ought not to busy themselves with speaking about this book, unless it has first spoken to them as one whole. Indeed, the book would not be an interpretation of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans if it did not follow in detail the various stages through which Paul moves so impressively. There can therefore be no possible understanding of this book if the reader has not himself also followed through these stages.

4. Lastly: it may not be irrelevant if I now make it quite clear both to my future friends and to my future opponents in England that, in writing this book, I set out neither to compose a free fantasia upon the theme of religion, nor to evolve a philosophy of it. My sole aim was to interpret Scripture. I beg my readers not to assume from the outset—as many in Germany have assumed—that I am not interpreting Scripture at all, or rather, that I am interpreting it 'spiritually'. In this context the word 'spiritually' is used, of course, to convey a rebuke. It may be, however, that the rebuke turns back most heavily upon those who launch it so easily against me. The publication of this book in English may perhaps lead to a fresh formulation of the problem, 'What is exegesis?' No one can, of course, bring out the meaning of a text (auslegen) without at the same time adding something to it (einlegen). Moreover, no interpreter is rid of the danger of in fact adding more than he extracts. I neither was nor am free from this danger. And yet I should be altogether misunderstood if my readers refused to credit me with the honesty of, at any rate, intending to explain the text. I must assure them that, in writing this book, I felt myself bound to the actual words of the text, and did not in any way propose to engage myself in free theologizing. It goes without saying that my interpretation is open to criticism; and I hope to hear as soon as possible of important and proper criticism of it at the hands of my English-speaking theological colleagues. But I do not want to hear of criticisms which proceed from some religious or philosophical or ethical 'point of view'. Proper criticism of my book can be concerned only with the interpretation of the text of the Epistle. In other words, criticism or approval should move strictly within the realm of Theology. I shall not be impressed in the least by general propositions concerning the value or lack of value of my 'spiritual outlook', or of my 'religious position', or of my 'general view of life'. My book deals with one issue, and with one issue only. Did Paul think and speak in general and in detail in the manner in which I have interpreted
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him as thinking and speaking? Or did he think and speak altogether differently? The fourth and last request I have to make of my English readers is therefore quite direct. Of my friendly readers I ask that they should take nothing and believe nothing from me which they are not of themselves persuaded stands within the meaning of what Paul wrote. Of my unfriendly readers I ask that they should not reject as an unreasonable opinion of my own what, in fact, Paul himself propounded. The purpose of this book neither was nor is to delight or to annoy its readers by setting out a New Theology. The purpose was and is to direct them to Holy Scripture, to the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in order that, whether they be delighted or annoyed, whether they are 'accepted' or 'rejected', they may at least be brought face to face with the subject-matter of the Scriptures. I wished, and still continue to wish, this book to be of definite service. But whom or what ought it to serve? No doubt it should be of service to those who read it. But, primarily and above all else, it must serve that other Book where Jesus Christ is present in His Church. Theology is ministerium verbi divini. It is nothing more nor less. The conflict in which we have been engaged in Germany during the past ten years revolves round the apprehension of this truth. My purpose in permitting this commentary upon the Epistle of Paul to the Romans to appear in English is to summon an ever increasing number of men to engage themselves in this conflict.

BONN

October, 1932.

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WHEN, in 1921, the author of this commentary on the Epistle to the Romans completely rewrote the earlier commentary which he had published in 1918, he stated in his preface that the First Edition, whatever its merits or failings, could now 'disappear from the scene'. It was therefore impossible for the translator to summon back the vanished volume even had he wished to do so. In consequence, it is not the original, but the revised edition of this modern attack upon the vigour of idolatry and upon the arrogance of that scepticism which holds itself aloof that is here presented in an English dress. Whether the translation will be adequate to explain the hubbub and commotion created by this commentary upon its first appearance is for its English readers to decide. Whether it reproduces the original with sufficient accuracy must be left to the judgement of those familiar with the author's works. But of one thing the translator is quite persuaded: to produce a translation worthy of the dignified language of English divinity has been beyond his power. The vehemence and explosive character of the German lies intractably behind the English, and for his inability to be rid of it, or to transform it into properly explosive English, he offers his apologies to the readers, both patient and impatient, of this book. As Professor Maitland once said, an English translation is always a 'distorting medium'.

What Karl Barth had to say lies embedded in a wealth of allusions which must be largely unfamiliar to the English reader. Indeed, the disturbing effect of his book among German-speaking people was due in no small degree to his extremely critical sensitiveness to movements of thought of which we in England may perhaps have heard, but which do not hang heavily in the air we breathe. This sometimes delicate, sometimes rough, allusiveness has presented an almost insoluble problem to the translator. What was he to make of such a sentence as this?—'Warum nicht mit Marcion fortschreiten
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zur Proklamation eines neuen Gottes im Gegensatz zu dem alten des Gesetzes, oder mit Lhotzky zu einer recht handgreiflichen Anspielung von "Reich Gottes" gegen "Religion", oder mit Johannes Müller zur Aufweisung eines Weges aus der Mittelbarkeit zurück in das Land der zwar verlorenen, aber immerhin hier und jetzt auffindbaren Unmittelbarkeit, oder mit Ragaz zur Aufforderung, aus der hoffnungslos gewordenen Kirche und Theologie in die bessere Welt der Laien überzusiedeln, oder mit manchen Seiten der 1. Auflage dieses Buches im Anschluss an Beck und altwürttembergischen Naturalismus zur Behauptung eines organisch wachsenden göttlichen Seins und Habens im Menschen im Gegensatz zu der Leerheit der idealistischen Forderung...?

Or of this?—'Er ist—nicht ich, mein existentielles Ich, ich, der ich in Gott, in der Freiheit Gottes bin'. Or even of this?—'Die Philosophen nennen diese Krisis des menschlichen Erkennens den Ursprung'.

The introduction of a long series of footnotes would merely have disturbed the reader and distracted his attention from the movement of the book itself. And indeed they are for the most part unnecessary, for we are not so far detached from European civilization as to be untouched by its problems, unmoved by its hopes and fears. We may be ignorant of the theories which German theologians and philosophers have so laboriously constructed, but we are not ignorant of the ideas or notions which underlie their theories. We or our neighbours hold the same opinions, and the same notions buzz in our English heads. An allusion to some particular theory is more readily intelligible to us than the theory itself would be. Many of the unknown persons whose names are scattered about in the book can, therefore, be taken by the reader in his stride without bothering to find out precisely who or what they were or are, or how they worked out their systems. Those who desire more detailed information will usually be able to find it in the second edition of Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.¹ There are, of course, passages which are wholly unintelligible without further explanation. In such cases a note has been added in order to avoid too great obscurity. There are also passages where the rich allusiveness of the author's language must escape the English reader, and yet not altogether escape him, for the Biblical background is common to the author and to all his readers. When, for example, he plays round the word 'High', we are not ignorant of the words, Set not your mind on high things, nor are we unfamiliar with the High Places of the Old Testament narrative or with their significance. It is, therefore, not difficult for us to catch a modern application of this Biblical language, even though we may not know that Das Hochland is the title of the most cultured Roman Catholic monthly journal in Germany, or even though we may not associate a wedding with the adjective 'high' (Hochzeit).

Quite apart, however, from this peculiar allusiveness, the task of translating a German theological work is never quite straightforward. Words pregnant with meaning often have no precise English equivalent. The words Sachlichkeit and Dinglichkeit, for example, are quite proper German words, but, though attempts have often been made to do so, we have never been able to build upon the foundation of the word 'Thing'. 'Thinginess', 'Thinghood', 'Thingal', 'Thingish', 'Thingness', 'Thingship', 'Thingsomeness' are, as the New English Dictionary shows, intolerable words. A German, moreover, is free, as we are not, to build up comprehensive phrases by the generous use of hyphens. 'Seelisch-geschichtlich' and 'Das Da-Sein und das Wie-Sein der Welt' are, no doubt, congruous with the genius of the German language, but, when turned into literal English, they make nonsense. With these and other such-like troublesome words and phrases the translator has done his best, being guided in each case by the context. English readers will undoubtedly find difficulty in attaching a precise meaning to important words round which the whole commentary tends to revolve. Such words as 'Dialectical', 'Krisis', 'Existential', are

¹ Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart—Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft; 2nd edition edited by Hermann Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen), completed 1931.
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stumbling-blocks upon the very threshold. They were, however, as difficult in German as they are in English, and only a steady concentration upon the actual commentary itself will enable the reader to grasp their meaning. The awkward words Aufheben and Aufhebung of which, because of their double meaning, Hegel was so proud, have been rendered by 'dissolve' and 'dissolution'. If their use to describe a chemical process be borne in mind, they have in English also a positive as well as a negative meaning.

The author intended his book to be read not only with the eyes but also with the ears. He therefore frequently printed particular words in a different type in order to lay emphasis upon them. The meaning of a difficult sentence often becomes clear when it is read aloud. This method of underlining words by the use of a different type is hardly legitimate in an English book, at least not to the extent to which it is allowable in German. The translator has endeavoured, wherever possible, to secure the appropriate emphasis by care in translation; but sometimes he has been compelled to fall back upon the use of a different type, and sometimes he has dared to introduce a hyphen into a word in order to ensure the proper stress (e.g. 'Purpose-full,' 'Pre-supposition').

Something needs to be said also about the translation of the Text of the Epistle. The author made his own translation. Luther's version formed, of course, the basis, but the modern translations of Weizsächer, Stage, and Jülicher were also consulted and, at times, preferred. Sometimes the author paraphrased rather than translated the original Greek, and distinguished paraphrase from translation by using a different fount. It did not seem necessary or advisable to attempt to make an independent translation into English of the author's resultant Text. The translator has found it possible to reproduce his meaning by selecting the rendering sometimes of one, sometimes of another, of the authorized English Versions. Taken together, the A.V., R.V., A.V.mg., R.V.mg., offer a wide choice of translations. Where, however, the author has no support from the

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English versions or where he has paraphrased the Greek, a different fount has been used, in order that the divergence may be at once apparent to the English reader.

A word as to the use of various types throughout the book. The Author bases his commentary upon shorter or longer sub-sections of the Epistle, which are first printed in full. Then, as he builds up his interpretation, he fastens upon sentences or phrases or even upon single words from the sub-section, for special discussion. In order to make this 'lay-out' of the commentary clear to the English reader, the sub-sections of the Epistle are printed in bold type. Sentences or phrases or single words are then, on their first appearance for special comment, picked out in a less bold type. All other Biblical quotations, including quotations from the Epistle to the Romans and even from the passage under comment, are printed in italics. Further, it has been thought advisable, for the sake of clarity, to use small capitals for certain transliterated Greek words, as well as for emphasis, and to space out quotations in other languages.

In conclusion, the translator cannot allow this book to be published without bearing witness to the unfailing kindness of Mr. Humphrey Milford and to the skill of the Printer to the University of Oxford, or without expressing his thanks to those who have helped him in tracking down allusions or in translating unfamiliar words. To Professor A. B. Cook, Dr. W. H. S. Jones, the Rev. C. J. Shebbeare, Canon J. K. Mozley, Professor G. Kraft of the University of Freiburg, and Professor Gerhard Kittel of the University of Tübingen, Frau Dr. E. Sommer, the Dean of York, Brig.-General W. Evans, C.M.G., D.S.O., and to the Rev. Charles Smyth, he is more particularly indebted. To the nice mathematical knowledge of his wife he owes the unravelling of the mathematical analogies which occur so frequently in the commentary. But it is to the author himself that his thanks are most especially due. Many questions have been asked, and these have been
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answered, always by return of post, always graciously, and always strictly to the point. The Rev. Noel Davey and the Rev. Charles Smyth have not only given generously of their time to the correction of the proofs but have also helped to rid the translation of some of its more glaring literary absurdities. There are, no doubt, many mistakes in the translation, but for these the translator is himself wholly responsible.

NOTE TO SECOND IMPRESSION

Through the kindness of the Rev. Noel Davey a few minor corrections which the translator had noted during his lifetime have been incorporated in this impression.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A BIOGRAPHY of the author would be inappropriate, but the place-names at the conclusion of the various prefaces need some explanation. Karl Barth was:

Pfarrer in Safenwil (Canton Aargau, Switzerland), 1911-21.
Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology in Göttingen, 1921-5.
Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis in Münster (Westphalia), 1925-30.
Professor of Systematic Theology in Bonn (1930-35).

OTHER WORKS BY KARL BARTH

In addition to the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Karl Barth is the author of the following works:


With Heinrich Barth:


With Eduard Thurneysen.


All these works were published by the Chr. Kaiser Verlag, Munich. In addition, the same firm publishes every two months the journal Zwischen den Zeiten, edited by Georg Merz, to which Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, and Eduard Thurneysen are regular contributors.

Of the above-mentioned books, No. 1 has been translated into English by H. J. Stenning under the title: The Resurrection of the Dead, published by Hodder & Stoughton, 1933; No. 2 has been translated by Douglas Horton under the title: The Word of God and the Word of Man, published in 1928 by Hodder & Stoughton in England and by the Pilgrim Press in America; No. 3 has been translated by I. Strathearn McNab and published by the Student Christian Movement Press, 1930, under the title: The Christian Life. One of the addresses contained in No. 6 has been published by the Lutterworth Press, 1932, under the title, Questions to Christendom. A few isolated sermons have also been translated and published in America.
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Paul, as a child of his age, addressed his contemporaries. It is, however, far more important that, as Prophet and Apostle of the Kingdom of God, he veritably speaks to all men of every age. The differences between then and now, there and here, no doubt require careful investigation and consideration. But the purpose of such investigation can only be to demonstrate that these differences are, in fact, purely trivial. The historical-critical method of Biblical investigation has its rightful place: it is concerned with the preparation of the intelligence—and this can never be superfluous. But, were I driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of Inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter, which has a broader, deeper, more important justification. The doctrine of Inspiration is concerned with the labour of apprehending, without which no technical equipment, however complete, is of any use whatever. Fortunately, I am not compelled to choose between the two. Nevertheless, my whole energy of interpreting has been expended in an endeavour to see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible, which is the Eternal Spirit. What was once of grave importance, is so still. What is to-day of grave importance—and not merely crotchety and incidental—stands in direct connexion with that ancient gravity. If we rightly understand ourselves, our problems are the problems of Paul; and if we be enlightened by the brightness of his answers, those answers must be ours.

Long, long ago the Truth was found,
A company of men it bound.
Grasp firmly then—that ancient Truth!

The understanding of history is an uninterrupted conversation between the wisdom of yesterday and the wisdom of to-morrow. And it is a conversation always conducted honestly and with discernment. In this connexion I cannot fail to think with gratitude and respect of my father, Professor Fritz Barth. For such discernment he signally displayed throughout his whole active life.

It is certain that in the past men who hungered and thirsted after righteousness naturally recognized that they were bound to labour with Paul. They could not remain unmoved spectators in his presence. Perhaps we too are entering upon such a time. Should this be so, this book may even now be of some definite,
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though limited, service. The reader will detect for himself that it has been written with a joyful sense of discovery. The mighty voice of Paul was new to me: and if to me, no doubt to many others also. And yet, now that my work is finished, I perceive that much remains which I have not yet heard and into which I have not as yet penetrated. My book is therefore no more than a preliminary undertaking. Further co-operation is necessary. If only many, better equipped than I, would appear on the scene and set to work to bore for water at the same source! However, should I be mistaken in this hope of a new, questioning investigation of the Biblical Message, well, this book must—wait. The Epistle to the Romans waits also.

Safenwil,
August, 1918.

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οὐδὲ ἀπέφυγεν αὐτὸ τῇ ἁρμονίᾳ
... οὐδὲ ἀπέφυγεν αὐτὸ ἀρχηγίαν.—Gal. i. 17.

This book was described in the preface to the first edition as a 'preliminary investigation'. If as great attention had been paid to this description as to the much-abused final sentence—'this book must wait'—, no justification would be necessary for presenting a new edition in which the original has been so completely rewritten that it may be claimed that no stone remains in its old place. What I hardly dared to hope has been fulfilled. The book brought Paul and the Bible to the notice of some who had thought little about them. That was indeed the 'definite, though limited', purpose for which it was written. Whatever its merits and failings, the first edition can now disappear from the scene. The work has been continued, and the reader is now offered further tentative results. New advance positions have been occupied, and, as a result, the original position has been completely reformed and consolidated. Consequently the position as a whole has an entirely different aspect. And yet identity of historical subject-matter as well as of the theme of which both editions treat, guarantees a definite continuity between the old and the new. In this second 'preliminary investigation' the co-operation of the serious reader is once again required, for the new edition also is concerned only with PROLEGOMENA. This does not mean that a third revision is promised, still less that the work may some day be completed. There can be no completed work. All human achievements are

no more than PROLEGOMENA; and this is especially the case in the field of theology. I emphasize this, in order that those who saw in my previous commentary the appearance of the horrible spectre of a new orthodoxy may not so misunderstand the situation as to be led to blame me now for too great flexibility of opinion. Such contradictions of criticism are not impossible in certain quarters!

Of the relation between the two editions it is unnecessary for me to speak. The book provides its own evidence of the nature of the revision. Strangely enough, the chief weakness of the original edition seems to have passed altogether unnoticed by those who criticized it, at least in public. And it is surely not for me to provide my readers, and certainly not my reviewers, with the formula for the damaging criticism which might have, and indeed ought to have, been made upon it.1 Some reference must, however, be made here to the circumstances which have led to an advance and to a change of front. First, and most important: the continued study of Paul himself. My manner of working has enabled me to deal only with portions of the rest of the Pauline literature, but each fresh piece of work has brought with it new light upon the Epistle to the Romans. Secondly: the man Overbeck. Elsewhere, Edward Thurneysen and I have drawn attention, at some length, to the warning addressed by Overbeck to all theologians.2 This warning I have first applied to myself, and then directed upon the enemy. Whether I have dealt at all adequately with the questions raised by this eminent and pious man I must leave to the judgement of those who are able to perceive the nature of the riddle he has formulated so precisely, and are willing at least to attempt its

1 On the eve of publication there has come into my hands an essay by Ph. Bachmann, which appeared in the Neue Kirchl. Zeitschrift (Oct. 1921). The essay contains some friendly criticisms which I recognize to be justified at least far-reaching. The author will notice that I too have recently been concerned with the same points.

2 Franz Overbeck (1837–1905) was from 1872 to 1897 Professor of Critical Theology in the University of Basel. The reference is to two polemical pamphlets in which he launched an attack upon his theological contemporaries. One pamphlet appeared in 1873 under the title Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie; the second—Christentum und Kultur—was published in 1909 from Overbeck's literary remains. According to Overbeck all Christian theology, from the Patristic Age onward, is unchristian and satanic, for it draws Christianity into the sphere of civilization and culture, and thereby denies the essentially eschatological character of the Christian religion. In their brochure, Zur inneren Lage des Christentums, 1920, Barth and Thurneysen drew attention to Overbeck and especially to his pamphlet Christentum und Kultur, and asserted that the questions he had addressed to all theologians still remained unanswered. See Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, and ed., vol. iv, pp. 183/4. [Tr.]
solution. To the judgement of men like Eberhart Vischer I cannot submit myself! He sees in the riddle no more than a biographical and psychological problem. Thirdly: closer acquaintance with Plato and Kant. The writings of my brother Heinrich Barth have led me to recognize the importance of these philosophers. I have also paid more attention to what may be culled from the writings of Kierkegaard and Dostoievsky that is of importance for the interpretation of the New Testament. The latter I owe more particularly to hints given me by Edward Thurneysen. Fourthly: a careful consideration of the manner in which the first edition of this book has been received. I am bound to say that the more favourable reviews have been most valuable in compelling me to criticize myself. Their praise has caused me such dismay that I have had sometimes to express the matter otherwise, sometimes even to adopt an entirely different position.—These four circumstances I have set out in order that those who are unhappy until they have exposed the immediate cause of this or that occurrence may at least be put upon the right road. Everything in this world has its immediate cause. How indeed could it be otherwise?

More important, however, are those fundamental matters which are common to both editions.

The book does not claim to be more than fragments of a conversation between theologians. It is quite irrelevant when Jülicher and Eberhard Vischer announce triumphantly that I am—a theologian! I have never pretended to be anything else. The point at issue is the kind of theology which is required. Those who urge us to shake ourselves free from theology and to think—and more particularly to speak and write—only what is immediately intelligible to the general public seem to me to be suffering from a kind of hysteria and to be entirely without discernment. Is it not preferable that those who venture to speak in public, or to write for the public, should first seek a better understanding of the theme they wish to propound? Ragaz and his friends reply hurriedly that this proceeds from callous theological pride. But this cannot be granted for one moment. Those who are genuinely convinced that the question is at present trivial must be permitted to go their way. Some of us, however, are persuaded that the question, What are we to say? is an important one, particularly when the majority are prepared at any moment to lift up their voices in the street. I do not want readers of this book to be under any illusions. They must expect nothing but theology. If, in spite of this warning, it should stray into the hands of some who are not theologians, I shall be especially pleased. For I am altogether persuaded that the matters of which it treats and the questions which it raises do in fact concern every one. I could not make the book more easily intelligible than the subject itself allows. And I must beg my untheological readers to be indulgent when they are confronted with citations in a foreign language, which defy translation without loss of meaning; or when I have from time to time made use of philosophical or theological abracadabra. If I be not mistaken—and here I must contradict Arthur Bonus—we theologians serve the layman best when we refuse to have him especially in mind, and when we simply live of our own, as every honest labourer must do.

A friend of Ragaz has thought fit to dismiss me with one of the elder Blumhardt’s aphorisms: ‘Simplicity is the mark of divinity’. My answer is, that it has never entered my head to suppose that what I say or write is ‘divine’. So far as I am aware, divinity is set out in no book. Not being the elder Blumhardt, we have undertaken rather to ask the question, ‘What is divinity?’. The simplicity which proceeds from the apprehension of God in the Bible and elsewhere, the simplicity with which God Himself speaks, stands not at the beginning of our journey but at its end. Thirty years hence we may perhaps speak of simplicity, but now let us speak the truth. For us neither the Epistle to the Romans, nor the present theological position, nor the present state of the world, nor the relation between God and the world, is simple. And he who is now concerned with truth must boldly acknowledge that he cannot be simple. In every direction human life is difficult and complicated. And, if gratitude be a consideration that is at all relevant, men will not be grateful to us if we provide them with short-lived pseudo-simplifications. Does the general demand for simplicity mean more than a desire—intelligible enough, and shared by most theologians—that truth should be expressed directly, without paradox, and in such a way that it can be received otherwise than by faith alone? I am thinking here of an experience in relation to that earnest and upright man, Werne. As a modern man he is deeply hurt when I say, for example, plainly and simply—Christ is risen! He complains that I have made use of an eschatological phrase, and have ridden rough-shod over very, very difficult problems of thought. However, when I endeavour to say the same thing in the language of thought, that is, in dialectical fashion, he protests in the name of the simple believer that the doctrine of the Resurrection is wonderful, spiritual, and hard to understand.
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How can I answer him? He would be satisfied only if I were to surrender the broken threads of faith, and to speak directly, concretely, and without paradox. This means that the wholly childlike and the wholly unchildlike belong within the realm of truth, but that everything between must be excluded. I earnestly desire to speak simply of those matters with which the Epistle to the Romans is concerned; and, were some one competent to do this to appear, my work would at once be superseded. I am in no way bound to my book and to my theology. As yet, however, those who claim to speak simply seem to me to be—simply speaking about something else. By such simplicity I remain unconvinced.

Turning now to another matter, I have been accused of being an 'enemy of historical criticism.' Such language seems to me nervous and high-strung. Would it not be better to discuss the point at issue quite calmly? I have, it is true, protested against recent commentaries upon the Epistle to the Romans. The protest was directed not only against those originating in the so-called 'critical' school but also, for example, against the commentaries of Zahn and Kühl. I have nothing whatever to say against historical criticism. I recognize it, and once more state quite definitely that it is both necessary and justified. My complaint is that recent commentators confine themselves to an interpretation of the text which seems to me to be no commentary at all, but merely the first step towards a commentary. Recent commentaries contain no more than a reconstruction of the text, a rendering of the Greek words and phrases by their precise equivalents, a number of additional notes in which archaeological and philological material is gathered together, and a more or less plausible arrangement of the subject-matter in such a manner that it may be made historically and psychologically intelligible from the standpoint of pure pragmatism. Jülicher and Lietzmann know far better than I do how insecure all this historical reconstruction is, and upon what doubtful assumptions it often rests. Even such an elementary attempt at interpretation is not an exact science. Exact scientific knowledge, so far as the Epistle to the Romans is concerned, is limited to the deciphering of the manuscripts and the making of a concordance. Historians do not wish, and rightly do not wish, to be confined within such narrow limits. Jülicher and Lietzmann, not to mention conservative scholars, intend quite clearly to press beyond this preliminary work to an understanding of Paul. Now, this involves more than a mere repetition in Greek or in German of what Paul says; it involves the recon-

consideration of what is set out in the Epistle, until the actual meaning of it is disclosed. It is at this point that the difference between us appears. There is no difference of opinion with regard to the need of applying historical criticism as a prolegomenon to the understanding of the Epistle. So long as the critic is occupied in this preliminary work I follow him carefully and gratefully. So long as it is simply a question of establishing what stands in the text, I have never dreamed of doing anything else than sit attentively at the feet of such learned men as Jülicher, Lietzmann, Zahn, and Kühl, and also at the feet of their predecessors, Tholuck, Meyer, B. Weiss, and Lipsius. When, however, I examine their attempts at genuine understanding and interpretation, I am again and again surprised how little they even claim for their work. By genuine understanding and interpretation I mean that creative energy which Luther exercised with intuitive certainty in his exegesis; which underlies the systematic interpretation of Calvin; and which is at least attempted by such modern writers as Hofmann, J. T. Beck, Godet, and Schlatter. For example, place the work of Jülicher side by side with that of Calvin: how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter, until a distinction between yesterday and to-day becomes impossible. If a man persuades himself that Calvin's method can be dismissed with the old-fashioned motto, 'The Compulsion of Inspiration,' he betrays himself as one who has never worked upon the interpretation of Scripture. Taking Jülicher's work as typical of much modern exegesis, we observe how closely he keeps to the mere deciphering of words as though they were runes. But, when all is done, they still remain largely unintelligible. How quick he is, without any real struggling with the raw material of the Epistle, to dismiss this or that difficult passage as simply a peculiar doctrine or opinion of Paul! How quick he is to treat a matter as explained, when it is said to belong to the religious thought, feeling, experience, conscience, or conviction,—of Paul! And, when this does not at once fit, or is manifestly impossible, how easily he leaps, like some bold William Tell, right out of the Pauline boat, and rescues himself by attributing what Paul has said, to his 'personality', to the experience on the road to Damascus (an episode which seems capable of providing at any moment an
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pretation really mean. Have men like Lietzmann ever seriously put this question to themselves? Can scientific investigation ever really triumph so long as men refuse to busy themselves with this question, or so long as they are content to engage themselves with amazing energy upon the work of interpretation with the most superficial understanding of what interpretation really is? For me, at any rate, the question of the true nature of interpretation is the supreme question.—Or is it that these learned men, for whose learning and erudition I have such genuine respect, fail to recognize the existence of any real substance at all, of any underlying problem, of any Word in the words? Do they not perceive that there are documents, such as the books of the New Testament, which compel men to speak at whatever cost, because they find in them that which urgently and finally concerns the very marrow of human civilization?—let the last word stand for the moment. Do they not see that their students’ future in the Church presents a problem which lies at the heart of the whole matter, and which cannot be dismissed as though it were merely a matter for ‘Pastoral Theology’? I myself know what it means year in year out to mount the steps of the pulpit, conscious of the responsibility to understand and to interpret, and longing to fulfil it; and yet, utterly incapable, because at the University I had never been brought beyond that well-known ‘Awe in the presence of History’ which means in the end no more than that all hope of engaging in the dignity of understanding and interpretation has been surrendered. Do the historians really suppose that they have exhausted their responsibility towards their readers, when, re bene gesta, they permit Niebergall to speak—in the fifth volume? It was this miserable situation that compelled me as a pastor to undertake a more precise understanding and interpretation of the Bible. Is the whole learned society of New Testament scholars really satisfied that this work can be left to what is called ‘Practical Theology’, as Jülicher in attacking me has reasserted with intolerable and old-fashioned assurance? Jülicher calls me an ‘esoteric personage’, but I am not that, nor am I a ‘bitter enemy of historical criticism’. I am quite

1 The reference is to the critical commentary on the Books of the New Testament published in four volumes under the title, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, and edited by Prof. Hans Leitzmann. Finally, a fifth volume with the title ‘A Practical Commentary’, was entrusted to Pastor Niebergall. Niebergall was killed in the War, and in the second edition of the commentary his work has been replaced by a volume containing an excerpt of the Lutheran Epistles and Gospels for the liturgical year, planned as an aid to preachers: Die alten Pericopen für die Theologische Praxis, erläutert von Dr. L. Fendt, 1931. [Tr.]
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aware of the difficulty of the problem. But no agreement with regard to the difficulties and dangers inherent in what I understand by 'critical' theology is possible, nor can there be any discussion as to how they may be avoided, unless my opponents acknowledge that there is a problem, and show some signs of penitence. Otherwise, nothing can be done.

What, then, do I mean when I say that a perception of the 'inner dialectic of the matter' in the actual words of the text is a necessary and prime requirement for their understanding and interpretation? It has been asserted—a Swiss reviewer has said it peculiarly roughly—that I mean, of course, my own 'system'. I know that I have laid myself open to the charge of imposing a meaning upon the text rather than extracting its meaning from it, and that my method implies this. My reply is that, if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.' The relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy. Philosophers name this krisis of human perception—the Prime Cause: the Bible beholds at the same cross-roads—the figure of Jesus Christ. When I am faced by such a document as the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, I embark on its interpretation on the assumption that he is confronted with the same unmitigated and unmeasurable significance of that relation as I myself am confronted with, and that it is this situation which moulds his thought and its expression. Nor am I unique in making an assumption at the outset. Other commentators do the same, though their assumptions are more pragmatic: as, for example, when they assume that the Epistle was written by Paul in the first century A.D. Whether these assumptions are justified or not becomes clear in the course of the investigation, when each verse comes to be examined and interpreted. That the assumptions are certainly justified is at the end only a relative certainty. They cannot be proven. In this uncertainty my fundamental assumption is, of course, included. For the present, however, I assume that in the Epistle to the Romans Paul did speak of Jesus Christ, and not of some one else. And this is as reputable an assumption as other assumptions that historians are wont to make. The actual exegesis will alone decide whether this assumption can be maintained. If Paul was not primarily concerned with the permanent krisis of the

relation between time and eternity, but was dealing with some other theme, the absurdity of a false assumption will become clear in the course of a detailed examination of the text. Questioned as to the ground of my assumption that this was, in fact, Paul's theme, I answer by asking quite simply whether, if the Epistle is to be treated seriously at all, it is reasonable to approach it with any other assumption than that God is God. If the complaint is made that I have done violence to the author, I shall maintain the counter-complaint that the real violence is done to him by those who suppose that, in speaking of Jesus Christ, he is referring to some anthroposophical chaos—to some relative-absolute, or to some absolute-relative. Surely it is precisely of this kind of chaos that Paul stands in such evident horror in all his Epistles. I do not, of course, for one moment claim to have provided an adequate interpretation of the Epistle. But, even so, I am persuaded that there is no reason whatever for me to abandon my prime assumption. Paul knows of God what most of us do not know; and his Epistles enable us to know what he knew. It is this conviction that Paul 'knows' that my critics choose to name my 'system', or my 'dogmatic presupposition', or my 'Alexandrianism', and so on and so forth. I have, however, found this assumption to be the best presupposition, even from the point of view of historical criticism. Modern pictures of Paul seem to me—and not to me only—simply incredible. It is true that their creators do frequently refer to modern problems in order to fill in the picture. But they do so only by way of illustration. I, however, wish to understand and to explain the Epistle to the Romans, not to provide it with a series of illustrations. Moreover, judged by what seems to me to be the fundamental principle of true exegesis, I entirely fail to see why parallels drawn from the ancient world—and with such parallels modern commentators are chiefly concerned—should be of more value for an understanding of the Epistle than the situation in which we ourselves actually are, and to which we can therefore bear witness.

The attitude that I have adopted towards the text has been called 'Biblicist'. For this some have blamed and some have praised me. The word is not mine, but I accept it, provided I am allowed to explain what I mean by 'Biblicism'. Wernle wrote of me with some bitterness: 'No single aspect of Paul's teaching seems to cause Barth discomport... . There remain for him no survivals of the age in which Paul lived—not even trivial survivals.' Wernle then proceeds to enumerate what he finds to be 'uncomfortable points' or 'survivals' which should
be permitted to ‘remain’ relics of the past. They are: the Pauline ‘deprecation’ of the earthly life of Jesus—Christ the Son of God—Redemption by the blood of Christ—Adam and Christ—Paul’s use of the Old Testament—his so-called ‘Baptismal-Sacramentalism’—the Double Predestination—his attitude to secular authority. Now, imagine a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans which left these eight points unexplained; which allowed them to ‘remain uncomfortable points’; and in which a maze of contemporary parallels did duty for an explanation of them. Could such a commentary really be called an interpretation? In contrast with this comfortable dismissal of uncomfortable points it has been my ‘Biblicism’ which has compelled me to wrestle with these ‘scandals to modern thought,’ until I have found myself able to undertake the interpretation of them, because I have discovered precisely in these points the characteristic and veritable discernment of Paul. Whether I have interpreted them correctly is, of course, another matter. There are passages in the Epistle which I still find very hard to understand. But I concede much more to Wernle than this. Strictly speaking, no single verse seems to me capable of a smooth interpretation. There ‘remains’ everywhere, more or less in the background, that which subtly escapes both understanding and interpretation, or which, at least, awaits further investigation. But this cannot be thought of as a ‘residuum’ simply to be put on one side or disregarded. It is my so-called ‘Biblicism’ and ‘Alexandrianism’ which forbid me to allow the mark of competent scholarship to be that the critic discloses fragments of past history and then leaves them—unexplained. I have, moreover, no desire to conceal the fact that my ‘Biblicist’ method—which means in the end no more than ‘consider well’—is applicable also to the study of Lao-Tse and of Goethe. Nor can I deny that I should find considerable difficulty in applying the method to certain of the books contained in the Bible itself. When I am named ‘Biblicist’, all that can rightly be proved against me is that I am prejudiced in supposing the Bible to be a good book, and that I hold it to be profitable for men to take its conceptions at least as seriously as they take their own.

Turning now to what is contained in my commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: I must confess that after all these years I am still concerned with the veritable rather than with the whole Gospel. This is because only by laying hold of the veritable Gospel does it seem to me to be possible to reach out towards the whole Gospel. No one has yet comprehended the whole in a single perspective. The normal practice of speaking or writing fluently and comprehensively of the whole—of faith, hope, and love, of earth, heaven, and hell, each playing its noble and proper part in the balance of the whole—seems to me an undifying procedure. I do not complain, however, if others, speaking in the name of Christianity, think differently. I only beg them not to pass by what is said here, as though it were totally irrelevant. Paulinism has stood always on the brink of heresy. This being so, it is strange how utterly harmless and unexceptionable most commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans and most books about Paul are. Why should this be so? Perhaps because the uncomfortable points are treated according to Wernle’s recipe. May I be permitted, out of deference to Wernle, a word of warning to those who are babes in the study of theology, that is, to any undergraduates who may chance to read this book? Read it, please, carefully and not too quickly. Check it by referring to the Greek text and to other commentaries. Above all, do not be ‘enthusiastic’. This is a critical work in the full and most serious meaning of the word ‘critical’. K. Müller of Erlangen has rightly pointed out that the book may exercise a fatal influence upon immature minds. And yet, the man who makes this criticism ought seriously to reflect whether the persistent covering up of the dangerous element in Christianity is not to hide its light under a bushel. Perhaps Spengler was right when he told us that we were entering upon an ‘iron age’. If this be so, theology and the theologians are bound to bear the marks of it.

Harnack’s book on Marcion appeared whilst I was immersed in the writing of my commentary. Those who are familiar with both books will understand why I am bound to refer to it. I was puzzled, on reading the earlier reviews of Harnack’s book, by the remarkable parallels between what Marcion had said and what I was actually writing. I wish to plead for a careful examination of these agreements before I be praised or blamed hastily as though I were a Marcionite. At the crucial points these agreements break down. Even before the appearance of Harnack’s book, Jülicher had already bracketed my name with Marcion’s. Harnack joined me to—Thomas Münzer; Walter Koeppler, I think, to Kaspar Schwenckfeld. Before these learned theologians made up their minds to throw me to some ancient and venerable heresiarch they would have done better if they had agreed in their choice. As it is, I remain unscathed, and can only wonder at the varied selection the three theologians have made.

And now, a word concerning a matter of detail. A quite unforeseen importance has been attached to the translation of
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know that it is beyond my power to put this so that they will understand what I mean.

Nothing more remains except for me to thank my friends Eduard Thurneysen of St. Gall, Rudolf Pestalozzi of Zürich, and Georg Merz of Munich, for their loyal assistance in correcting the proofs. The first of these friends has read the whole manuscript with approval, and has suggested many additions. Some of these additions penetrated deeper than my original comment, others were explanatory and added greater precision of expression. I have adopted these additions for the most part without alteration, and they remain a silent testimony to his self-effacement. So close has been our co-operation that I doubt whether even the specialist could detect where the one leaves off and the other begins. The completion of the second edition coincides with the moment when I have to bid farewell to the people of Safenwil. During the past years they have had to put up with a pastor who lived in his study. They have also had to put up with much from his disturbing preoccupation with the Epistle to the Romans. On the whole they have borne this with real patience and sympathy, and I cannot forbear to put on record my gratitude to them. No pastor to whom this book is welcome will find it a light task to make it simple either for himself or for his parishioners.—And now, when I am compelled to leave one field of work behind me and to enter upon a new task, it is a peculiar privilege and pleasure to send a word of greeting to all those friends known and unknown, German and Swiss, who in different ways share the same tribulation.

SAFENWIL,
September, 1917.

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DETAILS apart, the third edition is a reprint of the second. A time may come when it will be necessary for me once again to rewrite the whole. I hardly know whether I ought to fear or to desire this. Our modern life is subject to strange and rapid changes. Whether this is a symptom of decay, or whether it is a sign that we are moving towards momentous spiritual decisions, who can say? At all events, the situation alters from day to day, conference succeeds conference, men instruct and are instructed, a man says something, and then, finding it echoed in the mouths of others, fears to say it again lest its meaning be altogether lost in the noise of its echo, and yet, side by side
with all this dangerous applause, fresh, valuable criticism makes itself heard, and requires most careful consideration. 'We can never plunge a second time into the same river, for now it narrows, now it broadens out, but always it flows on and on.' How then can such a living and responsible undertaking be a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans ever remain stationary? Nevertheless I do not at present feel myself obliged to rewrite the book. This being so, I have no alternative but to sanction the reprinting of what I wrote a year ago. I have caused the preface to the second edition to be reprinted, because otherwise this book would be incomplete. I do not, however, regard its repetition as of very great importance, certainly not the repetition of the polemic contained in it.

The strangest episode in the history of the book since the appearance of the second edition has been its friendly reception by Bultmann and its equally friendly rejection by Schlatter. From the one I conclude to my very great satisfaction that the original outcry against the book as being an incitement to a Diocletian persecution of historical, critical theology was not demanded; from the other that the course I have taken is independent of that positive theology to which I feel myself most nearly related. For the present I have simply noted carefully and gratefully the criticisms and questions put to me by Bultmann and Schlatter, and also by Kolhaus. Some of their criticisms are new to me; of others I have been long aware.

I should like, however, to take this opportunity of adding something to what was said in the preface to the second edition about 'Historical Criticism', about the 'Dialectic of the Matter', and about 'Biblicism', because they affect the general method of approach. Bultmann complains that I am too conservative. He agrees with me that criticism must begin with the subject-matter, but thinks that this must lead on to the criticism of some of Paul's opinions, because even he fails at times to retain his grip upon what is, in fact, his subject. Bultmann writes: 'Other spirits make themselves heard, as well as the Spirit of Christ.' I do not wish to engage in a controversy with Bultmann as to which of us is the more radical. But I must go farther than he does and say that there are in the Epistle no words at all which are not words of those 'other spirits' which he calls Jewish or Popular or Hellenistic or whatever else they may be. Is it really legitimate to extract a certain number of passages and claim that there the veritable Spirit of Christ has spoken? Or, to put it another way, can the Spirit of Christ be thought of as standing in the Epistle side by side with 'other' spirits and in competition with them? It seems to me impossible to set the Spirit of Christ—the veritable subject-matter of the Epistle—over against other spirits, in such a manner as to deal out praise to some passages, and to depreciate others where Paul is not controlled by his true subject-matter. Rather, it is for us to perceive and to make clear that the whole is placed under the KRISIS of the Spirit of Christ. The whole is literature, that is, voices of those other spirits. The problem is whether the whole must not be understood in relation to the true subject-matter which is—The Spirit of Christ. This is the problem which provides aim and purpose to our study of the literature.

The commentator is thus presented with a clear 'Either—Or' question whether or not he is to place himself in a relation to his author of utter loyalty. Is he to read him, determined to follow him to the very last word, wholly aware of what he is doing, and assuming that the author also knew what he was doing? Loyalty surely cannot end at a particular point, and certainly cannot be exhausted by an expression of the author's literary affinities. Anything short of utter loyalty means a commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, not a commentary so far as is possible with him—even to his last word. True exegesis involves, of course, much sweat and many groans. Even so, the extent to which the commentator will be able to disclose the Spirit of Christ in his reading of Paul will not be everywhere the same. But he will know that the responsibility rests on his shoulders; and he will not let himself be bewildered by the voices of those other spirits, which so often render inaudible the dominant tones of the Spirit of Christ. He will, moreover, always be willing to assume that, when he fails to understand, the blame is his and not Paul's. Nor will he rest content until paradoxically he has seen the whole in the fragments, and has displayed the fragments in the context of the veritable subject-matter, so that all the other spirits are seen in some way or other to serve the Spirit of Christ.

It may be, on the other hand, that the commentator is unable to accept the presupposition which such fidelity requires. This may be because he does not perceive, or at least does not perceive sufficiently clearly, what is the veritable subject-matter of such a document as the Epistle to the Romans. Or it may be because, so noisy are those other spirits which shriek at him from every verse, he despair of ever being able to detect the dominant tones. If this be so, for whatever reason, he must content himself with writing a commentary on Paul. He cannot speak with him, except per chance when Paul says something.
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which even he can understand. Such a commentator will only
discover the Spirit of Christ 'here and there'; and he may not
attribute to the Spirit of Christ even those fragments which he
finds illuminating. He stands irresponsibly before the text,
confronted, as a spectator, with a mixture of Spirit and spirits.
Though he may here and there follow his author, he does not
feel bound to wrestle with the understanding of him, for
the simple reason that he has never made up his mind to stand
or fall with him. I cannot, for my part, think it possible for an
interpreter honestly to reproduce the meaning of any author
unless he dares to accept the condition of utter loyalty.
To make an oration over a man means to speak over his body,
and that is to bury him finally, deeper and without hope, in his
grave. No doubt despair leaves no other course open. Indeed,
there are many historical personages whom it is possible only
to speak about. Even so, it is still open to question whether the
riddle they propound is really due to their obscurity or to our
lack of apprehension. In any case, I am completely unable to
understand Bultmann's demand that I should mingle fire and
water. He asks me to think and write with Paul, to follow him
into the vast unfamiliarity of his Jewish, Popular-Christian,
Hellenistic conceptions; and then suddenly, when the whole
becomes too hopelessly bizarre, I am to turn round and write
'critically about him and against him'—as though, when all
is strange, this or that is to be regarded as especially outrageous.
Is Bultmann incapable of understanding that, even were we
concerned with an author's literary style, such a method
of procedure would be illegitimate? His demands seem to me,
therefore, to involve not merely a return to the older theory
of 'recipes of a bygone age' and 'uncomfortable points', but also
an error in literary taste. Bultmann further goes on to hint that
there lurks behind my whole method of exegesis a 'modern form
of the dogma of Inspiration'. Schläffer also noticed the same
tendency with disapproval. But, from the preface to the first
dition onwards, I have never attempted to conceal the fact
that my manner of interpretation has certain affinities with the
old doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. As expounded by Calvin,
the doctrine seems to me at least worthy of careful consideration
as capable of leading to spiritual apprehension, and I have
already made it clear how I have, in fact, made use of it. Is
there any way of penetrating the heart of a document—of any
document!—except on the assumption that its spirit will speak
to our spirit through the actual written words? This does not
exclude a criticism of the letter by the spirit, which is, indeed,
unavoidable. It is precisely a strict faithfulness which compels
us to expand or to abbreviate the text, lest a too rigid attitude
to the words should obscure that which is struggling to expres-
sion in them and which demands expression. This critical free-
dom of exegesis was used by Calvin in masterly fashion, without
the slightest disregard for the discipline by which alone liberty
is justified. The attentive reader will perceive that I have
employed this method, believing it to be demanded by the text.
I can only hope that I have not fallen into the snare of indis-
cipline which inevitably threatens those who employ it. I have
resolutely determined not to make use of the method in order
to criticize Paul; and it is my serious intention always to avoid
this temptation. The Spirit of Christ is not a vantage-point
from which a ceaseless correction of Paul—or of any one else—
may be exercised schoolmaster-wise. We must be content if,
despite other spirits, we are not wholly bereft of the Spirit;
content if, standing by Paul's side, we are able to learn and to
teach; content with a readiness to discern in spiritual fashion
what is spiritually intended; and satisfied also to recognize that
the voice with which we proclaim what we have received is
primarily nothing but the voice of those other spirits. No
human word, no word of Paul, is absolute truth. In this I agree
with Bultmann—and surely with all intelligent people. But
what does the relativity of all human speech mean? Does
relativity mean ambiguity? Assuredly it does. But how can
I demonstrate it better than by employing the whole of my
energy to disclose the nature of this ambiguity? More than one
reader of my book has learned from it to understand the uncer-
tainty of Paulinism. I do not object to the book being so
used. But nevertheless, we must learn to see beyond Paul.
This can only be done, however, if, with utter loyalty, and with
a desperate earnestness, we endeavour to penetrate his meaning.

It may help those who find much that is contained in the
second edition of my commentary strangely unfamiliar, if I
quote, in passing, the opening sentences of Calvin's interpreta-
tion of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.—
'Grace', he writes, 'has always the appearance of contradiction.
The foundation is faith. For faith is the pillar and possession
upon which we are able to plant our feet. But what, in fact,
do we possess? Not things that are present, but what is set
far distant under our feet—nay more, what is beyond the
comprehension of our spirit. Faith is therefore named the
evidence of things not seen. But evidence means that things
emerge into appearance, and is applicable only to what concerns
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our senses. In the realm of faith the two apparent opposites—evidence and things not seen—struggle with one another and are united. It is precisely the hidden things, inaccessible to sensible perception, that are displayed by the Spirit of God. He promises eternal life—to those who are dead. He speaks of the blessedness of resurrection—to those who are compassed about with corruption. He pronounces those in whom sin dwells—to be righteous. He calls those oppressed with ceaseless tribulation—blessed. He promises abundance of riches—to those abounding only in hunger and thirst. God cries out to us that He is coming quickly to our aid—and yet He seems deaf to every human cry for help. What, then, would be our fate, were we not powerful in hope, were we not hurrying through the darkness of the world along the road which is enlightened by the Spirit and by the Word of God?

I must again thank those who have assisted me so loyally. Georg Merz corrected the proofs and compiled the index. Lukas Christ of Prateln has smoothed out the roughness of my style in many passages—a very necessary piece of work.

GÖTTINGEN,
July, 1922.

THE PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Since the appearance of the last edition, further work and further reflection have made it obvious that the book needs to be rewritten. It requires clarification; and other improvements are necessary also. But it is no use patching it up, and for a long time to come I shall have no opportunity of recasting the whole. Further, I do not, as yet, see my way through those difficult passages which ought to be the starting-point of a new revision. Could I see my way clearly, I should have to find time to rewrite the whole book. I must therefore send the book out once more unaltered. This, however, need not inconvenience those familiar with current theological discussions. They tend, in one form or another, to revolve round the Epistle to the Romans. The reader will therefore be in a position to make for himself the necessary reservations and amplifications.

As regards the external history of the book: it should be noted that Jülicher has reviewed it for a second time. He pronounces it to have proceeded from the ‘arrogance of a spiritual enthusiast’; and this, he says, is his ‘final word’. On the other hand, the literary organ of the Dutch Reformed Church is outraged by the ‘negative’ character of the book, and its readers are warned to ‘exercise great care in using it’, since it is ‘foreign to their piety’. Of greater interest to me personally are the appreciations which have reached me from the Catholic side. Catholic reviewers have, for the most part, displayed a genuine understanding of the point at issue. They have, moreover, conducted the discussion in a proper atmosphere of theological controversy—an atmosphere seemingly foreign to most of my reviewers on the other side of the great gulf. Now, what is the meaning of this fundamental, and to me quite unexpected, understanding? Erich Przywara, S.J., contrasts our ‘school’ with that of Otto and Heiler, judging it to be a ‘genuine rebirth of Protestantism’, a reappearance of the ‘passionate fervour of the Old Reformers’, Joseph Engert, on the other hand, brings forward evidence to show that, apart from the doctrine of the Church elaborated in Chs. IX—XI, my commentary does not differ from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, of the Council of Trent, and of the Roman Catechism; only my formulation of it is far more obscure and complicated. The two reviewers are clearly not saying quite the same thing. Should they agree together as to what is precisely they wish to say to us, we should be bound to answer them. Meanwhile, I cannot help saying that I regard it as a most hopeful sign for both sides that an opportunity should now be provided of entering into genuine theological, as opposed to merely historical, discussion with theologians of the Old Church. Those, like ourselves, who are moving in the world of the theology of the Reformation, for this very reason, ought not—and indeed do not—cast in the teeth of others that they are moving with conviction in the world of medieval theology. When that is said, we must, however, own to a horror of mystical, High-Church, Evangelical-Catholic, dilettantism.

GÖTTINGEN,
February, 1924.

THE PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

This book continues to be read and to exert influence, but its very ‘success’ is such as to compel its author to pause and consider. In his thoughts about his ‘success’ it is right that his readers should share. Two reflections jostle one another in my mind. When I wrote the book, did I simply put into words what was everywhere in the air—especially in Germany after the War? Did I say what was readily acceptable to the ‘rulers of the
THE PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

world' in our generation, and what men's ears itched to hear? And, in becoming fashionable and in the appearance of 'proper Barthians', like the 'Ritschlians' of the Bismarck era!—am I suffering an inevitable punishment? Every word I wrote against human—too human—vapourings, everything I wrote especially against religious vapourings, everything I said about their various causes and effects, seems now to be turned back upon myself. I had set out to please none but the very few, to swim against the current, to beat upon doors which I thought were firmly bolted. Was I altogether deceived? Perhaps I was. For who is able to know even himself accurately, or to gauge his contemporaries? Who knows whether we are not being moved, just when we imagine that we are moving others? My readers can well understand how startling it was for me to note the kind of theological books which at the present time have made a like impression. Was I deceived about the world and about myself? Am I after all merely one of those bad theologians who are no more than servants of public opinion? And are my readers also deceived in supposing a thing to be relevant to-day which was, in fact, relevant only for Paul and for Luther and Calvin? Have they been presented with what is really no more than a rehash, resurrected out of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and Cohen? If this be what has actually occurred I must accept judgement and recognize that I am just the author of—a best-seller. But why should not this be the truth? And even if it were not true, no credit would be due to me or to my book. When I wrote in the Preface to the first edition that this book could 'wait', it was treated as a piece of arrogance. If this were pride on my part, perhaps I have had to be punished for it, since, unlike so many other better books, it did not have to wait. In common with much else that is empty show, it has gained the applause by which it is condemned. All flesh is as grass—the truth of these words is exhibited in this world far more surely by precarious success than by a correspondingly precarious failure. This is the first of my reflections; and I beg my friendly readers to perceive that it is directed against them as well as against myself. They must bear its weight with me. They will then be no more surprised than I shall be, should it one day become apparent that here too—the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.

The second reflection is more serious. It may be that every criticism implied in the former reflection is justified, and yet that nevertheless, in spite of much arrogance and wrong-headedness, aye, even in the midst of it, something has been brought out into the open through what has been observed and said in this book—as it were by forensic justification (justificatio forensis). And this applies to what others have also observed and said who are in no way dependent upon my book. It is to this whole situation that the Church and the theologians of to-day are bound to pay attention. But what then is my personal responsibility in all this? And what is the responsibility of my friendly readers? If, perhaps quite apart from me and even in opposition to me, there has emerged something true and right, what am I to say, when, because at the critical moment I sounded the alarm, I am now supposed—to my horror I must acknowledge it—to be in some special way responsible for continuing and deepening and carrying through what has been begun? I can only say that, when I was working at this book in my peaceful parsonage in the distant valley of the Aar, I was convinced, like any other vigorous and keen author, that I was producing something good and valuable. But it never crossed my mind to think that the apostle Paul, as I seemed to hear him, would awaken such an echo that with the publication of this book I should give many earnest men the right to drive me into a corner by asking me questions concerning further implications, consequences, and applications, or even by asking me to repeat what had been brought to light. As though I were competent for all this! In his 'Reminiscences' Admiral Tirpitz says that, whereas it is easy to hoist your flag, it is difficult to strike it honourably. I would add that it is even more difficult—at any rate when there is no question of hauling it down—to continue to fly it honourably. And this is my situation. As it becomes more and more clear how much there remained to be done after the book was written, I often wish that I had never written it. And I feel this even more acutely now that I have been suddenly appointed, in spite of my light equipment, to the responsible position of professor at a university. It is now demanded of me that I should definitely put my hand to the plough every day; and every day I am reminded how difficult it is to plough the field of Christian doctrine, remembering that each furrow is—of bitter necessity—a new furrow.

Should this more favourable explanation of the 'success' of my book also be justified, then, whatever can be rightly said to the contrary, it does mark the moment when a breach, however small, has been made in the inner and outer afflictions of Protestantism. It is, however, oppressively humiliating both for me and for my readers—at least, for my friendly,
THE PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

understanding, and sympathetic readers—to reflect that, when quick speech and action is necessary to do justice both to the misery and to the hope of the Church, we should remain so incompetent—unless indeed the whole present situation be merely a Fata Morgana. I have just come across the following lines written by a pastor in Hessen, who is personally unknown to me. They fit my position so well, that they might have been addressed to me:

God needs men, not creatures
Full of noisy, catchy phrases.
Dogs he asks for, who their noses
Deeply thrust into—To-day,
And there scent Eternity.
Should it lie too deeply buried,
Then go on, and fiercely burrow,
Excavate until—To-morrow.

Yes, God needs . . . ! I wish I could be such a Hound of God—Domini canis—and could persuade all my readers to enter the Order. Understood thus, these lines make the best review of my book that has yet appeared. And no review could be more critical. No man can add a cubit to his stature, and so the ‘success’ of the book, even according to the second reflection, is a judgement under which we stand.

It is necessary therefore to keep in mind both reflections upon the uncertainty of our position. For I wish my understanding reader—I am not now speaking of or to the others—to apprehend with me the severity and the goodness which together press upon our memory the fact that we have a Master. We must not expect to escape some equivalent of the concrete threatenings and tribulations which Protestant Christians and theologians were compelled to endure for their faith in the sixteenth century. We of the twentieth century must not shrink from being the Church Militant. I am able to understand something of what this equivalent is, when I think of the paradox or dialectic which is contained in the word ‘success’.

That is what I wished to say. And now I can send forth this book once more.

MÜNSTER IN WESTPHALIA,
February, 1926.

THE PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

The two years and a half which have passed since the publication of the fifth edition of this book have increased the distance separating me from what I had originally written. Not that, in expounding the Pauline Epistles, or indeed any part of Holy Scripture, I should now wish to say anything materially different from what I then said. I should still retain that which gave so serious and so severe offence; and so long as it still remains unrecognized that such offence had to be given and that the giving of it was justifiable, or until I am myself persuaded that I was wrong in giving it, there seems no reason why I should cease giving offence, and if so, why I should not continue to do so in its original form. However, I do not wish the book to go forth once more without saying that, were I to set to work again upon the exposition of the Epistle, and were I determined to repeat the same thing, I should certainly have to express it quite differently. I have, in the meantime, learnt that in Paul there is on the one hand a far greater variety and on the other hand a far greater monotony than I had then attributed to him. Much would therefore have to be drastically curtailed, and much expanded. Much would have to be expressed more carefully and with greater reserve; much, however, with greater clarity and more emphatically. A great deal of the scaffolding of the book was due to my own particular situation at the time and also to the general situation. This would have to be pulled down. Many threads, on the other hand, which I had not then noticed in the Epistle, would now have to be brought to light. Those who read the book must also bear in mind the quite simple fact that I am now seven years older, and that all our exercise books obviously require correcting. Moreover, since the appearance of the fifth edition, I have embarked upon the publication of my Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics. This means that a certain weight has been lifted from the earlier book, inasmuch as any serious criticism of it has at least to take also into consideration what is said in the second and more comprehensive book, where I have attempted a greater breadth of treatment and also greater precision. Similarly, those who, after reading the earlier book, still retain confidence in me and desire further treatment of the questions which it raises, should also take into account both the later book and other writings of mine, which are, in fact, continuations of the original work. At Neuenfettelsau

¹ Neuendettelsau is a small village in Bavaria, lying south-west of Nuremberg. It was the scene of the pastorate of Wilhelm Löhe (1808–72. See
The following statement appeared the other day: 'Of Karl Barth it may now be said that he is already slipping into the position of a man of yesterday.' (The Freimund of 8 Nov. 1928.) Yes, no doubt! Dead men ride fast, but successful theologians ride faster (cf. the Preface to the fifth edition). How could I have written this book at all, had I not been both in theory and in practice prepared before I became a 'man of today'? Do I—as I am accused of doing—treat 'time' and 'history' so lightly as to be hurt when I am told that my day has an evening and will, indeed, become a past yesterday? Warned of this, I am, however, glad of the opportunity of still making some corrections and of adding some explanations; glad to be able to beg my friendly readers, even if they think (perhaps rightly) that it would be better for me to make no corrections, not to write my obituary notice until what I have said is proved to have been exhausted and the 'yesterday' which exists sub specie aeterni has also been manifested in time.

Münster in Westphalia,
The First Sunday in Advent, 1928.

Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2nd ed., vol. iii, p. 1707). Since then it has become the active centre of the home and foreign missionary work of the Lutheran Church. The mother-house of the Lutheran Deaconesses is located there. The Movement has at Neuendettelsau its own press, and from it is issued a weekly paper entitled Freimund, Kirchlich-Politisches Wochenblatt für Stadt und Land, with the sub-title 'Organ einer öffentlichen Mission vom Standpunkt ev.-luth. Christentums. (Tr.)