

Death of a great theologian

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DEATH OF A GREAT THEOLOGIAN

Karl Barth 1886 — 1968

The death on 10th December of the distinguished theologian Prof. Karl Barth came as an unexpected shock to his many friends, students, followers and admirers the whole world over.

He was born on 10th May 1886 in Basle, son of a pastor and professor of theology. He went to school and studied in Berne, Berlin, Tuebingen and Marburg where, from 1908 to 1909, he worked for the "Christliche Welt". For a short time, he was curate in the German Reformed Commune in Geneva, and later pastor at Safenwil, Aargau, from 1911 to 1921. He was an active Social Democrat at that time.

He began to make a mark as writer in 1919 when he published his "Roemerbrief", and, a year later, "Zur Innern Lage des Christentums". On the basis of these publications, he was called to Goettingen as extra-ordinary professor of theology. In 1925, he moved to Muenster as ordinary professor of dogmatics and in 1930 to Bonn. He developed his controversial "Dialectic Theology" and became more and more an eminent author. Amongst his greatest works started in the 'twenties, is the "Kirchliche Dogmatik" which has grown to ten volumes and has been called the most powerful work in contemporary German prose.

His name became well known outside the circle of theologian experts in 1933, when he opposed the efforts of the so-called German Christians. When he refused to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler in 1934, he was dismissed forthwith. Straight away, he was called to his home-town Basle where he was appointed Professor of Theology. He was no longer allowed to enter Germany, and in 1939, his honorary doctorate of the University of Muenster was taken away from him, although re-conferred in 1946.

Among his many works published in the 'thirties and 'forties, were "a Letter from Switzerland to Great Britain", "The Church and the War" and "Eine Schweizer Stimme". He continued to take a stand in the controversy of opinions regarding the task of Christendom in the present, and his many publications included "Against the Stream" and "How to serve God in a Marxist Land". But he also wrote on Mozart and in 1951, he proposed the neutralisation of Germany. With his opinions he often caused anger, but he instigated creative disquiet and introduced promising argument.

In 1961, he officially retired from his duties at Basle University, and he gave his last lecture there at the beginning of March 1962 on the theme of love. He went to U.S.A. where he lectured at the universities of Princeton and Chicago. When he had retired, he continued on his Church Dogmatics and gave the inmates of the Basle Prison their Sunday sermons as he had done for many years. To mark the occasion of his 80th birthday, a number of publications were issued, amongst them a "Barth Brevier".

Prof. Barth married Miss Nelly Hoffmann, a violinist, in 1914. They had four children, two of them are university teachers.

So far his biography. The cremation took place quietly on 13th December, and the following day, a memorial service was held at Basle Cathedral. Government and Church were well represented, and there were handsome delegations from foreign Churches and universities. In the name of the German Churches and universities, Prof.

Helmut Gollwitzer, Berlin, gave an address, as well as Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft, former Secretary General of the World Council of Churches. Some of Karl Barth's beloved Mozart was performed.

Karl Barth was a man conscious of his political responsibilities at all times and who never failed to use his authority to show the way to the non-believer. His home-town not only mourns the great theologian and prominent lecturer, but also the man whose wonderful sense of humour always tempered his criticism. He broadcast the Gospel not only to the converted, but also to the small man such as the prisoners in their cells, and he served God the same way as he did his country as a modest volunteer in the auxiliary forces in the war.

One of the greatest men of our time and certainly one of the greatest Swiss has left this world, an upright believer and fearless man, whose reputation not only covered his teachings, but also his personality, his individuality as a living Christian and humane man.

*(Based on news received by courtesy of
"Tagesanzeiger", "Basler Nachrichten"
and Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

ANGLO-SWISS NEWS ITEMS

Prof. Werner Jadassohn, Geneva, has been made an Honorary Member of the British Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases, a rare honour for non-British scientists.

The Swiss Army has recently bought a large quantity of sleeping bags from Great Britain.

The American Columbia Broadcasting System Inc., the British Imperial Chemical Industries and the Swiss CIBA concern have founded a new company for the new audio-visual "Electronic Video Recording and reproduction system" which allows TV sets at home to reproduce sound-picture programmes on film.

The recently founded European Physics Society (Geneva) has amongst its members Great Britain and Switzerland, as well as many other countries.

The Geneva Office of the London auctioneers, Christie's managed to get hold of the "lost" Titian picture of a young nobleman. It had been in the possession of Mr. Georges Filipinetti, diplomat, Ferrari agent, President of the Swiss Automobile Club and owner of the Grandson Castle, as well as of vintage and many high-powered cars.

Last year's President of the Confederation was Honorary Patron of the festive gala-première in Zurich and Geneva of "Oliver". The performances were given in aid of UNICEF.

Leading engineers of the British Aircraft Corporation and the Breguet Aviation presented in word and picture the Anglo-French prototype of the "Jaguar" fighter to the Swiss Aviation Press in Zurich.

Penguin book no. 2611 is called "Ahead of the Game" by Calvin Tomkins, containing essays on four important Avant Guard sculptors, among them Jean Tinguely (40 pages) whose machine sculpture "Heureka" created a sensation at the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne in 1964, and is now in Zurich.

Switzerland will be one of the exhibiting countries at the European Plastics Industries Show in London's Olympia Halls from 18th to 27th June (INTERPLAS), whereas Great Britain will exhibit at the 4th International Exhibition of Industrial Electronics, INEL 1969, in Basle from 4th to 8th March.

*(A.T.S., "Pro Helvetia" and
Weekly Tribune.)*