

RELIGION

"Nothing Damaging"

A rich man dies. He is not celebrated for piety. Indeed he may frequently have broken the third Commandment (swearing), or the fourth (breaking the Sabbath), or the seventh (adultery), or the eighth (stealing), or the tenth (covetousness). Nevertheless his family desires a fine funeral, complete with eulogy. So the parson polishes up a sonorous speech, hunts for apt quotations. . . .

The memorial service to the late Gum Man William Wrigley Jr. in Chicago's smart St. Chrysostom's last month was graced with ushers from Wrigley Baseball Field and a *carillonneur* who sweetly ding-donged *Aloha Oe*, the gum man's favorite tune. Rev. John Crippen Evans, associate rector of fashionable St. Chrysostom's, eulogized Mr. Wrigley thus: "He



THE LATE WILLIAM WRIGLEY JR.

. . . worth a eulogy?

was a boy at 70, and that is a real achievement. It is in that sort of attainment that the Christian pulpit is primarily interested, because the message of the pulpit is wholly concerned with life—life that lives and will not die. . . ."

Was Mr. Evans "dishonest?" Did Mr. Wrigley deserve a Christian eulogy? Last week these questions interested *The Christian Century*, best written and most alert Protestant magazine in the U. S. Far from accusing Mr. Wrigley of breaking commandments, *The Christian Century* hastened to say that "We know nothing particularly damaging about Mr. Wrigley, if he is to be judged in the perspective of contemporary civilization." Nevertheless it took the occasion to point a stern moral:

"A charitable inclination which every Christian minister will probably feel upon reading this story will be one of sympathy for the poor parson who was under the professional necessity of delivering some kind of eulogy on such an occasion. He will remember similar predicaments in which he has found himself on occasion, and will wonder why, since the service occurred in an Episcopal church, the rector

did not seek asylum in the superior custom of the Anglican communion of refraining from any kind of eulogy. . . . If a saint has died a eulogy is useless, if a sinner a eulogy is impossible, and if like Tomlinson and the rest of us the deceased is neither a sinner nor a saint a eulogy tempts the parson to dishonesty. . . .

"Mr. Wrigley, from what little we know of him, was a rather typical modern pagan. He may have given generously to his church, but our guess is that his benefactions were infinitesimal as compared with the money he lavished on his estates. . . .

We know of no special evidence of a sensitive Christian conscience in his business dealings, though we assume that he was honest in the contemporary sense of that term. . . .

"The cynic might question whether the youthful exuberance of Mr. Wrigley at the age of seventy, which his rector marked for particular moral approbation, had any special merit even from the most ordinary perspective. . . . We are not sure whether the man who is driven to despair by the sufferings of the world would not have virtues which are morally preferable to this kind of superficial optimism and exuberance. . . .

"Millions of men and women die who make no pretension of Christian virtue or Christian belief. They are buried by the Christian church only because some vague sense of piety prompts the mourners to observe their passing religiously. Another ritual than that of the church would do just as well. . . . What is needed therefore is a much greater variety of burial rituals. . . . Perhaps when the story of our tragic era is written some astute historian will come upon the manner of Mr. Wrigley's burial and use it to symbolize our spiritual confusion and decadence in much the same manner as historians of the past have described, for instance, the religious pretensions of the Borgias to illustrate the spiritual quality of an era."

Young Theologians

*Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla. . . .*

A gloomy, wrathful day, gloomy as the days of the 13th Century friar who cried *Dies Irae!* Capitalism totters. Socialism? Communism? No, man is corrupt, his society is decadent, even his systems of worship are sterile. . . . There is still God. But are there not many Gods?—the Jehovah of the Fundamentalists, the incense-wrapped God of the Anglo-Catholics, the polite God of the Episcopalians, the companionable God of such new faiths as Dr. Frank Buchman's Groups? There are also many prophets, cultists, purveyors of fancy panaceas to the dejected. They are in the market place. But in the study is one who also is beginning to be heard again: the theologian.

In the U. S. theology is currently not so dead as it was a decade ago, and in gloomy, depressed Europe it is actually alive. Who are its leaders? Most thoughtful Europeans know of Lecerf the French neo-Calvinist, Heim the Lutheran. But all are

aware of Karl Barth, 45, Swiss founder of a potent Christian philosophy.

Before the War, Karl Barth preached in the German Reformed Church. Like his professor-father he is an eminent theologian. His theology, now called Barthianism, is pessimistic, dogmatic. It offers the dun-colored thesis that Man is immoral, selfish, bound to be an "unprofitable servant" to the end. Man achieves nothing, will be saved only by grace and belief in the "absolute otherness of God." Barthianism rejects Modernism in so far as Modernism throws out too much of the Bible, too much of God. Fundamentalism also is rejected insofar as it is hampered by the Bible.

In the blackness of spiritual despair Theologian Barth—now married and professor of theology at the University of Bonn—has attracted an immense following. Like a wan light amid disillusion and doubt, Barthianism flourishes in German and Swiss universities. Religious socialists



European Picture Service

KARL BARTH

Achieving nothing, he is successful.

join in, go on working for social betterment although it will not change mankind. Man achieves nothing. Christian Philosopher Barth, thin, stooped, slightly weak-eyed but rather jolly, does not evangelize. He will not come to the U. S. because the U. S. is too worldly. Nevertheless his U. S. admirers—who are many—wish he would come because they believe he would take the disillusioned, disappointed colleges by storm.

To Basle last month, from all over Europe, went delegates to a conference of Young Theologians. News of them reached the U. S. last week. They discussed their attempts to rescue the Modern Man. Chief feature of the conference was a one-act play presented by the British delegates, in which the Modern Man is approached by a Fundamentalist with an enormous Bible, a pompous Anglo-Catholic, a cordial member of the Buchman Groups, a Modernist who cuts most of his Bible into little bits. None succeeds in rousing Modern Man from his sleep. At last comes a Barthian. He is successful.