

A THEOLOGICAL TEA PARTY

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DR. KARL BARTH, who is giving the second half of his Gifford lectures in Aberdeen this month, was the guest of honour last Thursday at a reception given in Christ's College to the ministers of the city and their wives.

After tea Dr. Barth was asked to say a few words, but instead of making a formal speech he suggested that the guests might ask him any questions that occurred to them, and these he would do his best to answer. A very interesting half hour followed. On one side of the famous theologian sat the Master of Christ's College, Professor A. Fyfe Findlay, and on the other the interpreter, a former student of Dr. Barth's, both of these equally eager to smooth the lingual path.

The first question was, "Do Rome and the Confessional Church in Germany present a common front in opposition to Hitler's policy?"

"Not a common front," was the reply. "And it is better so. For the danger which menaces the Church from the side of the State is the same danger as that which menaces it from Rome. It is the same spirit of hostility against the Word of God. Between Rome and the State there is misunderstanding. Between the Confessional Church and the State there is a struggle. And if the Führer were a cleverer man than, luckily, he happens to be, he would co-opt Rome into the struggle against the Protestant Church."

Someone asked next if the support for the Church was growing.

"If you ask me if it is growing

statistically I must say no. But that is not all that is to be said. Is the Church growing spiritually? Undoubtedly it is. The situation is dark outwardly. For in Germany to-day it is not easy to be a Christian. When you go to Church you are suspected. But it is true now, as always, that out of persecution new strength comes."

To the next question, "How far is the Church still holding its Youth?" the answer was brief enough: "No one can say. I do not know. One waited," said Dr. Barth, "for the answer to this question with great anxiety and great hope. But the horizon is still dark."

"What liberty of preaching is allowed?" was then asked.

"The ministers are certainly allowed to preach as much as they like, but only about the other world. Heaven must be their subject. There are spies in the churches, and if you speak about this world, and about life as it is to-day, then you will probably be arrested. There is therefore no freedom."

"Is there union," asked another minister, "between the Confessional Churches?" "Yes, there was, and there still is. But German might is a sectional might. The Germans are a people who 'think too much,' and therefore they cannot agree! Always therefore there are differences in the Confessional Churches. And the inner struggle between these groups is often stronger than the united struggle against the State. For the last five years this has been so, but always in the end they come together again. God in heaven arranges that."

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