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EDITORIAL

The death of Karl Barth is something that has not only hit the theologians ; it has touched all church people, lay and ordained ; it has even affected innumerable people who have not more than remote contacts with the Christian church.

This was to be expected, for Karl Barth's personality was out of the ordinary. The people of my generation - I was a student in the twenties - will always remain profoundly grateful to Karl Barth for the challenge contained in his 'Letter to the Romans'. At a time when everything seemed uncertain, he recalled us to the supreme authority of the word of God.

Later, face to face with Nazism as it tried to reduce the Christian church to slavery and to rob the faith of its content, Karl Barth strongly reminded us of the absolute demands that are inherent in faith in Jesus Christ.

His struggle in Germany and, during the second world war, his letters to Christians in France and Great Britain had a decisive influence on people in all quarters.

After the war he knew how to give counsel to the church in Eastern Europe, suddenly placed in the midst of the communist world. Many of our church leaders have been personally encouraged or alerted by this Basle professor.

Karl Barth was a man in the true sense of the word. Those who have had the privilege of knowing him intimately will never forget his sense of humour, his lively spirit and his human-ness.

Above all, however, Karl Barth was a pastor who knew how to get through to each person. His ministry at the Basle prison where for many years he frequently conducted worship, sharing with the prisoners a message, straightforward and to-the-point, remains for me one of the most moving aspects of this great theologian. This is what one of his prisoners wrote :

‘His sermons aroused in me a great inner joy : one always discovered in them sparks of humour.

But what warmed my heart most of all was that someone should speak with such love to me, who am regarded as a murderer. Karl Barth sensed that through love barriers between men could be overcome.

In conversations in the evenings it impressed me how he always listened to our questions, down to the last word, and how he went out of his way to give an answer quietly until everyone was satisfied.

After the service Professor Barth used to visit those in solitary confinement. He wanted to carry things much further ; he had so much love in him that I believe I can say that he was always in touch with God.’

For this wonderful life we can only give thanks to God.

M. Pd.

GENEVA NOTES

The first of several publications to herald the 1970 General Council is about to come off the press. It is the Bible Study Guide for the churches, prepared by Dr. Donald Mathers of Queen's College, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The six topics which Dr. Mathers highlights in his book are : *Freedom, Reconciliation, God, God reconciles and makes free the Strong and the Weak, the Rich and the Poor, the Young and the Old*. The Bible Study Guide is warmly recommended for use in the local congregation, so that the events of 1970 may be embedded in the thought and devotion of our churches all over the world. Orders (20 copies minimum) can be placed with the WARC office, 150, route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

Price per copy 10 dollar cents, or 10 pence.

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KARL BARTH AND THE REFORMED TRADITION

by JACQUES DE SENARCLENS

How is it, that the most important theologian of the 20th century belonged to the reformed confession? Through which special grace was he one of us? Should we not on this occasion repeat the famous expression which he wrote down again and again, and on which he once commented in greater detail: *Hominum confusione Dei providentia*?¹ Is the situation not strange indeed?

Just imagine, that 400 years after the schism the most influential theologian did not keep in line with the apostolic and roman succession! Though he appealed to the former schismatics, it is wellknown that he energetically rejected their so-called modern successors. He was neither on one side nor on the other. Certainly, he was connected with Calvin, but with how much independence; also with Luther, with even greater freedom! Does this not appear to violate the continuity of human and religious history? These very schisms, far from isolating him, were the principal reason for his universalism. Because, ultimately, he accepted only one commitment as really decisive, as Calvin's spiritual son rather than as Schleiermacher's, through his liberty and also his exclusiveness, he became, against all expectation, a pioneer, not of division but of unity. The fact that a witness to the Reformation, of all people, is accepted 400 years after the event as one of the outstanding pioneers of ecumenism, can only be attributed to the providence – or the humour of God.

'It has always been my intention', he declared in an interview, published in 1963 by the French magazine 'Réalité', 'to teach an ecumenical theology which cannot be restricted to the narrow framework of a given confession. Of course, I stand in the reformed tradition, but I believe, as Calvin did, that there is only one Master in the church and in the world. Consequently, I try to be obedient to Christ and not to Calvin.'² He expressed himself even more clearly at a conference of churchleaders in Switzerland in February 1968, when he successfully combined, in the following unique way the two adjectives which had been irreconcilable for centuries: the true church is 'a catholic and evangelical church, or, and this amounts to the same thing, evangelical and catholic'.³ At an ecumenical conference in Amsterdam he showed himself even more affirmative when he addressed Reformed churchmen: 'We refuse to be restricted by the alternative – Roman catholics or

Protestants. Our answer is : we are catholic protestants, or, if you prefer protestant catholics.

It would therefore be ungracious if we tried to claim him exclusively for ourselves, and boasted about possessing such a representative. It is, however, difficult to understand that he was so many times badly received by men of his own tradition. How could Calvin's descendants consider him a stranger and fight against him on issues where he showed himself most loyal towards their great ancestor, where he speaks about the confusion of spirits – *hominum confusione* ! By contrast, how could the fact that the enemies of the reformer, those whom they used to call 'papists', were more and more open towards this kind of evangelism which can hardly be called protestant in the 19th century sense of the word and which is closely linked with the Reformation, appear like a good act of providence : *Dei providentia* !

It was necessary for centuries to pass before such a change could take place ; what was needed above all was an independent personality who, across our barriers and our formalities, could come back to the living Christ, showing His fullness, and who called men of goodwill to rediscover themselves in Him, despite their different traditions and restrictions. It is precisely because of these schisms in the history of men that there is no Barthianism. The only thing that is valid is a *spiritual attitude* towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as Barth explained in the Barmen Declaration : 'Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.' Is it possible to think of a more convincing ecumenism arising out of such a confession of faith ?

Since the 10th of December 1968, the sad day on which Karl Barth died, numerous papers and reviews have recalled his great career, his vigorous humanity, his many political engagements, and they have endeavoured to write about his theology. In this article I should like to emphasize just two or three major characteristics of his thinking which seem to be the most important for our generation.

A CONCENTRATION ON CHRISTOLOGY

First of all there was, of course, his constant effort to relate everything to Jesus Christ. But this fundamental trait has so often been highlighted that only a few quotations will suffice.

In the main lines of his autobiography which he published under the title *Parergon*, he wrote: 'I had to learn during these years (1928-1938) that the only and rigorous purpose of christian doctrine, directly or indirectly, in all its formulations, is to give information about Jesus Christ, the living Word through which God addresses us. It should be there to serve His name and rightly to build up a Christian Church.' He added: 'When I look back over the previous stages of my theological work, I have to ask myself how it was possible that I did not understand this and that I have not said this much earlier on. How long does it take a man before he understands, especially these most important realities?'⁴ It is not a matter of principle or of a simple method, but of an attitude of thankfulness and obedience, the fruits of sanctification which take a long time to ripen for all of us.

Therefore, this openness towards Christ determines the whole Dogmatics: 'A church dogmatics must, of course, be christologically determined as a whole and in all its parts, as surely as the revealed Word of God, attested by Holy Scripture and proclaimed by the Church, is its one and only criterion, and as surely as this revealed Word is identical with Jesus Christ.'⁵

'In the basic statement of a church dogmatics christology must be either dominant and perceptible or else it is not christology.'⁶

'Therefore dogmatics must actually be christology and only christology.'⁷

No theologian has ever been so strict and consistent on this point. Barth's name will certainly remain linked with this attempt which was more determined than that of anybody else to receive all knowledge from Christ alone, which clearly corresponds to the intention of the reformers - 'To the older Protestant theology... the discipline of the christological dogma of the Early Church was still a self-evident presupposition with a real practical importance.'⁸ - but not to the concepts of modern protestantism: 'And so Schleiermacher's romantic conception of history and Ritschl's Kantian metaphysics on the one hand and their christocentric efforts on the other, could only render each other unworthy of credence.'⁹

The adversary is in this case natural theology whose negation is only the corollary of this affirmation.¹⁰

Does not everything that is said to be the merit of man and his wisdom stem from Christ and His revelation? And can we deny, though few people are aware of this fact, that the heart of the theological debate today continues to deal with this central

issue ? One has only to look again at the booklet 'La Théologie Evangélique au XIX^e Siècle',¹¹ or even better at 'L'Histoire de la Théologie Protestante au XIX^e Siècle'¹², in order to be made aware of the analogy.

TRUE THEOLOGY

The second characteristic of this theology lies in the manner in which it is worked out, and in its train of thought. In this respect Barth rediscovered the great vein of classical theology. It is at this point that I should like to refer to an article by Dom Leclercq, which did perhaps not attract as much attention as it should have done.¹³ Writing about the theological crisis, the author traces it back to a conflict, a hesitation between two 'possible ways of engaging in theology': the thought pattern of faith and scholasticism aspiring to be scientific.¹⁴ Barth has always affirmed that theology is a science, but a *special* science, because it is determined in its way of reflection by the subject with which it deals: the living God in his revelation. Thinking of God is a live event – and not knowledge, some kind of erudition or a historical technique. Recently he repeated: 'How should one understand the term "theological science"? Not as a system of all sorts of "knowledge", divided into a series of disciplines, each one determining the other (or ultimately each one separated from the other)! But rather: the live event of the knowledge of God and man (Jesus Christ is true God and true man), worked out in a lasting manner by certain able men set aside for this task. A live event!' ¹⁵ Therefore Barth corrected Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*, and set out the main stages of theological investigation in the following way: *credo ergo sum, ergo amatus sum, ergo amo, ergo cogito.*¹⁶

The thought pattern develops only as it remains faithful to the revelation. As with St. Augustin it is an exigence of faith and love: 'Thou hast smitten my heart with thy Word and I have loved Thee... but what is it that I love, in loving Thee?' ¹⁷ We know that he defined the process of understanding, i.e. the theological curriculum, in his book on Anselm¹⁸, but also in his Dogmatics¹⁹, in the introduction to Evangelical Theology²⁰, and he kept returning to this point. Would this not be the moment to take this radical transformation seriously in our way of 'theologizing', which would without any doubt provoke a reform of our theological faculties ? Have we not lost our identity and

our authority because we have tried to copy the other disciplines at the university ?

Faith requires knowledge. To understand or 'prove' does not mean assessing the revelation by applying independent reason as a criterion, but penetrating into the thinking of God and grasping the mysterious correlation.

But this logic is not our merit : it is a gift, a new orientation of the application of intelligence which has to arise out of our deepest darkness. From there stems the importance of prayer. It is the Spirit who leads us to evidence, to joy and to vision. This theology manifests itself in a meeting-point with God,²¹ where one discovers at the same time the reality of man. Thus one can understand that it is of service to the church, to preaching and witness²² - in contrast to other ways of thought that are constantly uncertain with regard to Christian obedience. This theology is ecclesiastical because christology is vital to it. It is not practised like a simple intellectual technique (though it includes this, too) side by side with the struggle of faith, but within the very context of a life of gratitude. 'For that reason he could not emphasize too strongly (in his warning against the theology of bats and owls) that prior to any desire or ability to find theological answers is the question of dedication on the part of the theologian himself. What is required is a pure heart, eyes that have been opened, child-like obedience, a life in the Spirit, rich nourishment from Holy Scripture to make him capable of finding these answers.'²³ Barth's correspondence with Harnack (1923) was a first indication of this theological reform.²⁴

It is certain that, despite contestations at the present time, such a thought reaches non-believers much better than any form of apologetics. How authoritative and strong sounds the following declaration : 'Anselm is not in a position to treat Christian knowledge as an esoteric mystery, as a phenomenon that would have to shun the cold light of secular thinking. He credits his theology as such - without special adaptation for those outside - with being conclusive and convincing. He would have to distrust his theology and it would no longer be convincing even to himself and therefore it would be bad theology if, for the benefit of those outside, he had to give precedence to special proofs over its own distinctive arguments. And Anselm is in no position to serve the world with something other than that with which he himself is served. Not only because he quite honestly has nothing else to offer or because he knows no other proof than

the one that convinces him, but also because he knows himself to be responsible to the world and dares not offer it anything less than the best.' ²⁵

HIS AUDIENCE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

It has been said of our generation that it was too weak to receive such a giant. There is probably some truth in this. The richness and the number of his writings (approximately 600 titles) are somewhat frightening. His Dogmatics is difficult: Who has carefully read these 8,000 pages? And who can remember them? The development of his long arguments is difficult for the mind to retain. I see a good reason for this: he thought in a contemplative way – which requires an intense concentration both spiritually and intellectually, an availability of a whole being; the will and emotion have to be mobilized like the intellect. The closely printed passages are nearly always of a different kind: these are historical observations, critical or polemical remarks, and the memory, accustomed to this sort of exercise, has much less difficulty to find its way in them. But the working-out itself is a spiritual exercise rather than a straightforward conceptuality. This is why the hurried or absent-minded reader rapidly loses sight of the whole scene. As said before, reading requires discipline and not only dexterity. The main difficulty – as, incidentally, also with Luther, Pascal and St. Paul – is a matter of faith rather than of intelligence.

In fact, he does not explain the mystery to make it more accessible; he maps out this mystery, not to 'objectify' it ²⁶, but in the hope that it will manifest itself to him, making itself clear and evident through its very presence. Theology only marks the place where God himself has promised to reveal himself personally; it would never pretend to take hold of the truth to communicate it without this personal act. What is the final purpose? God or a religious theory?

In the last resort one might almost say that his conclusions are less important than the train of thoughts which has led to them. And yet it is logical, and one realizes, that the successful transformations which he imposed on dogmas such as that of the trinity, predestination, the attributes of God, creation, angels and devils, ecclesiology, sacramentalism, etc. have inspired him much more through motives of faith than through better reasoning. Here the function of reason is clear: It is in the service of the vigilance of faith. He who allows himself to be caught

up in this thought-world has the impression of being transported into another world – Col. 1:13 'He brought us away into the kingdom of his dear Son'. And paradoxically enough this being – transported brings him face to face with men. He does not meet them any more on the level of their inhumanity but within the framework of the humanity which Christ regained, i.e. according to their true nature. This means that insight into God and full solidarity with men are mutually dependent on each other – something the young generation does not seem to understand any longer.

Therefore the future of this 'theoanthropology' depends in the first place on the quality of Christians and on the authenticity of their devotion in the New Testament sense of the word. But this reaction of man depends on the activity of the living Christ. That is why the culmination of this work probably lies in its new definition of Christ's prophetic function²⁷. Christ's ascension does not mean that He left us to send us in His place the Holy Spirit, but that He remains alive and active in the history of man²⁸.

'Jesus Christ lives. This is at once the simplest and the most difficult christological statement. Any child can make it, but the profoundest meditation cannot master it'.²⁹ It means that Christ, on whom everything depends, remains at work and continues His operation at the centre of human history. He precedes us still today. We are not His successors. We are only allowed to follow Him to the point where He leads us. And since He retains control over His purpose (as Luther so often indicated), we are at the same time liberated from a wrong perspective, grateful to see Him victoriously at work and unceasingly active in life's turmoil. A prodigious complement is thus added to the famous *Soli Deo gloria* of the Reformers.

THE REFORMED WITNESS

Due to the immense labour of this man, to his indefatigable energy and rectitude, we now have at our disposal a practically inexhaustible source of theological reference. Instead of being afraid of the richness of this work, blinded by all sorts of prejudice or involved in useless conversations, would it not be more useful for our Christian service, the ecumenical dialogue, and also for the whole world to profit from this unique 'reservoir' in order to clarify our position? Nobody expects us to follow it slavishly, but why should we not show our gratitude for having at our

disposal, in an unstable and troubled time such as ours, so great a store of knowledge, faith and love ?

The best use we could make of it with an eye to this clarification would probably be to engage ourselves in a three-way debate. First, Barth and Calvin : the last volume of the *Dogmatics* on baptism, and the previous ones on the church, and of course on natural theology or predestination urgently invite us to revise our ideas and practices. Secondly, Barth and neoprotestantism : the article already mentioned concerning Schleiermacher shows clear links between the master of the XIXth century and what is called today the 'new theology'. As in the time of the Reformation, newness does not always come from the side from which one expects it. Finally, Barth and Roman catholicism, which seems to discover at this moment that its best spokesman might in the end be the true reformed tradition. All this is on condition that it is done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Barth recently expressed this desire in a striking way. Speaking about the future of the church, he suggested 'to dream now and then of a theology of the third article' in order to understand the dominant and decisive ways of the Holy Spirit. Everything one should believe, consider and say about God the Father and about God the Son... would be shown and brought to light as laid down by God the Holy Spirit...' ³⁰ This longing, together with some brief explanations and several warnings are perhaps his spiritual legacy.

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NOTES

1. Church Dogmatics IV/3, p. 693.
2. February 1963, p. 25. ff.
3. Dialogue, Labor et Fides, 1968, p. 12.
4. Théologie Evang., December 1948, p. 272.
5. C.D. I/2, p. 123.
6. do.
7. C.D. I/2, p. 123.
8. C.D. I/2, p. 297.
9. C.D. I/2, p. 123.
10. C.D. II/1.
11. Labor et Fides, 1957.
12. Id. 1969, see in particular the 1968 article on Schleiermacher added to the French edition.
13. Irenikon, 1964, No. 1, p. 50. ff.
14. See T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction, S.C.M. Press, 1965.

15. Dialogue, Labor et Fides 1968, p. 56.
16. Do. 'Je crois, donc je suis, donc je suis aimé, donc j'aime, donc je pense.'
17. Confessions X/VI/8.
18. Anselm : *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, Karl Barth.
19. C.D. I/2, p. 758 ff.
20. Labor et Fides, 1962.
21. 'He knows that God must stand in encounter with him if his "intelligere" is not to be delusion and if he himself is not to be mere "insipiens."' Anselm : *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, Karl Barth, p. 39.
22. 'Man knows God in that he stands before God.' Vol. II/1, p. 9.
23. The problem of Dogmatics is essentially the problem of Christian preaching. Vol. I/2, p. 766.
24. Anselm : *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, Karl Barth, p. 34.
25. Theologische Fragen und Antworten, E.V.Z., 1957.
26. Anselm : *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, Karl Barth, p. 68.
27. Contre A. Malet : La pensée de R. Bultmann, Labor et Fides, 1962, p. 347.
28. C.D. IV/3, p. 38 ff.
29. C.D. IV/3, p. 198 ff.
30. C.D. IV/3, p. 39.
31. Schleiermacher-Auswahl, Siebenstern-Taschenbuch 1968, p. 310-312, Labor et Fides, 1969.

ZWINGLI AND THE ANGLO-SAXON WORLD

by ROBERT C. WALTON

It is extremely difficult to assess the significance of Zwingli for the church history of the anglo-saxon world, because his importance is not fully understood by English-speaking theologians and historians.

The first volume of the Parker Society edition of Bullinger's Decades, which appeared in 1849, suggests for instance that Bullinger was the successor to Oecolampad in Zürich¹. Admittedly, this error was later corrected; nevertheless it reflects vividly the general ignorance about Zwingli in the English-speaking world. In 1939 the American historian M. M. Knappen dismissed Zwingli as 'a man of little spirituality'. 'Zwingli was killed', writes Knappen, 'in an unsuccessful war against Zürich's neighbouring cantons, whom he wanted to convert to his faith with the sword'².

A Swiss, who recently visited the United States, discovered to his dismay that a theologian of a well known theological seminary of the Presbyterian Church did know Calvin, but not Zwingli.

More than fifty years ago Professor James J. Good, a theologian of the German Reformed Church of America, pointed out that - unfortunately - far too many members of Reformed and Presbyterian churches regarded Calvin and Knox as the true founders of Reformed protestantism³.