

European Science Foundation
Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)

ESF SCH EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

The Theologian Karl Barth: A European Event

Scientific Report



Jena, Germany, 25 - 27 May 2006

**Convened by:
Martin Leiner and Michael Trowitzsch**

Executive Summary – An overview of the results of the symposium

The exploratory workshop examining “The Theologian Karl Barth – a European Event” took place on 25th to 27th May 2006 in the buildings of the Friedrich-Schiller-University and the Theological Faculty in Jena. It was characterized by a very inspiring and constructive atmosphere and could be conducted mainly as planned, with the exception of minor changes, (such as the unforeseen inability of G. Ward to attend). The outcome of the symposium, as also mirrored in the feed-back of the participants, was exceptionally positive on the whole, however also ambivalent in some other respects.

To start with the latter, it quickly became evident that the chosen theme comprised such a great host of subjects and facets that the working through of them, as far as was possible in the context of such a symposium – even with the utmost care in planning and running the event – always together with the examined theme seemed to show at the same time what was *missing* regarding each point. Indeed, as it became clear, the theology of Karl Barth is characterized by a European dimension to such an extent, that the perspectives and viewpoints raised in this symposium could examine mainly details thereof, and only a few greater structures. This occurred in spite of attempts of gaining an overview right from the start. The organizers had not expected to that extend this excess of problem areas and -constellations. In this way the *incentive nature* of the event became very evident.

On the other hand – to now emphasize the positive aspects – this incentive character had an immensely inspiring effect. Not only did it provide an opportunity for many Barth scholars to exchange their thoughts and in some cases to get to know each other, it also painted the landscape of a widely unexplored field of investigation into which significant inroads were made by all of the presented contributions.

Thus both interferences as well as analogies and also the particular differences of the reception of Barth in varying European countries came together and contributed to sharpen the different profiles (for example when it became clear that in some countries the image of Barth had been generated mainly through secondary accounts or even just by *on-dits* and anecdotes).

A threefold structure of the problem as a whole became apparent: The historical dimension (linked to the beginning of Barth's eminent and also political European activities during the national socialist regime); a more country-specific dimension (as influenced in part by the particular characteristics of the different languages) and a problem-oriented dimension (a.o. with insight into the indirect or direct impact of theological orientations on politics, philosophy and, of course, also the behaviour of churches). These three strands come together when one considers the influence of Barth's theology on the processes of reconciliation which were initiated after the second world war. Barth's grand "Lehre von der Versöhnung" (Teaching on Reconciliation) (occupying thousands of pages of his "Kirchliche Dogmatik") corresponds with his determined fight for a properly understood reconciliation of peoples after the war as well as his ecumenical initiatives. It can be regarded as one important result of the symposium, that the subject of "Karl Barth as a European event" is distilled in the different processes of reconciliation, whereby with Barth the theological position as center and point of origin plays the main role of course. Once again in his work and thinking his determinedly theological stance as an anti-totalitarian and an anti-ideological one becomes prominent. Barth's significance for our present times can be accessed not least from here.

In all this the character of the symposium as a catalyst/incentive for further investigation was very visible. A survey of the participants at the end showed that all participating scholars (with the exception of only one) wished to take part in further research projects on the subject.

Remarks on sections in particular

1. The paper by Eberhard Busch was possibly the highlight of the symposium in terms of productiveness. On the basis of his extensive research of the sources in the relevant Bern Archive, he presented an account of the reactions of Swiss political leadership to Barth's initiatives and interventions during World War Two. Barth had then completely fearlessly summoned and appealed to the Christians of Europe for resistance against the Hitler-regime, especially in the form of "open letters".

2. The first section started with a paper of Dr. Hans-Anton Drewes, director of the famous Barth archive in Basel on translating Barth as a European Event. As some of the translators of Barth (into Czech, into Norwegian, into Dutch) were present, we had a very profound

discussion about the right of the translator to transform the text by translating into something different. Especially the French translation of the Church Dogmatic of Barth eliminates the philosophical backgrounds in favour of a more pastoral style. By this discussion we were well prepared to compare the different forms of barthianism in Europe. French “barthisme” is indeed marked by the pastoral style of the translation, while German Barthism is very much marked rather by the political contexts of the Barmen Declaration and the oppositions between left and right wing “Barthianer” during the cold war.

3. In the second section, however, the current difference between left wing and right wing barthianism was very much criticised. In the different European contexts it is rather misleading, because it combines a theological evaluation with a political one which are not necessarily connected. One paper quoted the example of Swiss barthian scholar van Allmen who was politically socialist, in Church politics very conservative f.ex. against ordination of women and in theological contexts very open to dialogue with Roman Catholicism.

4. The contributions of section 3a shed a strong light on the interdenominational networks of thought exchange spanning the whole of Europe and discursive contexts Barth was connected with. The presentations given presented, although very instructive within each of their areas, exposed all the more the missing parts, for example a thorough presentation of Barth’s reception in the anglo-saxon world.

5. The structure of section 3b was informed and structured mainly by a number of particular subject-matters for which Barth had given important impulses and orientation. In spite of several excellent contributions it has to be said that this section lacked a comprehensive systematic approach to some extent. Without doubt important themes were dealt with, however, they were not sufficiently placed into relationship with each other.

6. Work in section 4 excelled through an exceptional presentation by Michael Beintker.

7. High-ranking contributions were also to be found in section 5: Bruce McCormack focussed on examining undertakings to contradict the significance of Karl Barth’s theology by re-evaluating Schleiermacher, the “church father of the 19th century”. At the same time Stefan Holtmann with great circumspection related the attempts of some theologians teaching in Munich to principally exceed Barth’s theological orientations.

On the whole the exploratory workshop “The Theologian Karl Barth – A European Event“ was set up in a way which was meant to stimulate the discussion of future research on Karl Barth in a European setting and in multinational collaboration. Both the discussion times after the presentation of papers and summaries and in section specifically dedicated to further research perspectives, as well as opportunities for further discussion in an informal atmosphere - for example in Schiller’s garden lodge – offered many opportunities for the exchange of thoughts on key aspects of further research work. These were welcomed by the participants, who engaged in many lively discussions. Participants from all countries present expressed their great interest in the future continuation and deepening of the work begun in this workshop.

Outlook on research perspectives

In particular scholars emphasized the importance a desideratum of researching more deeply Karl Barth’s theology and its prominence and impact with regard to various political contexts, and of examining the understanding and reception of his theological thought in different European countries with regard to their specific spiritual, denominational and historical backgrounds. Moreover, the potential influence of Barth’s thought on concepts of the dialogue between confessions and the inter-religious dialogue was considered a field of high priority of further investigation.

Many participants supported the view that Karl Barth’s teachings on reconciliation in his “Kirchliche Dogmatik” should be focussed on, especially as they have not been investigated in any depth in accordance with its importance to date. This assessment is made in respect of both, the possibility of receiving inspiration for present theological conceptualisation of reconciliation. It is also true for the illuminating of the impact his theology had on the dialogue and reconciliation attempts between Christian churches in Europe immediately after the Second World War, and the impulses generated by that to promote reconciliation between the peoples in post-war Europe on a political level. An important field of necessary further research lies also in the contribution of Barth’s theology later on regarding the stimulation of dialogue between churches under the conditions of a divided Europe during the Cold War.

In the context of contributions by scholars from eastern European countries regarding the theological discours on Barth’s thought in the cold war period in particular stress was laid on

the point of ideological take-over and instrumentalisation of theological thought. This raised also the point of the potential reasons and predispositions for a susceptibility to this danger within theological concepts as an important field of investigation. A number of participants (especially from Germany, Belgium, Canada, USA and the Netherlands) underlined the great importance of this subject.

In the light of these questions the plan of a future in-depth project on this area, preferably placing it in the wider context of investigating original theological and religious advocacy and contending for human dignity and reconciliation, found broad interest and support. (As mentioned above, such a project could be also closely linked to the subject of dialogue between confessions and religions.) The organizers were and are strongly supported by the participants of the workshop to propose the topic of “reconciliation” as for the **EUROCORES**- Program. They are contacting many scholars of different academic branches, countries, regions and religions such as sociology, politology, psychology, history, theology, philosophy, cultural studies and so on.

Furthermore it was also suggested to follow up connections with South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as with Israel and Jewish thought in order to expose references to Barth’s thinking. These aspects could be integrated into this project with the help of already existing university partnerships of participants from Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany.



PROGRAM

ESF SCH EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

The Theologian Karl Barth: A European Event

Place: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena,
Universitätshauptgebäude, Senatssaal, Fürstengraben 1,
D-07743 Jena

Program:

Wednesday 24 May 2006

Evening *Arrival*

Thursday 25 May 2006

9.00 Welcome; presentation of the project; presentation of the participants (chair Trowitzsch)

9.40 Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)

10.00 Special Exposé: Drewes (Basel): Translating Barth - the translations of Barth in the European languages and their consequences

11.00 Coffee Break

11.15 Section 1: Barthianism in Europe

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11.15 Short presentations of the statements of Schneider (Die Barthisme-Bewegung im frankophonen Protestantismus), Hennecke (Übersicht zur Bartherezeption in den Niederlanden), Hafstad (Karl Barths impact in Norway)

11.45 Synthesis of the statements: Beintker (Münster): Barthianism in Europe - differences and similarities; state of research, purposes for further research

12.15 Discussion

13.00 Break

15.00 Section 2: Barth's Theology and different political contexts in Europe

15.00 Short presentations of the statements of Stefan (Karl Barth in Tschechien. Achtzig Jahre der Barth-Rezeption in der tschechischen evangelischen Theologie), Leiner (Barth und die DDR), van der Kooi (Die neukalvinistische Barthrezeption), Fazakas (Links- und Rechtsbarthianer in der reformierten Kirche Ungarns), Beintker (Karl Barth und die Politik – Sondierungen auf einem komplizierten Terrain)

15.30 Synthesis of the statements: van der Kooi (Amsterdam): - Results and tasks for further research

16.00 Discussion

16.30 Coffee break

17.00 Public Conference:

E. Busch: "Eine Schweizer Stimme". Karl Barth and swiss politics in the international political context 1933-1945. (*Place: Faculty of theology, Fürstengraben 6, E003*)

17.45-18.30 Discussion

Evening: Free

Friday 26 May 2006

9.00 Section 3a: Barth and the Confessional and Religious Divide in Europe: Roman Catholic and Lutheran Barth Reception in different European Countries

9.00 Short presentation of the statements of B. Bourguin (rom-cath.) (Herméneutique et réception de Barth dans la théologie catholique en France et en Belgique); C. Chalameit (rom.-cath.): (Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth on God's attributes, or two forms of existential theology?) V. Cristescu (orth.) (Barth und die orthodoxe Theologie in Rumänien); E. Harbsmeier (luth.) (Karl Barth und Sören Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard als Zankapfel bei den Auseinandersetzungen in der dialektischen Theologie.), H. Mikkelsen (luth.) (Barth im Spiegel der dänischen Theologie- Rezeption und Kritik in einem Lutherischen Kontext) and E. Maurer (luth.) (Barth-Rezeption bei luth. Theologen in Deutschland).

9.50 Synthesis of the statements: Askani (Paris)

10.20 Coffee Break

10.30 Discussion

11.30 Projects for Further Research I - Presentation of Possibilities (Leiner, Eggert, Jung) - Round table discussion about the subject

12.30 Lunch Break

14.30 Section 3b: Barth within other Paradigms: Hermeneutic Barthianism, Postmodernism, Radical Orthodoxy, African Liberation Theology and Feminist Interpretation

14.30 Presentation of the statements of:

R. Hess (Main features of Barth-Reception(s) with a gender-perspective), M. Trowitzsch (Notizen zu Barths Hermeneutik), P. Stoellger (Barth und die Postmoderne. Perspektiven auf eine offene Konstellation)

15.10 Coffee break

15.25 C. Danani (Barth und die Hermeneutik – in der Sicht italienischer Kritiker) and G. Neven (Barth lesen in den Niederlanden. Das Beispiel von Oepke Noordman's in den zwanziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts)

15.50 Discussion

16.45 Break

17.00 Public dialogue-conference: A. M. Reijnen, P. Stoellger and B. Mc Cormack: Barth and Postmodernism Today (chair Leiner)

18:30 Barbecue in *Schiller's garden, Schillergäßchen Jena*

20.30-21.30: Young scholars meeting: How to organize cooperation among young scholars in Europe and beyond? (Introduction: Leiner)

Saturday 27 May 2006

9.00 Section 4: Barth and Jewish-Christian dialogue

9.00 Presentation of the statements of: H. C. Askani (Barth und Buber), M. Hailer (Barth und Miskotte) and A. M. Reijnen (Marquardt and Wyschogrod)

9.50 Discussion

10.30 Coffee Break

10.45 Section 5: Strategies of "overcoming" Barth

10.45 Presentation of the statements of: : E. Harbsmeier: (Kierkegaard and Bultmann), C. Chalamet: (Barth and Bultmann on God), S. Holtmann (Karl Barth als Theologe der Neuzeit (Die Deutungen Trutz Rendtorffs, Falk Wagner und Friedrich Wilhelm Grafts)) , C. Chalamet (Barth and Bultmann on God), M. Dumas (Karl Barth et Paul Tillich Opposition ou communauté? À l' exemple du couple révélation et religion) and Mc Cormack (Overcoming Barth...by Schleiermacher?)

11.00 Synthesis by G. Thomas (Bochum)

11.45 Discussion

12.30 Lunch Break

14.00-15.45: Definition of Further Research Projects

14.00-15.00: Parallel Session to the research projects resulting from this exploratory workshop

15.00-15.45: Presentation and discussion of future projects

Coffee break

16.30-17.45: Synthesis of the results from a North-American perspective:

16.30-17.15 Bruce Mc Cormack: European and North-American Barth-scholarship a critical comparison

17.15-17.45 Discussion

17.45: End of the conference, possibility to have dinner together

Sunday 28 May 2006

Morning: Departure

Please note that the whole workshop takes place in the Senatssaal (Fürstengraben 1). Only exceptions: The two public conferences are located in the Faculty of theology (Fürstengraben 6) and the Grill-evening in Schiller's Garden, Schillergäßchen Jena.

List of participants

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Statistical information concerning the participants of the exploratory workshop

The exploratory workshop “The Theologian Karl Barth: A European Event” was attended by 27 participants in total.

The participants convened from altogether 13 nations. 24 scientists originated from 11 European states, three scientists came from Canada and the United States. Including the three participants based in Jena totally eight person came from Germany, three from the Netherlands, two from Belgium, four from Switzerland. There was one participant each from Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Denmark and France. With regard to the non-European countries 1 scientist joined from Canada and 2 from the United States.

Out of all participants of the workshop 5 were female - which is about 18.5 % - and 22 male scientists.

Concerning the structure of age groups the workshop shows the following distribution: Dividing the total group of participants into three age brackets, the youngest group under the age of 40 years, a next group between 40 and 50 years and another one formed by the person of the age of 50 years and older yields 7 participants – which is ca. 26 % - under the age of 40; 10 person - which is about 37 % - were in the age group between 40 and 50 years and another 10 person – thus again about 37 % - were 50 years and older.