

## DEATH OF THOMAS MERTON

Father Thomas Merton, Trappist philosopher and writer, died, accidentally electrocuted, in Bangkok on December 10, aged 53.

Father Merton was a monk of Gethsemane Abbey, Kentucky, U.S.A., he had gone to Bangkok to take part in an international conference on monasticism and had lectured to the conference the day before his death.

Father Merton was born in France in 1915 the son of a New Zealand Anglican father and an American mother. His own introduction to Catholicism came through his literary studies. He was received into the Church in 1938 and became a Trappist in 1941. His many books—especially *Elected Silence* and *The Seven Storey Mountain*, won international fame.

## DEATH OF KARL BARTH

Karl Barth, 82, a pre-eminent Protestant theologian, died on December 10 at his home in Basel, Switzerland.

He was born on May 10, 1886, the son of Swiss Reformed minister in 1908. As pastor of a parish, he became known as the "Red Pastor" because of his support of factory workers seeking higher wages and better working conditions.

His first book, *The Epistle to the Romans*, appeared in 1919.

Professorships at the German universities of Gottingen, Muenster and Bonn followed.

As professor at Bonn, Barth was a civil servant. He refused to take the oath of allegiance that Hitler required of state employees. In 1934, he was the chief author of the Barmen Confession, which asserted the freedom of the Church from temporal powers. It was signed by about 2000 leaders of German Protestantism.

Condemned by a Nazi court in 1935 for "seducing the minds" of students, Barth was dismissed from his post at Bonn and expelled from Germany.

He became professor of theology at the University of Basel and continued in that position until his retirement six years ago.