

Bonner Querschnitte

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Bernd Schirmmacher (1921-2015): One of the Co-Founders of the Evangelical School Movement has died

(Bonn, 27.02.2015) Bernd Schirmmacher, Honorary Chairman of the August-Hermann-Francke School in Giessen, Germany, one of the largest Evangelical schools in Europe, died peacefully in a retirement home in Lahnu near Giessen shortly before his 94th birthday and just ten weeks after the death of his wife Ingeborg Schirmmacher (93).

In 2008, Bernd Schirmmacher was honored for having chaired the August-Hermann-Francke School board for 25 years and was elected to the position of honorary chairman.

In 2001, upon his 80th birthday, he was presented with the German Federal Cross of Merit by the President of the Republic. The Merit was handed over by the Vice President of the Federal Parliament, Hermann Otto Solms (FDP), and by the Mayor of Giessen, Manfred Mutz (SPD). In addition, a commemorative volume was published containing articles by and about Professor Schirmmacher carrying the title *The Lord is the Master Builder* (German title: *Baumeister bleibt der Herr*). Dr. Hermann Otto Solms said the following at the time of the presentation of the Federal Cross of Merit: "It is the individual and service and love towards other people that stand at the center of Christian education at the August-Hermann-Francke School – and this is completely in keeping with the sense of its eponym. Professor Schirmmacher contributed much to this objective, and for that I would like to express my gratitude."

After a long period of helping start private Evangelical Christian schools all over Germany, Schirmmacher became a founding member and member of the board of trustees of the August-Hermann-Francke School in his own town Giessen. He early took the position of chairman of the board in 1983 for what were purposes of a more representative nature. However, already a year later he went into early retirement from his professorship for telecommunications engineering and from that time forward was active more or less full-time for the school for many years. He was active as a project supervisor, organising the construction of most of the school buildings, as well as in the development of electronic bookkeeping, was active in job interviews, and as a counselor for teachers, parents, and students. As the School Director Lothar Jost



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said in 2008 in a ceremonial address, Schirmmacher played a major part in shaping the character of the school by, on the one hand, advocating clear Christian and ethical positions, on the other hand, serving a mediating role in order to bring a wide range of differing positions together. He always accepted the criticism of others with humor while admitting his own shortcomings. He repeatedly emphasized the grace and necessity of mutual forgiveness and lived it out. The close relationship with his wife Ingeborg Schirmmacher, to whom the school also owes gratitude for much good advice, also served as a model, said Jost.

Among other things, Schirmmacher, together with his wife Ingeborg, served as board members of the German branch of the mission society WEC International from 1968-1996. WEC International is one of the largest mission societies in the world. The prior international director of WEC International, Dr. Dieter Kuhl, communicated the following upon Schirmmacher's death: "Over the course of almost 30 years, they shaped an entire generation of missionaries as role models and by their proclamation and counseling. Through his expert knowledge, loyalty, and his ability to ask critical questions, Schirmmacher contributed decisively to the further establishment of the German WEC center in Eppstein. In the process, it was critically important that in and behind all forms of service the living God be the master builder. This was also the title he chose for his book about the beginnings of the German branch of the Worldwide Evangelization for Christ (WEC) mission society (*The Lord is the Master Builder*; original German title – *Baumeister ist der Herr* [1978])."

Schirmmacher was also board member of the German Christian Engineers' Association (Deutscher Christlicher Techniker-Bund) from 1969-1993, which is an affiliation of professors, lecturers, and students of engineering at German universities. For a time he also held the position of Chairman of the Evangelical Alliance in Giessen.

Schirmmacher was born in Bremen and was Professor of Telecommunications Engineering for 25 years beginning in 1969 at the State School of Engineering in Giessen, today named The Technical University of Middle Hesse. He was also the Dean of the Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications Engineering Faculty (now called Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology). Prior thereto, he was in the management of leading companies in the electronics industry, having been the head of quality assurance at Rondo and deputy to the owner at Tönjes in the 1950ies.

Schirmmacher leaves behind three children (Ingrid, Klaus and Thomas), 9 grandchildren, and 8 small grandchildren.

Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#) und [Photo 2](#): Bernd Schirmmacher

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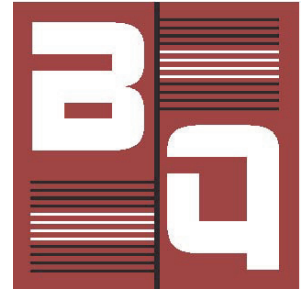
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