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Cutting from issue dated..... **24 MAY 1954****BARTHIAN ESSAYS****AGAINST THE STREAM.** By Karl Barth. (SCM Press, 16s.)

THIS is a collection of some of the occasional writings of Karl Barth which have appeared in the form of lectures and articles published since 1946. It has been ably translated, and, unlike so many English versions of German works, it is a pleasure to read.

As the editor, Ronald Gregor Smith, points out in his preface, this book gives us an opportunity to meet Barth in a less rarefied atmosphere than that of dogmatic theology, and to see the man and his message in the context of contemporary political and social problems. Most readers will come away with a new respect for the character of the man, his sympathy, kindly humour, and modesty, and for the ability with which he relates the problems with which he is here concerned to the fundamental principles of his theology.

Many will also be profoundly depressed by his handling of the problem of the Christian's attitude to the situation of which the outward symbol is the "iron curtain." His insistence that the Church must be the Church, that it exists to proclaim the saving Word, and that it must not subordinate its claims and its purpose to the interests of any political system or "way of life," is wholly good, and affords a salutary corrective to much loose thinking in the Western countries. His doctrine of the place and function of the State in the order of divine grace is interesting and in many respects valuable, though one may think that his refusal to countenance the concept of natural law leads him into unnecessary difficulties. But in his insistence on the Church's duty to hold its peace and refrain from protest or opposition in the Communist lands, and on its obligation to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality in the ideological war between East and West, many will see a sad retreat from the noble protestations of the days of the Barmen Declaration. For Barth, there is little to choose between the Kremlin on the one hand and "Truman and the

Pope" on the other, between Franco or (rather oddly) "the Dutch in Indonesia" and the totalitarian rulers of Eastern Europe. A letter from Emil Brunner, contained in this volume, expresses the matter forcibly: "I simply cannot grasp," he writes, "why you of all people, who condemned so severely even a semblance of collaborationism on the part of the Church under Hitler, should now be making yourself the spokesman of those who condemn . . . even inward spiritual resistance, and why you should deride as 'nervousness' what is really a horror-struck revulsion from a truly diabolical system of injustice and inhumanity." To this, Barth can give no convincing answer. The fundamental trouble is that he is infected with the old error of supposing atheist Communism to be, unlike Nazism, a "Christian heresy." "It would be absurd . . . to mention a man of the stature of Joseph Stalin in the same breath with such charlatans as Hitler, etc." Hence, for him, there is nothing to choose between the "antichrists" of East and West, and the Church must relapse into a passive quietism while the conflict settles itself.

All this contrasts oddly with the principle, enunciated forcibly elsewhere in this book, that the Church has a positive duty towards the secular order, and must actively concern itself with social righteousness. It should be added that this book, although it is mainly concerned with the problem of Church and State, contains also two short, but useful, essays on Revelation and the Bible, and on the Christian view of poverty.

**Seeking After Perfection.** By William L. Phillips. (Holy Cross Press, West Park, New York, \$1.50.) Good plain Catholic teaching, with hard-hitting moral instruction specially in regard to the Sacrament of Penance, makes this a really valuable contribution to the life of the Church in the United States. It should afford a corrective to any tendency to a vague and merely negative "Protestantism."

63