

us and our program, we would be happy to have them ask for our materials or attend our programs and judge for themselves.

KARL BAEHR,

Executive Director.

American Christian Palestine Committee,
New York, N. Y.

[Our clearly stated point was that the A.C.P.C. and every agency which undertakes to educate the American people on Middle Eastern affairs should abandon partisanship and work for an over-all solution to problems affecting all the nations of the area, those of the Arabs as well as those of Israel, and that this should be done before the Communists swamp the whole area in chaos by forcing millions of iron curtain Jews to migrate to Israel. Apparently that point was also made at the recent A.C.P.C. conference in Chicago, as our editorial correspondence in the March 4 issue indicated.—Ed.]

The Barth Exchange

SIR: I'm sure all your readers have watched with interest your coverage of Karl Barth's letter to an East German pastor (Feb. 11, Feb. 18). Probably few of us in America would take issue with Dr. Niebuhr's call for realism in judging the relative merits of East and West, recognizing that both stand under divine judgment. Certainly man cannot approximate the divine impartiality, but must make value judgments between opposing systems with his limited perspective. Still, one [feels] that Niebuhr's inference of irrelevance on Barth's part is not justified.

The reason for the letter in the first place was a very relevant demand to know what to do under the existing conditions in East Germany. Recognizing that in terms of "realism" we in the West may find Barth's ideas too extreme, the question still remains as to how the East German pastor is to be answered. Acute analysis of political strategies is helpful, but what of the role of a Christian who is involved in the conflict? How is he, maintaining Christian hope and faith, to express his Christian love? Those of us who hold Dr. Niebuhr in highest regard and respect would greatly appreciate his own answer to the East German letter.

ROBERT G. JONES.

Yale Divinity School,
New Haven, Conn.

SIR: I am constrained to comment on your editorial on Karl Barth's letter to a pastor in the German Democratic Republic (Feb. 11).

Karl Barth is continuing a tradition of

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Western world is the way in which the power conflict—which would exist even if all Russia were Christian and “democratic”—has been turned into a simple theological issue between “God” and anti-Christ. On this side the children of light, on the other the children of darkness. Many believe that the men of good will dwell exclusively in this part of the world.

Christians who see the issue in this way forget that when the West had the world in her hands in the 19th century, Christian civilization gave the world colonialism and American isolationism. It is not possible for us to do these things and to escape the wrath of God. In part the success of Marxism in both Russia and Asia stems from the failure of the West to deliver the goods when it had the opportunity to do so.

Christians in the “free” world would do well to ponder how sensitive they are to the “togetherness” of Christians in the lowliness of the church, across political boundaries, when they identify Christianity with the fortunes of the West or encourage Christians in the East to offer resistance to state authority. It is, of course, easy to call on others to be martyrs and equally easy to fail to appreciate the extent to which Christians in the West are guilty of political accommodation.

It is true that ideologically Marxism and Christianity are opposed, as Christianity is opposed to all worship of “mammon” in its diverse Western forms. Christians in both parts of the world are called to be loyal to their faith and at the same time to work to maintain state order against any movement to anarchy. Christians in the West who claim that their way of life in the state is alone consistent with Christianity do great disservice to Christians on the other side. If what they claim is true, then clearly every Christian in the East ought to be an active fifth columnist. No wonder that Christians there have suffered because of the loveless behavior of many other Christians in the West who have espoused the cause of the gospel too cheaply.

You refer to Hungary's strike for freedom. No one doubts that terrible things were done in that unfortunate land. But we must ask whether those who instigated the revolt were not “dreamers” who failed to take due cognizance of the limitations of freedom which the dilemma of power imposes on us all. With the balance of power so delicately poised as between Russia and the West (good for us to remember that all the great Western powers plus the Americas are ranged

against the temptation to prevent such a development? I think the answer is obvious.

BRYAN DE KRETZER,

Visiting Professor from Ceylon.
University of Chicago Federated Theological Faculty,
Chicago.

SIR: Reinhold Niebuhr's “warning” to Karl Barth (Feb. 18) tells me more about Reinhold Niebuhr than Karl Barth. Let us have the full text of Barth's letter first, and then perhaps “eminent theologians” will have something to say about it worth hearing.

The most unfortunate part of Niebuhr's reply is the concluding paragraph. In one year of study under Karl Barth I found no evidence whatever that he needs to realize “that he is not the only prophet of the Lord.” Those of us who heard his lectures on the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV/3 in February 1956 will not soon forget that afternoon when Barth announced that he was retracting what he had said during the past three lectures in order to revise it and make a new approach to the matter at hand. Nor will we forget the many times in his English seminar when Barth freely and quite openly discussed critically his own previous works.

At least the evidence I have seen declares that there is no pretension in Barth of “absolute purity” or of approximation to “divine impartiality.”

JOHN G. GIBBS.

Gerrardstown, W. Va.

[A translation of pertinent sections of the Barth letter is being prepared for early publication in the *Century*.—Ed.]

Traditional, Precisely

SIR: The report of your Chicago correspondent on interfaith understanding (Jan. 28) is confusing. He attributes to Catholic layman Stephen Mitchell the remark that his Catholic associates are “critical of some traditional Roman practices.” That a Catholic President would “owe allegiance to the pope in spiritual matters only” is exactly the traditional Catholic position. And I, too, doubt “that any Catholic clergyman would try to influence a President's executive policies.” If a priest were so tempted, he can recall the disastrous effects when Pres. Truman's Baptist pastor tried to influence him on the question of appointing Gen. Mark Clark ambassador to the Vatican.

Washington, D. C.

JACK SHEIL.