

Truman's inauguration, the second rabbi in history to participate in a presidential inaugural.* Others at the Jefferson Hotel's banquet table were the Very Rev. Paul C. Reinert, S.J., president of Roman Catholic St. Louis University, and Episcopalian Ethan A. H. Shepley, chancellor of Washington University. As the guest speaker, Baptist Truman had something useful to tell them all about that much-abused term, brotherhood. Excerpts from his speech:

"The first step of every enemy of this country has always been to attempt to separate the different strands of faith and belief out of which this nation has been woven. Our enemies have tried to set group against group, faith against faith . . .

"All the great religions, whatever their differences, acknowledge a belief in God as the father and creator of mankind. For us, therefore, brotherhood is not only a generous impulse but also a divine command. Others may be moved to brotherhood only by sentiment. We acknowledge brotherhood as a religious duty.

"Those of us who believe in God, therefore, can never be content to live for ourselves alone. We must always be working to eliminate injustice and intolerance, and to create a society which carries out our ideals . . .

"The beliefs on which we have founded our form of government and our hope of a better world are under attack . . . The defense of mankind against these attacks lies in the faith we profess—the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. Men and women who have this faith will refuse to bow to force. They will refuse to worship the power of the state. They will refuse to set their own nation and their own group above criticism. For they understand that above all these works of men there is the eternal standard of God by which we shall all be judged.

"It is only the people of religious faith throughout the world who have the power to overcome the force of tyranny. It is in their beliefs that the path can be found to justice, freedom and truth. Their religious concepts are the only sure foundation of the democratic ideal."

Theologian Upstream

Swiss Theologian Karl Barth, 67, has given modern Protestants a lot to think about. In the '20s, almost singlehanded, Barth took Luther and Calvin down from the dusty bookshelves where liberal Protestants had put them, and roughly recalled theologians everywhere to some fundamentals.† In the '30s, Barth was one of the first European churchmen to attack the Nazis. But since the late '40s, Barth has played a different kind of role. In the political and spiritual battle of

Communism and the democracies, he has become Europe's most respected Christian preacher of neutralism.

This week, in a book called *Against the Stream* (Philosophical Library; \$3.75), a collection of Barth's recent writings, largely on church and state problems, appeared in the U.S. The book clarifies Barth's political position and partly explains its connection with his rigid theology, with which U.S. theologians, he they as "neo-orthodox" as Barth himself, increasingly disagree. By what he says, Neutralist Barth marks himself as actually an indiscriminate "participationist." The essence of his church-state philosophy: the church must participate in the affairs of any state, Communist or not. "The State," says Barth, "is not a product of sin, but one of the constants of divine Providence."

Thin Ice. Barth's pessimism is enough to cast the optimistic reader into deep depression. "Everything we see before us



NEUTRALIST BARTH
Something of God in Communism?

today," he writes, "is more or less polluted, diluted and devalued . . . Men were never good, are not good, and never will be good . . . The morality of modern civilized man has turned out to be a terribly thin covering of ice over a sea of primitive barbarity . . . There is no doubt but that in recent years the whole conception of a Christian civilization in the West has been pitilessly exposed as an illusion—not least in the eyes of the heathen and Mohammedan world."

With these sorry foundations under them, can Christians hope to build any systems of just governance? Barth doubts it. He first makes the point that, since every political system has some elements of good and evil in it, there is really not much to choose between them all. Continues Barth: "Something of God's wisdom and patience (though it may be only a reasonable traffic regulation!) will be

revealed by even the worst political system. It has often been observed, and rightly, that the 'government' of whose divine institution the Apostle Paul spoke[§] was the 'State' Emperor Nero . . ."

A Mad Mixture. "The Church," Barth repeats, "cannot ally itself with any political system, old or new, for better or for worse, just as it cannot oppose any system unconditionally." What about new political systems, e.g., Communism? Barth has his own question for that: "Can a new political system arise without the Christian Church asking itself how, with what fresh insight and strength, it can make a new and better appeal to men in the new situation?"

Theologian Barth has consistently urged that Christians in Communist countries come to terms with the new regimes. The churches should accept restrictions on them as "penance," protesting only when some really flagrant state violation of their rights as Christians occurs. As for ideology: "The Church can never defend and proclaim—or even attack—abstract norms, ideals, historical laws and socio-political ideologies as such . . . It cannot make itself responsible either for any ism or for rejecting it."

Equipped with this kind of reasoning in the '30s, why did Karl Barth come out so boldly against the Nazis in the '30s and after? His answer: "Nazism . . . was a mixture of madness and crime in which there was no trace of reason." Barth seems to think that Communism is different, and, like other European neutralists, he is fond of the old balancing act equating Russian Communist "materialism" with U.S. capitalist "materialism." The evils of Communist living, furthermore, are all too apparent to Barth from where he sits in Western Europe. Only "a few Western European Communists," he says, would seriously consider the Soviet way of life.

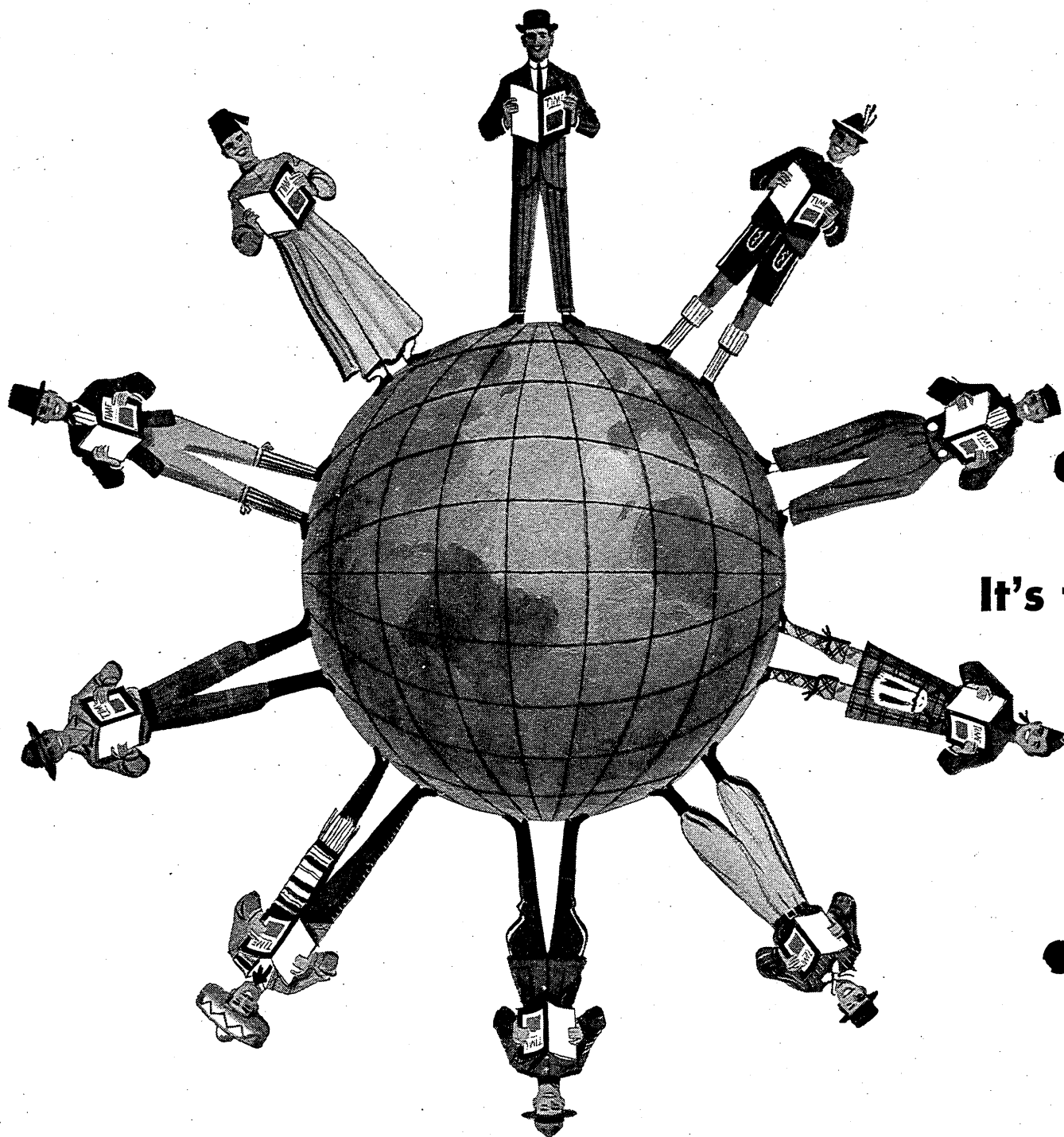
Professors' Textbooks. Never averse to minority positions, Barth feels that church denunciations of Communism would be superfluous. Says he: "When the Church witnesses, it moves in fear and trembling, not with the stream but against it . . . Must the Church then move with the stream and side with America and the Vatican, merely because somewhere in the textbooks of its professors—ever since 1934—it has rightly been said that 'totalitarianism' is a dreadful thing? . . . The Church ought to stand quietly aloof from the present conflict and not let off all its guns before it is necessary, but wait calmly to see whether the situation will grow serious again . . ."

So last week Karl Barth waited in his comfortable study in Basel, working on his magnum opus in theology, *Dogmatics*, still unconvinced that Communism is the "temptation" that Hitlerism was, still finding it hard to see any real qualitative differences between the Soviets and those rascally old American capitalists.

* The first: Rabbi Gershom Mender Seixas, who took part in George Washington's first inaugural.

† Among them: Calvin's doctrine of the essential evil in human nature, and Luther's doctrine that man can justify himself only by faith in Christ, not through good deeds.

§ Romans 13:1: Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.



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