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Is there a crown without a cross? Two models describing the duty of Christians in the world¹

The year 1948 represented a crucial turning point within the international theological and social life. During the spring of this year Karl Barth visited Hungary for the second time,² and in August the World Council of Churches became established.³ Both events had far-reaching results concerning the assessment of Barth's post-war behaviour and attitude towards communism as well as concerning the role of Christians within the new era.

In the spring of 1948 Barth had encountered a number of Hungarian theologians who could barely wake up from the horror of the Second World War whilst having to contemplate with an anxiety close to despair how the new warlords of communist dictatorship emerged and seized power in every Eastern European country. Barth's message, which in essence was considered as an advice to Hungarian church leaders to make some crucial compromises with the communists, was not appreciated positively by Hungarian theologians,⁴ including the evangelical community, which was and remained one of the major strongholds of spiritual resistance against atheistic propaganda both in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Within a wider international perspective, the assessment of the Swiss theologian's post-war attitude becomes increasingly problematic. The first signs of this became obvious at the First Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam already, where the two groups – labelled inaccurately as being 'continental' and 'Anglo-Saxon' respectively – discovered the fundamental difference between their understanding of the role of Christians within the world in desperate need for physical, spiritual and moral reconstruction. The North-American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in his article entitled 'We are men and not God', published in the 27 October 1948 edition of *The Christian Century*, clarified the differences between the two positions and their various nuances.⁵

In Amsterdam, Barth was the main spokesman of the so-called 'continental' theology. His position – based on the most important principles of the neo-Reformatory theology which had emerged to a large extent as a result of his own work during the first decades of the twentieth century and became established in a peculiar manner during the Second World War – was partly accepted by some European (especially German) theologians, but met with the fierce resistance of not only the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon', but (even outspokenly) of many theologians of the 'Eastern block'. Niebuhr described Barth's approach in the following manner:

This position might best be defined as strongly eschatological. This does not mean that it placed its emphasis primarily upon the hope of the culmination of world

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² Barth visited Hungary and Transylvania for the first time in 1936. According to the memoirs of Charlotte von Kirschbaum, Barth's second trip to Hungary took place between 22 March and 5 April 1948. See Árpád Ferencz, ed., *Világok vándorai. Úti beszámoló Karl Barth 1936-os és 1948-as magyarországi látogatásáról. Karl Barth és Vassady Béla levelezése*, Debreceni Református Hittudományi Egyetem Karl Barth Kutatóintézet kiadványai 1 (Debrecen: DRHE, 2007), 61–80.

³ The first General Assembly of the WCC was held between 22 August and 4 September 1948 in Amsterdam. The date of the official establishment of the WCC is 23 August 1948.

⁴ See e.g. the introductory words of Sándor Fazakas and Árpád Ferencz entitled *Karl Barth and Hungarian Reformed theology (Barth Károly és a magyar református teológia)* in Ferencz, *Világok vándorai*, 9–17.

⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', *The Christian Century*, 27 October 1948, 1138–1140.

history in the second coming of Christ, the final judgment and the general resurrection. If the position is termed eschatological it must be regarded as a form of ‘realized eschatology’. Let Karl Barth’s words explain the emphasis, since he was the most persuasive spokesman of the position. The assurance, declared Barth, that ‘Jesus Christ has already robbed sin, death, the devil and hell of their power and has already vindicated divine and human justice in his person’ ought to persuade us ‘even on this first day of our deliberations that the care of the church and the care of the world is not our care. Burdened with this thought we could straighten nothing out’. For the final root of human disorder is precisely ‘this dreadful, godless, ridiculous opinion that man is the Atlas who is destined to bear the dome of heaven upon his shoulders’.⁶

Even 62 years after the event, in our present reality it is absolutely important to understand the differences between the two opinions and of the arguments supporting them. In 1948 – both in Amsterdam and in Budapest at the occasion of Barth’s visit to Hungary – a certain collision happened between two theological systems, which are not at all absent from our present reality. In fact, these differing standpoints, together with their newly acquired tones and emphases, are continuously shaping our basic attitude concerning the role of the church within the world and human society. Although we do not intend to present these in a hermetically isolated fashion from each other, at least one brief assessment can be made: whilst in 1948 Barth sustained that ‘the care of the church and the care of the world is not our care’, Niebuhr (labelled as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ by Barth and his supporters) argued that both are very much our care.

In his quoted article Niebuhr evinces that whilst the so-called ‘Continental’ theology represented by Barth outlined ‘the final pinnacle of the Christian faith and hope with fidelity to the Scriptures’, nevertheless, at the same time ‘it has obscured the foothills where human life must be lived’.⁷ Whilst Barth’s theology of the Word undoubtedly contributed to the clarification of the role of the Christian Church within secular society torn by war, once the military conflict was over, a necessary adjustment had to be made: both the theologian and the Christian believer has to assume a clear responsibility and an active role within the painful labours of the deeply traumatised world. If this change of attitude does not take place, all previous merits of this otherwise respectable eschatological position may easily become untrustworthy.

Barth’s second visit to Hungary and his virtually undisguised endeavour to convince the mostly dissenting Hungarian Reformed theologians, church leaders and parishioners to reach a certain compromise with the forcefully emerging communist regime, was not at all in contradiction with the opinion he upheld in the same year in Amsterdam. Moreover, as we have quoted earlier, at the very beginning of the Assembly Barth made it clear that ‘the care of the church and the care of the world is not our care’. Instead, we have to commit both the world and the church to God ‘who will bring it to pass’. Our Christian duty, therefore, both in the church and in the world is almost exclusively to bear witness to the Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection for all our sake. According to Barth’s emblematic statement God has called us to be his witnesses, yet not to be ‘his lawyers, engineers, statisticians and administrative directors’.⁸

The above approach is on one hand positive, since it defines the duty of the Christian believer towards the world and human society in a short and unmistakable manner. According to Barth our *only* task is to represent that peculiar ‘revolutionary hope’, which can belong to all through the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ, and which can uniquely give a

⁶ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1138.

⁷ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1140.

⁸ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1138.

reason to this earthly life. Every other endeavour which tends to move beyond this statement represents for Barth a mingling into the affairs of the world and of the church, and thus should be avoided, since these are not our care.

Despite every positive feature of the above definition of the Christians' task, upon reading these lines, one almost instinctively remembers the prayer of our Lord preparing for his crucifixion: 'I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one'.⁹ Could Barth's attitude influence Christians to detach themselves effectively from the anguish, joy and sorrow of the world? Was this indeed the best way to imagine the physical as well as spiritual reconstruction of the completely destroyed European continent in 1948? Moreover, is this the way how we should distance ourselves from the current problems of our present?

These questions are not at all outdated, since the so-called post-war 'Barthian' training causes a lot of confusion for the theologians of our time. On the level of practical parish work most of them have to assume much more ecclesiastical, social and public responsibilities than they feel themselves prepared for. Moreover, the majority of these tasks are not even justifiably the care of the theologian, or of a Christian for that matter – at least within Barth's system. Thus, our ministers and theologians often have the impression that they are bearing the burden of Atlas, and if they do have a strong sense of responsibility towards their church, their country and the whole humankind, it becomes increasingly difficult to focus exclusively on the Barthian 'revolutionary hope' and its promulgation. One is compelled to live within the present, whilst retaining the eschatological perspective. Niebuhr himself tries to find the answer for this troubling dilemma, when he says:

No Christian would quarrel with the affirmation that the church finds the true and the new beginning of life and history in the revelatory and redemptive power of our Lord's life, death and resurrection. The questions which arose at Amsterdam were about the conclusions which were drawn from this article of faith. Did not these conclusions tend to rob the Christian life of its sense of responsibility? Did they not promise a victory for the Christian without a proper emphasis upon repentance? And did they not deal in an irresponsible manner with all the trials and perplexities, the judgments and discriminations, the tasks and duties which Christians face in the daily round of their individual and collective life?¹⁰

Neither of the above questions is irrelevant today. Is it not the problem of modern evangelicals that we often hobble through this world, having a volatile relationship with human society, because during our almost exclusive focus upon the Barthian 'revolutionary hope' we may have forgotten to learn the various methods of communicating the divine message? Barth went even further in Amsterdam, since he asserted: 'the care of the church is not our care'. On the one hand this affirmation is encouraging, since it assures us that the church has a Master, and we can entrust everything to Him. On the other hand, however, especially due to the rejection of divided responsibilities and the rigid separation of ecclesiastical and social roles, according to which God needs witnesses but not 'lawyers, engineers, statisticians and administrative directors', Barth effectively obstructs the correct interpretation of 1Cor. 12 as well, since following his rationale the body of Christ becomes unable to present itself credibly with all its variety in front of the world. In light of Niebuhr's assessment we may indeed consider that this Barthian attitude encourages Christians to indulge themselves with participating in the victory of the resurrected Lord without taking part in the crucifixion of their own old man.¹¹ Despite the slightly Pelagian formulation (a label accepted by Niebuhr himself at the end of his essay) one cannot escape the thought that

⁹ John 17: 15.

¹⁰ Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1138.

¹¹ Cf. Rom. 6: 6.

neither his sixty year-old dilemma, nor the four and a half centuries old question of the Heidelberg Catechism did not lose anything from their actuality: ‘But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane?’¹² This is especially true when applied to the increasing contemporary indifference towards the destiny of the church and of the world.

As it results from Barth’s statement in Amsterdam, not only the care of the church, but even the care of the world is not our care. This almost apathetic attitude towards the misery of a continent, which had recently passed through the valley of death, would again restrict the Christians to simply proclaim the central message of the Gospel. In Niebuhr’s view Barth warns us ‘to beware lest we seem to present a kind of “Christian Marshall plan” to the nations’.¹³ Nevertheless, Barth was unable to accept the mediating solution of the so-called ‘Anglo-Saxon’ group, according to which beside our clinging to the central message of the Gospel we need to turn our attention towards the society’s daily problems as well, since we are ‘God’s fellow workers’.¹⁴

The author of the pamphlet entitled *Nein!* against Emil Brunner presented himself to the world as the theologian of the extremities.¹⁵ He remained as such, together with all the advantages and disadvantages of this role. His reluctance to accept the Anglo-Saxon position may have been motivated not only by a fear from synergism, but also by some tragic lessons of the war, during which certain Christian communities ‘overcommitted’ themselves to various political trends. Niebuhr does not deny these either, yet manages to formulate a very accurate and still actual message concerning a truly Gospel-minded attitude towards the acceptance of social and public responsibility:

It is certainly not right for Christians to leave it to the ‘pagans’ of our day to walk the tightrope of our age, which is strung over the abyss of war and tyranny, seeking by patience and courage to prevent war on the one hand and the spread of tyranny on the other, while the Christians rejoice in a ‘revolutionary hope’ in which all these anxieties of human existence, and the particular anxieties of our age, are overcome proleptically. It is particularly wrong if we suggest to these pagans that we have no immediate counsel in the present perplexity but that we will furnish a ‘sign’ of the ‘coming Kingdom’ by some heroic defiance of malignant power, if the situation becomes desperate enough. We will not counsel any community that this or that course might lead to tyranny. We will merely prepare ourselves to defy tyranny when it is full blown.¹⁶

Such ‘desperate enough’ situations have presented themselves quite a few times since 1948, and by far not in the least measure within our Eastern-European corner of the world. Some of these desperate situations – like e.g. the 1956 revolution and freedom fight in Hungary – happened during the long lifetime of Karl Barth. Nevertheless, the Swiss theologian, who adored the extreme situations and statements, moreover, even thrived on them,¹⁷ remained

¹² Heidelberg Catechism Q64. <http://www.ccel.org/creeds/heidelberg-cat.html> (accessed: 10 Aug. 2013).

¹³ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1138.

¹⁴ Cf. 1Cor. 3: 9.

¹⁵ See Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade. Zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934), answered by Karl Barth, *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (München: C. Kaiser, 1934).

¹⁶ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1139.

¹⁷ See George S. Hendry’s assessment in his book review of the following volume: *Karl Barth, His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts By Eberhard Busch*, trans. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), in *Theology Today*, July 1977 <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jul1977/v34-2-bookreview1.htm> (accessed: 3 August 2013): ‘The years in Basel were the period of his crowning theological achievement – and of his decline. For Barth, they were happy years (despite four house moves), but they were not peaceful. His compatriots, who desired nothing so much as not to annoy Hitler, were upset by his continued outspokenness and took measures to restrain him. And after the war was over, they were even more upset by his outspokenness about the threat of communism and its lurid demonstration at the time of the Hungarian

distantly silent. His sporadic manifestations were either ambiguous or at least largely irrelevant. Niebuhr's criticism concerning Barth's silence about Hungary was definitely spot on.¹⁸

It is perhaps a result of Barth's strongly eschatological view of history that he still continued to see the post-war situation as a peculiar state of war.¹⁹ His theology, labelled very accurately as a 'crisis theology gone to seed' in 1948 by Niebuhr,²⁰ became even more extreme concerning the use of absolute language by the experiences of the war. As a result, Barth became gradually unable to see beyond his well established and strengthened old paradigms. According to Niebuhr,

It is only fair to Barth and to those for whom he speaks to acknowledge gratefully the great contributions which this theology made to the struggle against tyranny in recent decades. Its interpretation of the Christian faith helped to create a heroic heedlessness, a disposition to follow the scriptural injunction, 'Be careful in nothing'.²¹ This resulted in a very powerful witness to Christ in the hour of crisis. But perhaps this theology is constructed too much for the great crises of history. It seems to have no guidance for a Christian statesman for our day. It can fight the devil if he shows both horns and both cloven feet. But it refuses to make discriminating judgments about good and evil if the evil shows only one horn or the half of a cloven foot.²²

Barth's opinion, according to which the secular responsibility of the church should be restricted to the proclamation of the central message of the Gospel, may well have been motivated by the sad memento of *Deutsche Christen*. In 1948 he could still sense the danger, that if the church were to commit herself to the rebuilding plan of any political trend, and that political trend eventually gave birth to yet another tyrannical regime, the church may never regain its moral independence, which is absolutely necessary for the credible preaching of the Good News. This almost seems as if the only way of the church were a total independence from everything and everybody (i.e. a virtual isolation), just to avoid any imprudent association with a potentially evil secular trend. The Swiss theologian tended to make a rule out of a few exceptions.

Nevertheless, despite his forceful rejection of the Christians' involvement in the world's affairs, the very same Karl Barth in the very same year of 1948 had no problem accepting the totally aggressive secular involvement in ecclesiastical affairs in Hungary, moreover, he even encouraged the astonished Hungarian Reformed church leaders not to oppose the communist expansion. He actually bragged about the fact that none of the Hungarian Reformed Christians were tempted to the 'Catholic error of opposing the regime out of principle'.²³ It seems that he was not touched by the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' emphasis, that

uprising. Barth was excoriated by many, including Reinhold Niebuhr, for his strange 'silence about Hungary,' and Barth's attempts to defend his attitude were widely regarded as exercises in sophistry, if not something more serious – his telephone was tapped, and he caught the attention of the C.I.A. It seems clear that, despite his claim to an irenic disposition, Barth enjoyed controversy and thrived on it.'

¹⁸ For the exchange between Reinhold Niebuhr and Barth's disciples over the Hungarian freedom fight in 1956 see Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Why is Barth Silent on Hungary?', *The Christian Century*, 23 January 1957, 108–110 and 'Barth on Hungary: An Exchange', *The Christian Century*, 10 April 1957, 453–455.

¹⁹ A lot of his post-war writings convey this idea. See Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946–52* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954).

²⁰ Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1139.

²¹ Cf. Phil. 4: 6.

²² Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1139. Cf. with Barth's reply to a Hungarian Christian who asked him whether it was indeed acceptable for a Christian to collaborate with the communist regime: 'We shall never see a state either in its pure form as an ordinance of God or in its complete diabolical perversion. These are the two frontiers between which history moves'. Barth, *Against the Stream*, 96–97.

²³ See *The Christian Century*, 10 April 1957, 455. Cf. Barth, *Against the Stream*, 104.

the Christians *being committed* to help solving the world's most ardent problems is not equivalent to the Church *being bound* to any political or other secular entity, nevertheless, this may create a possibility for the Christian Church and her members to take part in an active and trustworthy manner in the life of the world. From this perspective it may not be useless to reconsider and reinterpret in a theological sense the assumption and accomplishment of secular and political roles by contemporary ecclesiastical personalities. It is perhaps not accidental, that Barth's 'eschatological-continental' attitude in 1948 in Amsterdam and beyond was best received by the Christian leaders of Germany. According to Niebuhr's sharp observation,

There is a special pathos in the fact that so many of the Christian leaders of Germany are inclined to follow this form of flight from daily responsibilities and decisions, because they are trying to extend the virtue of yesterday to cover the problems of today. Yesterday they discovered that the church may be an ark in which to survive a flood. Today they seem so enamored of this special function of the church that they have decided to turn the ark into a home on Mount Ararat and live in it perpetually.²⁴

This is exactly why Barth's theology is a 'crisis theology': it was born out of a theological crisis (i.e. the fiasco of the so-called 'liberal theology') and strengthened by a secular crisis (especially by World War II) to the extent that it became almost incapable to define the social and public role of the church 'outside the crisis'. Niebuhr, with his North-American experience (which obviously included a direct knowledge of various forms of sectarian isolation from the world since the mid-nineteenth century) attempted to prevent his European fellow-Christians from displaying a similarly distant attitude, which could easily result in an extreme behaviour of eschatological irrelevance.

Turning to our present problems, it may well be that we are also haunted by Barth's 'crisis theology' and its consequences since December 1989. Our own 'theology of survival', which was born out of the crisis of Romania's 'golden era' in the 1970s and 1980s, almost convinced us that the most we are allowed to do within the given narrow theological framework was simply to 'react' at best to secular changes, yet we are never permitted to actually come up with an initiative. This still represents a major obstacle in our responsible involvement in shaping secular life, education, public behaviour, family values and community existence.

We also know that Barth and the 'continentals' around him were hardly impressed by the 'Anglo-Saxon semi-Pelagianism'. This fairly rigid attitude resulted in a certain manner of thinking, which successfully survived both Barth himself and the fall of Eastern-European communist regimes. Moreover, it is still lurking amongst us today, and whilst some of its principles clearly show 'the final pinnacle of the Christian faith', others are willy-nilly obscuring 'the foothills where human life must be lived', making us accept long past paradigms as being still valid, thus removing our capacity to make balanced comparisons. Without trying to be exhaustive or denying their virtue, let us enumerate some of these Barthian principles:

1. We are men and not God;
2. God is in heaven and everywhere, yet we are on Earth. This indelible difference between Creator and creature sets clear boundaries for our earthly duties;
3. Christ had already completed everything, so, apart from preaching the Gospel, we are unable to do anything else;
4. The only thing the Church owes the world is the proclamation of the Gospel;

²⁴ Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1139.

5. The care of the church is not our care, since it is in God's hands;
6. The care of the world is not our care either, since it is also in God's hands;
7. We should rather accept the state of being ridiculed and pushed to the edge of human society than to become involved in secular affairs by any commitment;
8. We have nothing special to say to the godless people of our age which we would not have said in any age.²⁵
9. Nothing can be compared to the horrors of fascism;
10. No phenomenon or monstrosity can appear within the world, which could overwrite any of the above theses.

The above paraphrases could be continued at toilsome length, yet their lesson is quite obvious. Barth, having experienced a truly traumatising fascist regime, was incapable to conceive that the opposite extreme could be exactly as bad. A few years after the Second World War he even ventured to write:

Russia and America are both in different ways children of Europe. [...] They have both suddenly grown into giants, who each in his own way would like to be patron, benefactor and protector of Europe. Both are afraid of encirclement by the other. One must concede that the anxiety of the Eastern giant is better founded than that of the Western giant, when one considers the total ring of Western bastions.²⁶

Without lengthening the examples any further, we, who experienced the supposedly 'lesser' of the two evils of the twentieth century, have to draw some unavoidable conclusions. As it becomes more and more evident in our present, a theology dealing in absolute and extreme terms about everyday life, despite all its virtues, simply becomes incapable to formulate adequate answers to the questions of a relatively normal world (i.e. of a world not being in an extreme crisis). Nonetheless, it is one of the duties of Christian theology to provide working and adequate patterns of behaviour to the Christian citizens of the Augustinian *civitas terrena*, within which the *civitas Dei* and *civitas diaboli* are intermingled, yet that is the place where human life has to be lived. We live in an era, when we have to present 'the unknown God' (Acts 17: 23) to the children of modern, arguably 'post-Christian' Europe. In order to do this, we have to be able to engage ourselves in a dialogue with the nominally Christians and non-Christians with the very same openness that had been manifested by Paul on the Areopagus. Niebuhr's warning is perhaps even more actual than sixty years ago:

The certainty of the final inadequacy of the 'wisdom of the world' must not be allowed to become the source of cultural obscurantism.²⁷

One of the possible pinnacles of isolating ourselves from the world could be exactly the danger that evangelical Christians (and especially the servants of the Lord) might not reveal any interest towards anything beyond 'the Gospel and its preaching'. One may even reach the point of being unmoved by the daily problems, the future, the language, art, the tradition, or even the joys or sorrows of smaller and larger human communities. In the escalating rush of our days, when the assumption of any public role becomes increasingly problematic for the members of the clergy, the temptation of a conscious or even involuntary separation from the world amplifies as well. Of course, on the long run this may have devastating effects.

As it seems to emerge from the above, even from the perspective of a more successful evangelising mission within the world, we often have to unlearn to deal exclusively in oversimplified absolute terms, and realise: the truth of the Gospel is also very complex. This is already evident from the differences between the four gospels and the Pauline epistles.

²⁵ Cf. Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1139.

²⁶ Barth, *Against the Stream*, 129. Cf. Niebuhr, 'Why is Barth Silent on Hungary?', 109–110.

²⁷ Niebuhr, 'We Are Men and Not God', 1140.

Thus, the somewhat biased reduction of the message of the Gospel can neither facilitate the further growth of the living church, nor can it serve the glory of God. The unrevised Barthian theology proved to be socially dysfunctional – at least within the countries of the former European Eastern block. To mention only one example: it obstructed the even-handed theological assessment of the equal dangers of fascism and communism, whereas on the level of politics and historiography this evaluation has already been carried out.²⁸ As Reinhold Niebuhr rightly put it, ‘there is no substitute for common sense, even for theologians, whether budding or eminent’.²⁹

We therefore, especially as evangelical Christians, need to be involved responsibly in addressing and trying to solve the current problems of our world and our society, of course under the power of God’s grace. We do not have the luxury of staying in the ivory tower. To conclude again with the often forgotten words of Reinhold Niebuhr, by which he rocked the cradle of the World Council of Churches,

One of the tasks of an ecumenical movement is to prevent a one-sided statement of the many-sided truth of the gospel. ‘Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.’ There is an abyss on each side of that narrow way. Anyone who is too fearful of the abyss on the one side will fall into the abyss on the other side. We ‘Anglo-Saxons’ who object to this one-sided emphasis may be corrupted by many Pelagian and semi-Pelagian heresies. We stand in need of correction. But we also have the duty to correct. We are embarrassed about our correction because we cannot deny that this ‘Continental’ theology outlines the final pinnacle of the Christian faith and hope with fidelity to the Scriptures. Yet it requires correction, because it has obscured the foothills where human life must be lived. It started its theological assault decades ago with the reminder that we are men and not God, that God is in the heavens and that we are on earth. The wheel is come full circle. It is now in danger of offering a crown without a cross, a triumph without a battle, a scheme of justice without the necessity of discrimination, a faith which has annulled rather than transmuted perplexity – in short, a too simple and premature escape from the trials and perplexities, the duties and tragic choices, which are the condition of our common humanity. The Christian faith knows of a way through these sorrows, but not of a way around them.³⁰

²⁸ See also Reinhold Niebuhr, ‘Can We Avoid Catastrophe?’, *The Christian Century*, 26 May 1948, 504–506.

²⁹ *The Christian Century*, 10 April 1957, 455.

³⁰ Niebuhr, ‘We Are Men and Not God’, 1140.