

## Christianity

NAZI OPPOSITION to Christianity took the form of elevating its own world view into a matter of direct religious expression. The prayer for children on page 241 represents an extreme example of this aim. It was given to the children by the party welfare organization (NSV) in a suburb of Cologne—to be recited before and after the free lunch that was served. But however much the Nazis wanted to substitute their world view for Christianity, they were careful to keep the traditional forms intact. Even the language they used in their speeches often employed familiar Christian imagery. Hitler and Goebbels talked about the “miracle of belief” (now meaning the Nazi faith), appealed to “Providence,” and were not loath to call *Mein Kampf* the “sacred book of National Socialism.” Indeed, the Führer’s closest companions were called his “apostles,” while he himself was often referred to as the “savior.”<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to fill the traditional framework with their own content meant bending Christianity itself into conformity with Nazi ideology and culture. The “German Christians,” a group within the Protestant Church, sought to accomplish this end. Their articles of faith (1933) stress the figure of Christ and the Scriptures but inte-

<sup>1</sup> Werner Betz, “The National Socialist Vocabulary,” *The Third Reich* (London, 1955), pp. 786-789.

grate them into the community of blood through which they find their sole expression. The German Christians were formed by the Nazi party in 1932 in order to influence the elections to the Prussian State Church which took place in that year. The attempt was a failure and the Nazis learned their lesson.

Hitler now approached the desired transformation of Christianity in a more indirect manner. In its platform the Nazi party had declared its neutrality in religious matters, and Hitler after 1932 repeatedly assured the Churches that he would abide by that principle. In reality the ideas of the German Christians lay in wait, to be applied at the proper time. That the German Christian movement itself suffered many splits after the seizure of power was of scant significance in this regard.

The appointment of Hans Kerrl as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in 1935 should have been a sign for all to read, for he sympathized with German Christianity. His time came in 1938 when the crisis produced by Hitler over the fate of the Germans within Czechoslovakia was at its height. At that point Karl Barth, the famous theologian, who was the spiritual leader of the resistance to a Germanized Christianity, wrote a sympathetic letter to the head of the Czech Protestant Church. The shibboleth of allegiance to the nation could now be invoked against dissidents within the German Protestant Church in order to bring them into line with the desired world view.

The instrument lay at hand. The Thuringian Christians, a splinter group of German Christians, whose membership was not confined to Thuringia, had issued a Manifesto for a new order of the Evangelical Church. This "Godesberg Manifesto" (1937) shrewdly makes use of Hitler's decree of February 15, 1937, which called for a new Church constitution while declaring the Führer's own neutrality as to its form and content: let the communicants themselves choose. This was, after all, in accord with the Nazi party platform. Under the mantle of this decree the Thuringian Christians shrewdly appeal to the separation between Church and politics, a sound Lutheran doctrine. The call for "clear principles" is also in accord with the tradition by which the authorities had always regulated the Lutheran Church. But now this call is turned against the Lutheran concept of "faith alone" and infused with a "God-created Volkdom." When Luther had supported "the Powers that be," for they are "ordained of God" (Romans, xiii, 1), the idea of enforcing a Germanic Christianity in the name of clear principles had not occurred to him—or to his successors. In this man-

ner the Thuringian Christians perverted the Lutheran traditional faith in order to bend it toward the Nazi religion.

Hans Kerrl seized this opportunity and attempted to have the declaration adopted as the official order of the Protestant Church. The bishops balked, and he had to make some changes. But in essence he got his way; the opposition was temporarily disorganized by the accusation of treachery toward the Sudeten Germans. The promised Synod never met; no risks of dissent need be taken when legislation by decree was the order of the day. Hitler could maintain his supposed neutrality, and yet attain many of his true aims.

The real face of the leadership is represented by Martin Bormann in his confidential memorandum sent to all party district leaders (*Gauleiters*) in 1942. Martin Bormann had been the chief of staff of Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess since 1933, and a year before this memorandum was written had advanced to the position of chief of Hitler's own Chancellory. This, then, represents the thoughts of an official who by 1942 was regarded by many as the second most powerful man in the Reich. This memorandum eventually came into the possession of pastors opposed to the Nazis, who tried to spread it abroad in order to show the party's enmity to Christianity. This, in turn, led to a series of arrests as the secret police attempted to keep Bormann's remarks from receiving wide publicity.

In this revealing document Bormann goes far beyond the German Christians. He opposes what he calls "science" to Christianity, and the very use of this word in connection with his ideology clearly shows a belief in the Nazi world view as the final truth. God is present, but as a world-force which presides over the laws of life which the Nazis alone have understood. This non-Christian theism, tied to Nordic blood, was current in Germany long before Bormann wrote down his own thoughts on the matter. It must now be restored, and the catastrophic mistakes of the past centuries, which had put the power of the state into the hands of the Church, must be avoided. The *Gauleiters* are advised to conquer the influence of the Christian Churches by keeping them divided, encouraging particularism among them—proceeding in the opposite direction from that taken by the medieval Hohenstaufen emperors, who had restored order in Rome.

This plain speaking revealed the real aims of the Nazis, but in practice they maintained a slow pace: holding out the carrot of institutional freedom and, at the same time, using pressure to eliminate any divergence from their world view. The Protestant Church did react,

but in a confused way. Only one consistent group in opposition to official policy emerged. The so-called Emergency Association of Pastors (Pfarrernotbund) was founded by Martin Niemöller in 1933. However, increasing pressure upon dissenting ministers led to the formation of a larger organization, the Confessional Church (Bekennende Kirche). It first met in 1934, and from then on throughout the existence of the Third Reich it managed to hold together. It was not a separate organization, but worked within the German Protestant Church to resist the pressure of the state. These men attempted to expose the tactics by which the Third Reich sought to mold Christianity into its own image. They also protested, with some courage, to the authorities themselves.

The example of such a protest which is reproduced here was addressed, in 1937, to Deputy Führer Hess. This particular pastor was arrested for asserting the Jewish origins of Christianity—the very idea which the German Christians had condemned and which the Thuringian Christians promised to fight “in the name of our unsullied Volkdom.”

The education of youth was the key here also: to remove them from religious instruction would, in Bormann's terms, remove the influence of the pastors—and therefore of their “swindle”—from future German generations. Once more the Nazis used an indirect approach in order to accomplish their ends. But it was blatant enough to cause the Ecclesiastical Council (Oberkirchenrat) of Württemberg in 1939 to send a letter to all clergymen under its jurisdiction exposing the Nazi pressure tactics which were being used. In view of the pressures described in this open letter, the pathetic inquiry by some mothers whether Hitler's religious neutrality was still valid is significant. Coming as late as 1939, it can serve to illustrate the success of Hitler's two-faced ecclesiastical policy, the kind of faith in the “justice” of the Führer which many Germans retained to the very end. Ideological instruction never won out over religious instruction before the collapse of the Third Reich, but it certainly made important inroads in the schools.

The Catholic Church faced much the same pressure as the Protestants, and their common concern is acknowledged in the letter of the Württemberg Ecclesiastical Council. Though individual priests and even some bishops resisted this pressure and suffered persecution, no resistance group like the Confessional Church developed. Hitler had made a treaty (Concordat) with the Papacy early in the Third Reich

(1933) and this worked to inhibit opposition to the regime. The Concordat was supposed to guarantee non-interference with Church institutions and organizations, including religious instruction in the schools. But it was constantly eroded through Nazi pressure. To the last, the majority of Catholic bishops clung to the view of the Reich as just another type of government, which in return for political support would give security to the Church and respect its rights. This view of Nazi Germany conflicted with the reality of Nazi aims—and the dilemma which resulted is well illustrated by Cardinal Faulhaber's Advent sermons of 1933.

Cardinal Faulhaber (1869-1952), Archbishop of Munich, was an important and powerful figure in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. His aim in these sermons was to defend both the Old Testament and the Jewish origins of Christianity from the Nazi onslaughts. But this defense had to be made in such a way as to avoid a direct attack on Nazi policies. Faulhaber emphasized the Christian tradition which distinguishes between the Jews before the coming of Christ and those that came after. Modern Jews are cut off from Revelation, their Talmud is merely a human document, and the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have no validity. These remarks, though they may be well founded from the standpoint of Christian theology, must be read against the accelerating policy of excluding Jews from German life. By the time Cardinal Faulhaber preached his sermon, Jews had already been excluded from the professions and public office and were being forced out of the business world as well. Seven months earlier (April 7, 1933) the term “non-Aryan” had been officially defined to mean any person of Jewish parentage or with at least one Jewish grandparent. To be sure, in view of these circumstances the Cardinal's call to reverence the Jewish religion must have sounded a note of courage. But his distinction between the modern Jews and those who lived before Christ, his denial of the divine inspiration of the holy books of the Jews, introduced a more ambivalent note. When, on November 10, 1938, the synagogues went up in flames there was no open protest by any Catholic bishop, but Cardinal Faulhaber, though he remained silent, was said to have sent a truck to rescue some of the religious objects.<sup>2</sup>

In his sermons Cardinal Faulhaber resolves his ambivalence by making a distinction between the natural order and the order of salva-

<sup>2</sup> Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York, 1964), p. 284.

tion—one being the province of the state and the other belonging to the Church. But this traditional doctrine had already failed in the Middle Ages, and it was to do no better in Nazi Germany. National Socialism was, after all, no mere “political” movement but a total way of life; both the natural order and salvation were contained within its world view. A similar distinction between politics and religion had been used by the Thuringian Christians to press for a Germanic Christianity, and it would not prevent the Nazis from encroaching upon the tasks of the Catholic Church.

The actual inroads made by the Nazis are illustrated by one example: the decline of denominational nurses. Though most of the hospitals were not owned by the Churches, Catholic and Protestant nursing orders played a large part in German hospital care. Their destruction would further extend Nazi influence and at the same time would work to the disadvantage of the Churches. The Nazis formed a nursing order of their own, and these women took the oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler (1936). The Catholic orders were weakened by the fact that nuns were forbidden to assist in operations performed under the Hereditary Health Law (see page 90). The Church came to realize the handicap of this prohibition and in 1940 the nuns were freed from it. Part of the reason given by the Papacy for this ruling shows what was at stake: if the nuns did not assist in the operations, they would be replaced by others (presumably National Socialist nurses).<sup>3</sup> Here is an example which can be added to the tapestry of actions by which National Socialism attempted to penetrate all institutions that tended to lead a separate life.

Had the Nazis won the war their ecclesiastical policies would have gone beyond those of the German Christians, to the utter destruction of both the Protestant and the Catholic Church. Martin Bormann's religion would have triumphed and the children's prayer become the rule—the liturgical element so strong in Nazi culture would have been the only liturgy available.

G.L.M.

<sup>3</sup> Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, p. 263.

## The Führer Bequeathed to Me by the Lord

The new God, in which German youth were to believe, manifests himself in these “invocations” which children in Cologne, local branch Reinau, were instructed to recite at the NSV children's lunch program:

### Before Meals:

Führer, my Führer, bequeathed to me by the Lord,  
Protect and preserve me as long as I live!  
Thou hast rescued Germany from deepest distress,  
I thank thee today for my daily bread.  
Abideth thou long with me, forsaketh me not,  
Führer, my Führer, my faith and my light!  
*Heil, mein Führer!*

### After Meals:

Thank thee for this bountiful meal,  
Protector of youth and friend of the aged!  
I know thou hast cares, but worry not,  
I am with thee by day and by night.  
Lie thy head in my lap,  
Be assured, my Führer, that thou art great.  
*Heil, mein Führer!*

From Johann Neuhäusler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Der Kampf des Nationalsozialismus gegen die katholische Kirche und der kirchliche Widerstand* (Munich: Verlag Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946), p. 251.

## Christ in the Community of Blood and Fate

*Guidelines for the Movement of German Christians (National Church Movement) in Thuringia (1933)*

1. We “German Christians” believe in our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in the power of His cross, and in His resurrection. The life and death of

Jesus teaches us that the way of struggle is also the way of love and the way of life.

Through God's creation we have been put directly into the community of blood and fate of the German people and as the bearers of this fate we are responsible for its future. Germany is our task, Christ our strength!

2. The source and confirmation of our faith are God's Revelation in the Bible and the witness borne to the faith by the Fathers. The New Testament is to us the holy attestation of the Saviour, our Lord, and of His Father's Kingdom.

The Old Testament is an example of divine education of a people. For our faith, it is of value to the extent to which it permits us to understand our Saviour's life, cross, and resurrection.

3. As with every people, the eternal God also created a Law for our people especially suited to its racial character. It acquired form in the Führer Adolf Hitler and in the National Socialist state which he formed.

This Law speaks to us in the history of our people, born of our blood and soil. Loyalty to this Law demands from us the struggle for honor and freedom.

4. The way to the fulfillment of this German Law is through the German community of the faithful. In it Christ, the Lord, rules as grace and forgiveness. Here burns the fire of the holy willingness to sacrifice. In it alone does the Saviour meet the German people and bequeath to it the gift of a strong faith. It is from these communities of German Christians that the "German Christian National Church" must rise in the National Socialist state of Adolf Hitler, embracing the whole people.

One People! — One God! — One Reich! — One Church!

*From Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1933-1944, edited by Joachim Beckmann (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1948), pp. 32-33.*

## The Task of Proclaiming Christ among the German People

### *Principles for a New Order of the Evangelical Church in Keeping with the Needs of the Present Time*

Through a decree of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, issued on February 15, 1937, it has been ordained that the Church, in full freedom and according to the decision of the communicants themselves, shall provide itself with a new constitution and thereby with a new order.

Clear principles are required to assure the fruitful preparation and execution of a general synod in the form of an Evangelical Church Congress of Greater Germany.

Such principles are:

1. The Evangelical Church has learned from Martin Luther to distinguish sharply between the realms of reason and faith, politics and religion, state and Church.

The National Socialist world view is the Volkish-political doctrine which determines and forms the German man. And as such it is also binding upon German Christians. The Evangelical Church honors a divinely established order in the state and demands from its members a total service in this order.

2. The Gospel applies to all people and all times. The Evangelical Church, however, has learned from Martin Luther that true Christian faith can powerfully unfold only within a God-created Volkdom. We, therefore, decisively reject the political universalism of Rome and international Protestantism.

3. The National Socialist philosophy fights relentlessly against the political and intellectual influence of the Jewish race on the life of our Volk. In obedience to the divine order of creation, the Evangelical Church affirms its responsibility to preserve the purity of our Volkdom.

Beyond that, in the realm of faith, there is no sharper contrast than that between the message of Christ and the Jewish religion with its sterile legalism and its hope for a political Messiah.

4. The Evangelical Church has the task of proclaiming the message

of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ among the German people in the manner in which the great Reformers, especially Martin Luther, have taught us to understand it.

5. The question whether it is possible to reach a unanimous agreement on this divine message can be solved only if the existing tensions within German Protestantism are borne with a powerful vivifying spirit and if the necessary dialogue is continued in a spirit of truth and conciliation. Therefore, a clear order must be created which assures the preaching of the Gospel and fully provides for the spiritual needs of all members of the Church.

(1937)

From *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1933-1944*, pp. 299-300.

## National Socialist and Christian Concepts Are Incompatible

MARTIN BORMANN

National Socialist and Christian concepts are incompatible. The Christian Churches build upon the ignorance of men and strive to keep large portions of the people in ignorance because only in this way can the Christian Churches maintain their power. On the other hand, National Socialism is based on scientific foundations. Christianity's immutable principles, which were laid down almost two thousand years ago, have increasingly stiffened into life-alien dogmas. National Socialism, however, if it wants to fulfill its task further, must always guide itself according to the newest data of scientific researches.

The Christian Churches have long been aware that exact scientific knowledge poses a threat to their existence. Therefore, by means of such pseudo-sciences as theology, they take great pains to suppress or falsify scientific research. Our National Socialist world view stands on a much higher level than the concepts of Christianity, which in their essentials were taken over from Judaism. For this reason, too, we can do without Christianity.

No one would know anything about Christianity if pastors had not crammed it down his throat in his childhood. The so-called loving God by no means reveals the knowledge of His existence to young people, but amazingly enough, and despite His omnipotence, He leaves this to the efforts of a pastor. When in the future our youth no longer hear anything about this Christianity, whose doctrine is far below our own, Christianity will automatically disappear.

It is also astonishing that prior to our own era nothing was known to mankind about this Christian God and even since then the great majority of the inhabitants of our earth have known nothing about Christianity. Because of this, according to the arrogant Christian dogma, they are damned from the outset.

When we National Socialists speak of a belief in God,<sup>1</sup> by God we do not understand, as do naïve Christians and their clerical beneficiaries, a manlike being who is sitting around in some corner of the spheres. Rather, we must open the eyes of mankind to the fact that in addition to our unimportant Earth there exist countless other bodies in the universe, many of them surrounded, like the sun, by planets and these again by smaller bodies, the moons. The force which moves all these bodies in the universe, in accordance with natural law, is what we call the Almighty or God. The assertion that this world-force can worry about the fate of every individual, every bacillus on earth, and that it can be influenced by so-called prayer or other astonishing things, is based either on a suitable dose of naïveté or on outright commercial effrontery.

In contrast, we National Socialists call upon ourselves to live as naturally as possible—that is, in keeping with the laws of life. The more thoroughly we know and attend to the laws of nature and life, the more we adhere to them, the more do we correspond to the will of the Almighty. The deeper our insight into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our success.

It follows from the incompatibility of National Socialist and Christian concepts that we must oppose any strengthening of existing Christian denominations and must refuse to give them any assistance. We can make no differentiation between the various Christian confessions. That is also why the idea of establishing an Evangelical Reich Church by gathering together the various Evangelical Church bodies has to be finally abandoned. For the Evangelical Church op-

<sup>1</sup> *Gottgläubigkeit*: non-Christian theism.

poses us with the same hostility as the Catholic Church. Any strengthening of the Evangelical Church would merely work against us.

It was a mistake of historical consequence for the German emperors in the Middle Ages to take it upon themselves again and again to establish order at the Vatican in Rome. It is indeed a mistake that we Germans are all too often prone to make, namely, to establish order where our own interests would call for disunity and division. The House of Hohenstaufen should have had the greatest interest in the fragmentation of ecclesiastical power. From the point of view of the German Reich it would have been highly profitable if there had not been only one Pope, but at least two or, better, even more Popes to fight among themselves. Instead, the German emperors and especially those of the House of Hohenstaufen always worked for ecclesiastical order and aided one Pope to gain power over his competitors, with the result that, as soon as the Pope was strong enough, the emperors got it in the neck from their "own" Pope. Yet, to strengthen its own power position the Church has always exploited, and encouraged to the best of its abilities, the particularism of princes and later on that of political parties.

In earlier generations, the leadership of the people lay exclusively in the hands of the Church. The state limited itself to passing laws and regulations and above all to the task of administration. The actual leadership of the people was not vested in the state, but in the Church, which, through the agency of the pastor, exercised the strongest influence over the lives of individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Anything that was not to the liking of the Church was suppressed with unexampled ruthlessness. For centuries the state had to borrow from the influence of the Church through the most varied donations. The Church alone decided whether it would aid the state or range itself against it. The state was fully dependent on the assistance of the Church. The struggles of the German emperors against the Pope, in the Middle Ages and in modern times, were always bound to fail, since it was not the emperor but the Church that exercised leadership over the people.

This ideological dependence of the state on the Church, and the fact that the state had relinquished the leadership of the people, eventually became so obvious that no one dared seriously to question it. Not to take this indisputable fact into consideration was regarded

as the acme of political stupidity—up to the time of the [Nazi] seizure of power.

For the first time in German history, the Führer consciously has the leadership of the people entirely in his own hands. With the party, its subordinate apparatus, and the associations connected with it, the Führer wrought for himself and the German Reich leadership an instrument that made him entirely independent of the Church. Any influence that would impair or damage the leadership of the people exercised by the Führer with the aid of the NSDAP has to be eliminated. To an ever increasing degree the people must be wrested from Churches and their agents, the pastors. Obviously, the Churches, from their standpoint, will and must defend themselves against this loss of power. But never again must the Church regain an influence in the leadership of the people. This must absolutely and finally be broken.

Only the Reich leadership, together with the party and the organs and associations connected with it, has a right to lead the people. Just as the harmful influence of astrologists, soothsayers, and other swindlers has been suppressed by the state, so it must be made absolutely impossible for the Church to exercise its old influence. Only after this has been done can the state leadership exert full influence over all racial comrades. Only then will the future of Reich and Volk be secured for all time.

We would be repeating the catastrophic mistakes of past centuries if after our comprehension of the ideological hostility of all Christian denominations we were now in any manner whatever to contribute to the strengthening of the various Churches. The interest of the Reich does not lie in overcoming ecclesiastical particularism but, rather, in maintaining and strengthening it.

M. Bormann  
Reich Leader

(1942)

*From Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1933-1944, pp. 470-472.*

## The Epistle of St. Paul Is in Error

*Memorandum from the Confessional Church*

In submitting the following facts [of persecution] as they have been reported to us, we would like to address this question to you, Herr Reichminister [Rudolf Hess]: In your opinion, how long will it be possible to maintain domestic peace among our people, among whom doubtless many racial comrades are convinced members of the Christian Church and whose government, on the basis of Article 24 of its party platform, claims to extend protection to positive Christianity, if state officials openly impede and persecute Christianity and the Church? The following will show what we mean.

On Saturday, February 27—that is, on a day which was clearly within the purview of the Führer's decree on choice<sup>1</sup>—Pastor Zedlacher in Hamburg, an Austrian citizen, was interrogated by the Gestapo in connection with a Bible class he had conducted on February 24, 1937. We must call it utterly unworthy of a German official that the material for this interrogation was procured by a professional informer who managed by stealth to gain entrance to the Bible class. We must, furthermore, designate as intolerable and a mockery the fact that, contrary to all assurances that the freedom of preaching would be inviolable, Zedlacher was specifically criticized for using Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Verse 11, as a text for his lesson. It is indisputably asserted in the Epistle to the Romans, Verse 11, that the choice of Israel by God is unalterable. Zedlacher was only acting in accordance with his duties as a Bible teacher when he passed on to his pupils what is written in the Bible. The same applies to the assertions for which the Gestapo criticized Zedlacher—namely, that Jesus was not an Aryan but a Jew, and that despite Reichminister Kerrl's<sup>2</sup> contrary opinion, it cannot be denied that Christ's sonship from God is the fundamental dogma of Christianity from the standpoint of a confessing evangelical Christianity. . . .

More monstrous even than his interrogation was the treatment to which Zedlacher was exposed during the time he spent in protective custody. How can responsible state officials justify the fact that in the

<sup>1</sup> This decree made religious instruction in schools a voluntary matter.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Kerrl, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

concentration camp an official of the Church was called a Jew-lover and a Jew-slave, and was told that the best thing would be to save mankind from the likes of him? How can the protectors of positive Christianity account for the fact that a helpless prisoner was mocked and ridiculed by SS troopers on duty because he still happened to believe in the Bible, and was told that they would soon cure him of his piety? One of these SS men—a guard paid by the state—even had the insolence to ask the prisoner: "Would you like me to give your greetings to your God, Jehova? He's coming to visit us today." When Zedlacher answered that this would not be necessary and that they should not mock the Lord, he was rudely barked at and ordered not to be so impertinent. Seemingly [they said] he did not know where he was, and they warned him that if he said just one more word, he would get a severe beating and be sentenced to five days' solitary confinement on bread and water.

We also see a brutal mockery of Christian belief in the fact that Zedlacher was asked whether he thought the Jew Jesus would help him escape from the concentration camp and from the treatment he was receiving from the guards. We shall spare ourselves the recital of further revolting details, but in this connection we must point out one thing:

To us the deep significance of Zedlacher's reports lies not alone in the fact that they establish how grossly the Christian faith can be mocked and persecuted within the framework of the state, but also in that they force upon our consciousness the renewed awareness that the very existence of concentration camps constitutes a heavy burden for the Christian conscience. Zedlacher's release from the concentration camp, upon the intervention of the Austrian Consul-General, can by no means be considered a reparation for the wrong done, since Zedlacher was expelled from the territories of the Reich and left Hamburg on March 31, 1937, after, by the way, being bid farewell by a large circle of the people among whom he worked.

(1937)

From *Deutsche Kirchendokumente: Die Haltung der Bekennenden Kirche im dritten Reich*, compiled by W. Jannasch (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G., 1946), pp. 44-47.



## To Capture Youth

Stuttgart, June 19, 1939

To: All Deanery Offices  
 Subject: Ideological Instruction Courses

The attempt by both school authorities and special organizations to induce Evangelical parents in Württemberg to remove their children from classes in religious instruction in school and to register them in so-called classes in ideological instruction, continues even though, according to reports received by us, the actions of parents have clearly indicated how they feel about the question.

In a secondary school for boys, though the parents were openly solicited, only 17 pupils out of 250 registered for the ideological instruction course; in a girls' secondary school, the total was 23 students out of a total of 600. In both cases, the overwhelming majority of parents clung tenaciously to their right to Evangelical or Catholic instruction for their children. It appears necessary to keep our parishes constantly informed of these developments and to provide them with detailed information on the methods by which ideological instruction in the schools of Württemberg is to be furthered.

In one parish in Lower Württemberg, the parents had several months ago declared themselves strongly in favor of regular special children's religious services, and were successful in their demands. Now these same parents with equal decisiveness have rejected the ideological instruction classes. The school principal gave each of the children who had not yet been registered for the ideological instruction classes a mimeographed notice to take home to his parents, dated May 17, 1939, which read as follows:

Your child is to attend a Recreation Camp at — for the period from — to —. According to the latest regulations, this vacation will depend on whether you profess the world view of the Führer and, accordingly, send your child to the government-sponsored National Socialist ideological instruction class. As you have not done so, you are herewith requested to register your child for the ideological instruction. In case you do not wish to do so, please inform us accordingly by a short, written notice.

The Principal

In C., the children of an elementary-school class were told that they had to choose between ideological and religious instruction. They would no longer be graded in religious instruction; instead, only ideological instruction would be entered in their annual progress reports. If any of them planned to attend a higher school later, they would no longer be examined in religion, but only in ideology. Hence they could draw their own conclusions as to what they had to do.

In a municipality in the district of L., the school principal informed the children that their parents would soon be called upon to send them to ideological instruction classes. On May 10, 1939, the parents held a meeting, attended by about 20 men and 150 women, which categorically rejected this demand.

At the same time about 50 fathers were suddenly summoned to the Town Hall without being told why. There they were addressed first by the mayor, then by the local group leader, and finally by the senior master. Then a preprinted form was read to them and they were asked to sign it. All the fathers, with the exception of three or four, did so. It was obvious that the signatures were largely motivated by the senior master's disclosure that ideological instruction was bound to come anyhow and it would therefore be better to sign now.

The event produced tremendous agitation in the community. On the following day, groups of aroused citizens stood in the streets until late at night and discussed the problem of ideological instruction in the schools. Numerous women tearfully implored their husbands to withdraw their children's registration for ideological instruction; again and again one heard the question whether mothers no longer had any rights over their children and whether the Führer's assurance that everyone could seek salvation in his own fashion was still valid. In the morning, before school, some mothers sent their children to their fathers to beg them to withhold or recall their registration for ideological instruction. These requests were all the more justified in view of the fact that the fathers had had to register their decision at the Town Hall within less than half an hour, without being able to form a judgment as to the consequences of their signatures. The distress of consciences and the agitation of the community were markedly great.

In a community near H., recruitment for the ideological instruction was carried out under especially overt pressure and threats. As was reported from the community, a teacher said to a girl in the seventh grade: "If you don't take part in the ideological instruction class, I'll make you read the Bible until you're blue in the face." To another

child the teacher said: "What does your father do?" "He's a letter-carrier." "If he doesn't sign, he'll see what will happen; he'll have to become a street-sweeper." The school principal himself flatly told children who arrived without the desired signature: "This stuff in the Bible about the last being the first no longer applies." In this connection, the fathers and mothers, numbering about 100, who had not withdrawn their children from the religious instruction class were invited to a parents' meeting at the schoolhouse on April 28, 1939. The local Evangelical pastor, himself the father of an elementary-school child, was not invited. When he came nevertheless, on the basis of his right as a father, it was most sharply pointed out to him and his wife that he had no right to enter the schoolhouse, that he would be charged with trespass, and that he would only disturb the unanimity of the meeting. Several parishioners witnessed this treatment of their pastor. The evening, therefore, was a very stormy one. It had been planned not to allow any discussion from the floor. The principal's speech, interrupted by many excited catcalls, was followed by sharp and loud protests. The attacks against the clergy were decisively and solidly rejected. The excitement reached new heights when the flying police squad of H. was called to the scene. It could establish only that the parents had vigorously rejected this attempted unprecedented pressure on their consciences. The meeting broke up and the school principal excused himself to a few of those who had remained behind: the hard words that had been exchanged should be forgotten on both sides, since it concerned, in any case, a matter of a voluntary character.

At a meeting on May 4, 47 Evangelical parents and guardians signed and sent the following letter to the Württemberg Minister of Religion:

For several days the parents of children of school age of this locality have been pressured by teachers to declare their agreement with the introduction of ideological instruction in the classroom. The parents most decisively reject this coercion and demand full freedom of conscience as well as the cessation of the collection of signatures under pressure.

Heil Hitler!

In T., the boys' seventh-grade class had its so-called ideological instruction on April 24, 1939, from 9:30 to 10:30, that is, at a time fully within the regular school schedule. Out of 32 pupils, only 5 attended.

The other 27 were gathered in another room for a spelling lesson and were given such a difficult dictation that the best pupil made seven mistakes, the lowest forty-three. As punishment for this allegedly poor performance, all the pupils were kept in school the next day from 2 to 4 o'clock, and several of them even until 4:30. Complaints were answered by the principal with "This is perfectly in order."

In A., the principal of a secondary school told a father who asked for information on the ideological instruction course: "You know that I myself left the Church and you know my position toward Christianity. I shall introduce ideological instruction along these lines. There are to be no polemics, but the various religious faiths will naturally be dealt with in the upper grades."

When he asked whether it was not true that the Reich Ministry of Education had taken a different position on the problem of ideological instruction and had in fact issued contrary regulations, the father was told: "The regulations of the Reich Ministry of Education are not binding for Württemberg; the official publications of the Reich Ministry are not generally read and only this or that regulation which is important is given any attention here."

Referring to the traditional pre-confirmation instructions, the school principal continued: "Those who attend the ideological instruction could not also attend the confirmation classes." He had told his students in the ideological instruction class that he could not understand why any of them would want to be confirmed anyway. In some places a special celebration was to take place after the fourth grade, but so far there were no general regulations about this.

He denied that any pressure would be exerted to secure registrations for the ideological instruction classes. When told that some teachers had actually used high-pressure tactics, the principal made no answer.

In a community in Franconia, the principal of the two-grade elementary school distributed a form letter to his pupils on Saturday, May 20, at noon, which was to be signed by their parents and returned on the next day, Sunday, May 21, at noon. The form letter contained the well-known text:

The ideological disputations of our time have already led to numerous withdrawals of children from religious instruction and are bound to lead to more. For all pupils who, at the request of their parents, no longer wish to attend religious instruction in school, the Minister of Religion has instituted classes in ideological instruction. A course in

ideological instruction has also been initiated at the elementary school in ——. Those desirous of further information are referred to the school principal, who will also accept registrations.

In contrast to similar form letters distributed in other communities, this one carried the notation: "signed Mergenthaler."

This circumstance greatly depressed parents who were economically dependent upon him and caused immeasurable agitation among the independent farmers. On Ascension Day, at a parents' meeting, the school principal propagandized for ideological instruction: From now on, every child simply had to participate in it; if on top of this children were also to take two hours of religious instruction in school and two more hours of denominational instruction from their local pastor, this would be too much for them. Therefore, the parents should take their children out of the religious instruction class at school. The end result was that the school principal had only two registrations for the ideological instruction class—both from his own children.

On Tuesday, May 23, at a meeting of the local school board, the principal tried again to push through the introduction of ideological instruction. He had invited larger numbers of people to the board session. At the first offensive remark about the local pastor, who was present, a storm broke loose against the school principal. He was shouted down. One member of the school board jumped at him, his fists waving, and uttered unmistakable threats. The school principal was told that the form letter with the notation "signed Mergenthaler" was a matter for the courts. The principal from now on should adhere strictly to the legal regulations, which recognized the wishes of the parents as the only criteria for the religious instruction of their children. The principal was told that he was creating chaos in the whole community and was deceiving the people. Ever since he had arrived the whole town had experienced nothing but strife and turmoil; the community had built several schoolhouses at great sacrifice and now he had driven the pastor from the school and declared that he was no longer to be allowed to teach there. This was a grievous offense against the community.

"We would like to see whether we are no longer the masters of the school buildings which we have built with our money!" There were loud shouts of acclaim when it was demanded that the pastor be reinstated as religious instructor in the school. The principal declared that the decision in this matter was not his to make, since it had to be referred to higher authorities. This caused a renewed uproar.

The principal closed his speech with the request that the meeting should arrange a peaceful settlement in the interests of the children. Thereupon the local pastor said that a peaceful settlement could most easily be achieved by permitting him to resume his religious teaching at the school, just as he had done the previous school year. The principal could rest assured that this would restore harmony in the community and that no further difficulties would be raised. All present agreed that this was the only solution which they could advise the principal to take, in his own personal interest. With that the meeting came to an end.

In a number of municipalities, standard-bearers of the Hitler Youth ordered their subordinates to see to it that relatives of Hitler Youth members withdrew from religious instruction classes and applied for ideological instruction within three weeks.

By such procedures a matter that is one of the inalienable rights of parents is withdrawn from the free decision of the parents and propelled toward an anti-Christian solution, despite all official utterances to the contrary.

These matters should, in suitable form, be brought to the attention of all parishes. All rectories are requested, if they have not done so already, to report by July 1 on the methods used and the results attained in all campaigns for ideological instruction classes in the schools. Attention should be given to particular events, for example, to remarks concerning the future education and occupational prospects of children who have not withdrawn from their religious instruction classes; whether there have been threats to withhold child support payments from some families,<sup>1</sup> or whether means of economic pressure have been employed.

WURM<sup>2</sup>

From *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1933-1944*, pp. 343-347.

<sup>1</sup> Child support payments were granted to families with more than three children.  
<sup>2</sup> Theophil Wurm (1868-1953), Protestant Bishop of Württemberg, was one of the leaders of the Confessional Church (Bekennende Kirche).

## Judaism, Christianity, and Germany

CARDINAL FAULHABER

Already in the year 1899, on the occasion of an anti-Semitic demonstration at Hamburg, and simultaneously in Chamberlain's book *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*,<sup>1</sup> a demand was raised for the total separation of Judaism from Christianity, and for the complete elimination from Christianity of all Jewish elements. Nearly two decades later these ideas were once more propagated in such books as *The Sin Against Blood*, *The Great Fraud*, and *The False God*.<sup>2</sup> Judaism and Christianity, it was maintained, were incompatible; the Jewish Bible must be replaced by a German Bible; Martin Luther had done only half his work, for in his Bible he had included the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Today these single voices have swelled together into a chorus: Away with the Old Testament! A Christianity which still clings to the Old Testament is a Jewish religion, irreconcilable with the spirit of the German people. Children at school must no longer be bothered with Bible stories of Joseph the Egyptian or the ancient Moses. . . . Given the present general attitude of mind, this outcry is well calculated to shake the foundations of the faith in the souls of the German people.

Even the Person of Christ is not spared by this religious revolution. Some have indeed tried to save Him with a forged birth certificate, and have said that He was not a Jew at all but an Aryan, because there were Aryans among the inhabitants of Galilee. But so long as historical sources count for more than surmise, there can be no doubt about the fact. The first chapter of the first gospel gives us the genealogy of Jesus, with the title: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham." Similarly, the Epistle to the Romans attests the origin of Jesus from the seed of David (i, 4). Undoubtedly the Galileans, a borderland people, were of mixed origin. But Christ was not born in Galilee; He was born in Bethlehem, the

<sup>1</sup> Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (1899) was one of the most influential books, not only for National Socialism but for German nationalism in general.

<sup>2</sup> These were anti-Christian tracts, of which the most famous was Artur Dinter's *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (1918). This novel praised Aryan purity and saw the Jews as the incarnation of evil.

city of David, in the land of the tribe of Juda, and officially He was entered in the register as a descendant of David. And so others now take up the cry: Then we must renounce Him, if He was a Jew—and the scene of the Gospel is re-enacted: "They thrust Him out of the city and brought Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong" (Luke iv, 29). "Again they took up stones to stone Him" (John x, 31).

When such voices are raised, when such movements are afoot, the bishop cannot remain silent. When racial research, in itself not a religious matter, makes war upon religion and attacks the foundations of Christianity; when antagonism to the Jews of the present day is extended to the sacred books of the Old Testament and Christianity is condemned because it has relations of origin with pre-Christian Judaism; when stones are cast at the Person of our Lord and Saviour, and this in the very year in which we are celebrating the centenary of His work of Redemption, then the bishop cannot remain silent. And therefore I preach these Advent sermons on the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Christianity.

On this subject I may claim to speak as a specialist, having spent eleven years of my life lecturing on these questions in the University of Würzburg, and having held the chair of Old Testament Scripture in the University of Strassburg. . . .

So that I may be perfectly clear and preclude any possible misunderstanding, let me begin by making three distinctions. We must first distinguish between the people of Israel before and after the death of Christ. Before the death of Christ during the period between the calling of Abraham and the fullness of time, the people of Israel were the vehicle of Divine Revelation. The Spirit of God raised up and enlightened men who by the law, the Mosaic Torah, regulated their religious and civil life, by the Psalms provided them with a prayer book for family devotion and a hymn book for the public liturgy, by the Sapiential books taught them how to conduct their lives, and as prophets awakened the conscience of the nation with the living word. It is only with this Israel of the early biblical period that I shall deal in my Advent sermons.

After the death of Christ, Israel was dismissed from the service of Revelation. She had not known the time of her visitation. She had repudiated and rejected the Lord's Anointed, had driven Him out of the city and nailed Him to the Cross. Then the veil of the Temple

was rent, and with it the covenant between the Lord and His people. The daughters of Sion received the bill of divorce, and from that time forth Assuerus wanders, forever restless, over the face of the earth. Even after the death of Christ the Jews are still a "mystery," as St. Paul says (Rom. xi, 25); and one day, at the end of time, for them too the hour of grace will strike (Rom. xi, 26). But—I repeat—in these Advent sermons I am speaking only of pre-Christian Judaism.

In the second place we must distinguish between the Scriptures of the Old Testament on the one hand and the Talmudic writings of post-Christian Judaism on the other, whether these be glosses and commentaries on the biblical text or separate religious works; I mean especially the Talmud, the Mischna, and the medieval code of laws, Schulchan Arukh. The Talmudic writings are the work of man; they were not prompted by the Spirit of God. It is only the sacred writings of pre-Christian Judaism, not the Talmud, that the Church of the New Testament has accepted as her inheritance.

Thirdly, we must distinguish in the Old Testament Bible itself between what had only transitory value and what had permanent value. The long genealogies had value in ancient times, but their value was not permanent; similarly the numerous regulations for the ancient sacrifices and ceremonial cleansings. For the purpose of our subject we are concerned only with those religious, ethical, and social values of the Old Testament which remain as values also for Christianity. . . .

Let us venerate the Scriptures of the Old Testament! We do not set the Old Testament and the New on the same level. The Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse must hold the place of honor. But the Scriptures of the Old Testament are also inspired, and therefore they are sacred books, precious stones for the building of God's kingdom, priceless values for our religious guidance. And therefore the Church has stretched forth her protecting hand over the Scriptures of the Old Testament; she has gathered together the forty-five books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New into one volume, and she has used the text of the Old Testament also in her liturgy. By accepting these books Christianity does not become a Jewish religion. These books were not composed by Jews; they are inspired by the Holy Ghost, and therefore they are the word of God, they are God's books. The writers of them were God's pencils, the Psalm-singers were harps in the hand of God, the prophets

were announcers of God's revelation. It is for this reason that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are worthy of credence and veneration for all time. Antagonism to the Jews of today must not be extended to the books of pre-Christian Judaism.

In the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 11), Abel, Enoch, and other figures of Old Testament history are held up as models of faith to be imitated by Christians. St. Francis of Assisi once picked up a scrap of paper from the ground. "Let no man tread this under foot," he said, "for the name of God can be written thereon." Let no man trample under foot the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament; for the name of God is written there. Cardinal Manning once said to the Jews: "I should not understand my own religion, had I no reverence for yours."

Let us venerate the Scriptures of the Old Testament! And let us not allow Bible history to be abolished in our schools! These biblical stories have a great educational value in the school, so long as they are well selected and told in attractive language, and if the teacher knows how to make them live.

Side by side with the Bible there is a second source of revelation, the Tradition of the Church. Side by side with the Book stands the living teacher, the authority of the Church. Beside the good pasture stands the good shepherd, beside the precious materials for the building stands the good architect. Therefore the anti-Moses movement does not affect us Catholics so vitally as our separated brethren, who regard the Bible as the sole foundation of their faith. To these separated brethren we stretch forth our hand to make common cause with them in defense of the sacred books of the Old Testament, so that we may save them for the German nation and preserve this precious treasury of doctrine for the Christian schools. . . .

From the Church's point of view there is no objection whatever to racial research and race culture. Nor is there any objection to the endeavor to keep the national characteristics of a people as far as possible pure and unadulterated, and to foster their national spirit by emphasis upon the common ties of blood which unite them. From the Church's point of view we must make only three conditions: **First**, love of one's own race must not lead to the hatred of other nations. **Secondly**, the individual must never consider himself freed from the obligation of nourishing his own soul by the persevering use of the means of grace which the Church provides. The young man

who is always hearing about the blessedness of his own race is apt too easily to conceive that he is no longer bound by duties to God and His Church, duties of humility and chastity. Thirdly, race culture must not assume an attitude of hostility to Christianity. What are we to say of the monstrous contention that Christianity has corrupted the German race, that Christianity—especially because it is burdened with Old Testament ideas—is not adapted to the genius of the nation, and that therefore it is an obstacle in the way of the national consciousness?

What is the relation of Christianity to the German race? Race and Christianity are not mutually opposed, but they do belong to different orders. Race is of the natural order; Christianity is a revealed religion and therefore of the supernatural order. Race means union with the nation; Christianity means primarily union with God. Race is nationally inclusive and exclusive; Christianity is a world-wide message of salvation for all nations. The concepts of revelation and redemption, of supernature and grace must not be watered down. The fourth gospel makes a neat distinction between those who are born of blood and those who are born of God (John i, 13). Christ also clearly distinguished between what flesh and blood had revealed and what was revealed by the Father in Heaven (Matt. xvi, 17 foll.). We are Christians not because we are born of Christian parents; we are Christians because after our birth we were reborn and made a new creature by baptism in Christ (2 Cor. xv, 17).

No nation ever insisted more on race and ties of blood than the Israelites of the Old Testament. But in the fullness of time the dogma of race was eclipsed by the dogma of faith. Around the cradle of Bethlehem there were Jews and pagans, shepherds from the land of Juda and wise men from the East. In the kingdom of this Child, according to the words of His Apostle, "there is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek, for the same is Lord over all" (Rom. x, 12).

What is the relation of Christianity to the German race? The Christian, so long as he observes the above conditions, is not forbidden to stand up for his race and for its rights. It is possible, therefore, without divided allegiance, to be an upright German and at the same time an upright Christian. Hence there is no need to turn our backs upon Christianity and to set up a Nordic or Germanic religion, in order to profess our nationality. But we must never forget: we are not redeemed with German blood. We are redeemed with the Precious Blood of our crucified Lord (1 Pet. i, 9). There is no other name

and no other blood under Heaven, in which we can be saved, but the name and the blood of Christ.

From His Eminence Cardinal Faulhaber, *Judaism, Christianity, and Germany: Advent Sermons Preached in St. Michael's, Munich, in 1933*, translated by Rev. George D. Smith (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1934), pp. 1-6, 13-16, 107-110. (Reprinted by permission of the Macmillan Company, New York. Copyright 1934 by the Macmillan Company; and Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., British Commonwealth copyright.)

### Nurses and Philosophy

For the first time, National Socialist nurses have taken the oath of allegiance to the Führer and Reich Chancellor in the Cologne-Aachen district, according to a report by the National Socialist Party Press Service. District Leader Grohé, who administered the oath in the presence of Reich Women Leader Scholtz-Klink and District Superintendent Hilgenfeldt, explained why the formation of National Socialist Sisterhoods had become necessary.

The number of denominational nurses had fallen off to such an extent that there was no longer any guarantee for efficient nursing service in the future. In addition the future would present tasks which could properly be performed only by men and women fully imbued with the philosophical attitude of National Socialism. The bishops had forbidden nuns working as nurses to assist in the case of certain operations, in consequence of which in the interest of the patients the formation of National Socialist Sisterhoods became an unconditional necessity.

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# Nazi Culture

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by GEORGE L. MOSSE

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