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CHRISTIANS IN GERMANY

THE debates in the House of Lords, within recent weeks, on the future of Germany shows the acuteness of the difficulty that will face the Allies in victory. The divisions in France are problem enough, but the pacification of Germany is far more serious. The Peers evidently grasped the problem; no one has yet come forward with a possible solution. The conundrum is as baffling a one as any statesman has had to answer. The Nazi Party have succeeded in corrupting a high percentage of a vast people. They have set up an effective machine which exploits the evil tendencies—to be found in every people—of proud nationalism and of the false values of materialism. This paganism subjects truth to action so that what benefits the one nation is true, what does not is false. Like the Communists, the Nazis have given themselves the liberty to tell lies and break promises as it suits their purpose, a fact which should cause us no surprise, since it consists with their principles. This has reduced all the good elements in German society to defenceless impotence. The new paganism has even found men and women who were ready to propagate its doctrines in Christian words: the 'German Christians' thought to unite a garbled version of Christ's teaching with that of Hitler and Rosenberg. Worst of all, the machinery was constructed so as to deprive the youth of the nation of truth and saturate it with the inhuman worship of blood and race. Pius XI wrote in his famous encyclical on the Church in Germany: 'Thus to have ushered in the betrayal of the eternal principles of an objective morality . . . is a sin against the future of the people, whose bitter fruits the coming generations will taste.'

The fruits for Germany and the world become more bitter every day. The only articulate and organised section of the country has turned the whole nation into a *massa perditionis* which has spread across the world. How can we hope to deal with such a people even if they are beaten down by defeat at arms? The material adjustments after the war, economics, political reorganisation, demarcation of frontiers, these will provide problems enough. The future of a nation wholly organised on this pagan and anti-Christian basis

with the added hatred of a victorious enemy to weld it together opens into a dark fog of confusion and uncertainty. Some have suggested that the only hope lies in treating the German race as a dangerous breed of animal that must be dealt with in the same way as the Germans themselves are now dealing with Poland. It is argued that the Germans will always remain the same, and there is nothing for it but to keep them in constant subjection. Remove their big industries; occupy all the places of importance with an allied police-force; keep them unarmed, weak and divided, so that they can never rise again to power. Such a policy is an evident counsel of despair; and it is un-Christian besides. The German people is too large to be dealt with in that manner permanently, and such treatment would only serve to unite them in adversity and lead to a third world war, and so the miserable story would continue. Christianity stands for the equality of all men under the Fatherhood of God, who offers salvation to the whole human race; it stands also as a positive, constructive force making for peace and freedom among the children of God.

We need more urgently than any punitive measure a constructive line along which we can pursue a true peace of concord, not of fear and destruction. We have not yet reached the absurdities of hate that prevented our speaking of 'German' sausages in the last war, but there are signs that we are approaching the frame of mind for which there can be nothing good in Germany. Before it is too late we must search out the good elements among our enemies with a view to building a human society of nations after the war. We must realise that 'Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it,' and that the foundations and materials of this building must be specifically Christian.

In spite of the Nazis' avowed attack on belief in Christ, the great tradition of Christianity that St. Boniface established in the land has not been stamped out in a decade. Our view, coloured by the war, lumps all Germans together as pagan liars and cads. Are we not fighting a crusade? Then all our enemies must be enemies of Christ. Such simplifications bode ill for the future. It would be disastrous to counter the evil racial creed of the Nazi with another race theory that made all Germans sub-human. Memory is proverbially short in time of war. We tend to forget that the first to resist Nazi heathenism were the Christians of their own country, that from the moment when Hitler came to power they were subjected to a bitter persecution which has continued ever since, that many have resisted with persevering heroism the attack on their faith. There were not wanting Catholics and Protestants to resist the new creed.

Niemöller was not alone in declaring that the theory of 'Blood and Soil' was merely heathen materialism contradicting the universality of the Christian revelation. The whole story of the Confessional movement among the Lutherans reads like a new chapter in the history of the early Church. Persecuting Caesar is there, and no means is too foul for him in his effort to efface the image of Christ from the nation. Dr. Ehrenberg, who gives a glimpse of the Protestant attitude to Nazidom in this number of BLACKFRIARS, is one of a host of pastors who suffered in concentration camps rather than deny their faith in becoming 'German Christians.' That brave spirit of resistance cannot fade away overnight.

The Catholics were not behind in their resistance. The Catholic Centre Party had the inevitable defects of a religious 'party,' but it had been the great opponent of the Nazis, for the latter, as the Dean of Chichester has written, 'had broadly speaking been anti-Catholic because they regarded Catholicism as a dangerous example of the pernicious heresy of internationalism, a foreign intrusion into German life' [*The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*, p. 30]. Brüning himself on the day he had had to dissolve the Centre Party explained to the Dean that the German people, hungering for religion, had not seen the divine symbol of the Incarnation, and so had invented a substitute religion with the Swastika as its symbol. That was clearly understood by many German Catholics before the Concordat of July, 1933; and the persecution raged from the moment the Nazis first came to power without respect to their promises to Rome. The story has been told often enough, particularly by Dr. Micklem in *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church*, and latterly in the anonymous *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich*. We have only to recall the recent suppression of the great and celebrated Benedictine monasteries and the murder of some of their members to realise that the struggle continues unabated in spite of the war. Hardly a week passes without news of fresh attacks on the Church and fresh protests from the Catholic Bishops, among which the pastoral read in all the churches of the Reich on Passion Sunday is the clearest description of the war still raging within the German camp between Catholics and Nazis.

Dr. Micklem recognises that whereas the Confessional movement of the Evangelical Church was struggling for religious freedom, 'the Catholic Church was fighting not only, and indeed not primarily, for religious freedom, but for the principles of a Christian civilisation in Germany.' Since the war began we have been shown in our press what they were fighting against, but not what they were fight-

ing for, nor yet what they are in themselves. It is inevitable that propaganda should give a tilted view of the struggle. But a balanced policy for the future must take both sides into account. The Christians in Germany and the ideals for which they have been struggling are seldom mentioned in discussion on future settlement. Still less do we recognise the great power for good that Christianity has been in Germany: the two greatest Catholic movements, the Liturgical and the Social movements, arose mainly among that people. Read again the outspoken words of Pius XI in *Mit brennender Sorge*, but remember not only the common enemy against whom it is directed, but also the countless people who identified themselves with those sentiments and risked everything to have it printed and distributed throughout the Reich. The great Catholic leaders, Faulhaber, von Galen, and their like, have not suddenly forgotten the peril to Christendom in the Nazi creed. All these people may be muddle-headed about the issues of the war, but at least their eyes are as widely open to the devilry of Hitler's heathen principles as any of the Allies. They have suffered longer from it than we have. There must be, then, some good elements upon which a positive reconstruction could begin to work.

Here we are dealing with the future rather than the present, seeking the first hints of a solution to this terrifying problem of a corrupted nation. Inevitably, however, the question pushes its way into the foreground: How, if there are real Christians in Germany, can they co-operate with militant paganism in a war against the upholders of Christian principles? There is indeed a voiceless and powerless minority which recognises that a victory for Hitler spells defeat for the Church. But the clouds of a war in which facts are concealed or distorted and motives and aims hopelessly tangled prevent the issues from standing out so clearly in most minds. There are many who remember the effects of defeat in the last war, and naturally argue that they would be far harsher this time, and that Germany would be permanently deprived of full life and independence. Together with such justifiable fears they mix false hopes that Hitler will not be able to deny a victorious army its just demands, so that the large percentage of Catholics in the army will be able to work together for the re-establishment of Christian principles in the land. We have come to identify Hitlerism with Germany: it would be surprising if in that country the Christians, who have suffered so much at Hitler's hands, were to make the same identification. The great and powerful mass of Nazis fight for Hitler, Germany and religion all in one, but others may fight for their fatherland without regarding it as the same as the Fuehrer or their religion. All

this may be read in the *Passiontide* pastoral, especially in its two concluding paragraphs.

However this may be, the fact remains that our only hope for future peace lies in the true Christians in Germany. If at the end of the war they can be liberated, given a clearer view of the international situation, and assisted in a positive work of reconstruction according to the Christian tradition in which they have been born, then there is hope. If that element and all its great history is overlooked, the only course will be negative and repressive, a peace of slavery and death which can only foster future war. Dr. Karl Meyer, speaking to the 'People and Freedom' group recently, insisted on this fundamental policy. 'He saw in the Catholic Church and its natural ally, the Confessional Church, with the best in the trade-union movement and Social Democrats, the only forces that would form a new way of living for the German people' (cf. *People and Freedom*, June, 1942).

TRENDS OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT IN MODERN GERMANY

It is of profound significance that since the end of the last war Catholic thinkers in Germany should have devoted themselves almost exclusively to the preparation for the struggle for the Faith which is now raging. It is as though they had sensed the impending danger and were concentrating all their energies on the twofold task of arriving at a true appreciation of the present spiritual situation, and of providing the means to solve its problems in the spirit of Christ. This struggle for the Faith, for the very reason that it is fought on the spiritual plane, is by no means identical with the present war, which only becomes relevant as it serves to clarify the situation, and affects the spirits of men. The decisive events will take place in the depths of the human heart; it is here that the future of mankind will be decided. The crucial question is the same, which has at all times determined the fate of the individual as well as of nations: 'What think ye of Christ?'

This question was asked in the days of the Roman Empire, when to acknowledge the Kingship of Christ meant torture and death. It was asked in ages when belief was easy, when the individual was not yet torn out of community with his fellows, and lived in a world which bore in every detail the stamp of God. It is characteristic of the present situation that the very conditions which enabled such