

MR. TEELING ON THE GERMAN CHURCH

MR. WILLIAM TEELING has now replied to the many critics of his book *The Pope in Politics*, which was published in 1937. His reply takes the form of a study of the conditions and prospects of the Catholic Church in Germany, a subject with which he is undoubtedly familiar and about which he can speak with considerable authority.¹ He knows the language and the people well, and has taken pains to interview all kinds of personalities to ascertain the real state of feeling in the country. And though conversations, even with the most varied authorities, are not the most certain way of getting at the real truth, it is scarcely possible to adopt any other method in Germany. The Nazi press is inspired to tell just what the party leaders wish to have announced and the foreign press is often biased.

The method has its drawbacks, so serious that one has to read the book with some caution. For it is undoubtedly true that it is a very dangerous thing to speak to foreigners about the faults of the system, and it is questionable whether even Mr. Teeling's interviewing ability would elicit the whole truth about these from any responsible German. It is also a fact that the more highly placed ecclesiastics are rightly unwilling to grant interviews of the type that the author needed for the purposes of publication. Every spokesman, of course, is made anonymous in this book, but even this security would not encourage many to speak quite openly about politics.

The author's outlook over the whole problem is best indicated by the words, 'There seems to be amongst practising Christians an entirely unwarranted confidence that Christ will not desert Europe and that our civilisation must survive' (p. 12). Whatever be the merits or demerits of the rest of the book, Mr. Teeling deserves our gratitude for that stern reminder. We are inclined to forget that the

¹ *Crisis for Christianity*. By William Teeling. (John Gifford; 10s. 6d.)

Divine Promise does not fail even though the Church should be totally extinct in one continent. And though it cannot yet be said that Christ has deserted Europe, it is certainly true that our civilisation is no longer Christian. Its spirit is completely secular, and Nazism is but one expression of it.

Accordingly Mr. Teeling takes the view that the Nazi revolution is comparable to the Barbarian invasions and must one day be transformed under the influence of Christianity, as they were. There is a lot to be said for this view. It is clear that National Socialism is not a transitory thing; it has its roots in the past, and is not merely the product of the *Führer's* mind, nor even of the work of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. It corresponds to something primeval in the German mentality, though twisted and given a modern secular form. It must therefore in conjunction with other movements produce great transformations in the civilisation and culture of Europe.

Unfortunately, Mr. Teeling expects the Church to go too far in the way of concessions and does not pay sufficient attention to National Socialism as a doctrine. From this last aspect it is quite simply a heresy, and the Church can never be tolerant of heresy, even though she is generous to heretics. As a doctrine it was solemnly condemned both in the encyclical of the late Pope and in the instruction to the universities and seminaries. The Church must take all possible steps to prevent this dangerous and avowedly anti-Christian doctrine from being spread to the minds of her German members.

Nor is concession very helpful. The Church has conceded everything that she could lawfully abandon, and is now required to give up her very life. National Socialism has shown itself to be not a transitory revolutionary movement, the radical tendencies of which will disappear with the passage of time, but a cruel system which has consistently become more and more anti-Christian over the course of six years. It is a mistake, too, to expect the Church to give way on the matter of sterilisation.

Mr. Teeling sees as one of the main causes of the present crisis the organization of Catholics in large nation-wide

movements which weakened the authority of their diocesan bishops. The result was that when these movements were destroyed at a blow, Catholics did not naturally turn to their proper leaders for guidance. There is a good deal in this claim, and there was perhaps too much organization in the days of the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, the organizations were on a diocesan and parochial basis, and their members were well accustomed to looking both to priests and bishops for leadership.

He sees great promise in the attitude of the younger clergy, who are more anxious than the old to work in with the government and party. This may be the case, but there are not a few who are as strongly opposed to it as the older men. And if there is a fear among some that their government subsidy may be withdrawn if they do not fall in with its wishes, this cannot be said of the majority. It is typical of the author's categorical style that he should write 'the bishops are tolerating . . . first and foremost because they are worried over the financial position of the Church and its followers in Germany.' No matter how much evidence Mr. Teeling may have collected, that 'first and foremost' is gratuitously offensive and utterly unjustified (p. 239).

On Austria he is most unsatisfactory and expresses the most amazing hopes that the Nazis will go slow there in view of the readiness of the Austrian Bishops to give way. The attitude of Cardinal Innitzer seems to him to have been the only one possible under the circumstances, and he suggests that if the Church in Austria gives Hitler no cause for complaint it will be allowed to remain free to pursue its purely spiritual tasks. What has happened is precisely the contrary. The Church yielded as far as it was possible to yield, and still will not permit fiery pulpit oratory against National Socialism, yet Austria has suffered more from the religious persecution than any other part of the Reich. It is easy to be wise after the event, but surely it was never seriously held that 'With the backing of Hitler and Mussolini it is within the bounds of possibility that Cardinal Innitzer might himself become the first non-Italian Pope for many years' (p. 282). This forecast and the description of Schuschnigg's Austria as a totalitarian

State display a great want of understanding both of Austria and of the outlook of the Church's leaders.

It may appear mean to complain of misprints in an article of this kind, but they are so frequent and so striking that it does seem as if the author has never corrected the proofs. In his acknowledgement, five lines long, at the opening of the book there are no less than three misprints. One book is said to be published by Sheed and Ward which was actually published by Burns and Oates, and I am still at a loss to see why there should be special mention of two books on Austria in a work of this kind, which is, first, based mainly on investigation at first hand and, second, concerned with the whole of Greater Germany.

In general, it seems that the author has almost unconsciously been more influenced by Nazi propaganda than he would care to admit, and he is too much inclined to see the Church as the Nazis see it, purely from the political aspect. One would like to have seen a greater appreciation of the supernatural.

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ST. CATHERINE, THE PAPACY, AND ENGLAND

As an instance of the work done by the Friars Preachers for the good of England, it is interesting to remark the part Dominicans played in keeping the country faithful to the true Pope during the Great Schism. This has not been sufficiently noticed in the history of that sad time.

On March 27th, 1378, Gregory XI died at Rome, whither he had returned from Avignon in 1376. The chief instrument used by God to persuade the Pope to take this step was that great daughter of St. Dominic, St. Catherine of Siena. She it was who reminded him of the secret vow he had made to return to Rome; and when innumerable obstacles were put in his way by the Cardinals, who were loth to leave the peace and luxury of Avignon for the grass-