

CHRISTIANITY AND RACE

WEATHERVANES are like historians—not always infallible: whilst often they will register a change of breeze, they will repeatedly fail to detect approaching storms. Moreover although this generalisation is true, the word 'historian' is used advisedly: for on the one hand, there are those who colour their deductions with their own political outlook and, on the other hand, those who examine the past with what amounts to the prophetic eye in reverse. At the moment, German history is suffering from a spate of articles, pamphlets and, in some cases, books that belong to the partisan class of writer of the first group, and on no particular body has this ill-fortune acted so much as a stigma as upon the German Catholic Church.

These writers confronted with a subject such as the French Revolution seldom go beyond statistical fact: their income is largely dependent upon shoddy text-books pressed upon the young who, now considered no longer able to digest rows of figures, are treated to the same facts presented by isotype tables. That one of the principal reasons for the Revolution was because French and English philosophy had reached its acme as a science of materialism is not mentioned: still less is it hinted that the counter-blast to this materialism came from Germany. Any attempt to assess the belief, mood or temperament of a nation is omitted. Instead these minds have become so enamoured of factual evidence that it is not hard to see how such logical positivism carried to its ultimate conclusion will be able to glorify the rise of Hitler on the grounds that the babies born after the early 'forties were bonnier than those of the preceding decade. Admittedly everything is related, but the precise value of the relationship is expressly dependent upon the level at which it is examined: it is not a matter of the length to which things can be pushed, but of degree. Juggle with the evidence sufficiently and eventually any verdict may be reached. Hence it is that in an article of this nature it will be necessary to treat of the subject as a whole in which there fall two natural divisions: of the structural principle of the Church as one, and then, in more detail, of the part which Germany can play in the reconstruction of the Church in her own land. For this purpose it is proposed to call extensively upon a treatise written before the war by Johannes Pinski—a treatise which whilst avoiding the fickleness of a weathervane has the reliability of a barometer.¹

It has been said that by nature the Englishman is somewhat

¹ *Christianity and Race*, by Johannes Pinski.

materialistically minded: he is also practical, and although these rather stolid qualities (which are quite splendidly transcended when Catholicism takes hold of him) are equally applied to the German character, the accusation here is false. The German is essentially a visionary—even if often a misguided one. The works of Goethe and Schiller testify to this: indeed as Schopenhauer, in treating of love and the self, declared: 'That is to say, genius is the power of leaving one's own interests, wishes and aims entirely out of sight; thus of entirely renouncing one's own personality for a time, so as to remain pure knowing subject, clear vision of the world. . . .' Again, even after the attempt of Prussia to gain mastery of Europe in the nineteenth century and her failure in the first World War, it was still possible for a man as representatively typical of his country as Spengler to arise like a visionary after his own sort and propound a philosophy carrying with it a certain blood *mystique*. He was able to believe in a kind of heaven on earth in which lyricism would be replaced by technics, painting be dominated by shipping, and epistemology be ancillary to politics. Such a spirit may be warped, but its existence cannot be dismissed: it is one intimately connected with racial idiosyncrasy, with Christianity and Race.

But the perennial problem for the European mind of the balance of power between Church and State took on for Pinski a special significance. As he posited the problem: 'If one takes this title of honour of holy Church seriously—and it would be a sorry thing if one did not—the simple question at once presents itself: What has the Church inherited from the nations? This question taken in conjunction with the other: What has the Church brought the nations?' contains the problem that lies in the words 'Church of the Nations'. That is the point of departure, and from out of which many tributaries flow. The first concerns that mentality which believes that by a wave of the hand Christianity can become immediately palatable to the recipient without any attendant giving or taking.

This attitude is often passed off as a civilised habit of mind: one which reflects the advance of modern faith. In actual fact it is the contrary: it reflects a primitive state of thought in which it is assumed that a wave of the hand is a blessing in itself: it forgets that the power of benediction obtained in the movement is only made valid through apostolic succession. Of course, in essence, it is a confusion between magic and mystery: between the art of human conjuration and the efficacy of a supernatural act. For instance, Newman in his lectures on *The Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851) quoting from contemporary documents, shows how people tried to credit the Church with dabbling in trickery when at the exposition of

the Blessed Sacrament the server rang the bell; they believed that the sound came from the monstrance and was produced by an instrument hidden within the folds of the priest's humeral veil. From those who would take and honestly believe in such an explanation at face value it is not such a far cry to Baldur von Schirach's telling phrase: 'Youth for the State, and religion for the Church'. It fitted in well with National Socialistic doctrine that taught that the old might be fooled, but that the young constituted an élite whose wisdom was beyond such naïve hocus-pocus.

Naturally the appeal of such an argument was mainly psychological and so any body as strong as the Catholic Church constituted a threat which was best dealt with by first making it appear absurd, then ridiculous and finally obsolete. Furthermore the quarrel was not so much with the religious invisible forms of the divine, as with the concrete form the divine takes on in the Church. The hostility of Nazism was more increased by the doctrine of the Word made flesh than by any other factor. In short, to hark back to one of Pinsk's primary points, it is only when a country is prepared to make its racial characteristic subservient to Catholicism that its faith can become a living reality. The equation however was one not to be endured by the Third Reich, for although it classified its subjects as either male or female, fertile or sterile, it did not carry its dualistic policy to its logical conclusion. It was sorely in need of distinguishing between light and dark, virtue and vice, positive and negative. In creating modern history it forgot the point; forgot, as had been the case in early Chinese civilisations, that sacrifices to the deity Earth were made to honour the beneficial of the Earth, for Earth harboured all beings while Heaven held the stars and constellations suspended: forgot that whereas food and wealth are derived from Earth, the regulation of labours is derived from Heaven, and for which reasons Heaven is loved and Earth honoured.² These maxims with their simple truths still hold good, if it is added that man tends to make gods in his own image. But it was precisely this personal approach between Jew and Gentile, man and woman, I and Thou which the Gestapo could not permit, and which, no doubt unconsciously, had a hand in the development of Pinsk's theory on the law of particularity (*besonderung*).

Christ was a man, he was a Galilean and a Hebrew, and because of these factors—and in spite of the fact that he was the Son of God—he was, humanly speaking, part of an ancestry, just as he would have belonged to another heritage had he been born in France during the sixteenth century. Chesterton has well summed up the position:

² See *Book of Rites* (Chinese).

'It is not for us to guess in what manner of moment the mercy of God might in any case have rescued the world; but it is certain that the struggle which established Christendom would have been very different if there had been an empire of Carthage instead of an empire of Rome. We have to thank the patience of the Punic Wars if, in after ages, divine things descended at least upon human things and not inhuman'. At any rate, 'when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son made of a woman, made under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons'. Accordingly, although it follows that anybody may worship Christ as a saviour, from a racial point of view it may be easier for a Jewish convert than for a newly baptised English agnostic; easier for an English Protestant than a German Lutheran. After all, it is a very common trait among the British people to suspect the Vatican of being Italian and the Pope a Fascist. Yet, as in a sense every soldier carries a marshal's baton in his knapsack, so is it equally true of any member of the clergy with regard to the papacy. Again, racial preferences come out in painting: contrast the difference between Rubens' interpretation of the Crucifixion and that of Eric Gill as portrayed in his carved Stations of the Cross. To these observations, which could be drawn out in an infinite number of different ways, Pinski adds his deduction: 'I think that I may propound the thesis that *the Spirit of God was made flesh in the forms of this Roman-Hellenistic culture*, in other words, that these forms were called to be the expression and bearers of Christ's Spirit. *As the body of Christ was that of a Jewish man, so is the bodily manifestation of the Spirit of Christ in the Church that of the Roman-Hellenistic culture.*'

This summary of his thesis carries with it certain riders: one of these is that since Christianity manifested itself in the Roman-Hellenistic age its characteristics will be largely those of that era. It is this link with the classical world that permits a man such as Gilbert Murray, as one of the last humanists, to admit the morality and attendant virtues of Christendom, but not to accept its claim to be anything other than a moral code for living the good life. Here, in passing, it is worth quoting from Toynbee's *Study of History*, for there he sets down in historical terms, as Murray has set down in classical terms, what rules he considers men should follow if they are to live at peace with one another:

'At this hour of decision at which we now live it is meet and right that all men and women in the Western world who 'have been baptised into Christ' as "heirs according to the promise", and with us all the Gentiles who have become "partakers" of the adoption of our Western way of life, should call upon the Vicar

of Christ to vindicate his tremendous title . . . to the Apostle at Rome our forefathers committed the destiny of Western Christendom, which was the whole of their treasure. . . . The punishment for the hubris of the servant has been visited upon us; and it is for him who brought us to this pass to deliver us from it, whoever he may be: Catholics or Protestants, believers or unbelievers'. This passage is heartening for two reasons: first, because it is based on the assumption that the Christian Church flowed out of a previous Mediterranean civilization and, secondly, because it recognizes a co-existent relationship between both worlds and upon which man's survival is reliant. The thought, of course, is not entirely new, and as Abbot Vonier pointed out, more than a hint of it is contained in Newman's writings.

In *The Idea of a University* there is set down, in embryo as it were, what Toynbee has repeated and Pinski elaborated and carried yet further. Here is the particular section—a long one admittedly—but one which must be set down in full if the argument is to be seen in its totality:

'The civilization of modern times remains what it was of old, not Chinese, or Hindoo, or Mexican, or Saracenic, or of any new description hitherto unknown, but the lineal descendant, or rather the continuation, *mutatis mutandis*, of the civilization which began in Palestine and Greece. Considering, then, the characteristics of this great civilized society which I have already insisted on, I think it has a claim to be considered as the representative society and civilization of the human race, as its perfect result and limit in fact; those portions of the race which do not coalesce with it being left to stand by themselves as anomalies, unaccountable indeed, but for that very reason not interfering with what on the contrary has been turned to account and has grown into a whole. I call then this commonwealth pre-eminently and emphatically Human Society, and its intellect the Human Mind, and its decisions the sense of mankind, and its disciplined and cultivated state Civilization in the abstract, and the territory on which it lies the *orbis terrarum*, or the World. For, unless the illustration be fanciful, the object which I am contemplating is like the impression of a seal upon wax; which rounds off and gives form to the greater portion of the soft material, and presents something definite to the eye, and pre-occupies the space against any second figure, so that we overlook and leave out of our thoughts the jagged outline or unmeaning lumps outside of it, intent upon the harmonious circle which fills the imagination within it. Now, before going on to speak of the education, and the standards of education, which the civilized world, as I may now call it, has enjoined and requires, I wish to draw your attention, gentlemen,

to the circumstance that this same *orbis terrarum*, which has been the seat of civilization will be found, on the whole, to be the "promise" and "fellow heirs of the same body" through the seat also of that supernatural society and system which our Maker has given us directly from himself, the Christian polity. The natural and divine associations are not indeed exactly coincident, nor ever have been. As the territory of civilization has varied with itself in different ages, while on the whole it has been the same, so, in like manner, Christianity has fallen partly outside civilization, and civilization partly outside Christianity; but, on the whole, the two have occupied one and the same *orbis terrarum*. Often indeed they have been moved *pari passu*, and at all times there has been found the most intimate connexion between them. Christianity waited till the *orbis terrarum* attained its most perfect form before it appeared; and it soon coalesced, and has ever since cooperated and often seemed identical with the civilization which is its companion'.

To this summary it need only be added that in such a coalition what civilizes also spiritualizes, and conversely, for the outline of Pinsk's thesis stated, it but remains to fill in the detail with regard to the Church in Germany today.

From the foregoing remarks it will be seen that in the treatise under examination it is axiomatic that, if Germany is to play her part as one of the nations of Christendom, she must become aware of her place among other countries in the mystical body of Christ. She must again become a responsible people so that the Prussian novelist Ernest Wierchert's indictment may be revoked: 'We knew, we knew it all, we knew what went on in the concentration camps. We knew, but we did nothing, with our eyes open. . . . Let us recognize that we are guilty, and that perhaps it will be a hundred years before the stains of guilt can be washed from our hands. Let us recognize that we have to suffer hunger because others died of hunger'. That is a terrible confession, but it is a humble one and therefore worthy of pardon. Already there are signs of this—especially in the Catholic Press in such papers as *Hochland*, *Die Begegnung*, *Das Neue Abendland* and the Jesuit monthly, *Stimmen der Zeit*. There is, too, the *Frankfurter Hefte* in which the editor, Eugen Kogon, like Wierchert, has emphasized how Germans in many cases knew to what slavery their comrades were being herded, but did nothing. Again, Monsignor Johann Neuhäusler has shown in his book, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*, that, because of repercussions, printers often feared to print Church documents until eventually none appeared. In fact it would seem during the war that the bishops were not without courage—von Galen was an example to all—but

collectively they did not appear to act 'by way of resistance comparable to that taken by bishops in Belgium and France'.³ But reports are beginning to indicate that during this period more was astir beneath the surface than first met the eye.

For instance in 1940 the late Theodore Haecker wrote:

'We Germans fight this war on the wrong side. A very large part of us conducts it as unwilling slaves of an apostate government which is made strong by the passion of despair. . . . It was from the beginning the artifice of these monsters sent in order to plague Europe, to connect the interests of their own base, greedy . . . nature by lies without precedent with the true and just wishes of the German people. We have reached today the peak of this hellish art. Who does not love by nature his people? Who would not wish by nature that his people would win the war? But: we Germans are on the side of apostacy. That is the position of the German. Today is Pentecost, but my mind is sad, and the shadow of sadness spreads over it. For I must live when the apostate wins or when he is beaten. And with him the German people will be beaten, but not killed and annihilated. This light is in my mind: it is better that a people be beaten than win as apostates'.⁴

As Pinski had written earlier: 'The Catholic German cannot do otherwise: if he really sees the richness and fullness of Christ's Kingdom and *believes in it as a reality*, and if on the other hand he loves his people, he *must* use every effort to make this richness and fullness accessible to his people, even if it has to be purchased with apparent sacrifices on the part of the people'. In some measure those sacrifices have been extolled: but if Germany is to recover fully it will be a race against time, not Christianity. Her attitude—especially of her youth—is still very peninsular and to that extent dominated by Aryan views. The Catholic Action which has penetrated most of Europe in this case seems to have made an exception, and was well exemplified in the reports made of the International Conference of Christian Students held at Münster last year. Apparently the delegation found Catholics 'unaware of any duty resting on them, as Catholics, to play any active part in politics, in public life, in ASTA'.⁵ In many cases so much have they been cut off from the outside world they had not even heard of the Pope's Peace Points. Nor, now that the war is over, is the blame entirely theirs.

³ This point was made by Nathaniel Micklem in *Blackfriars* (March 1947) in a review of *Zeugnis und Kampf des Deutschen Episkopats*. He adds later: 'The protests of the bishops in general were courageous rather than effectual'.

⁴ See *Review of Politics* (January 1947) published in U.S.A.

⁵ See *Cruz* (Lent 1947) in which there is a symposium by writers present at the Conference.

The United Nations have been slow to send succour, and frequently such aid as has been sent has been inveigled from its intended destination by public officials whose positions on the Control Commission have been maintained solely on bribery. In fact, it is a fearful reflection on English politicians as a body that it has been a publisher (and he not a Gentile) who has so valiantly championed the cause of the oppressed. It is Victor Gollancz who has shown himself the embodiment of the cryptic saying 'Plan as if you were going to live for ever: act as if you were going to die tomorrow', for whilst bureaucracy to lessen certain controls devised further restrictions it was he who awakened citizens once more to their duties as good Samaritans. Hitherto they had lacked the initiative but he as a public man gave them the lead. He taught them by his persistent enthusiasm that they were not judges sitting on a jury examining hardened cases, but that if they looked far enough they might catch the cries of a sick people—cries not only for bread, but for that manna which in an earlier century the Israelites shared in common, and which was, is, and always will be, the body of Christ.

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

ALMOST anything that one may say about the situation in Germany today is trite and commonplace. It has all been said a thousand times already, and everyone would seem to be quite well aware of what is happening. Certainly many people have by now heard most of the facts; yet comparatively few seem to realise what they mean for Germany. Somewhere at the bottom of this gap in our minds there is the very understandable view that we have enough worries to deal with in our own country at present, and that we cannot spend ourselves wholeheartedly in trying to solve Germany's difficulties; 'Who won the war anyway?' Then of course the older generations have seen all this before; 'We became too sentimental after the 1914-18 war', we are told, 'with the result that on the first possible occasion the Germans armed again and got their own back; do you think we want to let them start again?' But one does not need to be very worldly-wise to know that an excess of sympathy is always as dangerous as an excess of severity. It is however no cure for emotional stupidity in the past (if this indeed was the case) to refuse to be troubled over present matters which are bound to touch our feelings, if we are human at all. I have no expert political or economic knowledge, I have no specialised 'inside