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NATIONAL SOCIALISM
AND CHRISTIANITY

BY

N. MICKLEM

PRINCIPAL OF MANSFIELD COLLEGE
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THE claims of Nazism upon the individual member of the Nazi State are 'all-embracing'. All other claims must be subservient to those of the State, as defined by the Nazi Party. Hence, inevitably, the conflict between Nazism and organized religion. The origins of this conflict are here explained, and the persecution of the Catholic and Protestant churches in Germany described.

Dr. Micklem is Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, and author of *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church* (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.).

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NATIONAL SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

National Socialism itself a Kind of Religion

TILL very recent times Christianity has for centuries known no serious rival in Europe. To-day the allegiance of men's hearts is claimed by Bolshevism and by National Socialism as it is by Christianity. National Socialism, like Bolshevism, is a religion or quasi-religion as well as a political theory. This explains the inevitability and inwardness of 'the Church Struggle' in Germany since Herr Hitler came to power in 1933.

It may be possible to distinguish between Bolshevism as an economic system and Bolshevism as a materialistic conception of the world, but it has proved quite impossible to distinguish the political aspects of National Socialism from the *Weltanschauung* or 'philosophy' of the Party. This was not so plain in the earlier days of the Revolution as it has since become, partly because up to the seizure of power the Nazis were almost wholly occupied with a political campaign, and partly because their 'philosophical' ideas were then neither prominent nor well known.

Moreover, the Nazis themselves are not altogether of one mind upon this matter. Many of their leaders frankly hate Christianity and would gladly destroy the Christian Church, but there are others who would adopt and accommodate and use Chris-

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tianity in the service of their Revolution. There has long been tension between these two parties, and this has tended to confuse the issue, but the fundamental principles of National Socialism are clear, and the sort of Christianity which Nazis have been willing to encourage has been so pliable to the State and so submissive in doctrine that its right to the name of Christian has inevitably been challenged.

The Nazi Revolution was the occasion of an extraordinary romantic revival among the German people. They had been bitterly divided, they had lost self-confidence, they had felt themselves impotent, they were suffering not merely from the determination of their late enemies that they should not recover their power but also, and perhaps more deeply, from the shame of what they called 'the war-guilt lie'; a proud race, they felt themselves regarded still as moral pariahs in Europe. With the Revolution all that was changed. New hope arose in them, new determination, new self-confidence. National enthusiasm was raised to the highest pitch, and patriotism, as we know, has close connexions with religion.

It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that the Protestant Church as a whole welcomed the Revolution, and that such men as Dr. Martin Niemöller voted for the Nazis. The Roman Catholics were much more hesitant, partly because they were better acquainted with the Nazi writings; but when shortly after his seizure of power Herr Hitler accepted a Concordat with the Vatican, the Roman Church hoped that open discord might be avoided.

The Nazi Conception of Religion

Yet from very early days of the Revolution the fundamental incompatibility of National Socialism and Christianity was apparent. National Socialism has been carefully expounded and may be fairly judged by two now famous books, *Mein Kampf* by Herr Hitler and *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* by Herr Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi minister in charge of the 'philosophical' education of the German people. Neither of these books is easy to read, and neither is likely to commend itself to educated readers,¹ but their practical importance is very great. Here National Socialism is revealed as based upon a racial theory. The Aryan race appears as the superior and creative section of mankind; the Aryans are best represented by the Germans; it is the God-given task and destiny of Germans to dominate the world. Racial purity is, therefore, the first necessity for Germans. All other breeds are inferior; the Negro is a 'half ape'; but rottenness and corruption come pre-eminently by the Jews. Entirely in the

¹ *Mein Kampf*, unabridged, has now been translated into English. Important excerpts from Herr Rosenberg's *Myth*, as also from *Mein Kampf*, can be read in pamphlets 34, 37, 38, 41, 44, 46, 48 issued by The Friends of Europe, 122 St. Stephen's House, Westminster. Some account of both will be found in my *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church* (Oxford University Press); see also Oxford Pamphlet No. 3, *Hitler's Self-disclosure in 'Mein Kampf'*, by R. C. K. Ensor. To such an extent has *Mein Kampf* been the 'Bible' of National Socialism that a copy was given to every young couple on their marriage. It is, however, not impossible to believe the report that since the Russo-German Pact the book has been withdrawn for reconsideration.

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spirit of Herr Hitler, Dr. Ley, head of the Nazi Labour Front, said in a speech:

‘For me the Hebrews are not members of a race. The Negroes should protest if they are put on a level with the Hebrews. The Hebrew fills me with disgust; not so the Negro. The Negroes are a race; the Hebrews are parasites like tuberculosis germs, like bacilli. They are a biological phenomenon. It is absurd to have compassion on the Hebrews. Those who suffer from tuberculosis do not have compassion on the germs of their disease.’

Such views cease to be laughable when in practical pursuance of them Czechoslovakia is handed over to Herr Himmler and his Gestapo (the secret, political police), and the Jews are subjected to pogroms.

Herr Hitler in *Mein Kampf* has little to say about religion. Herr Rosenberg in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century* makes up for this deficiency. The source of all true religious insight, at least for Germans, he says, is the ideals and demands of ‘the German soul’. The inspirations of the natural German soul are, indeed, Christianity itself, the genuine, authentic Christianity in distinction from that debased and Judaized version of it which, largely through the influence of St. Paul, has become traditional in Europe. Our Lord was of Aryan, not Jewish, birth; not as the crucified but as the warrior, pre-eminently the warrior against the Jews, does he deserve the honour of the German people. It is not surprising that, Christ being of Aryan race, the true and typical Christian virtues are those which

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have inspired the German race and been exemplified in German antiquity. These virtues are summed up in the idea of 'honour'. They stand in decisive contrast with those feminine or spurious virtues which are normally regarded as specifically Christian—meekness, humility, long-suffering, gentleness. In particular, the idea of universal love is, says Herr Rosenberg, 'a blow at the soul of Nordic Europe'. God is theoretically regarded as Providence, that is, as a universal God, but Herr Rosenberg can make no real distinction between God and the racial soul of the German people; thus God manifests Himself in the racial soul, and of the demands and inspirations of this soul the National Socialist Party is the sole interpreter. There is no transcendent God whose equal law of righteousness is binding upon all peoples and before whom all men stand in need of mercy and forgiveness. The idea of redemption, especially of redemption through a crucified Saviour, is repulsive to the noble and unfallen German race. Sin, indeed, is recognized, but it is sin not against a righteous God or a universal law, but against the unity of the German people or, in practice, against the requirements of the Nazi Party. Such is the 'positive' Christianity of Herr Rosenberg and the National Socialists, standing in clearly defined opposition to the 'negative' variety of the historic Christian Church.

Hostility of Nazi Party to Christianity

This apparently friendly, if highly critical, attitude to Christianity is counterbalanced by a very

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different point of view constantly inculcated at private Party meetings. It is a commonplace of National Socialist teaching that Germany has been suffering from three mortal enemies, Marxism, Judaism, and Christianity. A Christianity, such as that of the so-called 'German Christians', according as it accommodates itself to Herr Rosenberg's views, is tolerated and even receives official countenance and support, but the dominant tendency in the Party, as shown, more particularly, in the private literature prepared for the instruction of the young, constantly inculcates the view that the coming of Christianity to Germany led to a degradation of German life; the old heathenism of pre-Christian Germany is lauded, and rites and ceremonies are devised to take the place of Christmas and other Christian festivals.

National Socialists have neither the competence nor the interest to enter into theological debate. Any religion and any absence of religion is free in Germany provided only that the fundamental Nazi creed be whole-heartedly accepted. This creed has been defined in lapidary style by Dr. Ley, one of the chief Ministers of State; his words that I here quote were printed in enormous letters in an official but private publication called *Schulungsbrief* (or Letter of Instruction), April 1937, intended for school-teachers, Storm Troops, the Hitler Youth, and the Labour Front. There can be no question here of a chance indiscretion or of the embarrassing utterance of an unrepresentative enthusiast. Dr. Ley speaks with authority, and his words were

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officially published with peculiar marks of National Socialist approval. He said:

‘Adolf Hitler, to thee alone we are bound. In this hour we would renew our solemn vow; we believe in this world on Adolf Hitler alone. We believe that National Socialism is the sole faith to make our People blessed. We believe that there is a Lord God in heaven, who has made us, who leads us, who guides us, and who visibly blesses us. And we believe that this Lord God has sent us Adolf Hitler, that Germany should be established for all eternity.’

Christians who could accommodate themselves to this belief have been left unmolested; others have suffered persecution, not, officially, as Christians, but as disloyal to the German people.

The Nazi Party as such has entered into no theological disputations with the Church. It has made practical demands to which the Church could not consent without disloyalty to conscience. The issue has presented itself somewhat differently to the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches.

It has been typical of traditional Lutheranism to demand freedom to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance and freedom to administer the sacraments of the Gospel. The merely ecclesiastical or political side of the Church’s life could be left to the goodwill and disposition of the State. But what precisely is implied in ‘freedom to preach the Gospel’? Herr Hitler would claim that with ‘evangelical preaching’ he has never interfered, and that trouble has arisen only when the pastors abandoned theology for politics. The Protestant Church replies

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that the Government and the police have interfered in matters that concern the faith itself. Thus the State has required the Church to accept 'the Aryan paragraph' and dismiss all ministers who are not of pure Aryan descent. The Christians protest that the breaking down of 'the middle wall of partition' between Jew and Gentile belongs to the very essence of the Gospel, and that racialism has no place in the Christian Church. Again, just before the Munich 'settlement' a responsible group of Protestants issued a form of Intercession Service in which confession was made for the sins of the Church and people, and prayers for peace were offered. The Government declared that to pray for peace rather than for the victory of the national cause was constructive treason. In general, while the preaching of a purely individual or esoteric Gospel has been free, the Church has been absolutely forbidden to make any utterance, whether on moral or religious grounds, that was critical of the thought or policy of the Nazi Party. In this struggle, therefore, the Protestants are disposed to say that the integrity of the Gospel is at stake.

The case is put somewhat differently by the Roman Catholics, for they in their Thomistic philosophy have a theory of the State and of society which can be set forth systematically against the Nazi doctrine. The incompatibility is most clearly seen in respect of the ideas of Law and Right. For National Socialism Law is identical with the will of the sovereign power that recognizes no authority beyond itself; Right is that which serves the destiny

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of the German people as understood and interpreted by the Nazi Party. The will of Herr Hitler, as the quasi-Messianic embodiment of the racial soul, is itself the only source of Law and Right. The Roman Catholics reply that there is an 'eternal law' of God which finds expression in a 'law of nature' written in the hearts of men, that the source and authority of human law are ultimately the law of God, and that all people and all States are subject to the universal law of righteousness. A human law has no authority except as an expression of justice, and justice is to be defined, not by the supposed demands of destiny or of a 'racial soul', but by the law of God declared in Scripture and written plain upon the heavens. The Roman Catholics, therefore, are disposed to say that Christian civilization in Europe is at stake.

Such being in brief the underlying grounds of the struggle, some account of its course must now be given.

Nazism and the German Catholics

The first official Roman Catholic public statement about National Socialism seems to have been made by the Ordinary of Mainz on behalf of his Bishop in 1930. He concludes:

'What we have said contains the answer to the three questions submitted to us: (a) May a Catholic be a member of the Hitler Party? (b) Is a Catholic priest authorized to allow members of that Party to take an official part in Church ceremonies, including funerals? (c) May a Catholic who holds the principles of the Party

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be admitted to the Sacraments? To these questions we must reply: "No". (See D'Harcourt, *The German Catholics*, p. 8.)

When, however, the Revolution came in 1933, and some accommodation between the new Government and the Church became imperative, this ban was lifted.

It is not to be thought, however, that this utterance of the Ordinary of Mainz represents what at any time has been the sum total of German Catholic thought about the Nazi Revolution. A recent writer in *Blackfriars* has spoken of 'the real tragedy of the situation as most German Catholics know it—the inner conflict of beliefs and allegiances. It must not be forgotten that the issue is not, as we might like to think, between Nazis and Catholics, but between Nazis and *German Catholics* who are in greater or lesser degree National Socialists, or at least appreciative of Nazi achievements, and, in many cases, whose adhesion to National Socialism is grounded in their very Catholicity'; he speaks, further, of the aspirations of those 'who seek a positive policy towards the Third Reich and to sanctify the values it has awakened', and of 'the new spirit of sacrificial patriotism which may surely claim to be at least as genuinely Christian as an attitude of mere negative opposition'. Christians in Germany, in fact, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, have had to consider the question whether National Socialism is a movement which could be, and ought to be, baptized, or is nothing else but anti-Christ. There is not yet unanimity of

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opinion, but the development of National Socialist policy, the treatment of the Church, and more particularly the attempt to make the Nazi *Weltanschauung* dominant throughout the land, have made increasingly difficult any co-operation or even sympathy between the Roman Church and the Nazi Party. It is to be thought that the Russo-German Pact will tend to alienate those Christians who have in general supported Herr Hitler's régime as a bulwark against Bolshevism.

The Concordat with the Vatican

One of Herr Hitler's first and most startling achievements was the signing of a Concordat with the Vatican. No previous Concordat had offered the Church such generous terms; Herr Hitler, it seemed, had both declared his policy and added to the prestige of his new Government by this arrangement. There can be no doubt that the Concordat in its first days strengthened the régime both within Germany and without. It is a great question whether it has in any degree affected Nazi policy. No pretence is now made that the terms of the Concordat are binding on the State. The XXIIIrd Article, for instance, guarantees the rights of the Church in existing schools and provides for new schools under Church influence; the XXIVth Article declares that the teaching in Roman Catholic schools shall be in the hands of Roman Catholic teachers, and promises that there shall be no interference with their training. Article XV guarantees the religious orders in their pastoral, educational, and

charitable work. Not merely are these undertakings a dead letter, they are contradicted by the declared policy and principles of the Nazi Party. The Concordat has proved the Roman Church's 'Munich'.

Dissolution of the Centre Party

With the settlement of the Concordat the 'Centre Party' of Dr. Brüning voted itself extinct. This party was not an official political agency of the Church, not all its members were Roman Catholics, and, indeed, the party was not regarded with full favour in certain high ecclesiastical quarters. None the less, it represented in the main the political aspirations and activity of the Roman Church in Germany. It was hated by the Nazis because of its opposition to themselves, because it was connected with a loyal attempt to carry out the Treaty of Versailles, because it was to some extent European in its outlook, and because it was willing to co-operate with the Social Democrats, henceforward to be known and hated as 'the Reds'. In future one party only was to be allowed.

No evidence has ever been brought to show that the dissolution of the Centre Party was not genuine, or that the Roman Church has since been engaged within Germany in political intrigue. The Church turned to purely spiritual and religious activities. The Centre Party was gone, but 'Catholic Action' remained and was developed. This movement represents an apostolate of the laity which aims at 'the gathering together of Catholic forces for the preservation, propagation, achievement, and vin-

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dication of Catholic principles in personal, family, and social life'. 'Catholic Action', then, is no more and no less political than, for instance, the Social Service Schools and organizations of the various Churches in Great Britain. It has nothing to do with party politics nor with the organizing of any political opposition; but since it is inevitably concerned with the lordship of Christ in every sphere of public life, it is concerned with politics, as any man must be who would apply the Christian ethic to this world's affairs. The Nazi Party is pleased to identify the Centre Party with the Roman Church and to declare that 'Catholic Action' is but the old firm operating under a new name. With the Roman Church as a purely religious organization, the Nazis would say, the National Socialist Party has no quarrel, but 'political Catholicism' it will not tolerate. But in the Third Reich any criticism of Nazi policy or Nazi *Weltanschauung* is in itself political, and the Church could only be non-political in the Nazi sense by abandoning the affairs of this world altogether.

Persecution of the Roman Church

The National Socialist persecution of the Roman Church has passed through various episodes. The first issue was the relation of the young men of the Church to the Hitler Youth. For a time there was hope that the Hitler Youth and the Church Youth Movements might work in some co-operation, or even that some double membership might be possible; but, more especially since the appointment

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anti-Christian. The method by which the Church has been ousted has generally been by bogus popular election. Parents have been asked to vote whether they would prefer a Church school or a national school, and every method of threat and intimidation has been used to secure the desired result. Thus, as a leading bishop complained in his pastoral letter,

‘it is said: officials who should protest against the introduction of the community national school [in place of the Church school] would be dismissed, old age pensioners would lose their pensions, the children of those who had signed the lists [on behalf of the continuance of the Church school] would get no jobs, shopkeepers and tradesmen would be boycotted, workers in factories would run the risk of dismissal. Here and there officials have been asked—even on their oath—whether they themselves or any members of their families had signed the lists. Agents for special streets and blocks of houses frequently went round and paid house to house visits in order to intimidate the women and force them to withdraw their signature. Those who objected are even accused of sabotaging Government measures, of being politically unreliable and hostile to the State. Notice is given of disciplinary measures on the part of Party and State.’

No wonder, therefore, that these bogus elections achieved the purpose of the Party in respect alike of the Protestant and Roman Catholic schools.

1937: The Papal Encyclical

The year 1937 was notable for the issue of the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*.¹ The aged

¹ English translation, *The Persecution of the Church in Germany*, Catholic Truth Society, 2d.

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Pope spoke in no uncertain terms. He complained of 'machinations that from the beginning had no other aim than a war of extermination', of violated agreements, of 'a thousand forms of organized bondage in matters of religion', of 'blasphemies in word, writing, and picture', of those who 'create the impression that leaving the Church, and the disloyalty to Christ the King which it entails, is a particularly convincing and meritorious form of profession of loyalty to the present State'. He denounced the Nazi *Weltanschauung*:

'He who replaces a personal God with a weird impersonal Fate supposedly according to ancient pre-Christian German concepts denies the wisdom and Providence of God. . . . Such a one cannot claim to be numbered among those who believe in God. He who takes the race, or the people, or the State, or the form of Government, the bearers of the power of the State or other fundamental elements of human society—which in the temporal order of things have an essential and honourable place—out of the system of their earthly valuation, and makes them the ultimate norm of all, even of religious, values and deifies them with an idolatrous worship, perverts and falsifies the order of things created and commanded by God. . . . Every positive law, from whatever lawgiver it may come, can be examined as to its moral implications, and consequently as to its moral authority to bind in conscience, in the light of the commandments of the natural law. The laws of man that are in direct contradiction with the natural law bear an initial defect, that no violent means, no outward display of power, can remedy. By this standard must we judge the principle, "What helps the people is right".'

The whole document offers a searching and fundamental criticism of the Nazi philosophy from the Christian standpoint.

1938 : Annexation of Austria; Attitude of the New Pope

The year 1938 was marked by the annexation of Austria, which was immediately followed by an onslaught upon the property and influence of the Austrian Church more rapid and open than the rest of Germany had known. In this year, too, leaders of the Church such as Cardinals Innitzer and Faulhaber, Archbishop Gröber, and Bishop Sproll were the victims of organized violence.

An institution of great importance for the attack on the Churches in Nazi Germany is called *die kochende Volksseele* or 'seething soul of the people'. Train-loads and car-loads of Party members and hired ruffians can be brought to any desired spot in order to demonstrate with violence against a distinguished person objectionable to the Government. The police can be required to take no notice of the rioting, and the offending party can then be punished by the Government as being in himself a danger to the public peace. The 'seething soul of the people' is indiscriminately intolerant of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Social Democrats, and Jews.

At the end of 1938 plans were ready for the liquidation of the Roman Church in Germany. The new Pope on his election secretly summoned all the German Bishops to Rome, suppressed the

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publication of news unfavourable to the Reich, and has obviously been seeking a way out of the *impasse*. His efforts have not prevented the further persecution of the Church; whether they would have had any good result we shall presumably never know.

Nazism and the German Protestants

Much that has been said of the attitude of the Nazi Government to the Roman Church applies also in the case of the Protestants. But the story of the Evangelical Church or Churches has been much more complicated. At the time of the Revolution German Protestantism was divided between Lutherans and Reformed (or Calvinists), and again into many independent regional Churches. Since the Revolution there have been many tendencies, leagues, and parties which have crossed the local and denominational divisions.

The Revolution brought with it a romantic and quasi-religious national revival. It was natural that the Christians should wish to claim the new life for their Master and to divert it into Christian channels. Moreover, it was felt by many that the theology of the Church was rigid, antiquated, and out of touch with the living needs of the new day. Some argued, therefore, that if the new life of the nation was to be won for Christ, the message of the Church must be cast in the terms now current and understood; that is, it must in some degree be recast in terms of Race and Blood and Soil; it must be accommodated, too, in some degree to the anti-Semitism which was a dominating principle of the new régime.

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Those who took this view in an extreme form are the so-called 'German Christians'. They are prepared to swear 'unqualified allegiance' to Herr Hitler and to subject the Church wholly to State control. They accept 'the Aryan Paragraph', repudiate the Old Testament as Scripture, and would interpret Christianity, even the Communion Service, in terms of Blood and Race and Soil. The 'German Christians' are strong in Thuringia, but they are not, and have never been, a numerous party. They have, however, both importance and power because in the course of the Church struggle the intervention of the Nazi Government has given them almost complete control of the official Protestant Church organization throughout the land.

If the 'German Christians' represent the left wing of Protestantism, the right wing are those who stand in unswerving loyalty to the old Confessions of the Church, and who have been profoundly influenced by the teaching of Dr. Karl Barth. They are sometimes called 'the Confessional Church', but the term needs further definition (see p. 24).

Between these two extremes is found the majority of German Protestants. There are innumerable degrees of approximation to, and repulsion from, the 'heresy' of the 'German Christians'. Moreover, the course of the Church struggle has led to varying alignments.

Every department of State in Nazi Germany has its 'leader'. The Government desired, therefore, that the 'leadership-principle' (*Führerprinzip*) should be introduced into the Church. This was the

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occasion of the first dispute between the State and the Protestant Church. Herr Ludwig Müller, an old Army chaplain and friend of Herr Hitler's, was made *Reichsbischof* with plenary powers over the Church. The resistance of the congregations achieved his virtual retirement, but not before by a stroke of the pen he had handed over to the Nazi Party the whole organization of the Youth Work in the Protestant Church.

In May, 1934, there was held a great synod of the Church in Wuppertal-Barmen. It represented substantially the whole Protestant Church of Germany except for the 'German Christians', their warm sympathizers and such pastors and congregations as were in definite opposition to the then dominant influence of Dr. Barth. The Synod declared in memorable terms that the Christian Church rests upon the revelation of God in Christ, and that neither the events of the Nazi Revolution nor the philosophy of the Nazi Party could be regarded as subsidiary sources of revelation:

'Jesus Christ, as He is declared to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God that we must hear, that in life and in death we must trust and obey. We repudiate the false teaching that the Church can and must recognize as a source of its message, in addition to and beside this one Word of God, also other events and powers, figures, and truths as divine revelation.'

At this time German Protestantism spoke with an almost united voice, and the Church that made this declaration is sometimes called the 'Confessional

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Church' as being loyal to the old Confessions of the Reformation.

It should be explained, however, that the term 'Confessional Church' is normally used in a more restricted sense. In later days, when through the interference of the Government acting through the 'German Christians' the organization and constitution of the great Prussian Union Church had been disrupted, the faithful pastors and congregations joined to create a skeleton Provisional Church Government loyal to the standards of the Church. ('Prussia' in this connexion means a very large part of Germany, vastly more than the old kingdom of Prussia.) This organization also admitted individual members from outside Prussia. It is this body which is usually called 'the Confessional Church' in English writings and this which has borne the chief brunt of the persecution.

When the *Reichsbischof*, with his legal assistant Dr. Jaeger, had manifestly failed to settle the Protestant Church question, the Government attempted to find a settlement by means of new Church committees under Dr. Zoellner, a moderate and much respected 'General Superintendent' of the Church. Such questions were at issue as the extreme nationalism of the Government, the quasi-Messianic claims that were made for Herr Hitler, and the anti-Semitic legislation of the Party. The Church was also profoundly disturbed about the overt paganism which had apparent Government support. Though the less compromising pastors such as Dr. Niemöller looked askance at these new committees as repre-

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senting a Trojan horse, Dr. Zoellner might perhaps have united the great bulk of the Protestant Churches had the Government given him a free hand. But the interference of the Secret Police and the official backing for the 'German Christians' made Dr. Zoellner's task impossible. He resigned and died.

Since then the Protestant Front has gradually disintegrated through the action sometimes of the Secret Police and sometimes of the Department of State for Church Affairs. At the time of the Munich crisis, when the Provisional Church Government issued the Service of Intercession to which reference has been made above (p. 10), the Lutheran Bishops of the Regional Churches were persuaded to dissociate themselves from this action of their brethren in Prussia.

Then came the question of the oath of personal allegiance and obedience demanded of the pastors by Herr Hitler, a disturbing and divisive question because the exact relation of this oath to the prior ordination oath received no careful definition, and, once again, those who feared compromise above all things were divided and in part estranged from those who thought that so far as possible they should accept the Government's demands.

Persecution by the Gestapo and by Financial Control

Throughout the whole struggle both Churches have suffered from the constant attentions of the Political Police (Gestapo). Their correspondence has been opened, their telephones have been tapped,

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microphones have been surreptitiously installed in their rooms, their houses have been searched. There is no habeas corpus in Nazi Germany, and the Political or Secret Police are wholly independent of the Ministry of Justice. In unnumbered cases pastors have been arrested, imprisoned, misused, without trial and indeed without the preferment of any charge. The faithful remnant in the Protestant Church has been nearly driven into the catacombs.

In this year up to the outbreak of war, however, the Church has suffered rather from the Department of State for Church Affairs than from the Secret Police. Through the financial powers of this Department the Nazi Party has a stranglehold upon all Church finances. Without Government permission no salary may be paid, no money spent, and no voluntary Church collection taken up. The 'leadership principle' has been surreptitiously introduced into the Church by the autocratic powers given to the higher Church officials who are, to all intents and purposes, Government nominees. Any pastor may now be removed from his office 'for official reasons', and, in effect, the whole of the Church organization and machinery has been handed over to the 'German Christians'. The Bishops of the Regional Lutheran Churches have cut themselves off from the stalwarts in Prussia and in varying degree have accepted the Government control of the Church. The position of the so-called 'Provisional Church Government' has been made almost impossible. When war broke out, many of its leaders, it is believed, were in prison,

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others were forbidden to travel or to speak in public, others had been dismissed from office; their theological training institutions had been suppressed by the police, their ordinations were unrecognized, and their younger pastors almost penniless.

News that has come since the outbreak of war suggests that the State is making yet another effort at once to unify and control the Church. An Emergency Committee of four has apparently been set up to manage Protestant Church affairs. At the head of this is Dr. Werner, whose recent decrees have gone so far to 'Nazify' the constitution of the Church. His colleagues are a Dr. Hymmen, who is presumably legal adviser to the Committee, Bishop Schultz of Schwerin, a somewhat unbalanced and extreme 'German Christian', and, surprisingly, Dr. Marahrens, Bishop of Hanover, who was one of the Church leaders participating in the Barmen Synod, but who since then seems to have compromised more and more with the demands of the Nazi Government. Whether the national peril will lead to a calling off of the Church persecution or to a treatment of the 'Confessional Church' as treasonable to the State we cannot tell.

The New Paganism in Germany

By blandishments and by promises, by threats and by persecution, the State has attempted to bring the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches into line with the régime. Meanwhile within the Party and even openly a new pagan cult has been developing. The Church has had to meet not only

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the 'heresy' of Herr Rosenberg and of the 'German Christians' but also the fostering of a romantic neo-heathenism by responsible members and organs of the Party. At the Nordic Festival of the Summer Solstice in 1938, for instance, Herr Julius Streicher, editor of the notorious *Stürmer* and Herr Hitler's personal friend (who seems since the declaration of war to have been arrested by Marshal Göring), addressed a vast concourse of Germans on the Hesselberg, a mountain declared sacred by the Führer. Standing by a great bonfire, he said:¹

'We need no men in black to whom to make our confessions, that we may gain strength for the coming year. When we look into the flames of this holy fire and throw our sins into them, we can descend from this mountain with clean souls. We do not need priests and pastors. We have become our own priests. We approach nearer to God after climbing this mountain. Let people abroad criticize our worship as much as they like. The fact remains that God has always accompanied Germany on her way, even thousands of years before there were prophets or churches. The time will come when Germans will climb the sacred mountain not once a year but whenever they feel the need of worship which formerly drove them into the churches. Be beautiful, godlike, and natural.'

It would, perhaps, be a mistake to take very seriously this frank heathenism, except in so far as it might easily ally itself with the anti-Christianity of Moscow. The danger that Christianity itself be paganized in the service of National Socialism is

¹ See *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* for 27 June 1938.

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probably much greater. The real attitude of the State to the Christian Churches was revealed in a well-attested speech delivered privately at a Party gathering at Nürnberg in 1938 by Herr Alfred Rosenberg. He said:

‘In replying to various questions relating to our attitude towards the Churches I wish to emphasize that my replies are in harmony with the Führer’s opinions on this very complicated subject. There are hot-heads amongst us who would like to compel the Führer simply to root out the Catholic and the Protestant Confessional Churches just as we have the Bolshevik parties. Now, apart from the fact that the prohibition of these parties was by no means synonymous with the extirpation of Marxism from the thought and feeling of our people—a point we can note every day—we must remember that the international position of the Catholic Church calls for very careful tactics on our part towards that Church. Every attack upon the Church affects international relations and can intensify the difficulties of a position which is already serious enough. That the Catholic Church and also the Confessional Church in their present form must disappear from the life of our People is my full conviction, and I believe I am entitled to say that this is also our Führer’s viewpoint. . . . We have already gone far ahead in permeating the German Youth with the National Socialist philosophy of life. Whatever still functions of the Catholic Youth Movement is nothing more than various fractional groups which will be absorbed in the course of time. The Hitler Youth Organization is an absorbent sponge which nothing can withstand. Furthermore, the development of our teaching scheme in schools of all categories is of such an anti-Christian-Jewish type that the growing generation will be forewarned against the

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blackcoat swindle. And you should also remember that even in the Catholic Church there are sincere Germans working as priests, who are utterly devoted to the National Socialist philosophy. With their help we shall occupy the last—and, I admit, extremely solid—positions of the Church. But we have another means of pressure also, and that is the financial one. But here also we must proceed prudently, although systematically, so as to cut the financial arteries supplying those clergy whom we cannot win over.’

It is fair and necessary to take this utterance as representing the mind and policy of the Party.

The Fundamental Clash between Nazism and Christianity

All political questions are at bottom theological. The clash between National Socialism and the Christian Church rests upon the incompatibility of two views of the world, two conceptions of God, two ‘anthropologies’. In National Socialism there are no ultimate, universal standards. Right is defined as that which accords with the demands of the people’s soul; law has no basis in an ethic binding upon man as man; what Germans wish is right, what Germans think is true; there is no transcendent God whose Law is universal, whose Love knows no favouritism and no limits. The Church struggle in Germany is of no merely ephemeral interest. It raises in an acute form an issue which both National Socialism and Bolshevism present to every country. What is to be the foundation of our European civilization? Both Germany and

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Russia as represented by their Governments have repudiated the moral standards and the moral sanctions upon which for a thousand years what we call the civilized world has rested. National Socialism in Germany is doomed, for Herr Hitler's régime will not survive the war. Germany, as we may suppose, will either go Bolshevist or revert to Christendom. It is this idea of Christendom which now appears not as a mere dream of the Middle Age but as the burning issue of our time.

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