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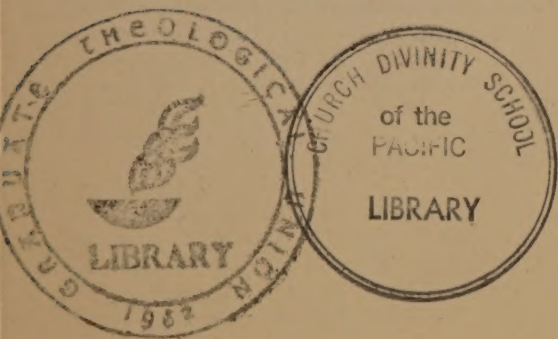
THE ORDEAL OF THE GERMAN CHURCH

BY

DR. ARTHUR FREY

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
DR. KARL BARTH

TRANSLATED BY
J. STRATHEARN McNAB



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE ordeal of the German Evangelical Church is as severe as it has ever been. Many people have the impression that the worst is past. They are mistaken. They are mistaken because the German Government wants them to be mistaken. It was partly because Niemöller had such a good press abroad and by his utterances kept the open sore of the Church so prominently before the outside world that, at the risk of a temporary sensation, he had to be put out of the way. With diabolical ingenuity and under cover of legality (laws never intended to apply to the Church being pressed into service) a campaign of suppression is being carried on—so successfully that it is confidently felt that little else remains to be done, and that it is only a matter of time till the Church will disappear. The young people have been secured, the machinery has been captured, the old confirmed Christians can be allowed to die off and the new generation will grow up apart from the alien influence of the Christian religion.

As long as Christianity remains Christianity and as long as National Socialism remains National Socialism conflict is inevitable. The totalitarian National Socialist *Weltanschauung* is a pagan faith that cannot but regard Christianity as alien and antagonistic. This book makes that very plain.

Another point that it makes plain is that this Church conflict is not a domestic German matter. In Germany forces have come to a head that are present everywhere throughout Christendom. The ideas of the "German Christians" have their counterparts in the Churches of Britain and America, but there the different elements

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that compose contemporary Christian culture remain interfused. No crisis has arisen to isolate them. We can still remain comfortably vague about many things just because we have not thought them out. The German conflict calls us and helps us to see just where we stand. And it must be apparent that we should be well advised to think these things out, not merely for the sake of intellectual clarity and theological integrity, but, practically, because the crisis that has confronted the Church in Germany is certainly—if with some superficial differences of form—going sooner or later to confront us here. Germany has no monopoly of paganism and it is not the habit of paganism always to remain passive and non-aggressive.

A word about words. National Socialism is not a mere form of government; it is, as its exponents are never done telling us, a *Weltanschauung*. This is a word which is untranslatable, and if it had not occurred so frequently I should have set it down untranslated. I have used for it consistently the word "world-view", and the reader will know that he is really reading about *Weltanschauung*, a word meaning a general view of things that affects every department of life. Of the various National Socialistic "technical" terms the one of most frequent occurrence is "Volk" in its various permutations and combinations. In the circumlocutions used to express these, "People" with a capital is usually employed to indicate that the reference is to that mystical entity, *das Volk*. On occasion, following Professor Roberts, I have allowed myself the not very beautiful, but useful neologism, "folkic".

Dr. Frey's statement that he is dispensing with footnotes has been allowed to stand, for he has provided none. But for the convenience of British readers one or two brief explanatory notes have been added.

J.S.M.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THE Translator and the Publisher have asked me to write a Foreword for the English edition of this book. I am grateful for the request, since I want to tell the British public that I regard the contents of this book as both true and important. Besides, I am glad to have the opportunity of saying a few words myself on the subject. It is impossible to set often enough or forcibly enough before the eyes of the Churches and the Christians of other lands what is taking place during these years in Germany. The Evangelical Church in Germany has become silent to the outside world. Anything that it told foreign countries about its situation would incur the suspicion, and be quickly followed by the accusation, of high treason. In view of this all those beyond the German frontiers who know the truth about Germany, have the duty of speaking out loudly and clearly. Dr. Arthur Frey has—not only in this book—made that his special task. I should like to be associated with him—all the more since I am at one with him in holding that the German Church Question is a question directed to all Churches, to the whole Christian Church.

British readers will be glad to hear first of all something about the *author* of this book. Since 1931 Dr. Frey has been head of the Swiss Evangelical Press

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Service in Zurich. He is not a theologian but has passed from very different spheres into his preoccupation with theological and Church affairs. Born in 1897, he turned first to commerce, then later studied economic science in Zurich. The reader of this book would certainly never have suspected that the author's thesis for his doctorate, published in 1922, had for its subject: "Meat Price Policy in Switzerland during the World War, 1914-1918." Dr. Frey was afterwards editor of a political daily in Frauenfeld in the Canton of Thurgau and President of the Democratic Party of this Canton. I may further divulge—since I know that people in Britain are interested in these things—that he is an expert exponent of and an authority on the national form of wrestling, which is certainly not unknown to some travellers in Switzerland. To see him is to see a type characteristic of our country, a man whose healthy robustness, whose resolute gait, expression and utterance, whose poise and self-possession would seem to point rather to a solid preoccupation with the varied realities of this world than to theological and ecclesiastical interests. But appearances are often deceptive. I do not know, I admit, whether Dr. Frey has anything like a conversion behind him. That is something we have never discussed. A calm sobriety and a practical interest have characterized his mind and his bearing right up to this day. One thing I do know, however, and that is that at the first encounter I realized I had become acquainted with a man who obviously had read and reflected to an astonishing extent on theological and ecclesiastical

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matters and who in this field had won the right to independent judgment—a man with whom I could converse on a basis on which it is possible to converse with not many theologians. And then I saw how in the difficulties and temptations involved in the work of the Swiss Evangelical Press Service he showed not only a remarkable expertness, but real intuition for essentials, and calm decision in face of all requirements. These qualities will be perceived by the reader in this book on the German Church Conflict. If only we had among the non-theological members of our Churches more who were endowed with such gifts of discrimination and decision! And if only we had among the theologians more who, as a matter of course, expended as much energy in getting down to fundamentals in all their thinking and speaking!—But let us come to our *subject*.

—It is one of the characteristics of this book that the author has seen and presented the problems, the actors and the incidents in the conflict *simply*, so to speak, as a woodcut. This must not be taken, too lightly, as a reproach. As a matter of fact, the situation in Germany is extraordinarily simple. Just here, in all important questions, it is possible to answer with a plain Yes or No. The enemies of the Gospel have grasped that better than many of its friends. In the camp of the latter one of the great troubles to this very day is just that so many estimable people are continually busy with the attempt, in face of the decisive question put to them, with unequivocal clarity, by the attitude of their adversaries—and by the Word of God!—to withdraw by means

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of some profound religious, historical, or philosophical perception, into a siding where they can escape saying Yes or No. All the results that they have achieved up to now have proved useless and dangerous. People abroad also, if they adopted this way of looking at things, would only make their understanding of the matter more difficult for themselves. The realities of the German situation to-day—and not only Dr. Frey's presentation of them!—form a wood-cut. One can only rejoice that Dr. Frey has been simple enough to see and present a simple thing simply!

The proof that the Church question in Germany is a question simply put and to be answered simply is to be found in developments during the last six months, that is in the period since the first German edition of this book appeared. These developments have brought about such a deterioration of the situation as could only be surpassed on the part of the National Socialist State by the outbreak of open persecution of the Church loyal to the Gospel—and correspondingly, on the part of the Church, by a steadfast continuance of suffering.

In Germany to-day things have got to the pass that the Word of God can no more be freely preached. He who still does preach it must be prepared to face not only rude public depreciation and scorn, but also supervision and spying from public authorities and their countless organs watching for chances to interfere. Nor can the Word of God in Germany to-day any longer be freely heard, at any rate by those countless people who are in a dependent position as

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officials of the State or as members or functionaries of the Nationalist Socialist Party. Teachers in lower and higher schools cannot any longer mention the Christian faith in its Biblical form without endangering their position. The Church Press and the publication of Church and theological literature are subjected to all kinds of restrictions and interferences. It cannot be maintained that the Church is in a position to contest publicly the threat which is being made to its very being and substance, to declare and defend its message, to contest fairly, that is, with the same weapons with which it is being attacked, the nonsense and the injustice its attackers use against it. The Church's work amongst youth is condemned to impotence by the competing youth organizations of the National Socialist Party which are supported with all the resources of the State. Even the supply of future ministers is threatened at its source by the removal from the Theological Faculties of almost all teachers prepared to champion the Confession and by the substitution for them of youngsters attached to the will of the Government and so, more or less, to the new alien faith. And when the Church tried to make up for this by instituting its own Theological Schools, these free foundations were suppressed by the police and forbidden. It is made impossible for those ministers and Churches loyal to the Confession, without breaking the law, to take counsel together and to come to decisions. The law against the Communists has been brought into operation against the organs of a free provisional Church Government, its offices plundered and closed. The Churches have been prohibited from

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making collections; such collections have been confiscated, snatched away in the middle of Public Worship and from the Communion Table. A number of ministers—a number that has become immense—who were bold enough to resist all this have been relieved of their office or expelled from their parishes and provinces, or prohibited from public utterance, or punished with shorter or longer imprisonment. Martin Niemöller has been in prison since 1st July, 1937, without that trial of which he was at one time notified in such loud tones!¹ On the other hand, the widest possible latitude is given in Germany today to all the propaganda that is carried on in favour of the heathenism of the new State religion and against the Church and Christianity. This propaganda has at its service, directly and indirectly, the whole of the political Press, which, in regard to all that it has to say and has not to say, is subject to the most meticulous direction. It has at its service the whole of the adult educational system carried on in the various subordinate organizations of the Party, and that of the young people in the famous "Hitler Youth" and its female parallels—and more and more the instruction, even the so-called religious instruction, of the public schools. It has at its service the proclamations of the highest leaders of Party and State, of whom one of the worst is that man, at heart an utter stranger to the Church, who in the autumn of 1935 was made "Church Minister". One hears sometimes that the barracks of the Reichwehr form a region that is

¹ This was, of course, written by Dr. Barth before the recent trial. See p. 203.

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relatively little touched by this propaganda. But it would not seem to be advisable to build too great hopes on that. The exception—if such it be—proves the rule: an advance is being made all along the line with the proclamation of the religion of the German Myth which Dr. Frey has described as the special Nazi form of that deterioration of Christianity that is taking place in the modern world. With this goes on an almost unexampled dissemination of hatred and contempt for the foundation Christian verities. And I repeat: At the same time every means is being employed to make the Church powerless, defenceless, even speechless. Against this campaign it is actively hindered from uttering publicly and effectively so much as a word.

Therefore there is to-day no longer any possibility of doubt. A simple Yes or an equally simple No meets the situation, at any rate in regard to the Nazi Church policy.

On the other hand, in this very situation the Church in Germany has begun in a way not attempted for a very long time, to think out what it stands for as Church and to confess its faith before men. It is notorious that the political change of the year 1933 meant for it above all a serious temptation. The Church had almost unanimously welcomed the Hitler regime with real confidence, indeed, with the highest hopes. Christians of all shades were in the front ranks of those who saw in National Socialism salvation for Germany. Salvation, also, from the atheism of Russian Bolshevism. To-day that has got to be expressly stated, in view of the fact that one of the

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favourite reproaches against the Church in Germany has been that it is a refuge and covert for enmity and rebellion against the new form of State, an assemblage of reactionary or revolutionary elements, a cell of that internationalism so odious to the present regime and its *Weltanschauung*. I, personally, always wished that the Church should have recognized earlier the demonic nature of National Socialism, of its dictatorship, of the merciless methods of its dictatorship against hundreds of thousands of people, of its radically anti-Christian totalitarianism, instead of taking up a position at the start upon its platform. I can therefore testify all the more strongly that the resistance of the Church, at any rate at first, had nothing whatever to do with a resistance to the new political system, but that it only subsequently developed into that much against its own will, when this system began unambiguously to reveal itself as a religious system, as the system of the Church of a new revelation and of a new faith, when the Nazi State began to force this religion of its own upon the Christian Church, and to use its organs to suppress the Church's resistance to this adulteration of its substance. Had that not happened, the Church in Germany would probably be standing in the same relationship to the government—indeed, if possible, the relationship might have been still more positive—as the English and Scottish Churches have for long stood to the British Crown and the British realm. The Church in Germany opposes and resists the government there because it can do nothing else, because otherwise it would inevitably cease to be a Christian Church,

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because to its sorrow this government allows it but the one choice, to be obedient *either* to it *or* to God revealing Himself in Jesus Christ. Therefore, although its opposition has to-day by an inevitable process taken on a political significance, it is really nothing else than Evangelical faith and profession asserting and maintaining themselves in face of the attempt to falsify the faith and ultimately supplant it with another alien faith.

It is for this maintenance of the Christian faith that the so-called "Confessional Church" has come into being in Germany. But that would never have been possible, if there had not previously been taking place, in Churches and amongst ministers far and wide, something in the nature of a rebirth of Christian faith through the one power capable of that, the Word of God. In the trials and temptations of these years the Church in Germany has had to learn and has indeed learned, during a long period of shifts and confusions, to look away from these and to turn back anew to its true original foundations, to the Holy Scriptures and to the doctrine of the Reformers. In doing so it has experienced that it is itself free, strong and alive in the measure in which it dared to hold to its Lord alone and to His own Word, in opposition to the new bonds with which it was threatened, as well as in opposition to so many traditional elements belonging to that Babylonian captivity from which it had already suffered for centuries. In present day Germany where it is so despised, the Bible is being more diligently and more attentively read, both by theologians and non-theologians, and its Word is mak-

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ing itself more mightily heard than perhaps has been the case since the sixteenth century. Faith in God's revelation in Jesus Christ, now that it is so contested, has become a precious thing. Trouble has taught men to pray. The "Victorian" times when it paid to make at least public profession of Churchmanship are past so far as Germany is concerned, and so conventional Christians have become far far fewer. Instead, those who to-day call themselves Christians know better what they are doing and what it means for them. The situation depicted in St. Matthew's Gospel, Chapter X, the confession of the Gospel and the consolation of the Gospel which were tested of old in law courts and prison cells, have taken new forms in Germany. To find oneself for the sake of the Gospel seated on one bench with bicycle thieves, panders and Communists, has become in contemporary Germany a daily possibility, one that is hard certainly, but according to the testimony of many, one that is also fruitful and happy, because on the Gospel view, natural. And need it be told that, the more clearly the Christian faith is now again recognized, the more violently it is contested and oppressed from without, it is the more earnestly preached and the more gladly heard by those who find themselves in this situation.

But it would be a mistake to paint too heroic a picture of the Confessional Church. It would be a mistake to look too long and intensely at what men have done and what men have omitted to do in the Church in Germany. Of a surety much is lacking. The fight for the new understanding of the Gospel

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and for freedom in the consistent profession of it is not being carried on everywhere with equal insight and discrimination. Confusion and harm have again and again been caused by efforts at a compromise which were in principle odious and in practice useless, but in which the Confessional Church frequently believed that it was called to engage with greater or less zeal. One need but think of all that is connected with the name Marahrens and of the system of Church Committees. In the ranks of the Confessional Church there are on occasion false brothers, and there are manifestly and decidedly weak brothers. These weak brothers are often very hard to put up with since they are in their own eyes the strong, as representing a deeper piety and a superior wisdom—sometimes for no better reason than that at the moment they possess the actual power. Temptations to disloyalty crop up, one might almost say, every day, for the men in responsible positions, as for each individual Christian. What could be expected then but daily defeats? But what is in question in the German Church Conflict is neither the strength nor the weakness of those who confess the Gospel, but, according to the repeated testimony of the brethren in Germany—and here again the question on this side also is put simply and to be answered simply—the grace of the Word of God, which is strong enough to make His work victorious with the strong and with the weak, and even without them, yes, even against them. Where would the confessing Christians, both strong and weak, have been, where would the Confessional Church have been if God's Word had not entered the

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field in the Germany of these years, if it had not itself carried out its gracious work among men? Because the work of those who confess the Gospel can do no more than subserve the work of God's grace, so this work cannot be hindered or destroyed by the work of its enemies. The German Islam—without exaggeration one can say, the German Bolshevism—of the present day does not know that in fighting the Confessional Church it has really to do with the Word of God, and therefore with an opponent on which it will sooner or later, throwing in all its forces, break its teeth. Had it known, it would never have taken up this struggle. To its own destruction it was allowed to undertake this conflict. But it is already possible to say that, not with its will, it has become the instrument for wakening the Church from sleep, leading it back to the sources of its being, educating it to a new confidence in the court of appeal which alone deserves the confidence of man and in which the Church alone can have confidence, a confidence which will assuredly not be deceived even in the greatest troubles. Because National Socialism has done that for the Church, there are to-day many in Germany—in quite another sense than in 1933—grateful for its coming. They would not like to be back in the peace of a Church which has perhaps been lulled by that peace into forgetting that it is a Church and why it is a Church!

But it is just here that the fight of the Evangelical Church in Germany becomes a serious question put to the Churches of the rest of the world. May it be given to Dr. Frey's book to be read in Britain not

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merely as news of a distant fight in which the reader shares merely as benevolent, interested spectator. None can tell whether the situation which has arisen in Germany between Church and State will be repeated in other lands. There are good grounds for thinking that for example in Britain and in Switzerland, this is out of the question for as long as one can conceive. Yet there is this to be said, that so little as five years ago this situation would have been described as absolutely impossible in Germany also! And the question which the German Church Conflict is addressing to the other Churches holds independently of whether similar developments will or will not take place elsewhere. Stated generally it is the question as to the unity and community of the Churches of the whole world. It is the question put all at once not theoretically but practically, as to the œcumenical cohesion of the one Church of Jesus Christ. It is surely impossible that when one Evangelical Church has been plunged into a life and death struggle, when it is faced at once with the greatest distress and the greatest promise, the other Churches, preoccupied with their own cares and joys, carry on as if nothing had happened. That is impossible, for one thing, because the Church in question is the Church in Germany in which the Reformation had its origin, and from which since that time (for good or ill!) so many influences potent for all Churches have radiated. It was certainly a mistake on the part of the Confessional Church—even if full weight is given to the reason mentioned earlier—to keep so silent in relation to the outside world and to fail to summon us with

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immensely greater energy to take our share of responsibility, too, on our consciences. But we have learned from other sources too much about German circumstances on both sides of the conflict to escape the summons to accept this responsibility. We have every reason, on the basis of what we know, to define our position and to define it much more strictly, plainly and stringently than was done in the summer of 1937 at the Œcumenical Conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh. The outer difficulties that could hinder us from doing that are certainly not insurmountable. There is, however, a very serious inner difficulty: that these experiences do not lie within the realm of the possible to-day so far as most Churches—except perhaps in certain mission fields—are concerned. Profession of the Gospel within a political and social order that is hostile to it and is fighting against it, perseverance in this profession and suffering for the sake of it—these are to them quite unreal ideas. They will not be able to take up any useful attitude to German conditions without first of all submitting to the question whether, and to what extent, they themselves, in doctrine and order, are part of the real genuine Church of Jesus Christ. They will probably make the discovery that they too need above all to go back to the sources of Evangelical faith in a completely different way—avoiding the aberrations of which they too were not innocent in these last centuries—and so learn anew to be a Church under the Word of God. Certainly it is too much to demand of them that they should carry out a radical revision and correction of their position within a couple of

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days. But this can be asked of them at once: they must see to it that the facts of the German Church Conflict put the *problem* of such a revision and correction on their agenda and that no delay be permitted in having it examined and thrashed out. It cannot be indifferent to them that, in relation to the Christian message, State and society—with which they are at present and will perhaps be for long permitted to live at peace—are evidently quite as capable of adopting that attitude of hostility. In that case the Christian message has no choice but to become as simple and as unequivocal in respect of its content, in respect of the truths on which it is based, as the Confessional Church in the six statements of the Barmen Synod of 1934 (of which Dr. Frey prints the text¹). The Churches of the world will have to examine the question whether they are to go on working with principles, in regard to both doctrine and order, which, as is seen from the German example, prove themselves in the hour of need to be nothing better than broken reeds. But it will not be possible just to fold the hands in the lap till this examination is undertaken and while it is going on. This examination will only be able to be fruitful if it is sustained by *prayer*. And this is really the first and the most important thing which is required of the Churches abroad; in their prayers they must not leave the Church in Germany alone. Looking at Germany they must *ask*—that the Church in its perilous position may not only be steadfast, but may go on, faithful and undaunted, on the path it is treading! That the

¹ See page 149.

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many afflicted may again and again be consoled and the many oppressed strengthened! That the countless wanderers may have no rest in their error, but may recognize the truth anew and return to the peace of the truth! That the wavering may more and more be deprived of every possibility of consoling themselves with hollow compromises, and that they may ultimately become as adamant as God's Word demands of its preachers and hearers in the hour of temptation! That the political chiefs in Germany may change their minds, renounce the folly of totalitarianism, learn again to fear God, and give freedom to the Church, or that in some other way they may be made innocuous! But looking at Germany they must also give *thanks*—that the wicked will of the Church's opponents has not so far turned out to be for the Church's harm but for its welfare! That the Grace of the Word of God, far from ceasing, has become amid the darkness of present-day Germany, to such a remarkable degree, more potent! That there has been vouchsafed to the Church in Germany, right in the midst of its grievous trials, so much new knowledge, so good a Confession! That up to now a power, which has all means at its disposal and knows how to use them, has not succeeded in breaking through the apparently so thin lines of resistance of the Christian conscience! That in the Church in Germany even in 1937 a happy Christmas was able to be celebrated! That we could witness an Evangelical Church proving that modern secularism, about which we were so concerned a short time ago, does not have the last word even in the twentieth century;

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that now, in our present and not just as a matter of past history, we are permitted to see something of that faith which is the victory that overcometh the world. And looking at Germany, should not our prayer have to be also a prayer of *repentance*? Surely we have cause to be ashamed of ourselves in the sight of God. We have but to think of the apostasy from the faith of the Bible and of our fathers, of the bad, weak theology of which all the Churches of the world are guilty, and with which they have all contributed to the affliction which has now fallen especially on the German Church! We have but to think of the remarkable passivity with which the political world has accepted the suppression of the Church in Russia, and with which it now appears to be willing to accept that of the Church in Germany, without the Churches having so far done anything worth mentioning in opposition to this indifference! We have but to think of the iniquitous Treaty of Versailles, against which the Churches in the victorious powers never raised, as they ought, a word of protest, a Treaty whose evil effects have driven Germany along the desperate ways, including also the way of godlessness, which we see it travelling to-day! We have but to think of the strange torpor, of the totally inappropriate, because unspiritual, diplomacy, with which up to now the Churches of the world—even the various œcumenical councils—have handled the German Church question! . . . So the prayer in which the Churches of the world must to-day unite themselves with the Church in Germany does not lack variety of content. And if they do that, it cannot but be that by such

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prayer they are confronting themselves with the problem of their own existence and therefore with the problem of the revision and correction of their own foundations, and that means that they are at once driven to active work at these things.

But the presupposition of all this is that the other Churches of the world should be better acquainted with this German Church question than has been the case in the past. The book of Dr. Frey will help towards that. All who read it attentively will know enough to be able to think as participants in the German Church Conflict. What is to be desired is that, following them, the widest circles in the Churches should be constrained to enter—and this could not happen too quickly—into this *participation*, until these Churches themselves (and their official leaders and societies!) come into this inner and outer movement; for, so far as I see, the most urgent thing which Christianity in the whole world needs to-day is just that this movement go on and grow in strength.

KARL BARTH.

PREFATORY NOTE TO SWISS EDITION

ONE day, when the historical results of the present struggle of the Evangelical Church in Germany will be to some extent visible in their completed shape, there will be a great deal of investigating and pondering to do over the grounds and the significance of the struggle. No one can tell what new aspects will open up as it runs its course. The book of Dr. Frey cannot and does not attempt to forestall the more comprehensive and penetrating presentation which will be possible to the future historian, free to survey the whole field. This is the work of a man who himself participates in these uncompleted proceedings. He wants as a participant to set before himself and others how out of yesterday's situation everything inevitably developed in just such a way, and also what is at issue to-day. It is already possible to make such an attempt; enough has happened to permit of a provisional reckoning. And such an attempt is necessary; all that has happened and all that goes on daily cry out for consideration of the "Whence?" and the "Whither?" This consideration is dependent on a provisional reckoning such as is offered in this book for the benefit of those who have not had the opportunity of forming for themselves a coherent picture of the events.

The reader will observe right from the first line

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of the book to the last, that the author himself actually participates in the German Church Conflict.

He is not a German, but a Swiss living in Switzerland. But from time immemorial there have been German things in which good Swiss had to, wished to, and were able to, participate with the utmost earnestness, while at the same time perhaps countless Germans knew little or nothing at all about them. What is taking place to-day in the German Evangelical Church belongs to these things. It is an idea that lies outside the pale of discussion that the political frontier should allow us to treat this matter as something foreign to us, to be left in the hands of those on the other side—or that the frontier should allow those on the other side to demand of us “Non-Intervention”. The trials and sufferings of the Church in Germany affect every Swiss who is a real live member of his Evangelical Church, in exactly the same way as if he himself were a German. It is out of this solidarity that the author has reflected and written about these German affairs. Would that everyone on the other side of the frontier were as deeply concerned as he! And may he succeed in making it clear to some amongst ourselves that in this cause we share in a responsibility which we cannot refuse and from which we cannot allow anybody to debar us.

The author is certainly not even a Swiss theologian, but by profession a political economist. But here, too, he cannot be blamed for interference. The Church is not a minister's preserve, but is the affair of the congregation. And in the congregation the

PREFATORY NOTE TO SWISS EDITION

difference between theologians and non-theologians—the word “layman” should be condemned to complete oblivion in the Evangelical realm—can only be a technical, not a fundamental, difference. That applies also to questions of doctrine about which rightly this book is specially concerned. And even the technical difference disappears in the moment when the non-theologian gives practical proof that in regard to theological matters he is so well informed and has reflected on them so deeply that he has something to say. If I see aright, Dr. Frey in this book has probably something that is new and worthy of consideration, even for some ministers. At any rate his book has this to be said for it, that it carries out in an impressive way the duty of the non-theologian in the Church not only to listen, but—when he has “the goods”—to let his voice be heard.

It is clear, as the author says in his Preface, where his heart lies; that is another mark of his active participation in what he writes about. He has taken up a definite position; unambiguously and without reservation he has decided—for and against. Not only is this taken amiss in Germany by those to whose aims and actions he has said No, but in Switzerland also and elsewhere by all those who along with them are indirectly affected and also actually meant. And beyond them, perhaps especially in Switzerland, by all those of our intellectuals who regard our neutrality as consisting essentially in this, that everywhere the cultured Swiss has to be as much as possible the cleverer, and therefore—has not to come to a decision! Now, the German Church Conflict belongs to those

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things—and this is something that these clever people have got to accept—which no one can see and understand in their reality, who wants to go sneaking to some middle point and keep everything in reserve. Even in later quieter times (if such should be in store for us!) no one will be able to understand and depict this conflict who is not at heart a fellow-combatant (for or against!). Objectivity is in all essential matters something which is to be had only at the price of the completest surrender of subjectivity. Anyone who wants to study the material statements of this book, can do it quietly. But my desire is that it be read as it has been written: as the call of one who has himself heard and answered the call.

KARL BARTH.

BASEL.

July, 1937.

PREFACE

ONLY one aim was possible in carrying out the Publisher's commission to write a book about the struggle of the Evangelical Church in Germany, and that was to confine oneself to setting forth the points at issue in the conflict. There could be no question of giving a survey of all that has taken place in the Evangelical Church in Germany since 1933. All that could be attempted was to show what are the powers and the spiritual currents with which the Church there is in conflict. If this book is helpful towards an understanding of the contest it will have fulfilled its purpose.

The story of what went before has been treated very briefly, only sufficient being given to show how and why the present conflict has arisen. On the other hand, the various "fronts" which are to-day struggling with each other, have been described with greater fullness. If the author betrays here where his sympathies lie, he craves pardon. For all that his statement is, he dare maintain, strictly objective.

The sensation-seeker will lay down the book in disappointment. The matters at issue are too serious for one to allow oneself to be enticed into making

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an exhibition of specially painful and distressing events such as are so frequent in this conflict.

To enable the book to be read easily, notes and references have been dispensed with.

THE AUTHOR.

ZURICH.

July, 1937.

CHAPTER ONE

FAITH IN MAN AND PEOPLE

WHO would have thought thirty years ago that Christianity could ever again in Europe be attacked by governments and downrightly opposed as an enemy of the people? For many this is a fact so incredible that they cannot grasp it. Therefore, they do not yet take the Church's struggle in Germany seriously, but hope that the oppression of the Church there is only an aberration, a transitory phenomenon.

Certainly events in Russia gave and give cause for serious thought. It is now almost twenty years since there flared up that fight of the Soviet power against the Church which to this day has not ceased. But could anyone have the effrontery to compare Germany with Russia? Could anyone imagine that things which might be accepted in half-Asiatic Russia as at least partly understandable could possibly happen in the German Reich with its high spiritual and cultural development? Germany—that means in its plainest and proudest sense, Europe. That means in some sense, ourselves, in so far as we feel ourselves united with the spiritual life of Germany. *Quo vadis?* Upon what road do we find ourselves travelling when such things are possible, and are actually taking place in Germany?

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But the situation is not so hard to understand, if the development of the last two hundred years is kept in mind. Unheard of disillusionment must to-day be the portion of anyone who put his faith in man and humanity. Fictions and illusions that have become dear will have to be painfully discarded. But the fruits which we are garnering to-day will not be so surprising to the man who recognizes that what has been taking place during these last centuries was not so much continued progress as a separation of man from God.

The history of the world and of the Church during these last centuries teaches us in an extraordinarily emphatic way the truth that is stated on the first pages of the Bible: the creature has severed himself from his Creator. He has cut the bonds that fettered him to God. The centre of the world is not occupied by the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord over life and death, but man has stepped into that position. This is man's sin—that he himself wants to be Lord and God in his world, thereby becoming, to his own destruction, an offender against the authority of the real Lord and God. But the history of the world and of the Church during these centuries teaches us further, that time and again the Church itself has been in danger of becoming servant to the world, i.e. to this man who rebels against God; has been in danger of giving up its job, and instead, of settling down only too comfortably in the world, and so condemning itself to impotence. For a Church so secularized will no longer have anything to offer to the world. What is there for her to offer, when she can

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no longer offer the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If she substitutes for the Gospel human opinions and ideals, and goes in for letting the world renew her, then it is all up with her. She enters into the relativity of all that takes place on earth and becomes subject to the secular powers. And that is what has actually happened to the Church in these centuries. She is in the gravest danger of no longer being the salt of the earth, and so of being thrown away and trodden under the feet of the men whom she wanted to please. That is the great background of the German Church Conflict.

The Christian Church was given in the sixteenth century a Reformation, that is, a renewal. She recognized anew that she had no right to base herself on anything else than on the Word revealed in Jesus Christ, and she cleansed herself from foreign elements which, in the course of developments taking place in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, had forced their way into her. Properly speaking, she did not cleanse herself, but let herself be cleansed. For the Reformation was the renewal of the Church not by men, but by the divine Word. The Holy Scriptures cleansed the Church. Through study of the Holy Scriptures it was recognized that God alone is holy, that we men have sinned, but that we have been saved by God's grace in Jesus Christ. "Glory to God alone!" That as a fact, and as a command, dominated the proclamation of the Genevan Reformer, John Calvin. And with new liberating power the old message of the divine grace, of the mercy with which the Son of God took all human guilt upon Himself and reconciled

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men with the Father, dawned upon men. Likewise Martin Luther in Germany bore testimony to justification by faith alone, on the strength of which despair was supplanted by "comforted despair". And on this basis it could not but be that there was a new power and a new earnestness in the proclamation and in the recognition of the might of the divine commandments, compelling a reconstruction of private and public life. "Harkening to the Word of God, that alone will set you right again," was Huldrych Zwingli's call to the Swiss. The world listened. It was inevitable that for the world also the renewal of the Church by the Word of God was of immediate importance.

Calvin's doctrine of the Church has had a political influence which even to-day is far from exhausted, the scope of which in its entirety will perhaps only become visible in the future. And the Reformation idea of vocation gave a mighty impulse even to economic life. No longer in monasticism, in flight from the world, was to be found the life well-pleasing to God, but, on the contrary, in work within the world. A man is acting according to the will of God if he fulfils the task given to him in the world. He restrains his impulses and subjects himself to a discipline—which should be stricter than all monastic rules—not in the special works of a self-chosen piety, but in the divine service of everyday life, as that takes on new meanings in the light of the Sunday of divine grace. In this way the Reformation released unsuspected energies which could not but further and did further decisively social and cultural develop-

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ment. The difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant states became so great that even protagonists of Romanism like Austria ultimately acquiesced in toleration of the heretics, so as to make growth of trade and commerce possible. It is not a matter of chance that the scene of the development of modern science has been the Protestant countries. Whatever may have happened later, originally it was the new obedience to the authority of God that operated as the motive of human activity in all these spheres. Thus in the Reformation there became manifest, at least over wide areas, not only a renewal of the Church but also—just because it had no other interest than the proclamation of the Word of God and the call to obedience to that Word—a revival of the entire political, economic and social life.

But the Reformation was not a finality. It was, above all, and it continued to be, a promise. *Man* was, and continued to be, man, and again set himself in opposition to divine authority. He sought again—even invoking the Reformation—to place himself at the centre of life and of everything that happens. He had doubts about the authority of the divine Word. The Word with which the Serpent tempted: "Hath God said?" got a new hearing. Could it be said that God had revealed Himself for us fallen mortals only in His Word? What is the position with regard to the doctrine of the *one* revelation of the *free* grace of God? Was that not too narrow a conception for the man of the new age, for the child of the Enlightenment? An entirely new idea of the world had emerged from new scientific discoveries. Man

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felt that he was on the point of getting behind the secrets of the world and of his own life. The Holy Scriptures were more and more thrust aside; gradually the view prevailed that not the Bible, but man's own science was able to give him the ultimate answers.

Nearly all fields of culture experienced a blossoming time. Human thought, philosophy, attained a great new reputation, and undertook to be the spokesman of self-sufficient man. Here we think of the most important achievement in this sphere, the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Like so many others Kant believed that he was adhering to Christianity whereas he had already decisively departed from it. For he did not doubt that God revealed Himself, not in Jesus Christ, but in the demands of human reason, which got an additional affirmation in Jesus Christ. Thus the moral law that forms the centre of his teaching, is based not on knowledge of the divine Commandments, but on a definite view of himself held by man. God no longer comes first, but second; He has become a mere postulate of practical reason. In like manner the mystics had already in the sixteenth century moved away from Reformation doctrine. Mysticism in all its forms means communion of man with the god whom he finds in himself. Neither mysticism nor idealism knows of an extra-mundane God. According to both, He is the infinite world-soul, who operates in the human soul. But that is pantheism, which never had and never will have any connection with Christianity. Moving along optimistic lines, it gives a picture

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of human history as an irresistible development towards true humanity. In its mystical-idealistic form it certainly suffered in the course of the nineteenth century a temporary reverse through the emergence of the materialistic conception of history, as this was advocated in practical form especially by the founder of Communism, Karl Marx. But strong as the Marxist Movement became in connection with economic development, its importance in the world of thought must not be overestimated. It was the German Idealist, Hegel, who was the father of Marxist materialism, and soon enough there appeared, even within the Socialism of all countries, monitors who turned against Marxist materialism as such, and brought again to the light of day its original unity with Idealism. In the nineteenth century the upholders of the new faith in man, and so the real upholders of the opposition to the Gospel were Idealism and Mysticism—and not Materialism!

The nineteenth century had its own peculiar greatness. It was the time of unexampled technical, economic and cultural development, and it would be perverse to deny this to-day, whatever strong views one may be compelled to hold about the seamy side of this development. What advances were made in this period in the education of the masses and in social life! Economic development created the wealth that made possible a better schooling of the people, and this in its turn was an advantage to industry and commerce and so to man himself also. In their way the Liberalism and Socialism of this time were powerful movements that were in the best sense of the term,

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humane, that is, human and for man's benefit. Who could have cut himself off from them completely, who would have thought of doing so? It was no mere chance that they attracted even wide circles of the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the fact must not be blinked that belief in money and its power formed the common basis of Liberals and Socialists. There was no longer, as in the post-Reformation time, that strict idea of vocation, springing from obedience to God, which imparted energies to trade by the fact that it regarded money not as personal property, but as a trust, owing to God and no one else. Now man had made himself free, and freely he disposed of the world's goods. But did he really do that? No, it was Money, this curious image of the man who had become his own master, which now had him at its disposal. He had got rid of the Lord God, in order now to be really slave of this his own image. In spite of this growing economic wealth the men of the new age were no happier than their fathers had been. The perilous social differences had not only not been overcome, but had become greater. The pauperization of the populace and as Karl Marx prophesied the revolution to revenge it, stood like a threatening ghost before the eyes of this very century. The belief in a steady evolutionary improvement of circumstances, the hope of realizing ultimately a state of social righteousness certainly sustained Socialism right up to the World War. With Liberalism it was immovably rooted in the view that man is by nature good and that he had in him the power to free himself from all evil and from the fetters of this world.

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Here they both parted company with the Christian doctrine according to which man is in sin and is incapable of self-redemption. In both the creature, separated from his Creator, thought that he was able to be his own Lord and Saviour. It was a fatal mistake, that in wide circles, and even in the Church itself, this "liberation of man" was regarded as a development along Reformation lines. In reality, what animated, in exactly the same way, the leading people in the intellectual world as the leading people in the commercial world, the rulers as the ruled, the capitalists and the middle classes on the one side, as the revolutionary proletariat on the other, was—in absolute opposition to the Reformation—belief in man and no longer obedience to God. Whether Christianity was being directly contested, or whether it was tolerated as a private concern or whether there was a disposition to continue affirming it as one of the supports of society, actually what had taken place was a movement along the whole line into a position of opposition—which in the course of time became increasingly incapable of concealment—to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now there is a special form which this belief in man has assumed since the end of the eighteenth century, a form which is—as is seen to-day—powerful above all others, and that is belief in the People (*das Volk*), the National Socialist belief. Herder and later Fichte (in his *Addresses to the German Nation*) were the men who stepped forward as the first great prophets of this faith. Faith in humanity, such as still animated Goethe, disappears. Attention is now

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fixed on the special community of blood, speech, terrain, on the "Fatherland" as the highest of all gods. The nations are established by God, so we are now told; with their special creation God has in each case bound a special purpose. So recognition of the divine will becomes recognition of this purpose. To be religious means therefore to think, feel and act nationally. Men are not alike but unlike, for even their soul, even their spirit varies in accordance with their membership of this or that people, and it is just in this membership that they are to know themselves united immediately with God. This theory was for the first time comprehensively set forth in Houston Stewart Chamberlain's famous *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Here, too, we meet that *Anti-Semitism* which is characteristic of it: the doctrine that the Jewish people are *the* foreign race which endangers the unity and purity of the German people. This Anti-Semitism is also to be found earlier in Paul de Lagarde, who in his *German Writings* demanded a Christianity corresponding to the German nature, a Christianity in which something out of the inheritance of Germanic heathenism should again come to life.

! This is obvious: those elements which we see in present-day Germany actively opposing the Gospel already existed long before the Third Reich. National Socialism did not create them. It is itself only a product of the development that has been going on during the last hundred years. Already the philosophy of the Enlightenment and of idealism, already mysticism, already Liberalism, and Socialism

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had supplanted the gracious God revealed in Jesus Christ with the myth of man who is himself God in us. Already at this point the old heathen mythology was not so far off as was fondly thought. But if the deification of man arose out of the very tendency and spirit of the time, it is no less understandable that, given certain definite historical conditions, the idea of the People, the People in its essential being, could become what it has become in National Socialism: the point at which crystallizes a new religion that enters into open conflict with Christianity. This—together with the fact that the German State as such has declared itself to be the Church of this new religion—is the novelty which has taken shape in contemporary Germany. But before going into this in greater detail, we must touch on the question, how the Christian Church adjusted itself to this movement of thought, or rather—how it sought to come to an understanding with it and to unite with it.

A serious opponent to the Christian Church had arisen in these centuries. But it was a long time before it finally and publicly declared itself that. At first there was almost no one who wanted to take up the cudgels against Christianity. The aim was rather to renew it, but that meant, bringing it into consonance with all those forms of that new faith whose object was man himself. Christian doctrine should be brought into new and better relationships. Why should the Church pay absolutely no heed to the new religion and the new world-view, and so lose touch with the world? Should it not, on the contrary, open wide its doors at this moment when a new

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religious wave was manifestly advancing, ready to fill Christianity with a new, live spirit, after it had been, as was again and again asserted, "petrified" in the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century? The Church had got a friend, not an enemy; that is what was said even within the Church. No one considered that a serious enemy does not come forward looking like an enemy, but like a friend. Certainly there were not wanting voices that called attention to the fact that the alluring myth of man is the exact opposite of the Christian faith which is given to us in the Word of God. Yet, on a general view, the position was, that it had been forgotten that Christianity by its very nature means the end of all mythology. It had been forgotten that, in the Reformation, God had brought about a renewal that expelled the Nature religion which the Roman Church had taken over from the pagan world, and that set forth the Word of God as the single source of divine revelation. And it had been forgotten that the Christian Church is based singly and solely on the Word of God and that it can be renewed by nothing else than the faithful proclamation of this Word. Once again it has to be admitted that what the Reformation had learned had completely disappeared from the Church. In these past centuries, also, there were innumerable people who had put their lives under the Word of God and whose sole consolation in life and death was Jesus Christ. But these were, in these centuries, the quiet in the land. The leaders and the masses in the Church travelled other ways, ways which must ultimately lead out of the Church. The Church had

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—putting things broadly—approved the offer which modern man made to her, and had launched out on the effort to renew herself—on the world's impulse and out of the world's resources.

Liberal Theology, of which Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher was head, aimed at forming a scientific synthesis between Christianity and the modern religion and world-view. All intellectual currents of the past two centuries threw down their sediment somehow in Liberal theology, for, as a matter of fact, what that theology aimed at was to be open, as far as possible, to all sides. In this way in nineteenth-century Germany it stood, right from the beginning, wide open even to the "national" movement. Was there not something in the nature of a prophecy of what is going on at present, when one of the noblest and most sensitive representatives of this theology, Richard Rothe, supported the proposition that Church and State must become, in course of development, a single whole, this being achieved by the State's gradually taking over all the functions of the Church; what is realized in the completed State is nothing else than the Kingdom of God.

The attempt to bring Christianity into harmony with modern religion and the modern world-view, thereby robbing it of its character as proclamation of revelation and grace, was carried out, within the framework of theology, in the shape of a new invasion by so-called "natural" theology. One of the decisive things, I take it, in the Reformation was that it allowed only the Word of God to be valid as source of our knowledge of God, and so saw the Church's task to

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be the proclamation of the Word of God, and knew no other task. No doubt God is manifest in all His works and no doubt man was created in the image of God; but human nature has been ruined by sin, and therefore is not capable of a natural knowledge of God. God must give Himself to us to be known in Jesus Christ or we shall not know Him at all. At the beginning of the eighteenth century another opinion began to gain ground. Natural religion was now to be taken as no less than the foundation of all other knowledge of God, the context and the measure even for the understanding of the Gospel. Theology—with praiseworthy exceptions—did not offer sufficient resistance to this development. Not that it simply put natural theology into the place of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. But it thought to go the way of compromise and to be able to say “Yes” to both sides. It said “Yes” to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and it said “Yes” to a revelation alleged to be discernible by man in creation, in nature, in man himself, and in his history. But this second “Yes” became more and more the one really intended and decisive. The consequence was that some maintained that their knowledge of God came from human feeling, others that theirs came from human reason, others from culture, others from advancing Socialism, others again from newly awakened National Socialism, and they began to explain Christianity in this way or in that according to their choice—without noticing that they were all of them travelling together along the road to that new religion which is not only foreign, but in the last resort openly hostile, to the Gospel.

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In that way it at last came about that the Church was not able to offer any unanimous resistance to the "folkic" currents. On the contrary, here, too, it attempted—the name of Lagarde has already been mentioned—to pursue in full consciousness the way of synthesis. In his three-volume work on the Religious Crisis of the present day, Arthur Bonus openly demanded the Germanizing of Christianity. In him we find the German Christian Movement of the present already visible, when he explains that Christianity had come to the Germans as a foreign religion and that it was now necessary for it to be born anew out of the German spirit.

So the Church pursued the way of accommodation and forgot the saying, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The consequence of this was that the world-view and the morality of an optimistic belief in evolution positively became indigenously not only in the world, but also in the Church. When the great catastrophe of the World War broke over Europe the question could not be avoided; whether the world, whether the Church might not now perhaps be capable of a new way of thought, whether the Reformation message of man's impotence and God's grace might not perhaps now anew find open ears? Who would dare to decide lightly whether that has or has not happened? One thing is certain, and that is that since the days of the World War we have had a theology which, in opposition to the development of the last two hundred years, again takes seriously the Gospel, God's grace and God's judgment. Thus in the perilous moment

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when, in the year 1933, that development moved towards its completion, provision had been made to ensure that there need not be lacking a corresponding counter movement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST STATE

THE exclusive authority of God, as it was proclaimed and brought to recognition by the Reformation, suffered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a gradual disintegration. God was anthropomorphized: He was put on a level with the human soul; He was seen in man; man was deified. In proportion as final exclusive authority was taken from God, secular power, particularly the State, assumed absolute authority.

The Reformers understood the State above all as a constitutional State. Its task is, within the earthly, imperfect world to provide a legal order so that men, in spite of their sins, might still be able to live together in ordered relations. To establish and maintain such a legal order is the task assigned to it by God. Because it, the State, is an institution willed by God and fulfils in this sinful, fallen world a task willed by God, the Christian owes the State obedience. So far the Reformers were, I think, in agreement. Luther went so far as to demand of the Christian absolute obedience to the State. Criticism of the State belongs not to man, but to God alone. Here Zwingli made a significant qualification that greatly influ-

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enced the course of things. He demanded that the State also take the Gospel for its guide. Only as long as the State itself submits to the divine commandments and the demands of the Gospel, does the Christian owe it obedience; otherwise he has to enter into opposition to it. It cannot be our business here to enter into a defence of the Zwinglian Theocracy; there is without doubt much to be said against it. But we have this to thank Zwingli for, that, with this conception of his, he showed the door, as we hope for all time, to the total or absolute State, whereas Luther with his conception opened the door to political "divine right" and to the absolute State. This difference in the attitude of the two reformers must be kept in view if the development of the State in Germany is to be clearly understood.

So, as a matter of fact, it is not surprising that at a time when the authority of God was dwindling away, State absolutism put on strength. The German philosopher who evolved an absolutist political science was Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel. It was his belief that with his conception he was keeping strictly to the ground occupied by the Lutheran Reformation. He was grateful to the Reformation and glad that it broke up the unity of the Church and thereby helped the State to its power and dignity. Only by its crystallization in the course of history into a State does a people gather itself together for action and thereby come to consciousness of its freedom. This freedom is man's deepest being and, at the same time, his highest aim; and, seeing that man achieves freedom in the State, Hegel can pronounce the remarkable

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opinion: "Everything which man is, he owes to the State!" Not merely is it, as the Reformers emphasize, that the State is an organization willed by God; Hegel expresses in the loftiest strains the deification of the State. "The existence of the State is the work of God in the world." The State is absolute purpose, "the real God", "The Divine, existing in and for itself", "of absolute authority and majesty". It is not possible to speak more absolutely of the State. With Hegel we already have the totalitarian State!

For Hegel the State is in character completely religious. In the same way as the people, the State also has its roots in religion; but the people exists for the sake of the State and not the reverse. There is absolutely nothing which stands over the State. Hegel stresses with the greatest emphasis that the State stands above religion. The State is divine and therefore almighty. So Hegel becomes the philosopher who champions the domination of the Church by the State; it is in this sense that he understands the principle of a State Church. He sets himself against Schleiermacher who stands up for the freedom of the Church from the State. He is also an opponent of the Enlightenment which regarded the State as essentially a police and constitutional State. If one sees nothing higher than this in the State, then everything spiritual and moral belongs to the Church. Here is the mediaeval idea of the Church, which, in his view, was overcome by the Reformation. The Church is not perhaps superfluous, but it is purely the subjective form of the truth. The State, however, has the right and the duty to maintain, over against

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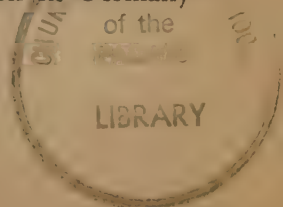
it, objective, self-conscious rationality. Therefore Church doctrine also falls within the State's domain. Everything has to subordinate itself to the State; even science, and along with it, theology, stand first of all at the service of the State. Within this limit they enjoy freedom. Thus with Hegel the State comprehends all the elements of life and in this way becomes the sum total of morality.

If with Hegel the State is the ultimate and the highest existence in the world, there crops up with other thinkers a new conception that is peculiar to the nineteenth century; it is the conception of the *Nation*. It became popular through Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*, which prepared the way for the German National State. "Among all peoples you (the Germans) are that in which is contained most definitely the germ of human perfection." He sees the German people as the sole modern people that can boast of a living speech of its own and that possesses a creative literature and science. It is the people of poets and thinkers and is called to be the "regenerator and restorer of the world". Fichte's belief in the German nation breathes a religious spirit. German nationality is to him something divine, no less than an organ through which the eternal spirit reveals itself. He sees the Fatherland "under the image of eternity, and that the visible and sensible eternity". Fichte founds a national mysticism; with him not the State, but the nation is divine. This national mysticism, or, to put it otherwise, mystical patriotism, has exerted a profound influence on the German People.

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Fichte recognized that man is willing to make sacrifices only for a religious cause, and therefore he proclaimed nationality as gift of God, "for which the man who is noble is happy to sacrifice himself". In this he is not glorifying raw force; what wins prosperity is not the army, not weapons, but strength of spirit. If Hegel was the creator of the totalitarian State, Fichte is the father of the *Myth of the Twentieth Century!* And that is a myth which has not yet suffered under the icy breath of materialism.

Yet in the nineteenth century it was impossible for the totalitarian State, such as Hegel demanded, to be realized. That was the century of the Liberal and democratic movement, from which even Germany was not able to cut itself completely off. But it would be a mistake to assume that Liberal ideas transformed political development in Germany and sent it along new lines, as happened in other states. Certainly there was in Germany, theoretically, a strong Liberal and democratic movement. But the State knew how to keep itself for the most part free from these movements. The State, it is true, gave these political currents opportunity to express themselves in parliaments—think of the famous Frankfurt Parliament—and later in the Reichstag. But the German Reichstag never exercised material influence on political development. The German State was never built on a democratic foundation, but on the hierarchy of officials. The monarch did not even select his ministers from the Reichstag, but as a rule from the official caste. What had to be done by anyone who wanted to reach an influential public position in Germany



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was, not to have himself elected by the people to the Reichstag, but to pursue a career in the civil service. In this way the Reichstag was robbed of the most capable brains, so that it not only failed to attain the same political importance as other parliaments, but it was also unable to win the same intellectual standing as others. Because of the carefully articulated hierarchy of officials, upon which reposed the whole being of the German State, that State was able, in spite of the Liberal and democratic movement, to remain to its very bones a conservative state.

The ideas which more and more inspired the people were those of Fichte. Right through the nineteenth century belief in the German nation was growing vigorously, and it had its fruit: the establishment of the German Empire. Upon that there followed a technical and economic boom, so that in a few decades Germany became one of the strongest and most dreaded of the Great Powers. This added new fuel to German nationalism. It developed so greatly and in the pan-German Movement assumed such forms that the whole world followed the development with serious apprehension.

To this nationalist development Social Democracy with its internationalism was really no adequate corrective. Bismarck, who had to drop his law against Socialists, succeeded in making the Social Democratic Party very loyal to the State by introducing an ample measure of social insurance. At any rate it was apparent at the Second Hague Peace Conference, at which Germany gave an exhibition of the most militant nationalism, that German Social

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Democracy had failed to exert any substantial influence on intellectual and political development in Germany. The masses of the German working class were as nationalistically inclined as the middle class circles. So we must assert that the decisive element which was gaining strength in the German People in the course of the nineteenth century was not democracy, and not Socialism, but nationalism, belief in the German nation.

Towards the end of the last century there steps into the centre of observation—we think here particularly of Chamberlain—the People (*Volk*), and by that is meant the one homogeneous People which is determined by soil, blood and race. As we have already seen, Chamberlain demands that the race be kept pure. Only by that can the future of the People be assured. Intermixture of races ruins the People. But it will be ruined also if it is inundated by foreign cultures. These lead, not to an enrichment, but to the disintegration of the People. Therefore war must be waged against Christianity also, seeing that it is for the German an essentially alien religion which was forcibly thrust upon him a thousand years ago. The German People has got to cultivate a religion of its own, a religion that flows from its own nature, from the Germanic race, and that has grown upon German soil. With this we are already right in the thick of the National Socialist ideology which has built the Third Reich.

The nationalist development, which shortly before the War had attained a certain magnitude, suffered a set-back as a result of Germany's defeat in the War.

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President Wilson's declaration that he would only conclude peace with a democratic Germany forced democracy on Germany. Thus German post-war democracy was in no way an organic growth and on that account could have no stability. Social Democracy, which after the War undertook political leadership for a time, did not possess the internal strength to build up anew the German Empire labouring under the burden of defeat. The world-view of Socialism had by that date, as was shown earlier, long been outlived. The internationalism which it had proclaimed since Karl Marx, received with the outbreak of the World War the knock-out blow. On the one side, the decisive political idea of Socialism, which believed in the continuous progressive evolution of humanity and in the international brotherhood of the proletariat, had gone to pieces by the time that Social Democracy came into power in Germany; and on the other, its social programme was incapable of realization among a people impoverished by the War and the inflation. So Socialism lacked a political and social programme such as could have awakened new reconstructive forces and created a new will in the people.

What still held the State together was the apparatus of bureaucracy. The attempt of Social Democracy to build up democracy and to transfer political leadership to the Reichstag tended more and more to undermine this bureaucratic State, without succeeding in attaching the whole German People to a new political idea. So the democratic post-war period was able, not to overcome, but simply to disintegrate, the con-

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servative state which had stood up to Liberalism in pre-war days. The lack of a constructive political idea led to the formation of wellnigh innumerable parties, which made positive political work almost impossible. To the German People democracy could not but appear as a form of State which is incapable of positive constructive work, while to tell the truth all the preparation which the German People had gone through during a whole century was not a preparation for democracy, but for that most inflated nationalism, which broke through in the National Socialist Movement.

Not much more successful than Social Democracy was political Catholicism, which in the post-war period struck up an alliance with the parties of Left and Right by turns, and on occasion with both together. Owing to the fact that the supporters of political Catholicism, the Centre Party, almost always formed, both in the government and in the Reichstag, so to speak, the indicator on the scales, its political influence was disproportionately strong. It made the fullest use of this to push forward in all directions and to try to fill with its adherents important positions in the State and in the territories. At the same time it sought to create for the Roman Catholic Church powerful strong-points. One has but to recall the extent to which new monasteries sprang up in the post-war period and how greatly the position of the Jesuit order, which was permitted in war time, extended and gained strength. The advance of Roman Catholicism was a serious anxiety for many Protestants and formed one ground along with others for the

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attachment of numbers of them to the National Socialist Movement, for this movement promised a victory not only over Communism and Socialism, but also over political Roman Catholicism.

What led the German People in the post-war period to the verge of the abyss was an unexampled spiritual and political distraction. This is not the place to examine the question, what share in the political, economic, social and moral distress of the post-war period in Germany is to be attributed to the Versailles Peace Treaty. But without a doubt the problem has been solved too easily in Germany, when, as has happened time and again, everything has been laid at the door of the Treaty. The primary cause of post-war troubles has been the War. Had Germany no share in its outbreak? Was it not just that German nationalism which had long ago become an idol of the German People, that was one of the causes of the War? Should it not have been the Church's task to say a serious word, a word of repentance? Should not that have been the help that the German nation might well have expected of the Church? But this duty she was unable to perform, because for long she had failed to be the Church which proclaimed, loudly and clearly, God's Word and nothing else, and had been tossed to and fro between the human opinions and convictions which happened to prevail. She was no longer the Church, knowing only one Lord, but she had become the handmaid of very worldly lords and worldly powers. In the long period during which Crown and Altar belonged together, she had become the loyal and uncritical helpmeet of the State to too

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great an extent for her to be capable still of proclaiming the Word of God, loudly and fearlessly, even in face of the State and its gods. The severance of State and Church which was brought about by the Weimar Constitution in the year 1919 was not able to lead the Church back to its job; that was something that could only be done by the Church's taking thought. But, instead, she looked for salvation in a new union of State and Church. This was one of the reasons why a large section of German Protestants placed itself behind the new national wave which came rolling in in the National Socialist Movement. As a matter of fact, it was the one movement which held out the hope of uniting together anew all the forces of the nation and so of putting an end to post-war miseries. German nationalism, on which the War defeat had inflicted a terrible blow, celebrated a resurrection; the seed which Fichte had disseminated and which had been carefully fostered during more than a century, bore fruit. In the year 1933, just as during the whole preceding centuries, the Church was blind to the fact that it was a national myth which was coming into being in the Nationalist Movement. Yes, it must be admitted that the Church always acted as protectress of the Nationalist Movement and so promoted the growth of the national myth. This was so till the very moment when the Church was threatened with itself becoming the victim of the national myth. Over the Church a judgment broke, for which she herself was not without blame.

“One People, one State, one Church,” was the great

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watchword with which the Third Reich was built. Let us turn now to this Reich.

The National Socialist State exhibits two quite special characteristics. These constitute its being and have their roots in its spiritual history. First, the National Socialist State is not content to be a certain form of State, a certain political method of managing a State, but it claims to have a world-view (*Weltanschauung*) of its own. The Führer Adolf Hitler has again and again emphasized that National Socialism is a world-view. When he addressed the first Party Congress at Nuremberg on the subject of Culture, he said: "National Socialism is a world-view. In laying hold of those who by their innermost constitution belong to this world-view, National Socialism becomes the party of those who by their essential being are to be reckoned as belonging to a definite race. Thereby it recognizes the givenness of the various racial substances in our people. It is also far from denying that it has itself this admixture which goes to make up the totality of the expression of our people's life. But it wants the political and cultural leadership of our people to be the domain and the expression of that race which out of a conglomerate of varied fragments really created the German People by its heroism alone, thanks to its inner endowment. So National Socialism professes a heroic doctrine of the value of blood, race and personality, as well as of the eternal laws of selection, and consequently enters consciously into irreconcilable opposition to the world-view of pacifist-international democracy and its effects. . . . And it is there-

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fore no wonder that every politically heroic age at once seeks in its art the bridge to a no less heroic past. Greeks and Romans will then be so near the Germans because we all have to seek our roots in a ground-race, and therefore the immortal achievements of the ancient peoples continue to exercise their fascinating effect upon their racially related successors."

Adolf Hitler links up the National Socialist world-view quite unambiguously with heathenism; about Christianity there is not a word in the whole speech; in his endeavour to create a new national world-view he at once feels himself near the old Germans. The National Socialist world-view is called to act as a solvent upon the Christian age which has lasted a thousand years, and the Führer promises it the same duration when he emphasizes, as he did at the second Nuremberg Party Congress that in National Socialism there has dawned a Kingdom of a thousand years. This statement of the Führer's was not to be understood in a political sense, but as part of the "world-view".

The second characteristic of the National Socialist State is that it wants to be a totalitarian State. The totalitarian State takes the individual, and all institutions as well, under its wings. W. Sauser says as much in his book *Philosophy of the Law and of the State* that appeared in 1936: "Not only the individual, but all cultural organizations have therefore in the last resort to serve the community of the people and it is in relation to this that they get their meaning and justification. To this extent only a 'political' activity is to be recognized and tolerated in the life

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of the people. Therefore economics, law, science, art, religion have no 'independence'; they have all to be 'political', thus carrying out their 'approach to the people'. Thus, even law is to be determined in a way that is at variance with the formal conception hitherto prevailing. What serves the State is right, what injures it is wrong." The totality finally culminates in a national philosophy of culture with "folkic" racial features. "Totality and unity gain such practical significance that the different elements of culture are often positively felt to be identical. This explains how sometimes custom or popular morality is characterized as law, or the People as moral obligation, or all these as religion, or even the community as religion. In this way there grows out of the attitude of the soul and out of deep personal experience the drive towards a new religion. And as the simple man is scarcely able to recognize the totality as real cultural value, the whole of which he is himself a member presents itself to him only as the sum total of the people, the phenomenon of the masses. Only that does he really experience and only that kind of totality is he able to perceive as a kind of religion. What mediates to him this mass experience is the Party, which becomes in this way an Order."

Thus the totalitarian State is religiously transfigured so that it even becomes the source of religion. It is not as if it wished to have no knowledge of religion. Religion is useful and necessary for the upbuilding of the totalitarian State. But it has no independent significance. On the contrary, its significance has always reference to the totalitarian State

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which claims for itself the right to circumscribe and delimit the activity of the Church and to tell it in what way it can and must serve the totalitarian State. The Church is consequently, like science and art, a governmental domain and has its task shown to it by the State. If we interrogate the National Socialist literature, which in these last few years has become legion, as to what task falls to the Church and to religion (for the National Socialists these are identical conceptions), the gist of what we learn is this:

What is to be striven for is a "folkic" religion. This can be created most effectively by taking the values which are most important for a people in a certain historical and cultural epoch and utilizing them for the form and content of the religion. In the present situation a "folkic" religion can best be built up out of those fundamental questions of legal, political and social philosophy, which in turn come from the being of the People. The ideas and sentiments of the Christian Church which have been naturalized and have entered into the substance of the People can very well be taken over or developed; but the burning questions of political, social, national and cultural life must stand at the centre of the "folkic" religion. This religion is to deepen man and to lead to an even higher stage of culture. Of this Sauser says: "All the values which a man creates, or wants to create, for others, raise that man himself out of merely natural existence into the higher, social, cultural and cosmic sphere. Love for his neighbour, expressed in feeling and act, connects him immediately with values further up the scale, and these in

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turn lie on the way to higher totalities, to People and Nation, to Church and State, to the universe and the world spirit. *By what he himself does and what he himself feels man opens for himself the view of, and the way to, God and eternity.* The more self-sacrificially and selflessly he denies himself for the sake of his fellows, the more does his real original being live in the various social groups, in the cultural unit to which he belongs, in the world and in eternity." What is striven after is God-likeness, and this striving takes the form of aiming at, and realizing, values. Of course, God is remote in eternal distance in space and time; but on the way thither, treading with sacrificial steps, man already finds himself in eternity, in the realm of eternal values. Man is an eternal immortal being, because, and in so far as, he creates, in his self-sacrifice, values tending towards wholeness. Religion and business therefore belong together; they have to permeate each other in accord with the demand for unity and totality. Business has to become religion and religion must show its worth in business. Thus religion has to promote three things: activity in business, the creation of values for the community, and devotion to God and eternity. "In view of the long life and great age of Christian dogmatics" the doctrines of the Church have got to be renewed or if necessary abandoned, "so that religion may be preserved as a living procession having both a protective and a cultural value". That is what we take to be meant when the conception of the Church is defined in this way: "The Church is the community of believers, who seek, in the unity of devotion, to

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satisfy their religious longing and to give it visible expression."

The religion which the totalitarian State desires or demands has received a more particular specification in the National Socialist world-view. That has got to be more closely considered.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MYTH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY¹

IT has already been shown that at the turn of last century nationality and race were placed at the centre of a new mystical view of the world. The preservation of racial purity had become of supreme importance, for it is the infiltration of strange blood that prepares the way for the downfall of the nation. From this idea grows anti-Semitism. The "Judaizing" of the German People has brought it to the verge of the abyss. But something has happened that promises that Germany will arise anew: in the World War two million Germans sacrificed themselves for the ideal, "Germany". According to Alfred Rosenberg this blood-offering suddenly revealed that the fallen heroes could shake off, so far as Germany was concerned, the whole nineteenth century, and that in the hearts of the simplest peasant and of the homeliest artisan the old myth-making power of the Nordic racial soul was just as much alive as in the ancient Germans when once upon a time they marched over the Alps. Rosenberg continues: "In the humdrum life of every day it is only too often overlooked what immense psychic forces become active in a man when

¹ The title of a very influential book of the National Socialist Movement, by Alfred Rosenberg.

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in a tattered regimental flag he beholds himself, sees a bit of himself in all the deeds of the regiment throughout many centuries, the works of his ancestors. The sailor who, standing on the keel of the *Nuremberg*, sank into the deep before the eyes of the enemy with the waving German colours in his hand; the nameless officer of the *Magdeburg* who put the secret code into his pocket and drowned himself with it—these are parables, myths, types, which have not had their recognition in the present chaos. In the last resort it is a matter of indifference whether we rightly appreciate Gothic, Baroque, Romanticism. What is important is not the expression of Nordic blood in these forms, but the fact that this blood after all still exists, the fact that it still throbs with the old will power. The field-grey army of the German People was the proof of a willingness for sacrifice such as creates myths. And the present revival movement is the sign that countless people are beginning to understand what the two million dead heroes are: the martyrs of a new myth, of a new faith.

“The place of the splendid dress uniform has been taken by the field-grey garb of honour, by the austere steel helmet. The dreadful crucifixes of the Baroque and Rococo periods, exhibiting distorted limbs at all the street corners, are gradually being crushed out by war memorials, severe in style. On them stand inscribed the names of those men who, as sign of the eternal myth of blood and will, died for what our nation values most—the honour of the German name.

“It aims now at giving form to this strength that made sacrifices from 1914 to 1918. It fights against

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all the forces that are not willing to give it its place as the first and highest of all values. It is *there*, to be accepted and not to be explained, and it is pointing the way which one day will have to be trodden even by those misguided Germans who to-day oppose it.

“The God whom we worship would not exist if our soul and our blood did not exist: that is how the confession of a Meister Eckhart would run to-day. Therefore everything which protects, strengthens, refines and furthers the honour and freedom of this soul and this blood is matter of our religion, our law, our State. Therefore all those places where German heroes died for these ideals are holy places. Those places are holy where memorial stones and monuments bring these ideals to remembrance; those days are holy on which once upon a time they fought for them most passionately. And the holy hour of the Germans will come when the symbol of awakening, the flag with the sign of uprising life, has become the confession of the coming Kingdom.”

The World War contributed mightily towards the fashioning of a new national myth, that myth which had taken on importance in the spiritual life of Germany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Church, which had become greatly disintegrated and which to a large extent itself represented a mystical Christianity, was no longer in a position to give the people the inner stability necessary to enable it to stand up to its defeat in the War. So the people proceeded to make a god of its own, in order to win from the national myth strength to master war defeat and the evils of the post-war period.

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The myth of the twentieth century is a judgment on the Church which had ceased to proclaim the divine Word purely and without adulteration, and had to a large extent put in its place modern world-views. No wonder that the people which no longer knew its only Saviour, Jesus Christ, and which no longer understood the Book of books, sought for another source of consolation and power! In doing so it went the way which was prescribed for it by its spiritual history: the way of national renewal. There is no doubt that the isolation of Germany which was, probably inevitably, a consequence of the War, was partly the motive for its seeking deliverance singly and solely in a national renewal which went the length of rejecting "international Christianity" in order to find salvation in a national religion. But it must ever and again be pointed out that this development was not caused by the World War. The beginnings lie deeper down and further back. But the development received from the War a mighty impulse.

We find the same thing also in Bergmann, who wants a German National Church, and who explains: "The truth is that their (the soldiers') death has become our living will; namely, the will not to make their sacrifice vain or meaningless. And if that applies to the multitudes of dead who fell in the World War and in the German War of Liberation, how great must that will of ours be!

"Each one of those who gave their lives is so precious that for his sake we should know but one religion, the German religion and the German

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Church, *which is built on the rock of the truth of our people's need.* Only we can make these dead immortal, and that by our not allowing to pass away, but rather by our maintaining and magnifying, the prize for which they gave their life, the honour and greatness of their nation. But that can only be when our national consciousness becomes concentrated into a religion, and our will not to defraud the dead of their holy deed, into a Church.

“They will rest the more quietly in their graves, their wounds will cease to bleed and their tears will no longer flow, when they see that the will and the faith of their people have become so great and holy, that out of them a new German religion and Church have arisen.”

This German religion is the breath of man and people, their life and struggle, death and change, the heart-beat of their existence. Herein God is known. But this God is more than the totality of what is seen and experienced. Faith *in* this God is not what a German faith is concerned with. Faith *from out of* Him, the living of a life that is consciously sustained and accredited by Him—that is German Faith. It cannot reveal, show completely, His nature, and what He is once and for all aiming at. Nay, He is the eternally Inscrutable, the Director of all, yet Himself inconceivable. The German God is He who is active in racial soul and blood, and who creates the national honour.

National honour is the gist of the myth of the twentieth century and it is towards that that everything strives! To it everything has to be subordin-

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ated. Love and honour—so argues Rosenberg—strive together to be counted highest values. The Churches sought to reign through love; the Nordic Europeans sought through honour to live free or in honour to die free. “In view of the question as to which motive has proved itself to be supremely the one that has formed soul, state and culture for the Nordic race, it is palpably clear that it has been primarily the conception of honour—and with it the idea of duty which is inseparably bound up with it and which issues from the consciousness of inner freedom—that has been everything in maintaining our peoples, our States and the character of our race. But in that moment when love and pity become predominant, then begin the epochs of racial and cultural dissolution in all the states that have ever been nordically determined.” According to Rosenberg the idea of honour—national honour—becomes the beginning and the end of all thought and action. It tolerates no power centre of equal calibre, equal in any way, alongside of itself, neither “Christian love, nor the humanity ideal of the Freemasons, nor the Roman philosophy”.

Everything has to minister to national honour: politics, economics, science, art, criminal jurisprudence, yes, even the Church. There is nothing that is entitled to seek any other aim. The ultimate and highest commandments are those which spring from national honour, which again is nothing else than racial honour. It is the final authority. The Christian Churches furthered the anarchy of freedom, since they proclaimed a raceless authority. A man who does not regard the people and the people's honour

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as the highest values, waives his right to be protected by the people; on the contrary he should be declared a man without honour.

Even the Church has no other task than to minister to the people and to national honour. In Rosenberg's opinion the Christian Churches have been guilty of a huge conscious and unconscious falsification of the plain, happy message of the kingdom of heaven within us. If the religion of Jesus was—as it was—the preaching of love, then a German religious movement aiming at becoming a Church of the people will have to subordinate the ideal of neighbour love to national honour. A German Church must not approve of any action which does not in the first instance minister to the safeguarding of the people, of nationality. Church ties, religious ties do not come before, but after attachment to the nation. The German clergyman must not be bound by an obligation to anything that lies outside of the national honour. On the other hand, the German State has to impose on all clergymen the oath to preserve the honour of the nation; “for the rest it will be the chief task of the German Order, to labour in the service of the myth of the nation through the creation of a German People's Church, till a second Meister Eckhart one day relaxes the tension and embodies, lives, forms this German community of souls.”

Leadership in the Church must be exercised by men who have again won a deep inner confidence in their own nature, who have fought out for themselves a heroic conception of life. Wrangling over dogmas is a thing of the past. The battles, too, over

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the relationship of man and God in Jesus, the conflict over love and grace, over the immortality of the soul, do not have a look in in a religious revival that is German and that runs in the old Germanic tradition. The standard of adherence to the new community is the recognition of those values which have become manifest in Germanic dramatic art, and at their greatest in the mysticism of Meister Eckhart. With asperity Rosenberg turns against the younger generation that is fleeing back again "to strict churchmanship". "To-day there is a stirring even in the Lutheran Church. A storm is naturally being raised against the innovators who have here (in the myth of the twentieth century) sprung into life. Impelled by the instinct of self-preservation the 'Lutheran' Scribes and Pharisees to-day convene world congresses, as Rome its councils. But on this occasion they no longer see themselves confronted by a manifestation of decay with its liberalizing tendencies, but by a pregnant, full-blooded myth, by a sense of life which possesses a centre around which everything forms and fashions itself. Throughout the whole of Germany there are to-day germ-cells of this new awakening."

Even Rosenberg has nothing to tell us about the more detailed content of the myth. He merely asserts that the Nordic sagas and tales, at first simply narrated, then later conceived as symbols, will take the place of the Old Testament stories of pander and cattle-dealers. It is not the dream of hatred and "murdering Messianism", but the dream of honour and freedom that has to be stirred up by Nordic

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Germanic sagas. "It will be reserved for the hand of a genius to select from the psychic deposit of centuries the hitherto miserably handled gems of the German spirit and to bind them together organically. It is easier than ever to-day to make out what had the fleeting marks of Rome and Judaea. All the more distinctly the real heart-beat of our Eckhart, of our Luther, strike an echo in us. There will be unrolled before the eyes of mature scholars a colourful picture of the religious quest from Iran, India, and even from Hellas, which will be found at once alien and akin. The longing to give to the Nordic racial soul in name of the national myth its form as German Church—that is to my mind the greatest task of our century."

What the National Socialist literature has to tell us about the myth of the twentieth century will scarcely impress us as a profound religion. There is more concern with catch-words than with real ideas. What is meant by race and blood estimated from the standpoint of world-view? Yet we must guard against a dangerous optimism that would make us regard such catch-words as out of date. The fact is not to be overlooked that for some centuries now they have had their roots in the history of the spirit, and that often extremely simple, indeed primitive ideas, have been able to satisfy a nation for decades. Who would have thought that one day German science—the savants of the nation of poets and thinkers—would be satisfied with such catch-word conceptions? But so far as one can see that is what it has—with few exceptions—done.

But this phenomenon is not to be explained solely

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by the weakness of the present scientific generation, however much human weakness is to be found in it. What is here as clear as daylight is that *science without presuppositions is a delusion* which has fooled us for over two hundred years. The belief that the spirit will lead us nearer to the truth, and will disclose the meaning of life, has proved itself false. If there sprang up at first self-contained world-views which came forward with the claim to universal validity—such as the Kantian categorical imperative or the Hegelian philosophy of history—and if they were convinced that they were impregnable to scientific criticism, it was in course of time the same scientific spirit that showed up the sources of their error, and affirmed the relativity of all these intellectual constructions, i.e. of modern world-views. It was also apparent that philosophy did not succeed in eliminating what was inadequate in all the various world-views. There remained a hundred variations of the same problems, and there never was any success in overcoming the relativity of all scientific knowledge. No one got a single step nearer to the question of the truth, the question about the meaning of life. So the belief in scientific knowledge which formed the presupposition of science without any presuppositions suffered shipwreck. To-day there is no longer hope of getting results from a science without presuppositions, but a new presupposition is being sought after, one that will make science capable of new research and new work. This change has been accomplished in German science.

If during the last two centuries there never arose

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a decisive conflict between Christianity and science, that was no doubt because the most important views did not reject Christianity out of hand, but made wide use of Christian truths and built them into their world-views.

But as soon as a new presupposition was sought, Christianity, the Christian Church, could no longer shirk the conflict. The myth of the twentieth century having now found in people, blood and race a completely new foundation, the alternatives are plain. The decision has to be made whether the foundation on which the German People stand and live is to be the racial myth or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The totality claim of the National Socialist world-view, which culminates in the blood and race myth, stands in opposition to the Word of Scripture: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This conflict will not immediately come to an end. The myth of the twentieth century is the basis of the Third Reich. This is signalized not only by a new political structure, but pre-eminently by its aim to establish a new age that pushes out the Christian age. A new world-view—and this cannot be sufficiently stressed—is contending for recognition and is striving to reorganize the whole of life. In all spheres the beginnings are clearly visible. The main features of a new German Faith already exist, and Rosenberg tells us that it is in this field that the most important task of the century is to be carried out. On the basis of the racial myth a new political philosophy and a new constitutional law have already developed. Even

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criminal law has been subjected to a corresponding change. In the realm of art the transformation has just been completed. What is in fact taking place is a revolution such that it is impossible for us to conceive one more complete. Going on that one pre-supposition, that the basis for the whole of life is to be found in people, blood and race, German science—with few exceptions—has put itself at the service of the Third Reich. The conflict with Christianity has been taken up all along the line. How harmless were the attacks that Christianity experienced from the Enlightenment, Idealism and Romanticism compared with this attack of the myth of the twentieth century.

Because the concern of the Third Reich is with a new world-view, instruction in this world-view is one of its highest interests. So far as the education of the people is in the hands of the State—and it is attempting to get it completely into its hands—it is at the service of the National Socialist world-view. To indicate no more than the decisive facts: the National Socialist Party's instruction in world-view has been put in the hands of Alfred Rosenberg, the author of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*; the Hitler Youth, i.e. all the German young people, is under Baldur von Schirach from whom, as is well known, comes the saying, "I am neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic, I believe only in Germany!" Even the Order for men, which Rosenberg demanded in his book, is in course of formation; the citadels of the Order have come into existence. The choice of the teachers who give instruction there is in the hands

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of Alfred Rosenberg. No wonder that great numbers among these are reported to have severed their connection with the Church. The fight for the education of the young will come more and more to the front in the conflict between Church—and that both the Evangelical and the Roman Catholic—and State.

In conclusion, however, there is one further point to notice. The fact, namely, that the myth of the twentieth century is being incorporated more and more strongly in the person of the Führer. If German constitutional law goes on with the attempt to do justice to the conception of Führer, it is obvious that the conceptions of constitutional law hitherto prevailing no longer meet the case. With the affirmation that the Führer is master over the whole power of the State, that he is the highest law-giver, the chief executive, and the supreme judge, his position, one is tempted to say, his nature, has not been finally described. For the Führer is at the same time the reviver and guardian of the national honour, he is the leader of the new People's Community which he has himself created. Führer he became not through the will of the people, but through Providence, which in the hour of trouble gifted him to the German People. For this reason he is ultimate authority and therefore also there must be no criticism of any kind of the conduct of the State.

The Führer is not only secular Kaiser, who carries out in the State the task of government, he is at the same time the Messiah who is able to announce a millennial kingdom. A distinction according to the saying, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are

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Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's" is no longer possible. Since this government of the State wants to be something more, since in the Führer we are confronted with a metaphysical conception, the question becomes serious, extremely serious, whether in the German Führer State we have to do with authority in the sense of the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

German constitutional law largely accommodates itself to this peculiar position. For example, when it is said that in the National Socialist State what is demanded is not obedience to the authority of the State, but free attachment to the Führer. Accordingly, even taxation is regarded as an act of loyalty to the Führer! The relationship of State and subject is abolished; in its place come the Führer and the follower. Even the conception of "following" appears! That is not a political, but a religious conception. A remarkable, and equally important change is in progress: the State is being surrounded with a religious consecration. Modern German constitutional law lacks the terms by which to define completely the Führer State of to-day, for this State aims at being not only a state but also a religious community, i.e. a Church.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GERMAN VISION OF GOD

It was almost to be expected that at the moment when the Aryan racial consciousness received such an impetus from the National Socialist Movement and created a myth of its own around the Aryan racial soul, there should also be experienced by Germanic religion a stirring of new life. We find it in the "German Vision of God", which starts out from the conviction that each people has its own God and its own knowledge of God and that this God reveals Himself solely in the people's life and being.

The German Vision of God explicitly rejects Christianity, for to the German this is a religion that is by nature alien. It explicitly rejects also any synthesis, any connection between Christianity and the German Vision of God. Therefore the "Germanizing" of Christianity, such as Paul de Lagarde and especially Arthur Bonus wanted, is no longer acquiesced in. On the contrary the conviction is expressed that, if the German uprising is not to come to an untimely end, the fight must be carried on till the new and young German Faith has gained the victory. Exactly in the same way as the unity of the new Reich had to be fought for, so the struggle for the faith of the new Reich must be carried on with

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relentless determination. This struggle for something new will not have a disturbing effect on the people, on the contrary, it is an absolute necessity of life for a creative nation whose heart beats strong.

In the German Vision of God, whose most important representative is Professor Wilhelm Hauer, we find arguments for a reconstruction of the religion of the German People, similar to those which met us in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* by Alfred Rosenberg. As a matter of fact, no profound differences can be established between the National Socialist world-view which derives its content from the myth of the twentieth century, and the German Vision of God which at the start was mainly represented by the German Faith Movement. Both start out from the People and have no other aim than to serve just this People. There is no other God than He who reveals Himself in the People's life and being. Therefore the People's life and being are the Alpha and Omega of National Socialist ideology, and also of the German Vision of God. But while Rosenberg does not get beyond hoping that the German People may be given the man who will build for it the Church of the German religion, Hauer believes that in his German Vision of God he is already able to fulfil this wish.

The birth place of the German Vision of God is the German soul as it is laid hold of by God. *Soul* and *heart* are the important conceptions in the German Vision of God. Hegel and Fichte come to mind, and also Herder and Schleiermacher and besides, the pantheism of Johann Wolfgang Goethe. As a matter

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of fact, the mysticism and the pantheism of German Idealism are the forerunners of the German Vision of God. Whereas in the course of the nineteenth century mystical pantheism got rid of the Christian ideas of which it was full, what it had to do in the twentieth century was to become filled with Germanic religious ideas. That is where the German Vision of God comes in.

Hauer is perfectly right when he says that the influence of Goethe has been a decisive one in the contest between the Germanic German spirit and Christianity, and that Christianity is wrong in claiming Goethe for itself. "All attempts to stamp as a Christian the greatest figure of the last important epoch, Goethe, must shipwreck on his own words and his own works. Certainly he had an entirely receptive mind for the living religious spirit in the Scriptures of the Christians, as is natural in a great German. And he did not remain untouched by the living power of Jesus. But none of those great truths of Christianity which are set forth in the central dogmas of its Confessions had a decisive influence in the life of Goethe. What he is and teaches is nothing else than what the seers and prophets of Indo-Germanic Faith have everywhere and always been and taught, namely, that the world is the manifestation of God in visible form and that wherever man stands truly and completely in the world, he is directly united with God. Reconciliation and redemption in the Christian sense are not needed by this man. He *is* reconciled because in the deepest ground of his being he is one with the eternal ground. And this

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primal fact of his being saves him from all condemnation and gives access into his life to those powers by which only the man of action and aspiration is redeemed." That is in fact Goethe's brand of pantheism.

What Hauer has to say about the influence of Schleiermacher is as little open to criticism. "The Schleiermacher of the *Addresses on Religion* attempts to liberate Christianity from its Near Eastern Semitic form and out of the Germanic German spirit to give it a new basis. And the liberal theology of the nineteenth century of which he was the founder is, when looked at within and to its depths, nothing else than an attempt to Germanize Christianity. We must be heartily grateful to this theology for helping by its critical work to prepare the way for the courageous disavowal by wide circles of the German People of forms strange to us. But the fact that Christianity cannot be Germanized is shown by the fate of this theology, especially at the present moment when what is wanted is a new structure right from the foundation. It is dismissed as a factor of no importance in the great work that is going on."

Therefore in the German Vision of God we do not have—and this has constantly to be stressed—a new phenomenon; it had already assumed importance during last century. At the present moment we are simply experiencing an acute phase in the fight between German Faith and Christianity and indeed, as the adherents of the German Vision of God hope and believe, in the final phase of it. For the Germanic peoples have been occupying for some five millenia

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the soil which has become their destiny, and they spring from that first blossoming of Indo-Germanic religion, the glorious symbol of which was the light god of heaven and ruler of all things in heaven and earth. They experienced a second great blossoming in the earlier and later Bronze Age from about 2000 B.C. But we can also regard as expressions of this great new epoch of Germanic life and energy the migrations of the Vikings, the Edda, the lost epics of the southern Germanic lands, the founding of the Russian Empire by the Normans, the beginning of the British Imperium, yes, even the Empire of Charles the Great which came to grief in its large enterprise through a Church policy that belonged to an alien world. At that point, according to Hauer, Christianity breaks in and for a short period is master of the situation. But it has a stiff fight lasting for a thousand years and finally is inwardly vanquished. "So it has become plain that, on a broad historical view, the domination of Christianity as normative power on Germanic German soil was nothing more than an episode of a thousand years, which is now approaching its end."

But let us now turn to the content of this German Vision of God. Faith is, according to Hauer, life, strength, security of the inmost being. In it we meet eternal reality, in communion with which we are joyful and unmoved. Therefore faith is surrender to the will of this reality, is working and fighting under its compulsion, is a knowledge of its victory. It is a trusting to the power which dwells in the heart, for it is there that God, the creative One, enters

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into union with the upright and the self-sacrificing. But faith is also mastery of the task which God's sovereignty lays upon us. It is a resting on the ultimate foundation that gives blessed strength in the midst of the hardest conflict. But it is also stillness in the storm, staying power in defeat, and hope where every hope appears lost. "Over all questions and doubts it rises up again and again out of the pro-creative ground of our soul and towers victoriously aloft, a wonderful gift of that eternally active reality which is God." And German Faith is just that! That does not mean that it is limited to the present German People. "German" joined with Faith is only a symbolical term for the commission that comes "out of the creative ground of West-Indo-Germanic blood and spirit, for the demand of the eternal powers that this space of earth should have its own religious being". Thus Dante, Giordano Bruno, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Björnson and Ibsen belong just as much to the West-Indo-Germanic region as the Edda and the Nordic sagas, seeing that they draw their life from the same spirit and the same blood. The German Vision of God is concerned with fighting in this area against faiths that are in their nature foreign, not against peoples that are in their nature related. German Faith is faith welling up from the primal ground of German being, from the Indo-Germanic Nordic native soil.

To German Faith the "blood" is holy. "In it has run from time immemorial the creative secret of families, tribes and peoples." "This wonderful life has been fashioned by the creative will of deity;

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it comes flowing from the eternal ground which is actually present working within it." Blood is the bond of community. Inwardly the thread of the blood of one generation is joined up with those thousands of others in a people, which have been spun by the same fate. The heart of the people is the bond of blood. Even the spirit's root goes down into the blood. No doubt the spirit creates the body, but it wraps itself up in the secret of the blood which runs from generation to generation and determines men's spiritual being. Thus the blood is a fateful demand which none can evade. The man of German Faith accepts it with its light and its darkness as at once gift and task, coming from the eternal hand.

The Indo-Germanic soul has from time immemorial divined the holiness of the blood. Thus even the Nordic sagas and the Edda are saturated with the sense of what the blood means for strong creative life and work. In loyalty to inherited blood the will of the gods is fulfilled. In the course of the centuries and with influences from the soil, from the areas occupied, the creative secret of inherited blood gives itself the form of the *race*. It is of the highest importance for a people which racial image it regards as authoritative. Even if it is not admissible to speak of exactly delimited races, German history shows that the ideal image of the Nordic race forces itself upon the German People. The best and highest that the German man longs and strives for, is connected with the image of the Nordic species of humanity. But Nordic species is what has for all time been the divine destiny of all that goes by the name, Indo-

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Germanic. The divine formative will, which is never completely realized, but that always remains longing and aim, is the 'Ought' of a race. In this 'Ought' God is present to man. So reverence for race is no cause of presumption, but a sacred obligation, a grave responsibility.

Not only race, however, but also *place* belongs to a people, the land on which it has developed. The soil, the earth, is the sanctuary in which God meets it as nowhere else. The soil is the ground out of which there grows for the people, with diligent toil, the bread which nourishes the body. The mountains and woods are for it the sacred places in which it worships the invisible powers which are present to it in calm and storm. Verily, throughout the centuries there has been sung the song of the German earth and of the German homeland. "And because the earth is sacred to us, we not only love it with a passionate love, we care for the gifts, which it gives us with profound reverence and responsibility. The bread of its soil, the springs that quench our thirst and refresh us, earthly love, embrace of body and soul, the mother, the child that is nourished from her strength, the force within us, driving us, the fighting spirit that makes us shout for joy when the call comes to risk our lives. Here are our sacraments, the sacraments of the earth, which are more real to us than all others. In them we are joined together by the Holy Ghost, who rules the whole world in one eternally joyous Pentecost."

Everything that happens, conditioned by blood, race and soil, is a People's event. And this People's

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event is for the German Faith a divine event. Hauer says: "Blood and place, soil and fatherland, the history of our people and its battles, we love so ardently and honour with a profound piety because here God meets us bodily and directly." He who places himself in the mighty rhythm of growth and decay is no longer troubled by the question about the meaning of life, for the rightly lived life is everywhere revealed, and it carries within itself life's meaning. Yet greatness of soul and nobility of spirit and conscience belong to this faith in life, but that means that we shudder before the greatness of this humanity of ours. Ultimately the meaning of life is this: "That within this totality, in strict responsibility to the laws of life, we complete the circle of our existence and thereby take our part in rounding off the eternal ring."

The Germanic German¹ Faith in life discloses also the eternal meaning of death. The earth is home and sanctuary, it is her will that the generations sink back again into her as they rose up from her. "We say, 'Yes', to death also, for it is the divine 'Must', the sacred original law of life, to which we willingly submit ourselves." According to eternal law death belongs as much as birth to the rhythm of life. Certainly the adherent of the German Faith also, on occasion, is faced with the question, Why is he not permitted to complete the circle of his existence? But Faith in Life does not allow lingering over this question, to which there will never be an answer.

¹ This is a frequent combination of adjectives in the new Germany. "German" refers to the race as it is to-day; "Germanic" to the old tribes of pre-Christian days.

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“Because we believe in life, we know that death cannot destroy any life, that death is no longer effective. . . . No one is really living who is afraid of his hour of death.” On that account there is no necessity in German Faith for a “Deliverer”, for a Redeemer who has taken the power from death. But what about eternal life? To that Hauer gives the answer that all attempts to unravel the secret of the soul’s destiny after death are to the German Faith open questions. All longings for the future are absorbed in religious surrender to the moment.

The Christian conception of sin is rejected by German Faith as essentially foreign. Not that it professes no knowledge of sin. On the contrary, Hauer declares, “We believe that to become guilty and to feel oneself guilty belongs to humanity as such, and that even the heathen man stands under this rule. . . . In German Faith there is a deeper knowledge about the incurring of guilt. There guilt is again and again spoken of as a destiny. It has been pre-eminently the science in the Germanic German area which has had the penetration and the courage to see that when a man becomes guilty it is often because of the powers which develop in him by inheritance and for which he cannot be held personally responsible. Here we see the man placed in a dark context without his personal will thereby being involved. . . .” Yet he knows also that the “eternal Judge” is every moment close to him in his own bosom, and that he has to render Him full account. But He is none other than He who brought him into life and determined his fate. So even remorse is only

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“consonance of pain for broken laws with the quiet security that even this guilt and sinfulness belong to the whole of his life.”

In the German Vision of God a decisive role is played not only by blood, race and soil, but out and beyond them there comes to life in it “a myth of unheard of greatness” that towers up into the “Christian epoch of Germanic German history”. It is the myth of *Ragnerök*, of the destiny of the gods, of the “twilight of the gods”. It proclaims the frightful fact that even the gods do not live eternally, that their world also, like that of men, and the whole cosmos is caught up into the vast vortex of growth and decay. The tragic pathos of the downfall of the world of the gods is genuinely Germanic. In an awful battle between the gods and their adversaries all go down together. Yet the downfall of the gods is not the end. New worlds of gods and of men come into being. The circle of growth begins anew.

But are gods that pass away really gods? Hauer's answer is: Divine beings such as the German worships, are not for him an absolute finality but a manifestation of the eternal divine force, the mighty living forms assumed by that original divine power which bears no name and which needs no name. Also, it would be a mistake simply to bring to the front again the old divine forms, for the forms which the divine assumes in human consciousness are subject to change. What must rather be attempted is to express our experience of the divine presence in ideas and words. The divine power remains the same, only the divine images have changed. That is—according

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to Hauer—the gods' change of form. But we never get any nearer the truth than former generations. "We do not behold God more truly, but only differently." "Whereas we have made bold to denominate with words that primal power out of which rose the divine powers and the divine images, our forebears persisted in keeping in respect to it a sacred silence. The great truth which the myth teaches us is this: Worlds and their ruling forces, gods and their images, and forms come and pass away in a mighty rhythm. The original divine power remains eternally and its activity never comes to an end. Forms of religion and brands of faith come into being and pass away, but the ground out of which they arise remains; the power to experience the divine and to give it form continues operating without cessation in man. For divinity is omnipresent and of the activity of the divine there is no end." The ultimate reality in the Germanic German Vision of God is life, it is will, it is "becoming", it is action. It can do nothing else than will to act and make. It is a something existing and upwelling that wants to become a formed reality.

But there also grows out of this faith a morality of universal love of a special sort. Every existence is rooted in God, is permeated by Him right to its depths. So in God they are all equal, and this equality binds one existence to another throughout the whole realm of creation. All existences are equal in what is most inward, in what is eternal in them. That is their dignity. In that is rooted our love for them. But it is of the essence of the German Vision of God,

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tracing in the world as it does, in the infinitely great ebb and flow of life, the eternal God, to hold that there is an infinitely deep love of life combined with a state of mind which calmly accepts the struggle and all the vicissitudes of life.

But whence derives the Vision of God? It derives from experience of God. Faith is born of the perception of eternal reality. This perception is called by Hauer revelation. But experience of God is not simply to be equated with an emotional experience. It is not an experience of bliss, but the actual perception of a reality which is ultimate. It is a being seized by the primal forces of being. And *the* way to faith? Within us is the avenue to the hidden centre of the world, to the original ground and the ultimate reality. There is no man who is not by nature, in virtue of his humanity, bedded in the eternal ground of life, and who consequently does not carry in himself the possibility and the presupposition of faith. Yet there are some conditions to be fulfilled if out of what is given revelation is to come. The world of the eternal always closes itself against anyone who persists in egoism and self-will. But everything that exists, everything that occurs, can become revelation to a man, if he stands in the centre and lives from the ground and source of eternal life. All things are a gateway to the eternal being; "its opening is a wonderful experience which we ever and again reverently accept."

It goes without saying that this German Faith has also got to be cultivated and to be anchored in the people. That is done first of all by instruction in the

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German Faith, at the centre of which instruction stand the history of Germanic mythology, folklore and racial science. It is done also by the fostering of festivals and ceremonies that express the German nature. The spheres in which the making of festivals takes place with an inner necessity, "are like concentric rings where one encloses the other". Human crises are determined by the rhythm of the supreme life itself. Man is first of all adjusted to the movement of the surrounding universe and to the rhythm of the earth that bears and nourishes him. The course of the sun determines the pace of the year and this controls the rise and the falling off of growth. "Therefore men celebrate festivals of the sun, of the year, of growth, of harvest, where these have not been destroyed by a religion that is foreign to the world, hostile to the earth." Hauer believes that in the making of yearly festivals there are still many unexhausted possibilities which could be made the starting-points of popular religious and ethical renewal. The rhythm of the day's course in particular should again make men experience the solemnity of dawn and sunrise or the golden glowing consecration of a sunset and the restful, liberating stillness of twilight.

It is no less important to celebrate the festivals of the year. Here Christmas, the Yule Festival, takes a special place. Under no circumstances would Hauer dispense with the genuine Germanic word *Weihnachten*. The content, however, is that of the Yule festival. The Yule solstice is the immemorial Indo-Germanic festival for the victory of light, for the birth of the

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young sun god and of the young year. This demands a ceremony outside in the wood or on a quiet hill-top "where the deep winter night envelops us or where the soul expands under that tree of candles, the starry heavens". Especially the great events in the people's history should also be celebrated. Where that is omitted, the popular life is stunted. The content of these national festivals is to be determined by the idea of the development of the people and by the effect of the heroes' and leaders' mighty exploits. Such festivals should be celebrated by the whole community of the people. After that the youth dedication deserves special attention. This festival touches the people as much as family and kindred, for its peculiarity consists in its symbolizing the fact that the young man now steps out of the circle of family and kindred, to which he has up to now almost exclusively belonged, into a life "where the reality, the People, regulates him in a more noticeable and visible manner than before". Therefore youth dedications will be increasingly large community festivals, and the final aim must be that these youth dedications should be held for all the youth of the German nation. The occasional festivals are not to be forgotten, those which a kindly destiny has given to us. Family birthdays and high days or those small events that are often so little considered. "The first ripe strawberry, the song of the first starling in spring, the returning stork, the first snow, can affect us with such a festival spirit that a palpable pause is created for the exchange of a true word, an occasional festival. A sacred hour in which two friends are permitted to see completely

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into each other's hearts can become a festival, demanding festal attire and clinking glasses and sparkling wine."

The style of the festivals is as manifold as life itself. If they are not purely military festivals, youths and maidens, men and women should take part in them for they should represent family, kin and the community of the people. The festivals are to be held in a cult-building which symbolically represents the community of the people. More difficult is the question of the symbols to be employed in the festivals; yet it is scarcely possible to work out an actual festival without outward signs. But the peculiarity of the symbol is that it must not and cannot be thought out. It must be born out of the depths of the enraptured heart. Most impressive, according to Hauer, are the symbols which nature gives to us, such as fire, tree and water. As newly discovered symbols there are also the swastika and the sun-wheel; the "Heil" greeting, likewise, and the assembly places of the People possess symbolic power.

Hauer proposes a proper liturgy for the ordering of the name consecration, for the youth dedication, for the consecration of marriage and of the dead.

The Name Consecration takes place under a large old pear tree, around which a circle is formed with benches and chairs, in the middle of which stands the basket, decked with blue and yellow flowers, in which later the child will be laid. To begin with "No little blade grows on earth" is sung to an accompaniment of violin, 'cello and flutes. Then the nurse hands the child over to its mother with a certain

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form of words. The mother enters the circle and thanks God for the child. But she also thanks the Führer:

“Thanks to thee, Führer and Friend; for on confident
course,
In troubled times thou didst send us, therefore souls
found thee.”

Then—also in verse form—the mother expresses the hope that the little one will grow, will manifest boldness and open-hearted love, and will show itself thankful to parents and kindred. Thereupon the father holds the child in his arms while the children sing. He then gives it into the arms of its great grandmother and then of its grandmother. Then the godparents one after the other take it and give it their good wishes.

The godfather says:

“Wolf’s cub. . . .
may life keep you sound in body and soul,
that strong and bold thy
step may go into the German future.”

The godmother says:

“Seek and keep ever within thee
the yearning for what is holy.
It makes your good fortune and helps you
to conquer pain and disappointment.”

But the word of another speaker is not without interest:

“Thou are not to-day
and art not to-morrow.
Thou art 1,000 years before
thee and art 1,000 years
after thee.

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1,000 years before thee
have guarded your blood,
that thou becamest just
what thou art.

Guard thy blood, that
the generations that come
1,000 years after thee
have cause to thank thee! "

The grandmother now lays the child in the flower-decked basket. Next the speech of dedication is delivered, concluding somewhat as follows: "Therefore we salute thee, thou child, in the congregation of those who wait and those who fight, with the wish that you will one day dedicate yourself to the company of those who are willing to listen to the eternal voice of their People and to be obedient to it. All powers of goodness and nobility that were ever bodied forth in German lands rule over thy ways. Heil to thee!" At the end of this discourse all rise and salute the new-born child with the German greeting. The ceremony concludes with a song in which all join.

The Youth Dedication is ordered with no less solemnity. Choir, speaker and congregation take turn about, then follows an address, after which the speaker turns to the young people with these words:

" Drink the wine's dark strength,
which flows through your soul,
creating in the inmost being
a holy sense of responsibility.
Then pray, yet pray only
to yourselves, and you conjure up
out of your own nature
a spirit who hears you.

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To God the Lord it is a triumph
when you do not wilt before him,
when instead of kneeling down
dumb in the dust, you stand lordly,
when proudly like the tree
you do not bow down under blossom
when only the burden of blessing
drives you down to the dust.

Remove the wine. He who is not yet aflame
is not worthy of its kiss!
But he who himself comes from the fire
has already for long been gloriously aglow.
Only one pleasure befits you:
only that course through storm and night
which out of your own dark breast
makes a heaven of stars."

When the vows of the young folk are received by the leader of the movement, the young men and women speak in chorus making the following confession:

"We love the day with the sun's brilliance,
we love the night garlanded with stars.
Let us love delight, teach us to love trouble,
teach us to love life: birth and death!
Give us purity and strength for the fight
use us as instrument which makes the new thing out
of the old."

In conclusion the congregation sings the following adaptation of a hymn:

"If all become unfaithful, yet we continue true,
that still upon the earth a banner wave for you,
O comrades of our youth, images of a better time,
which has consecrated us to manly virtue and love's
death.

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Will never to fall away from us, always be nigh to us,
true as the German oaks, as moonshine and sunshine!
One day all our brothers will again clearly know
and they will turn to the source in love and loyalty.

You stars that tranquilly look down, be witnesses
to us,
if all our brothers keep silence and trust to false
gods:
we shall never break our word, never be like knaves,
but will preach and speak of the Holy German
Reich."

The Marriage Consecration has the same liturgical framework. There are added some opening words by the minister of consecration, who begins:

"Hear how an old song of the Edda speaks to us of love's joyful and painful destiny decreed by the eternal powers. According to Nordic wisdom it lies like slumber on the soul of the woman till the man's love stirs it to waking life. And for the man the deepest secrets of life remain hidden till his loving wife reaches to him the draught of knowledge. . . ."

Then follows the reading of a song from the Edda.

In this song, at the end of it, Sigurd declares: ". . . I swear that I want thee for my wife, thou art my heart's desire!" And Sigdrifa answers: "Thee do I most desire to have, even if I could choose among all men!" And this they confirm with oaths.

In the address which follows important passages are read out of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Now follows the act of consecration: "And now step forward and exchange rings as a sign of your union in wedded love."

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The minister of consecration hands to the bridegroom the ring of the bride, and he puts it on her finger, and to the bride in the same way the ring of the bridegroom. Then the pair take right hands and the consecrator pronounces over them these words:

“ Mother Earth, who lovingly bears us all,
And Father Heaven, who blesses us
with his light and his changing weather,
and all the good powers that inhabit the air,
they rule over you
till your destiny is fulfilled.”

The ceremony closes with a “ Heil to you ”.

At the Consecration of the Dead, the course to be followed is: The coffin shall be solemnly borne on a hand-cart before the mortuary, under the escort of six torch-bearers and the cemetery superintendent shall lead it to the grave, then the torch-bearers take up position at the head of the grave. The relations and those who speak go to the foot of the grave. The coffin is then placed over the grave, but not lowered. Then, after poems have been recited, the speaker goes up to the grave and says:

“ Eternal creative power,
thou inflamest our life
to battle, to completion.

We lower the torches,
that they go out,
as thy life went out.
Farewell! ”

At the same time the torches are thrust into prepared holes in the ground. The minister of conse-

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cration throws three handfuls of earth down into the grave and says:

“ Loyalty to the earth,
Loyalty to the God in us,
Loyalty to the eternal ‘ Die and Become! ’ ”

After all those present have thrown a spade of earth into the grave, together they take their way back into the village, “ the way into life ”.

In his *German Vision of God* and in his instructions on the ordering of Festivals and Ceremonies of German character, Hauer has given us much fuller information about the German Faith or the German Religion than Alfred Rosenberg, who in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century* leaves the shaping of the German religion to the future. But if Hauer's most varied publications might raise some claim to completeness, it is very evident that what he has to say to us about God, about the meaning of life, about death, about sin, guilt and redemption is remarkably meagre. Do we really have here a faith which proves itself strong in life and in death? Or is it not rather the case that it can be regarded as nothing more than a correlate of the new national movement and of national optimism? The *German Vision of God* draws the breath of life from the national myth; it will scarcely outlast it by a single day. But will it be called to give to the myth of the twentieth century a concrete form? Even that is very doubtful.

The indefiniteness of all their statements of faith has already brought forth the wildest individualism. Alongside the German Faith Movement a series of movements of German Faith have maintained them-

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selves, and since Hauer has himself turned his back on it, it has gone into a rather bad state of disintegration. The line of development seems to be that the German Vision of God is merging into the myth of the twentieth century. Yet there are some forms of People's religion that will be able to keep going for a longer or shorter period. The most important deserve a brief description.

A great prominence has been won by the labours of the late General Ludendorff and his wife, Mathilde Ludendorff, for a German Faith. For Mathilde Ludendorff deemed it important to make an attack "scientifically" against Christ and the Bible. Her writings, *Redemption by Jesus Christ* and *The Great Displacement—the Bible Not God's Word*, were directed to this aim. The second of these particularly had a huge sale. It is probably in the writings of Mathilde Ludendorff that Christianity is most sharply attacked. She is convinced that the greatest outrage ever perpetrated against the German People took place in the Christianizing of the old Germanic stocks. "During many thousands of years our ancestors were an ethically elevated, powerful folk, healthy in body and in soul. After many single violent attempts, it was about eleven hundred years ago that a beginning was made with systematic sword-methods against our ancestors of German Faith. Thousands were murdered, because they preferred losing their lives to rejecting the faith of their fathers." Yes, the whole history of the German People is seen as a fight of the German soul for "its inborn faith" and as a continuous conflict with the foreign Christian faith.

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On the positive side less importance attaches to the "House of Ludendorff". What we are here told about the German Faith is by no means so complete as, say, in Hauer's *German Vision of God*. The stir that this movement makes is due rather to its relentless struggle against Christianity. On occasion it so broke the traces that leaders of the Third Reich at different times moved away from it and sometimes set the Secret Police to work. National Socialism does not want an open conflict with Christianity; its aim is to dam back its influence and reduce its sphere of action step by step. The fight of National Socialism against Christianity is being carried out under camouflage. Therefore comrades in arms so passionate as Mathilde Ludendorff are inconvenient. But meantime things have gone so far that much greater scope is allowed to this open kind of fighting against Christianity; at least General Ludendorff was not tardy in interpreting his reconciliation with Adolf Hitler in this sense.

The "Nordic Faith Movement" seeks to exhibit its importance by maintaining an aristocratic aloofness towards the other organizations taking the same direction, and in carrying out, consciously, as a minority a cult of genuine Nordic superiority. It is specially proud of its "Nordic Racial Creed", which it regards as almost the epoch-making deed within the whole German Faith Movement. On nearer view this "Nordic Racial Creed" scarcely presents fundamental differences as compared with the other faith movements of the German People. Here also we meet faith in the eternal struggle of the constructive

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forces against the destructive forces in earth and universe, and faith in the continual revelation of the divine in the eternal laws of race, in blood and soil. The unity of blood and soil in all creatures is specially emphasized. Its doctrine of immortality is just that with which we have already become acquainted: "We believe in the immortality of Nordic man in the heirs of his race, and in the eternity of the Nordic soul as the power in which the divine manifests itself on the earth and in the universe." On the other hand, a great emphasis is laid on that moral law in Nordic man which demands the struggle for the preservation, increase and unification of the Nordic race upon earth and insists on heroic sacrifice for Nordic might and Nordic right in war and peace. There is also demanded equality of the sexes in family, people and State, hallowing of marriage in the sense of the vigorous maintenance of the stock and the expulsion and annihilation of dysgenic elements. Special desires spring up from the people's consciousness. The states of the peoples of Nordic blood must hold together defensively and offensively against all other races for the preservation of their being and of the Germanic branch of languages. Wars between peoples of Nordic race contradict the Nordic mission. The "Nordic Faith Movement" will have nothing to do with the activities of Mathilde Ludendorff, seeing that she is concerned, not with a religious faith, but only with philosophic theories, which are vigorously contested and have nothing specifically Nordic about them. "We are not going to swallow whole the philosophic theories of Mathilde Spiess, just be-

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cause Erich Ludendorff fought the battle of Tannenberg."

A subordinate role is played by the "Germanic Faith Communion" which Professor Ludwig Fahrenkrog called into existence in Barmen even before the War. In a "Speech of Fire at the Hermann Stone" he declared: "He who has a German mother, needs no Oriental nurse." Binding upon the members of this movement are (1) the avowal of German blood, (2) the confession of the German Faith, (3) non-adherence to any other religious communion. The communion is organized, first, in the house congregation, in which the father is the natural *Weihwart* or consecrator of his house, performing the consecration festival within the family and representing his house in the congregation and in the whole communion. The second organ is the local congregation, consisting of the members of the communion in a particular place. It assembles at the summer solstice for the congregational meeting and chooses the *Weihwart* who conducts the general consecration festivals and who represents the congregation outside of itself. The local congregations are, thirdly, joined together into one tribe or district, which consists of representatives of at least twelve local congregations. It assembles at Easter for the district meeting which chooses the *Gauwart* on whom devolves the duty of supervising the customary rites and festivals. Fourthly, there is a community that is made up out of the representatives chosen by the districts, and which assembles annually for the general meeting which chooses the *Hochwart* to whom falls the

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supreme direction of the Germanic Faith Communion.

In the year 1936 the "German Faith Communion" was able to celebrate its semi-jubilee. It declares: "We want the complete decisive step to be taken towards the exclusive German Faith based on our German inheritance. Therefore we take our place in the Third Reich not alongside of other confessions, doctrines or philosophies, but solely and exclusively on our inherited German foundation, upon which other religions as sects of foreign origin and type cannot possibly be based. With all freedom of doctrine, it cannot satisfy us that each is saved according to his own whim. We take our stand on the fulfilling of our people's task which is ours by our birth, and which commits us to obligations which rise up out of eternal deeps of our blood. Therefore we confess: we have only one single belief, namely this, that we know ourselves to be born of the eternal German People, and that with this our German origin we have received a duty and responsibility before the archetype of our German race, before present and future, for time and for eternity." For the future the German Faith Communion and each of its members have to satisfy the following demands, (1) rejection of every religious principle received from abroad, (2) recognition of the inborn duty of faith, (3) the cultivation, as a fruit of German birth, of the German ideal, by making all thought and action the expression of German loyalty.

The "Association to Fight for German Faith" which was founded in the year 1935, sets itself the

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aim of fusing the varied German Faith movements together into one fighting unit. To indicate its character, the guiding principles of the Association may be set forth. (1) The "Association to Fight for German Faith" is a religious society whose members are guided by the German world-view in the conduct of their lives. Its purpose is to bring together the "folkic" religious movements outside of Christianity, those who profess German Faith, German Knowledge of God and German Religion, to a common sacrifice in order to confront all alien doctrines in all their ramifications with the united front of all who hold the same views, bound together for action. (2) The "Association to Fight for German Faith" leaves the experiencing or knowing of God to each individual as a personal affair, and permits complete liberty of believing—in accord with the moral feeling of the Germanic race—the sole restriction being the compulsory renunciation of all occult ideologies. (3) The "Association to Fight for German Faith" sees in the laws of the race's life and of the people's life God's "revelations, which when regarded and observed bring fulfilment of life". Membership of the Association is possible only for those who have severed their connection with the Church. Those who cannot make up their mind to leave the Church can join the Association as "Supporters". The attempt to extend the organization over the whole Reich did not succeed. The other German Faith movements, generally speaking, would have nothing to do with fusion. When it transpired that the founder and leader of the Association was himself still a member

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of the Evangelical Church there developed in the Association a cleavage which shortly became a rapid disintegration. Finally there remained only a local group in Mannheim, which published in the autumn of 1936 an advertisement to the effect that "We require in all parts of Germany people of real fighting spirit as speakers who will carry home to the people our German knowledge of God. Anyone having the specified qualifications, report at once to the Central office at Mannheim."

A character of its own is exhibited by the "German People's Church" which was called into existence by Artur Dinter and is led by him. Judging by his Confession of Faith one could count the German People's Church as belonging to the German Christians, for here Christ is not rejected. His Confession of Faith says: "I believe in God, the Almighty, All-loving, All-righteous Father of all men. I believe that God created us as spiritual beings possessing free will. I believe that we have become men in consequence of the misuse of our free will. I believe that pain is only the legitimate consequence of our apostasy from God. I believe that God gives to each man who is willing, the power and help to work his way again up to Him. I believe that the Saviour Jesus Christ has been sent by God to the earth to show men the way back to God. I believe that even the most depraved man will, if he follows the Saviour, be one day saved in the presence of God. Heil!" That is a religious philosopher's entirely personal Confession of Faith, and it can assuredly lay claim neither to religious nor intellectual profundity. But owing to

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the multiplicity of Dinter's writings—he is almost solely responsible for the literary activity of the German People's Church—and the largeness of the editions through which some of his writings have gone, his influence in National Socialist circles has at times assumed considerable proportions. This was helped by the fact that as long ago as the year 1923 he was a comrade of Adolf Hitler in his struggle and that soon after that he founded, along with Julius Streicher, the "All-German People's Community" and advocated a passionate anti-Semitism. Certainly he later severed his connection with the National Socialist German Workers' Party. That did not mean the cessation of propaganda for the German People's Church; on the contrary he is extraordinarily busy with it. In a guide to propaganda we read: "What we are to bring about is that the dear Berliners will be hearing nothing else, on rising, at breakfast, at lunch, and supper and on going to bed, than, again and again 'German People's Church', and 'German People's Church'." His fierce attacks on the Evangelical Church and on the other Faith movements have involved him in a multitude of law-suits. But that has not caused him to give up his German People's Church. In a retrospect of the year 1936 he affirms: "A frightfully difficult year of strife lies behind us. It has been the most difficult during the nine years existence of our German People's Church."

In addition to the German Faith movements which have just been briefly described, there is a whole crowd of others which are, however, quite unimpor-

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tant, and so do not call for consideration.

The German Vision of God, to give it once more this compendious title, is thus broken up into a whole series of movements and organizations. These do not possess the qualities that would justify the conclusion that a comprehensive union of all the German Faith movements was on the cards. Besides it is no longer possible for them to exert too great an attraction on the people. The Third Reich is making that its own business, for it sees in these various movements a disagreeable dissidence that is far from conducive to the unification of the German People on the platform of the National Socialist world-view. The German People is to find its sole world-view in the myth of the twentieth century. So it is hardly surprising that German Faith movements, which aim at presenting within the Third Reich a confession of their own, designed to supplement the myth of the twentieth century, are to-day in process of dissolution. Thus disintegration has already laid hold of the German Faith movement and robbed it of its intellectual leaders. Herbert Grabert, one of the movement's leaders, hits the mark when, in justification of his requirement from the movement, he says: "For us, as for countless Germans, National Socialism is the new faith which makes every Confession and every group with its world-view, superfluous. . . . The man who has not yet recognized that the new faith of our people manifests itself to-day with the utmost power and decisiveness in National Socialism, and that it inspires millions of German men, making them capable of unlimited sacrifice, the man who continues

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to speak about special religions and confessional needs of his soul or to think that he is called on to satisfy them in others, that man may go on cultivating his soul, but he will have no part in the faith of his people and in its creative work."

CHAPTER FIVE

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DETAILED study of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* and of *The German Vision of God* shows that the Christian Church has been confronted with a more serious adversary than in all previous centuries. But at the beginning only a few realized that. Even Church circles were largely captivated by the national renewal, or, as people liked to put it, by the rebirth of the German People. Yes, many positively expected that the new national movement was going to mean the saving and renewing of the Church. Had National Socialism not struck down with one blow the Church's worst enemy, Communism, and did not the Party programme proclaim that the National Socialist Party stood on the platform of positive Christianity? And was it not a fact that at the beginning of the Third Reich the Churches filled again? Ought the Church to stand aside in the great hour of the nation? Ought it not to co-operate gladly in fulfilling the demand of all hearts: one People, one State, one Church?

It is hard for us to form an adequate conception of the significance of this renewal of the will of the people after the years of decline, of hopelessness and of despair. Is it not understandable that in wide

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circles in the Church the one wish was to co-operate and to play a proper part in this mighty struggle for the renewing of the people? Many feared, with all seriousness—and still to-day fear—that, if the Church does not place itself at the service of the national renewal, it will be cold shouldered and will sink down into complete insignificance. Did things not reach such a pass during these last decades that the Church was no longer a concern of the whole people, that it was only for a minority that it had any significance at all? Life was flowing past the Church. And would the process of elimination not run its complete course unless the Church succeeded in fitting itself into the process of renewal? It could well be expected, on the other hand, that the Church would again be a matter of importance to the people; the mighty Church in the strong State was a phrase that began to go the rounds. A new State capable of action and a new Church freed from its enemies—what an inspiring prospect! Here was not merely a renewal of the State; what was taking place was also a renewal of the Church. What dared to stand in the way of that? Was opposition not betrayal at once of the State and of the Church?

And yet the warning of the Church went sounding clearly and audibly right into the midst of the giddy turmoil of this national renewal. It was the warning that told what the Reformers knew, that if the Church is to be renewed, the impulse to that can never come from the world, can never come from a political movement nor from a human world-view: the Church can only be renewed through the Word of God. Here

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is where the spirits had to be separated. The Evangelical Church was faced with the question whether it was finally to abandon the ground of the Reformation or whether it was to turn back to the Reformation truths. In fact, the question that really had to be decided was, whether the Evangelical Church was going to be and remain a Church of Jesus Christ, or whether it was going to become a religious communion based on what comes from man, what comes from the world.

The Christian Church is continually being confronted, and particularly during the last two centuries has very frequently been confronted, with this alternative. But never since the Reformation did the Church have the question so plainly presented to it as now. And again the decision led to a division in the Church. On the one side were ranged the German Christians who wanted to place the Church at the service of national renewal, expecting therefrom a renewal of the Church also. On the other side, the Confessional Church which planted itself on the ground of the Reformation and stood for the Reformation truth that the Church can only be renewed by the Word of God and that the Church can do the people no other and no better service than to direct to it the message of Jesus Christ, as we have it certified in the witness of the Holy Scriptures.

Could it be described as something new and unheard of, when the German Christians trod this way and undertook the attempt to make a combination, a synthesis, between Christianity and National Socialism? Was that not the very road which the Church

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had been travelling for now two hundred years? Had the Church not contrived to accommodate itself to the Enlightenment, to reconcile itself to Idealism and Romanticism? In reality, the German Christians are going no other road than that which had become customary in the Christian Church! The Church had contented itself with exercising a Christian influence on modern world-views. And this is just what the German Christians were aiming at. They wanted to try, as far as possible, to influence the National Socialist world-view, the myth of the twentieth century, from the side of Christianity.

In contrast to the "folkic" religious communions, as described in the chapter on "The German Vision of God", the German Christians do not downrightly reject Christianity. They are working for a German Christian Church. Here there peeps out the idea, again and again to be met with in German Protestantism, that the Reformation had not been anything else than the inbreaking of the German spirit into Christianity. But four hundred years ago Martin Luther had not been completely successful in his efforts, and so it is the task of the Third Reich to complete Luther's work in a German Christian Church. Even if it be granted that there are single utterances of Luther which can give colour to interpretations of this sort, there is no need of detailed proof that what we have here is a total misunderstanding of Martin Luther. In dealing seriously with Martin Luther there can be no talk of a German Christian Theology or even of a People's Church.

A complete German Christian theology, or a

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coherent German Christian Creed is not to be found. There are many of them, and they differ greatly in content from one another. The differences come from difference of accent, some putting it on "German" and some on "Christian". That gives room for all sorts of variations and these do exist. But there were many people also who were convinced that it was possible, as a German Christian, to take one's stand strictly on the ground of the Reformation Confessions, seeing that a German Christian Church wants to be reckoned as nothing else than a Christian Church for the German People. The number of those who saw from the start that the German Christian Movement meant the "renewing" of the Christian Church on the basis of the National Socialist world-view, was relatively small. So the Church Election in July, 1933, gave a great majority to the German Christians. No small contribution to this Election success was made by the intervention of the Führer Adolf Hitler, who comes from the Roman Catholic Church, with a Radio speech, supporting the cause of the German Christians.

It was in fact possible to cherish the hope that the German Christians would espouse the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed the Church Constitution for the Reich, dated 11th July, 1933, affirmed: "The inviolable basis of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Scriptures bear witness to it, and as the Confessions of the Reformation bring it anew to light. By this Gospel the authority which the Church needs to carry out its mission is determined and delimited." This was

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in very deed an unequivocal basis for the creation of an Evangelical State Church. But only too soon it became evident that the German Christians were not at all in agreement with this basis of the Church, and that they were sparing no pains to show that the world-view principles of National Socialism were binding for the Church also. [The Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller who, with the approval or even by the express wish of the Führer Adolf Hitler, was placed at the head of the State Church did not consider himself called to act as protector-in-chief of the Constitution. On the contrary, right from the start he ranged himself with the German Christians who aimed at destroying the basis of the Church's Constitution. This was a deep disappointment and a painful blow for all who were going to build the one Evangelical State Church on the sole basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But all the protests and warnings of Churches and theologians, who remained true to the Confessions, were unavailing to check the efforts in a German Christian direction made by the Reich Bishop and the German Christian Bishops of the Regional Churches. A cleavage became inevitable.]

What first helped to a clear understanding of the aims of the German Christians was the Demonstration at the Sports Palace at Berlin on the 13th November, 1933. In the presence of many German Christian leaders and German Christian Bishops the District Leader of the German Christians of Greater Berlin, Dr. Reinhardt Krause, delivered a speech in which he demanded emancipation from the Old

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Testament with its "Jewish morality of rewards" and its "stories of cattle-dealers and panders". Christianity that is true to itself and the Old Testament are mutually exclusive. The demonstration had a strong anti-Semitic stamp. Anti-Semitism has from the beginning been a special interest of the German Christians. "If we National Socialists are ashamed to buy a necktie from the Jew, we should be utterly ashamed to accept from the Jew anything that speaks to our soul, to accept from him the deepest things of religion." Therefore a resolution was passed expressing the expectation that the Regional Churches should at once and without diminution carry the Aryan paragraph¹ into effect. Besides, all Evangelical Christians of alien blood should be gathered into special congregations of their own race, i.e. Jewish Christian Churches should be founded. A further demand is that a German People's Church devote itself seriously to the proclamation of the simple Gospel shorn of all Oriental disfigurement, and of a Jesus of heroic mould as basis of a Christianity conforming to German nature and race, and nurturing no broken servile souls, but, instead, the proud man who as a child of God feels himself in bondage to the divine in himself and in his people. The one real divine service is service to one's fellow-countrymen. A communion, conscious of that and ready to devote itself strenuously to that, will play its part in building up a true and valiant "folkic" Church, completing the German Reformation of Martin Luther and alone

¹ The section of the German Constitution which excludes Jews from citizenship. See also p. 143.

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doing justice to the totality claim of the National Socialist State.

Dr. Krause later laid down the basis of the German People's Church, that is to be aimed at, in the following propositions:

1. We are striving for an undivided German People's Church on the basis of a really racial German Christianity according to the principle: one People, one Reich, one Faith.

2. We confess the divine revelation of the People's community, rooted in blood and soil.

3. Rejecting everything foreign in faith and morals, we stand on the ground of the Gospel of the heroic Saviour, and of German piety as it has been proclaimed through the words and deeds of our great German spiritual leaders and as it continues in that ancestral inheritance which comes to us from earliest times.

4. For the Church absolutely the same laws of life hold as for the State: service to our people is divine service.

Only those can become members who are of Aryan descent and who do not belong to a Masonic Lodge.

Membership of a definite religious communion is not requisite.

Such a "Creed" has no longer any connection with Christianity; it is a confession of National Socialism. Within the Church it evoked a storm of indignation. But this demonstration undeniably did one good thing: it sounded the alarm for all those who held that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must remain the

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single foundation of the Evangelical Church, and strengthened the forces opposed to the penetration of false doctrine into the Church.

Much greater significance attaches to the Twenty-Eight Theses of the Saxon People's Church for the inner upbuilding of the German Evangelical Church. In these Theses, also, the supreme aim is the binding of the Church to the people. It has got to realize that it stands within the State and it must not lead a hole and corner existence alongside of the State. It is neither over nor under the State; it is People's Church only as Church *in* the State. The Church stands in a peculiar position of trust in relation to the State; therefore only a man who possesses the confidence of the government can be a Church leader. In return the State affords the Church every help and full freedom to carry out its work, for State and Church belong to each other as the two great powers for ordering the people's life. The People's Church in its Confession acknowledges blood and soil, because the people is a community of being and blood. Therefore only those who according to the State's law are citizens can be members of the People's Church, and only those who according to the State's law can be office-bearers, can be office-bearers of the Church. So it is expressly insisted that in the Church also the Aryan paragraph of the State must hold, for since the German People's Church regards race as the creation of God, it recognizes the demand to keep the race pure and sound as a commandment of God. It regards marriage between members of different races as an offence against God's will.

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According to the Theses the Church's proclamation has for its goal the placing of man under the will of God. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not denied. In the Theses it is expressly stated: "Gospel of Jesus Christ means that God is our Lord and Father, that this God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, and that we men find the way to the Father only through Jesus Christ. To this proclamation the Church is bound." Alongside this thesis the following exception is striking: "God orders the life of man in family, people and State. Therefore in the totality claim of the National Socialist State the Church recognizes the call of God to the family, people and State." It is noteworthy that in this confession of the German Christians there is found, placed alongside the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, this, if not exactly revelation, yet call of God, in the totality claim of the National Socialist State.

Bible and Confession are recognized as bases of the Church. The decisive revelation of God is Jesus Christ and the primary record of this revelation is the New Testament. The Old Testament has not the same value, for the specific morality and religion of the Jewish people have been transcended. Let us hear something more of what the Theses have to say about the Old Testament: "The Old Testament remains important because it hands down the story of the career and downfall of a people that, in spite of God's revelation, was continually separating itself from Him. The God-thirled prophets have illustrated from this people that a nation's destiny in history is decided by its attitude to God. In the Old

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Testament we see the apostasy of the Jews from God, and in that, their sin. This sin becomes manifest to all the world in the Crucifixion of Jesus. By reason of that the curse of God lies upon this people right up to this day. But at the same time we see in the Old Testament the first rays of the love of God which is finally revealed in Jesus Christ. For the sake of this knowledge the People's Church cannot give up the Old Testament." Here anti-Semitism is carried to extremes. The curse of God lies on the Jewish people, because it crucified Jesus Christ! Therefore Christ did not give Himself to death for the sin of all men. Here the central Christian doctrine of the Cross is perverted into its opposite.

Not without interest is the attitude adopted to the Confessional documents of the Reformation period. It is acknowledged that in the Augsburg Confession and the other Confessional writings of the German Reformation we have witnesses to the content of the Christian proclamation. By means of these confessions the present is joined up with the fathers in the Faith. "A Church without a Confession would be like a State without law and constitution." But a Confession is always bound to a definite time and its problems. "Therefore we endeavour to find, on the basis of the Confession of our fathers an answer, in Confession form, given by the People's Church to the problems of our time. Not back to the faith of our fathers, but forward in the faith of our fathers!" Here we meet the idea so perilous for the Church that the Church and the message which it has to proclaim are subject to historical development and

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change. The belief that God has revealed Himself once and for all in Jesus Christ and that the world, but not God's Word, will pass away, has here been surrendered.

It is all the more surprising to read in the same Thesis that the People's Church must turn against Liberalism, since this destroys faith in Jesus Christ, seeing in Him only a man. It knows Jesus only as proclaimer of a lofty morality or as heroic personality; it places human reason above God. "To us Jesus Christ is the Son of God, His appearance the miracle of human history." On the other hand, the People's Church also attacks a new orthodoxy which by its dogmatic rigidity bars the seeker from the way to Christ and hinders a live proclamation of the Gospel. But the People's Church also attacks the attempts to substitute for the Christian faith a religion which is formed out of racial life and history. As quest of God and questioning about God, all religion is racially differentiated. "But Jesus Christ, in His wonderful Person, is the fulfilment of all that lives in the human soul in the shape of longing, questioning, conjecture." On that account the German People's religion cannot be anything else than a Christian one. But since Christianity takes various forms according to race and nationality, the German People's Church must struggle for the realization of a German Christianity. This German Christianity looks up to Martin Luther, for his Reformation means the breaking through of a German belief in Christ. "German Christianity is Lutheranism. As German Lutherans we are completely Germans and completely Christians."

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While—as we had to state earlier—Christ is misused so that a basis may be found for anti-Semitism, nevertheless in the same “Confession” He is hailed as Mediator. “Bondage to sin, force of destiny, power of death are overcome only by faith in Jesus Christ. Through Him we receive forgiveness of guilt, union with God, eternal life.” / But the value given to this confession of Christ has to be carefully considered, for the forgiveness of sins is clearly not an act of God’s free grace, but something that the man who is bound through Christ to God is able to win.

[These Twenty-Eight Theses, which have been summarily set forth, show clearly the aims of the moderate German Christians. They try to hold fast to Christianity and at the same time to take their stand on the ground of the National Socialist world-view. It is assumed that this is possible, and the attempt apparently succeeds, for the reason that neither the Gospel of Jesus Christ nor National Socialism with its totality claim is taken quite seriously. It is not realized that here two totality claims confront each other: the totality claim of God and that of the National Socialist State and its world-view. Yet it is clearly noticeable that the Church is put at the service of the “organization of the People”, indeed, in this process a decisive task falls to it. That is true so far as the Church can, as a matter of fact, render the people no other service than to proclaim to it the Word of God unadulterated and without any foreign addition. But the Church is not doing its job when it fails to realize that it has but one responsibility—to serve the Word of God and

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not to subordinate this service to any other aim, even if it be the furtherance of a new national development. So soon as the Church throws itself open—even from the noblest motives—to the wishes of the world, incorporated in State and People, it abandons its foundations and gives over the Christian message to dissolution. That being so the Church, so far as it is the Church of Jesus Christ, must offer resistance to all German Christian efforts, even if these appear in forms ever so harmless and “reasonable”.

The German Christians could not unite on the Twenty-Eight Theses. From the beginning various streams were noticeable. We distinguish a moderate and an extreme section. The former we find in the Reich Movement of German Christians, and the latter in the National Church Movement of the Thuringian German Christians. The difference can be put this way, that the moderate German Christians are striving to let Christianity and its doctrine have their course as far as possible within National Socialism, whereas it is the wish of the German Christians of the extreme section to put the Church as far as possible at the service of National Socialism. Let us first follow the moderates. Under the leadership of Dr. Kinder they adhered to the Twenty-Eight Theses. According to him, the task of the German Christians lies in fusing together all Evangelical Christians who affirm both National Socialism and the Church. What is aimed at is the renewal of the Church by the impulse coming from National Socialism. “The German Christians’ Youth Movement, which National Socialism has awakened to life within a Church which had become

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alienated from the people, has now got to return to its starting-point and to be finally fitted into the reconstruction of the German People."

The Twenty-Eight Theses evoked a multitude of manifestoes. The Confessional Churches in particular strongly criticized the "German Christian heresy" of the Theses. In an expert opinion of the Theological Faculty of the University of Leipzig it was affirmed that in many points the Theses deviated from the Reformation Confessions. The Theological Faculty of Berlin, on the other hand, largely defended them, merely stating that their authors start out from People and State, and reach Christ and the Church, whereas the opponents of the Theses take their start with Christ and the Church, pursuing the aim of influencing People and State! If the substance of the varied positions be compared, it might well be hoped that the differences of doctrine could be overcome! As early as the spring of 1934 the Theological Faculty of Berlin had got that length!

The Twenty-Eight Theses can be regarded as representing the Creed of the moderate German Christians. True, they have never attained such importance as, for example, the "Barmen Declaration" for the Confessional Church, but it is ultimately upon this ground that all German Christian declarations and manifestoes are based. Always the same things meet us in the German Christians. (1) There is the aim to have the Church renewed by means of National Socialism. (2) There is the attempt to reconcile Christianity *and* National Socialism with each other, indeed, to weld them together into a unity,

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for the German Christian Church is the Church of those who affirm Christianity and National Socialism. And (3) the German Christian Church is a Church which excludes the Jews, directing them to Jewish Christian Churches of their own.

All these characteristics still mark the German Christian Movement in the year 1937 and as far as can be seen, they will remain the characteristics of this movement. When the Führer in February, 1937, held out the prospect of a Church Election, the different groups felt themselves constrained to publish new manifestoes. For the main part they were the old ones over again. The moderate German Christians under the leadership of Party Comrade Rehm who superseded Dr. Kinder, declared: "The hour has come! For a Jew-free German Evangelical Reichs Church! . . . The Evangelical German People reject a Church which fails to bring the regulation of its inner problems into harmony with the National Socialist revolution and whose ministers do not range themselves unreservedly in the National Socialist front of all Germans. . . . The Evangelical People themselves can and shall now determine which Church it will have: A Pharisaic, sectarian Church of Confessional Councils of Brethren, a Church alienated from the People—or an Evangelical Reichs Church bound to the People. . . . A so-called Confessional Church which still maintains communion, as is very apparent, inwardly and outwardly with Judaism—or an Evangelical Church free of Jews and conscious of race. . . . A Church which is a retreat of that vanishing minority, those who look for eternity

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in the days that are gone, and which is eking out its pitiful life of ingratitude to God's great providence till it goes completely to ruin, or a Church which is thankful to God and to our Führer for the new *risorgimento* and which fulfils its divine commission to this People of ours which has been called by God to great work. . . . Therefore this is the issue at the coming Election—and this involves at the same time a decision with regard to the basic Evangelical substance of our Church: Against Liberalism, Clericalism, Judaism in the Church! For Gospel and unity with the People through National Socialism! ”

Here the Gospel slips into the background and unity with the People, i.e. the confession of National Socialism, steps into the foreground. Here we can see the evolution of the German Christians: if at first the confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in the centre of their Creed with a confession of race, blood and soil thrown in as an addition, in the course of development the relationship is so altered that the National Socialist aims and interests are brought into the centre of German Christian activities. Nothing else is possible. A Church which so much as opens the door in face of the mighty assault of the myth of the twentieth century, of the National Socialist world-view, will in the shortest possible time be full of the myth.

But right from the beginning there were German Christian movements of extreme sort which did not hesitate to hand the Christian Church over completely to National Socialism. Thus as early as March, 1934, there were set forth in opposition to the Twenty-Eight

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Theses of the Saxon Church Six Theses for German Christians which deserve to be recorded.

√ 1. For the German People the time is fulfilled in Hitler. For through Hitler Christ, God the Helper and Redeemer, has become mighty amongst us. Therefore National Socialism is positive Christianity in action.

2. Hitler (National Socialism) is now the way of the Spirit that God wills for the Christ Church of the German Nation. With that religious courage that characterizes Lutheranism we "German Christians" make bold in faith to build this Church with proved old stones (Bible and Confession) and with new stones (Race and People).

3. Hitler wants the Church. He waits for us. Achievement and success decide with him. Christ says: "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

4. Faith and true politics (never party politics or Church politics) are not to be separated; for in faith both State and Church come together for our action.

5. The State is the instrument of God for the inward maintenance of the German People.

6. Because we believe in God (Christ), we believe in Germany, and its divine task in the Church which is to be among the peoples, and we are therefore German Christians.

These Theses are worthy of attention in so far as Adolf Hitler appears here not only as political leader, but as true Messiah of the German People. Here also we see what we have found when we considered modern German constitutional law: the State wants

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to be Church! That is what is involved in the statement "for in faith both State and Church come together for our action". The State becomes Church, and the Church State!

But there are not lacking also utterances of the German Christians which resemble almost to a T those of Alfred Rosenberg. This is so when it is declared that what brought the German Christians into existence was the experience which Christians who were Germans, had in National Socialism and that therefore they were fighting not for an "ecclesiastical clericalism" but for the success of the National Socialist world-view. "The seizing of political power by the Führer confronted the German Christian in the year 1933 to their astonishment with the task of making the National Socialist world-view prevail in the sphere of the organized Evangelical Church, and at the same time of uniting German Protestantism into one complete Reichs Church." The "Mission of National Socialism" is what the extreme German Christians are really concerned with; they form, so to speak, the bridge over which Christian Germany is to be led to the myth of the twentieth century. "The mission of the German Christians follows from the mission of National Socialism which is built up upon the ultimate God-given realities and tasks. The National Socialist Movement and the State established by it can only be maintained if National Socialism is not merely a political world-view that appeals to the intellect, but, as regards what it demands, what it knows and what it gives, is experienced as divine commission and divine mission. National Socialism

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is only genuine and creative when it has become such an experience for the German man, when the individual is and has to be a National Socialist out of the profoundest, the ultimate, responsibility to eternity and by a divine compulsion. This corresponds to the nature of our People and our race. The German man is not satisfied with the dust of this earth, but he is always longing for the ultimate reality and he can only act firmly and with assurance when he has found in it immovable support and eternal certainty about his mission. The National Socialist upbuilding of the People, consciously starting out from our People's racial nature, demands the cultivation and promotion of a real religious attitude on the part of our People, as inviolable foundation for the stability and the realization of the National Socialist cause. . . . Here lies the important future task of the German Christians as a National Socialist Movement. As a movement that is free, that is independent of the organized Church, knowing itself bound only to the Führer and to the People, it proclaims in the simplest, plainest way, the eternally abiding values and verities of the Christian faith which Jesus without any human theological dogmatics but with efficacious power imparted and exemplified in His life." Here indeed Christianity is completely submerged in the National Socialist world-view.

This extreme section of the German Christians has become embodied especially in the National Church Movement of the Thuringian German Christians. The "Letters to German Christians" give informa-

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tion about the origins of the movement. "From the year 1919 right up to this hour our thought and action have been exclusively occupied with one single object: Germany! The Church's failure in the troubles that afflicted our State and People in the post-war period and the unlimited enthusiasm stirred up by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Movement form the basic experience from which everything that is said theologically and ecclesiastically from this side, is to be understood. Many times in the day two little words burned in our soul. . . . Germany and Christ!" It is Christ, the statement continues, Who reveals Himself in the National Socialist Movement, and the prophetic figure of Adolf Hitler is the only person who can save the cause of Christ in Germany. The principles of the National Church Movement are these: (1) We German Christians believe in our Saviour Jesus Christ, in the power of His Cross and of His Resurrection. Jesus' life and death teach us that the way of struggle and passion is at the same time the way of love and the way of life. By God's creation we have been placed in the community of the German People, partakers of its blood and destiny, and as we carry its destiny so we are responsible for its future. Germany is our task. Christ is our strength! (2) The divine revelation in the Bible and the testimonies borne to this faith by the fathers, as well as by pious seers and prophets of our people are the source and substantiation of our faith. The New Testament is for us the holy witness to the Saviour our Lord and His Father's Kingdom. The Old Testament we regard as an example of divine education of a people. It has

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value for our faith in so far as it enables us to understand our Saviour's Life, Cross and Resurrection.

(3) As for every people, so for ours, the eternal God has fashioned a law suited to our nature. It became embodied in the Führer Adolf Hitler and in the National Socialist State formed by him. This law speaks to us in our People's history, a history that has grown out of blood and soil. Loyalty to this law lays on us the obligation to fight for honour and freedom.

(4) The channel for the fulfilment of the German law is the believing German community. In it Christ, the Lord, rules as grace and forgiveness. In it burns the fire of a holy sacrificial spirit. In it alone the Saviour meets the German People and bestows on them the strength of faith. From out of this community of German Christians is to grow, in the National Socialist State of Adolf Hitler, the "German Christian National Church", comprehending the whole people. One Führer! One People! One God! One Reich! One Church!

These principles do not differ essentially from those of the other German Christians. Of decisive significance is the demand for a National Church which comprehends the whole German People! What is aimed at here is nothing less than the suppression of the Evangelical Regional Churches, as well as of the Roman Catholic Church and the combination of all into a German Christian National Church! These are indeed plans of far-reaching significance. And it is here that there appears the fundamental difference in aim between the Reich Movement of German Christians and the Thuringian German Christians.

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The former simply strive for a German Christian Evangelical Reich Church, while the latter demand the creation of a National Church, in which there would be absorbed both Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches.

With this fundamental difference in aim it is not surprising that efforts to unite the two movements were doomed to failure. Again and again negotiations have taken place, and on occasion agreement has been reached, but it has never been possible to carry it into force. The National Church Movement has shown itself considerably more effective than the Reich Movement of German Christians. Many of those who at one time stood in a leading position in the Reich Movement, as for example Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller, have joined the National Church Movement which has spread far beyond the bounds of Thuringia. We have to face the possibility that this movement may make still further strides, for it is the movement that comes nearest to the myth of the twentieth century, and, like National Socialism, aims at the creation of a unified German People's Church. There is the further fact that they are bringing the content of their faith more and more into consonance with the racial myth. The Christian elements retained in the original principles have receded completely into the background, if they have not been entirely abandoned. It is pure racial myth when a leader of the Thuringian Christians says: "And there came the day of Pentecost for the German nation too. May we never forget the March days of the year 1933! The God of love ruled as Holy Ghost

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in our midst, and bestowed on us the power to believe in the freedom and honour of the German nation, the readiness to receive the world-view of service to blood and soil, the will to be loyal to the idea of the Third Reich. It was indeed the case that we saw His glory, the glory of the Kingdom of God among the Germans. . . . The Kingdom of God, which had faded in Church and State, and had failed to be the strength-giving reality of life, was again experienced in Germany as something which took plastic shape in the body of the National Socialist Movement. . . . In Adolf Hitler we see the door open for the formation of the German Church. . . . He leads us to the completion of the German State in the spirit of the People's-ethic of National Socialism and in so doing lays bare the source of the strength which has enabled the German nation to return home, namely, to the revelation of Christ." It is positively shattering to see what is understood here by the revelation of Christ.

The pitiful residue of Christian elements—Christian conceptions, doctrines and words—that remains with the Thuringian German Christians, is so feeble that it is understood that it has nothing more to give even to these people themselves. The Christian contribution is mere ornamentation. The new centre around which their thought circles, which tests everything, giving it its value, its rank or rejecting it entirely, is the political "folkic" experience. They give the name of Christ to this movement that touches them to the depths, because there is no other name to hand. But it is a name without any content or power

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of its own. Where this name comes forward with a claim of its own, where it itself seeks to determine thought and action, it is turned back with the remark that what people are concerned with here is, not theological conceptions, but " life ".

In any case, one thing becomes clear, that all the efforts of the German Christians, whether the attempt of the Reich Movement of German Christians to create a synthesis between Christianity and National Socialism, or the attempt of the National Church Movement of Thuringian German Christians to form a " German Christian National Church " must lead to the dissolution of the Christian Church, into whose place steps the myth of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

IF this chapter is entitled not "The Confessional Church" but "The Renewal of the Church", that is to indicate that the conflict between the German Christians and the Confessional Church is not a mere contest between two different Church groups. Would that this struggle could be characterized as nothing more than "a squabble of theologians". But, far from that, there is nothing less at stake than the Christian Church! The issue is the surrender or the renewal of the Church.

At the beginning of the Church conflict, at the time when there was a stormy demand that the Church should conform to the national renewal, should fit itself into it, a word was uttered that was very remarkable, that struck an utterly alien note. What was said was that the Church must now go on as if nothing had happened, since all that was occurring in the political arena, could not and must not alter in any way the commission of the Church. He who said this was Professor Karl Barth, then in Bonn, the founder of the new Church Theology, the so-called Dialectic Theology. His word meant that a renewal of the Church could never be caused by the world, could never be the result of political movements. And at the same time it expressed the conviction that the

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Church would render the State and the political renewal no better service than by proclaiming the unadulterated Gospel. The new thinking about Church matters which had been going on in the Church Theology, did its work and saw to it that the Church was not simply put at the service of secular powers.

In his *Theological Existence To-day*, Karl Barth proved that the "other-worldly Dialectic Theology" could speak "right into the midst of life" *that* word about the concrete situation which alone could get a hearing amongst the choir of thousands hymning the national renewal. The others were not heard and did not need to be heard, all those thousands who began, or continued, enthusiastically to preach "from out of life into the midst of life"; for anything that was to be said "from out of life" about the national renewal, was able to be very much better said by National Socialism. It would be strange indeed if theologians had something important to say from out of life. And yet the Church has *the* important thing to say; it gets it, however, not from the world but from God! Its task is to proclaim the Word of God which is entrusted to it, and nothing else, and in proclaiming that Word and in seeking to do it ever better and ever more purely, it is rendering the world the service that is decisive. It is to this service that Karl Barth has recalled the Church when it was on the point of being untrue to its proper task and of running on at the heels of the national renewal carried out in the National Socialist Revolution. Plainly and clearly he declared: "What must now under no circum-

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stances take place is that, in zeal for something which we regard as a good cause we lose our theological existence. Our theological existence is our existence in the Church, and that, as appointed preachers and teachers of the Church."

It was something quite remarkable and indeed almost inconceivable that at a moment when national renewal was everything, a man came forward and began to speak loudly and clearly about the Church. Let us hear what Karl Barth goes on to say: "In the Church there is unanimity that in the whole world there is no claim more pressing than the claim of the Word of God to be proclaimed and heard. This claim has to be satisfied, no matter what it costs, and no matter what thereby becomes of the world and even of the Church. In the Church there is unanimity that the Word of God clears out of its path everything and anything that may resist it, and that it therefore *will* be victorious over us and over all its other enemies, because—' crucified, dead, buried, risen on the third day, sitting at the right hand of God the Father '— it *has* already, once and for all, been victorious over and for us and all its other enemies. In the Church there is unanimity that it is just by this Word of His that God upholds all things (Heb. i. 3), answers all questions, reacts in righteousness to all desires, sustains and leads to its proper end all that He has made, and that, on the other hand, there is *nothing* in all the world which can subsist and flourish without His Word. In the Church there is unanimity that it is good for man, and that in time and eternity nothing but this one thing can be good for him, namely to

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cling to the Word of God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind and with all his powers. In the Church there is unanimity that God is never present for us anywhere, in the world, in our space and time, except in this His Word, that this Word of His has for us no other name nor content than Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ is not to be found by us anywhere else in the whole world than each day anew in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments."

What a warning to all those who were now, all of a sudden, looking for the world's salvation in a national renewal and not in Jesus Christ! It was such an alarm-call, so clear and forceful, as has probably not been heard in the Church since the Reformation. Or should we not call it a summons to repentance when Karl Barth cries out to the Church: "The mighty temptation of our time is: that in our anxiety in face of dangers of all kinds we no longer put such complete trust in the power of the Word of God, but think that we have got to come to its help with all sorts of contrivances, thus absolutely abandoning our confidence in its victory. That we think there are certain things which we are better able to answer, solve, make, from other sources than from and by the Word of God, proving thereby that in actual fact we do in respect of no single thing regard that Word as the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. That we give our heart partly to the Word of God and partly to all sorts of other things which we expressly or tacitly invest, alongside of Him, with the glory of the divine, thus showing that we do not have our heart

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absolutely in the Word of God. That under the stormy assault of certain 'principalities, powers and rulers' we seek God somewhere else than in His Word and His Word somewhere else than in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ somewhere else than in the Holy Scriptures of Old and New Testaments, and in so doing really belong to those who do not seek God at all. All this, although the Church holds unanimously the exact opposite."

Even then—as early as June, 1933—Karl Barth voiced his criticisms of the Church reform that was being striven after, and he pointed out that it would have to be carried through in obedience to the Word of God, else it would be no Church reform. In the following eight points he gathered together and set forth his challenge to the false doctrine of the German Christians which was then in vogue:

" 1. The Church has 'to do everything', not that the German People may 'find the way again into the Church' but that these people may find *in* the Church the commandment and the promise of the free and pure Word of God.

" 2. The German People receives its vocation from Christ and to Christ through the Word of God which is to be proclaimed according to the Holy Scriptures. This proclamation is the task of the Church. It is not the task of the Church to help the German People to know and fulfil a 'calling' different from the vocation from and to Christ.

" 3. The Church has not to be at the service of man, in general, and therefore has not to be at the service of the German People. The German Evan-

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gelical Church is the Church for the German Evangelical People. But it serves only the Word of God. It is God's Will and Work if by means of His Word man, and therefore also the German People, are served.

" 4. The Church believes in the divine institution of the State as the agent and administrator of public law and order in the People. But it does not pin its faith to any definite State, and so not to the German State, and it does not pin its faith to any definite form of State, and so also not to the National Socialist form. It proclaims the Gospel in all this world's kingdoms. *In* the Third Reich, also, it proclaims it, but not *under* that Reich and not in *its* spirit.

" 5. If the Confession of the Church is to be expanded, that must be done according to the standard of Holy Scripture, and in no case according to the standard of any world-view, political or other, prevailing at a particular time, nay, not even of the National Socialist world-view, either in regard to what these world-views affirm or deny. The Confession has to 'provide weapons' neither for 'us' nor for anyone else.

" 6. Not by blood and therefore not by race is the fellowship of those who belong to the Church determined, but by the Holy Spirit and Baptism. If the German Evangelical Church were to exclude Christian Jews, or treat them as Christians of a lower grade, it would cease to be a Christian Church.

" 7. *If* the office of a Reich Bishop were possible in the Evangelical Church at all, then it would have to be filled like any other Church office, never according to political ideas and methods (General Election,

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Party membership, etc.) but by means of the regular office-bearers in the Churches, who, in making the appointment, insist exclusively on Church qualifications.

“8. Not ‘in the direction of a greater nearness to life and solidarity with the community’ are the instruction and training of ministers to be transformed, but in the direction of greater discipline and fidelity in carrying out the one task commanded and entrusted to them, that of scriptural proclamation of the Word.”

These words increasingly got a hearing in the Church, which actually submitted to be called to its senses. Yet it was long enough before the resistance became a reality. Only when the first intoxication of the national renewal was past and when the attempt was being made to introduce laws of the State into Church legislation, did resistance raise its head. Then—in the summer of 1933—when efforts were being made to incorporate the State’s Aryan paragraph, the paragraph affecting the Jews, in Church legislation and when the strange utterances of the German Christians were being often repeated, then it was that the resistance of the Church appeared. In the emergency there was founded a Pastors’ Emergency League which resisted the Aryan paragraph. A vow (October, 1933) of the League, drafted by Martin Niemöller, ran thus:

“1. I engage to execute my office as Minister of the Word, holding myself bound to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confessions of the Reformation as the true exegesis of the Holy Scriptures.

“2. I engage to protest, irrespective of the sacrifice

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involved, against every violation of this Confessional position.

“3. I hold myself responsible to the utmost of my ability for those who are persecuted on account of this Confessional position.

“4. Under this vow I testify that a violation of the Confessional position is perpetrated by the application of the Aryan paragraph within the Church of Christ.”

From this vow it is very apparent that at that date the seriousness of the situation was still far from being conceived. It was not yet seen that National Socialism was concerned with a totalitarian State, in opposition to which the totality of the Christian message of the Kingdom of God ought to have been fearlessly proclaimed. The idea still prevailed that it was sufficient to protest against single cases of “encroachment” or “infracton”. Even in the Pastors’ Emergency League it was the general opinion that people must put all their strength behind the national renewal, and even in these circles there was a wide agreement with the German Christians in holding that the latest events in German history, i.e. the National Socialist Revolution, might be claimed as a revelation of God. The warning which Karl Barth had issued had not yet been seriously taken. Thus there was not from the start a Confessional Church. On the contrary, it must be recorded that in the year 1933 the Church did almost nothing but suffer defeats. And there were only isolated points of advance. There were a few crying in the wilderness, calling the Church to serious reflection.

A certain importance attaches to the Eight Articles

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of Evangelical Doctrine composed by Heinrich Vogel "because of present-day heresy to serve as instruction for the erring, as consolation for the afflicted, on the basis of Holy Scripture". In these Articles the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are acknowledged as God's Word which is to be heard only in faith through the Holy Spirit. The attempt to rend the unity of the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments or to do away with parts of it or to abbreviate it, is condemned. Thereafter Scripture is characterized as the sole source of revelation and the hypothesis of other sources of revelation in nature and history rejected. "We hear God's voice not in the voice of the people who to-day cry 'Hosanna' and to-morrow 'Crucify', but in the Word of Scripture." The trinitarian faith is professed and the nature deities, the idols of culture, race and class, of folk and of humanity are rejected. As to the Church, it is said: "We confess the Church as the community of Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit makes and keeps by means of the Word of God and the Sacraments. The Church is not the expression of all the religious forces of our nation; it is the Body of Jesus Christ, of which we are members only through Baptism in faith. The Church is not a religious party. It has not partners, but members." Opposition is offered particularly to the depriving of Christian Jews of their rights in a Church which professes to be the Church of Jesus Christ. The task of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel. The Church owes the world the Gospel; the German Church owes the German People the Gospel. But the Church also owes a protest

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against heresies which annihilate or adulterate the Gospel. With regard to order in the Church, it is stated that the Church authorities are an earthly order of the earthly Church, to which obedience is due in ecclesiastical affairs, unless its directions be against the Word of God. Ecclesiastical authorities are not obeyed because of any religious leadership-principle, but because of, and so far as is demanded by, the Word of Holy Scripture. So the Articles condemn an episcopal office that is founded on the leadership principle, with teaching authority, as well as one equipped with power to appoint and to depose, in whose voice the voice of the Church would be supposed to be heard.

The being and the business of the State are described as follows: "The State has its dignity and power neither by a social contract nor by the will of the nation, but by the authority of the grace of God, for the purpose of resisting evil and of making possible and maintaining the life of men in community, as members of their people, in marriage and family. Therefore we owe the civil authorities obedience unless they order us to act in opposition to the Word of God." With regard to the relationship between Church and State, it is explained shortly and crisply, yet clearly and plainly: "The Word of the authority of God's grace, that same Word which is the Creator, Judge and Lord of all human authority, it is that Word which gives to Church and State each its distinct supremacy. Therefore State and Church have to recognize in each other the distinct authority given to them and again to keep it within the limits

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set for them. But a co-ordination of Church and State ignores and confuses the being and business of the State to which is given the sword, and of the Church to which the Word of God is commanded and promised. Therefore we condemn the deifying of the State in the same way as the secularizing of the Church, the subjection of the State to the Church as the subjection of the Church to the State."

Here that real Church thinking which we saw appearing in the Dialectic Theology, is having its gratifying effect. But these Articles were far from being a Confession of the Church or even of a Church; they gave the ideas of individual theologians. Yet it was becoming manifest that the desolation in the Church was creating the need for a Confession to which people could hold. It is easy to understand how in its distress, and it was real distress in which the Church found itself, recourse was first had to the Confessions of the Reformation time. Not that the main object of interest was the Reformation ideas, but the understanding of the Bible. But the ideas of the Reformers were a valuable guide that gave help in the avoidance of false paths. It is no bad principle for sons to go to school to their fathers and then—when they have understood their father's teaching—to ask themselves whether they also can confess that, or whether they have something to add to it.

Yet it was not sufficient to bring forward again the old Confessions which were in force in many Churches, for it transpired that even many German Christians declared that for them, too, the Confessions were binding. Here indeed lay one of the troubles

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of the Church, that at one and the same time the Reformation Confessions were being formally affirmed and the German Christian heresy being accepted. The question that arose was, quite simply: With what seriousness is the Confession made? It was one thing to affirm the old Confessions, and another to confess anew to-day the contents of the old Confessions. A common profession was made, but there was little real confession. That is always the trouble of the Church that it has many who assent to the Gospel of Christ, but few who confess it. In Germany it never was and it is not to-day a serious matter to profess loyalty to Martin Luther, the truly German man. But it is a very serious matter really to profess to-day, in face of National Socialism, what Martin Luther, as soldier of Christ, professed then before Emperor and Church. What was involved was not the mere Confession of Christ *in* this world, but the Confession of Christ *against* this world, against the heresy that, besides the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, there is also a revelation in nationality, in history, in the National Socialist Revolution. The Confession which the Church demanded meant opposing a "god" who derived from the world his claim to be recognized in the Church, also, and who aimed at ousting the sole Lord of the Church or at least of taking his place beside Him. It meant resisting the National Socialist heresy which culminated in the blood and race myth. This was no mere dogmatic quarrel of the theologians—the innocent thing which people have so often made it out to be. What was at issue was nothing else than the taking of a stand *for*

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Christ and *against* the world with all its material forces.

Could it be expected of the Church that it was ready and equipped for such a stand, such a confession, in the midst of a world which had lost the power of resistance? All the political parties without exception and the Trades Unions which numbered millions of members, had, without offering any resistance, fallen like a house of cards! Yes, to this Church, from which, it would seem, the world expected nothing, it was given to confess, and from the moment when this confessing became a fact in the Church, we are entitled to speak of a renewal of the Church.

This took place visibly in the Reich Synod of the Confessional Church in May, 1934, in Barmen. The Barmen Declaration has in fact decisive importance, much as this is frequently denied. This Declaration, which is really a Confession, has become the foundation of the German Evangelical Church. As often as the attempt has been made to depart from this foundation, so often has a return always been made to it. In spite of all attacks, and in spite of all discussions, it has proved itself to be a foundation capable of carrying the Church. Because of its outstanding importance the main parts of it must here be recorded.

“ THE CONFESSIONAL SYNOD OF THE

GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

IN WUPPERTAL-BARMEN, FROM 29TH TO 31ST MAY, 1934

1. *Summons to the Evangelical Churches and Christians in Germany.*

The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical

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Church met in Barmen from 29th to 31st May, 1934. Here representatives from all the German Confessional Churches found themselves at one in confession of the one Lord of the One, Holy, Apostolic Church. In loyalty to this their confession members of Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches sought for a common message for the trouble and tribulation of the Church in our days. With gratitude to God they verily believe that the common message has been given to them. They aimed neither at founding a new Church, nor forming a Union. For nothing was further from their thoughts than the abolition of the Confessional position of our Churches. Their desire was rather, in fidelity, to resist unanimously the destruction of the Confession of Faith, and so, of the Evangelical Church in Germany. In opposition to the attempts to unify the German Evangelical Church by means of false doctrine, by the use of force, and of insincere practices, the Confessional Synod declares: *The unity of the Evangelical Churches in Germany can only come into being from the Word of God in faith through the Holy Spirit. Only so does the Church become renewed.*

Therefore the Confessional Synod calls the Churches to place themselves in prayer behind it and to range themselves solidly around their pastors and teachers who are loyal to the Confession.

Do not let yourselves be misled by frivolous speeches, pretending that we oppose the unity of the German People! Do not listen to the deceivers who twist our intention to make it seem that we want to rend the unity of the German Evangelical Church or

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to forsake the Confessions of our fathers!

Try the spirits whether they are of God! Try also the words of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church to see whether they agree with the Holy Scriptures and with the Confessions of our fathers. If you find that we contradict Scripture, do not listen to us! But if you find that we are standing upon Scripture, then let no fear nor temptation keep you from travelling with us the way of faith and obedience to the Word of God, in order that God's people be of one mind on earth and that we in our faith experience that He Himself has said: 'I shall not leave you nor forsake you.' Therefore, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.'

2. *Resolution of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church.*

(1) The Synod acknowledges the Theological Declaration on the Present Position of the German Evangelical Church together with the Address of Pastor Asmussen as a testimony that is Christian, and Biblical in the Reformation sense, and accepts it with a full sense of responsibility.

(2) The Synod hands this Declaration over to the Confessional Conventions in order that they may work out an interpretation of it corresponding to their Confessions.

3. *Theological Declaration of the Present Position of the German Evangelical Church.*

The German Evangelical Church is according to the Preamble of its Constitution of 11th July, 1933, a federation of Confessional Churches of equal status,

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having their roots in the Reformation. The theological basis for the union of these Churches is stated in Art. 1 and Art. 2, 1 of the Constitution of the German Evangelical Church, recognized by the Reich Government on 14th July, 1933:

Art. 1: The inviolable foundation of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Scripture bears witness to it and as it comes anew to light in the Confessions of the Reformation. By this the powers which the Church needs for its mission are determined and delimited.

Art. 2, 1: The German Evangelical Church is organized in Churches (Regional Churches).

We, the representatives of the Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches, of the free Synods, Church Assemblies and Presbyteries, united together in the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church, declare that we jointly stand on the ground of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of German Confessional Churches. We are united by the Confession of the One Lord of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

We declare publicly before all the Evangelical Churches of Germany that our common cause in this Confession and so also the unity of the German Evangelical Church are most seriously imperilled. They are threatened by the methods of teaching and acting employed by the ruling Church party, that of the German Christians, and by the government of the Church run by them, methods which became more and more visible in the first year of the existence of the German Evangelical Church. This threat consists

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in the fact that the basic principles which unite the German Evangelical Church are continually and systematically being thwarted and made ineffective by alien principles, held both by the leaders and spokesmen of the German Christians and also by the Government of the Church. When these principles are acknowledged, then, according to all the Confessions that hold sway amongst us, the Church ceases to be Church. When therefore these principles are acknowledged, the German Evangelical Church as a federation of Confessional Churches becomes impossible.

As members of the Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches we may and must to-day raise our voices in common in this cause. For the very reason that we want to be and to continue faithful to our various Confessions, we must not keep silence, since we believe that in a time of common trouble and tribulation a common message has been given us to deliver. We leave it to God to determine what this signifies for the inter-relations of the Confessional Churches.

In face of the errors of the 'German Christians' and the present Reich Church Government, errors which ruin the Church and so shatter the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we make profession of the following Gospel truths.

1. *'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.'* (John xiv.)

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.'

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I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. (John x. 1, 9.)

Jesus Christ, as He is testified to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and death.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church might and must acknowledge as sources of its proclamation, except and beside this one Word of God, still other events, powers, forms and truths as God's revelation.

2. *'Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'* (1 Cor. i. 30.)

As Jesus Christ is God's Word of forgiveness of all our sins, in the same way and with the same seriousness, He is God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through Him we get happy liberation from the godless bondage of this world into free, thankful service of His creatures.

We reject the false doctrine that there are realms of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ, but to other masters, realms where we do not need to be justified and sanctified by Him.

3. *'But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together.'* (Eph. iv. 15, 16.)

The Christian Church is the community of brethren in which Jesus Christ, present as its Lord, acts in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Spirit. In the midst of the world of sin, it has, as the Church of pardoned sinners, to witness, by its faith and by

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its obedience, by its message and order of life, that it is only His property, that it lives and can live only by His consolation and by His orders, in expectation of His coming.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church is permitted to form its message or its order according to its own desire or according to prevailing philosophical or political convictions.

4. *'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.'* (Matt. xx. 25, 26.)

The various offices in the Church do not set up any lordship of some over others, but they make possible the carrying out of that ministry which is entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church is able or at liberty apart from this ministry to give itself or to accept special 'leaders' equipped with power to rule.

5. *'Fear God. Honour the King.'* (1 Pet. ii. 17.)

Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church exists the State has by divine appointment the task of seeing to and maintaining—by the fullest exercise of human insight and human capacity, by means of the threat of force and by means of the use of force—law and peace. With gratitude and reverence towards God the Church acknowledges the benefit of this order which He has

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appointed. It is a reminder of God's Kingdom, of God's commandment and righteousness, and so, of the responsibility of both rulers and ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of that Word through which God sustains all things.

We reject the false doctrine that the State should or could go beyond its special task and become the sole and total order of human life, thus fulfilling also the Church's vocation.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church should or could go beyond its special task and assume functions and dignities of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

6. 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

'The Word of God is not bound.' (2 Tim. ii. 9.)

The Church is commissioned—and in this lies its freedom—to this task: in Christ's stead and so in the service of His Word and Work, to deliver, by means of Preaching and Sacrament, to all men the message of the free grace of God.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church could assume a human sovereignty over the Word and Work of the Lord, and place these at the service of any arbitrarily chosen wishes, aims or plans.

The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church declares that it sees in the recognition of these truths and in the rejection of these errors the indispensable theological basis of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of Confessional Churches. It invites all those who are able to accept

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their declaration to keep these theological principles in mind in their decisions in Church politics. It asks all whom it concerns to return to the unity of faith, love and hope.

Verbum Dei manet in aeternum."

Is this not a Confession in true Reformation language? Let us note first of all that here no room is allowed to Natural Theology, natural knowledge of God. In the German Church Conflict this has proved the Achilles heel of the Christian Church. It has become apparent that, if a little door is opened to Natural Theology, in no time the whole "folkic" Theology slips through. Where Natural Theology gets admission, heresy also is again within the Church. The "And" which particularly at the beginning of the Church conflict in Germany played such a disastrous role, has no place in the Barmen Declaration. Here we no longer find Christianity *and* Rationalism, Christianity *and* Idealism, Christianity *and* Nationality. At Barmen the problem of the sources of Revelation was definitely decided in the sense of the Reformation.

From the Barmen Declaration, however, it is clearly seen that the Church's Confession is always an *action* of the Church, i.e. to the Confession there must be added a Confessional attitude, conduct. Thus it is not just a matter of affirming and esteeming the Confession within the Church; confession consists partly in confessing before the world. As it is put in Luke xii. 8: "I say unto you, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also con-

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fess before the angels of God." The question of Confessional conduct is not to be treated lightly; the seriousness of confession is here at stake. In the Confessional Church itself it has again and again become evident that a real Confessional conduct was not to be lightly achieved, especially when it meant confessing Jesus Christ in opposition to the State. Especially the Lutherans, who recognize absolute obedience to the State, find it infinitely difficult to say a word against the State. Consequently it is, to some extent, understandable that the Barmen Declaration came in for criticism particularly from the Lutheran side. Unfortunately it was not very fruitful. Without doubt the final word was not spoken at Barmen, but there could be no question of overturning again what had once been gained and said, if the Church was not to be exposed anew to certain caprice and certain chaos. A passionate struggle went on over the purity of the Lutheran Confession. But what was discussed was not confession in the sense of a Confessing Church, it was Lutheran Dogma. In place of Church Confession was put the defence of Confessional interests. It may be considered necessary "to give a sharp profile to Confessional points of view", but what excites the profoundest misgivings is the fact that passionate battles are being fought within the walls of the Church while the world is left to remain world. The Lutherans—but not only they—are continually in danger of taking the course followed by the Russian Orthodox Church in Czarist Russia: Dogma is carefully looked after within the Church, but there is no

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longer any confession before men. It might be a useful thing if the fate of the Russian Orthodox Church were ever kept vividly in mind.

Thus the acceptance of the Barmen Declaration was far from at once clearing out of the way all difficulties. But it gave the assurance that in all the coming struggles the right path would be found, even if often in weakness and despair, and that in the fight there would be no thought of weariness or defeat. For hard conflicts had as a matter of fact to be faced by the Confessional Church. The German Christian Reich Bishop and his political colleague, Ministerialdirektor Dr. Jäger, went on with the work of destroying the Church. When the Regional Churches resisted the co-ordination of the Church, they employed force in their attempt to build the German Christian National Church. Regular governing bodies in the Church were abruptly deposed and political commissioners were put in their place. At the Reich Synod at Dahlem in October, 1934, the Confessional Church replied to this procedure by proclaiming the Church Emergency Law, and it declared itself the legitimate German Evangelical Church. The significance of the Reich Synod, which worthily ranged itself alongside that of Barmen, will be considered in more detail in the chapter on "The Confessional Church and the National Socialist State".

Under the pressure of the Dahlem Declaration, of the many protests from single Churches, and of the strong movement which developed in South Germany against the co-ordination of the Churches of Württem-

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berg and Bavaria, the State had to give up the attempt to co-ordinate the Church by forceful measures, to drop Ministerialdirektor Dr. Jäger and to turn the cold shoulder to the Reich Bishop. The regular Church governments in Württemberg and Bavaria again entered into their rights. Many read in these measures the proof that it was not the State that was trying to bring about the co-ordination of the Church, but that this was no more than a fad of the Reich Bishop's. From this it was concluded that the Church was now out of danger. Those who saw clearly and recognized that by this action the State was not giving up its aim, but only the way that had proved impassable, were a minority in the Confessional Church. The majority set before itself the aim of restoring peace with the State, actually believing this possible. On the 22nd November, 1934, the Council of Brethren, together with the intact Regional Churches, decided to form a "Provisional Church Government". This gave the preponderance of power in the government of the Confessional Church to those circles which hoped for an understanding with the State. This resolution was approved by the Reich Synod in Augsburg in June, 1935. So the line Bar-men—Dahlem was departed from, without any clear understanding of what was involved. How much trust was put in the State was evident from the fact that the Synod anxiously avoided uttering a single unambiguous word against the State's encroachments or against those wider measures of the State of which the Church could never approve. On the contrary, it went so far as to agree to the arrangement come to

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on 19th December, 1933, between the Reich Bishop and the Youth Leader which placed all the Evangelical young people under the Reich Youth Leader, Baldur von Schirach! That was only possible because it was confidently believed that the State's attempts at co-ordination were nothing more than a transient phenomenon not really willed by the State.

So the period of quiet which dawned for the Church after the shattering of the Müller-Jäger experiment, became a serious testing-time for the Confessional Church. All danger being regarded as past, it was thought possible to depart from the decisions reached at Barmen and Dahlem. People were of the opinion that they had done their bit in the Church's time of trouble. Besides, these utterances were conditioned by the time and there was not to be attributed to them anything like the importance attaching to the Reformation Confessions. Thus the renewal of the Church that started with Barmen was again jeopardized. Yet it is to be noted that the so-called "Radical Wing" of the Confessional Church never ceased to hold firmly to Barmen, and thereby saw to it that the position once won was not again surrendered.

It goes without saying that in this quiet period peace was not restored in the Church. The Confessional Church and the German Christians remained apart from each other. The voices multiplied which cried out for the State's help and wanted to hand over to it the task of "re-establishing peace in the Church". On the other side stood the radical wing of the Confessional Church holding to the Dahlem Declaration which clearly and definitely laid it down

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that it lies entirely with the Church to determine Church organization.

The State seized this opportunity to intervene anew in the Church conflict. True, it appointed a Church Minister in the person of Reich Minister Kerrl and handed over to him the task of "re-establishing peace in the Church". His procedure was to form out of Churchmen a Reich Church Committee with the task of building the Reich Church. The Reich Church Committee issued a declaration which ran as follows:

"Under the law of 24th September, 1935, for the Protection of the German Evangelical Church and of the First Order of Administration of 3rd October, 1935, the Reich and Prussian Minister for Church Affairs has appointed us to the Reich Church Committee, or alternatively, to the Regional Church Committee for the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union. Thus by commission of the State, we, as members of the Church, have taken over the leadership and representation of the German Evangelical Church and of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union. We are merely trustees for a transition period which is to end with the appearance of our independent self-regulated German Evangelical Church.

"The inviolable foundation of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is witnessed to in the Holy Scriptures and as it came anew to light in the Confessions of the Reformation (Constitution of the German Evangelical Church, Article 1). All the Church's work, even its theology

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and its government, must serve the proclamation of this Gospel.

“United in this belief we admonish and request the Evangelical Churches to stand by People, Reich and Führer in intercession, loyalty and obedience. We affirm the revival of our People brought about by National Socialism on the basis of race, blood and soil. We affirm the will to be free, the national dignity, and a socialist spirit of sacrifice that does not grudge even the life on behalf of the People. In these things we recognize the German People’s true nature, as that has been given to us by God.

“The Church has the task of proclaiming to this German People the message of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen, our Lord, the Saviour and Redeemer of all peoples and races. So we summon all the living forces in Evangelical Germany to the obedience of faith and the practice of love. Our prime concern at the present hour is to understand the vital requirements which have come to light in the struggle of these last years and to lead the forces which have broken out, to positive ends.

“Only in this way can the devastating consequences of the contest be overcome. Only so can a new confidence arise in Evangelical Germany and throughout all Christendom and only so will the Church of the Reformation be able to render to the German People that service which is its due in the religious conflicts of our days.

“Disagreements are unavoidable. They must be discussed with dignity, honesty and truth. This applies both to us and to our opponents. In this spirit

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we go to work. We know how serious is the responsibility laid upon us, but we are consoled by the certainty that God is able to renew His Church."

This programmatic declaration of the Reich Church Committee contains two Confessions, one to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and one to the National Socialist world-view. The words, "We affirm the revival of our People brought about by National Socialism", however carefully formulated, could not conceal the fact that the Reich Church Committee saw itself compelled to make an important concession to National Socialism. In large part the Reich Church Committee took the position of the German Christians. Here again it was the Gospel of Jesus Christ *and* National Socialist world-view, though the words used were "revival of our People brought about by National Socialism on the basis of race, blood and soil".

Could the Confessional Church co-operate here? Could it stretch out its hand to the Reich Church Committee and support it in its efforts? Could it say "No" when an honest attempt was to be made—and no one would for a moment have doubted the honesty of the Reich Church Committee—to restore peace to the Church? Was it not a duty to co-operate when the State placed itself as trustee at the disposal of the suffering Church with a view to introducing order into Church life?

Two things had definitely to be taken into consideration. First, the question had to be asked with the utmost seriousness whether the peace which was aimed at was not a peace at the expense of truth.

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The attempt of the Reich Church Committee to bring the Confessional Church and the German Christians together on a line half-way between them meant placing doctrine and heresy on the same plane. Could that be permitted? May doctrine make a compromise with heresy? One would have to be ready for that if the position of the Reich Church Committee was to be accepted. The declaration of Barmen, which rejected every concession to the false doctrine of the German Christians, would have had to be given up and departed from. In Dahlem the Church's Emergency Law was proclaimed and the shaping of the Church's organization was put into the hands of the Church. So, in the second place, the question had to be asked: Is the Reich Church Committee an ecclesiastical organ? It was not of first-class importance that the Reich Church Committee was composed of Churchmen; what was decisive was the fact that it was appointed by the State and that in the first instance it was responsible to the Church Ministry of the State. The Reich Church Committee was a State organ, not a Church organ.

It was necessary for the Confessional Church to adopt a definite attitude to the Reich Church Committee. The decision made a cleavage in the Confessional Church. On the one side were those who wanted to remain on or to return to the line, Barmen-Dahlem, and who rejected the Reich Church Committee, for the reason that they could not compromise with the German Christians and that they rightly feared that the State in its endeavour to co-ordinate the Church was merely using the Reich Church

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Committee as a means towards that end. On the other side were those who, now that the State had given up the Müller-Jäger experiment, believed that all danger for the Church was past and held that the attempt at pacification must under all circumstances be supported. They were confident that the Reich Church Committee would safeguard the Confession of the Church and great importance also was attached to the fact that Churchmen sat in the Reich Church Committee.

At the Reich Synod of Oeynhausen in February, 1936, the majority of the Confessional Church decided against supporting the Reich Church Committee. Yet individuals who had accepted the invitation to join the Church Committees were allowed to continue their activity in them. The consequence was that the settled, or as they like to be called the "intact" Churches of Württemberg, Bavaria and Hannover became still more closely associated in the "Lutheran Council" than before and continued their benevolent attitude to the Reich Church Committee. The attitude of the intact Regional Churches was an extremely interesting one. They assured the Reich Church Committee of support on condition that no such Committee should be established in Württemberg, Bavaria, and Hannover. The Reich Church Committee promised this. So the intact Churches have been spared any further interference, while on the other hand those who held true to Barmen and Dahlem were subjected to the most grievous assaults.

The time of the Reich Church Committee was a difficult time for the Provisional Church Government,

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for the Confessional Church. People did not see, or no longer wanted to see, that it was standing for the interests of the Church; they held it responsible for the failure to reach peace in the Church. Only a few realized that on account of the Church Committees there was the greatest danger of the Church losing its freedom and of succumbing to the State's move to co-ordinate it. The fact that men who were deeply trusted in the Church lent themselves to the Reich Church Committee, had the effect of reassuring people and blinding them to the dangers. Even in the Œcumenical Council there was uncertainty. Whereas it had made a definite utterance at Fanö in the summer of 1934, now the view was increasingly held even in those circles that the Confessional Church had best place itself at the disposal of the Reich Church Committee.

Yet the sympathy accorded to the Reich Church Committee was not able to give it the pith to overcome the actual difficulties. It was not simply a matter of goodwill, as was here and there imagined; it was a matter of doctrine against heresy, of the freedom of the Church against co-ordination by the State. Just because these fundamental decisions were at issue it was impossible for the Confessional Church to give up opposition to the Reich Church Committee. There had to be a brave and consistent "No".

But even the German Christians were by no means satisfied with the Reich Church Committee. The Committee actually characterized the doctrine of the Thuringian Christians as heresy. How then could agreement be possible? Yet the Reich Church Com-

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mittee spared no pains in trying to bring harmony into the Church, and it only gave up the attempt when the Reich Church Minister began consistently to take the German Christians under his wing in opposition to the enactments of the Reich Church Committee, and in January, 1937, even proceeded to forbid "Evangelical Weeks" in the whole of Germany. In February, 1937, the Reich Church Committee retired with the declaration that its attempt to restore the harmony of the Church had gone to pieces and that special hindrances to its work had come from the side of the Reich Church Minister. In an address the Reich Church Minister publicly stated that what he was wanting was a Union of the Church by acceptance of the Thuringian German Christians' position, or, in other words, that he wanted the German Christian National Church. The fear which had haunted the Confessional Church right from the beginning was confirmed by the Reich Church Minister in a way that could no longer be mistaken. More will have to be said of this in the following chapter.

The second heavy attack delivered by the State and, with it, by the German Christians had been beaten back. What gave most cause for joy was the fact that the speech of the Reich Church Minister opened the eyes of many, especially in the intact Churches. It was now realized what the State was aiming at with its Church Committees. The way was clear for a new understanding between the Confessional Church and the Lutheran Council, i.e. the intact Regional Churches. After the Führer decreed

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a Church Election, the two found themselves co-operating. It is again possible to-day to reach agreement on the Barmen-Dahlem line, if Confessional points of view are not dragged unduly into the foreground.

And certainly since then important events have taken place. At the Second Session of the Fourth Confessional Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union in Halle, from 10th to 13th May, 1937, the Barmen Declaration was placed alongside the Reformation Confessions. For the future the Ministers of God's Word in the Old Prussian Union are bound to the Confession (for such it was from the beginning) of Barmen. This fact will have extraordinary significance for the struggle of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

The Ordination Formula for the Reformed Churches may here be quoted:

"I vow before God that I will fulfil the office committed to me, bound to the Word of God as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the sole and complete rule for doctrine, as it is witnessed to in the Creeds of the Ancient Church, the Apostles', in Nicene, the Athanasian, as well as in the Heidelberg Catechism (in French Reformed Churches also in the *Confession de Foi*) and as, in face of the heresies of our time, it is anew confessed as obligatory in the Theological Declaration of the First Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church in Barmen."

It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance belonging to the declaration "On the Question

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of Inter-Communion". Here probably the first decisive step is taken towards settling the dispute over the Lord's Supper which has so sorely troubled the Churches of the Reformation.

On the question of Inter-Communion the Confessional Synod of Halle resolved as follows:

"In view of the urgent question whether in face of Scripture and the Confessions that witness to it we do right when we Lutherans, Reformed, and members of the Union join together in the celebration of Holy Communion, the Synod takes up its position under the Word of Scripture (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.'"

On the basis of this Word, the Synod unanimously testifies:

1. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, Who for our sakes came in the flesh, offered Himself for us once and for all on the Cross, and rose bodily from death, is Himself the gift of grace given in that Holy Communion of His Church which He instituted.

2. For the question of Inter-Communion it follows: Inter-Communion between Lutherans, Reformed and members of the Union is not justified by the situation existing in the Union.

Separation of Lutherans, Reformed and members of the Union from each other at Communion is not justified by the hostilities of the sixteenth century.

Inter-Communion has its ground, not in our know-

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ledge of the Communion, but in the grace of Him Who is Lord of the Communion.

3. The differences between us on the doctrine of Holy Communion concern the nature and the manner of the self-impartment of the Lord in the Communion. They have no reference to the fact that the Lord Himself is the gift of the Communion.

4. Therefore adherence to the Reformed Confession forms no ground for exclusion from the Communion Service of a Church of the Lutheran Confession.

5. Therefore adherence to the Lutheran Confession forms no ground for exclusion from the Communion Service of a Church of the Reformed Confession.

6. Therefore Communion Services in which Lutherans, Reformed and members of the Union take part in common are not in contradiction to the Scriptural administration of Holy Communion.

Who will still contest the fact that we are confronted with an actual renewal of the Church? Now is not the time for making an estimate from the point of view of Church history and of theology of this new Communion fellowship. Now we can do nothing else than thank the Lord who in the hour when His Church suffers the greatest tribulation, has imparted to it such a gift. Is it not as if scales were falling from our eyes, to find that this new Church thinking, as we meet it in the Confessional Church, from which, according to the constant prophecies, there could only result separation and cleavage in the Church, is on the contrary smoothing the way for the overcoming of those most painful divisions which the Churches

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of the Reformation have had to suffer during four hundred years! This union in faith will lead to a momentous strengthening of the Confessional Church.

Certainly it must be admitted that it has not yet been possible for this union to effect any real strengthening of the Confessional Church. Not least of all because Inter-Communion is strongly contested by extremely Lutheran circles who regard it as their duty, particularly at the present moment, to push into the foreground the Confessional point of view. There is, however, no question that with the renewal of theology—and this is going on with special vigour in Germany—Inter-Communion will be achieved.

The wide union between the Provisional Church Government and the Lutheran Council which was effected after the resignation of the Reich Church Committee, was able to be maintained, even if considerable differences were always cropping up. These differences, to be sure, had no connection with the Church Confession, but with the attitude that the Church had to adopt to the State and its intrusions.

In opposition to the sharp attacks which Alfred Rosenberg launched against the Christian Church, the Provisional Church Government, the Lutheran Council and the Conference of the Leaders of the German Evangelical Regional Churches issued on Reformation Day, 1937, a common Manifesto which had in addition ninety-five other signatures. Attention is directed in this Manifesto to the fact that Alfred Rosenberg in his *Protestant Pilgrims to Rome* demands the severance of the German People from Christianity. In this writing Rosenberg declares:

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“The historical Christian tradition does not help towards a political moulding of our life; it has rather become a hindrance. . . . The National Socialist world-view is based uncompromisingly on the self-regard of the German man, on the natural values which we feel to be noble. We are firmly of the conviction that the German People has no original sin, but original nobility.”

The answer of the Manifesto to this is:

“The words of Rosenberg which have been quoted show that the attack is directed against the Christian faith itself. In view of such utterances no one can maintain that the fight is waged against political interference on the part of the Church or its ministers. No, Christianity is demolished. Its place is to be taken by the world-view of the Rosenbergian myth and ‘the political Church of National Socialism’. He who aims at that can no longer speak of a Confession of positive Christianity.

“After this explanation of the position we put to all our fellow-countrymen, who want with us to remain Christians, the serious and urgent question: Are you willing to join us in testifying that Rosenberg’s statement is not Christian, but anti-Christian, and that belief in the myth is rebellion against the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to join us in testifying that the world-view, represented by Alfred Rosenberg as National Socialist, is incompatible with the Christian faith? Are you willing with the Christian Church, to demand that this world-view will not be forced upon our people and our youth in the name of the community? Are you will-

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ing to offer with us all due obedience to the authorities instituted by God, but just as unswervingly to hold true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in faith and confession?

“Further, we ask the National Socialist Movement, for which countless loyal Church members helped to pave the way, and the Government that the movement gave to our Reich: Are we or are we not to be allowed to profess publicly the Christian faith as the power of God which has richly blessed our People in the past and which will bless it in all future times? Is it to be counted ‘anarchistic rebellion’ that we are Christians and with God’s help will remain Christians? Are Christian Churches in German towns and villages to be an ‘artistic reminder like the temples of Zeus and the songs of Thor’, or may they continue to be places in which the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed to our people, without preachers and hearers being regarded as enemies of the State and traitors to their People?

“The weight of these questions is increased by the fact that vilification of the Christian Church and its faith is allowed the fullest licence, while on the other hand public defence of Christian truth and of the honour of the Church is obstructed and prevented. This condition of affairs presses heavily on the life and conscience of the Christian section of our people. The people’s confidence in the promises, guaranteeing the freedom of the Christian faith and the rights of the Christian Churches, will inevitably be shattered if a clear order is not given, calling a halt to such doings.

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“In obedience to God’s command and in faith in His promise we shall not cease to stand before our People as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of the Bible and of the Reformation about the sin of man and the grace of God.

“We know that God will require of us the souls of our people.”

This Manifesto, signed by the leading men in the Churches in Germany, shows how serious the situation of the Church actually is, and how strongly the Gospel of Jesus Christ is attacked and reviled.

There is no question that the struggles which the Confessional Church has to endure, are not yet at an end. After the second attack will come a third, a fourth, a fifth. But the Church that is really Church and puts its trust in nothing else than the Word of God will outlive these attacks. Nevertheless the history of the Confessional Church is no heroic saga and those called to take their place in the front line of the Confessional Church are no heroes. They are men, men who know something of what it is to be weak and despairing, but yet at the same time men who place themselves daily under the Word of God and desire nothing else than to be obedient to this Word. And then there occurs the miracle that this Word of God becomes mighty in weak men. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Words shall not pass away.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONFESSIONAL CHURCH AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST STATE

WE shall have to consider more closely, with some slight repetition of what has already been said, the attitude of the Confessional Church to the National Socialist State. It has to be emphasized at the outset that the situation has not yet become clarified to the same degree as the theological cleavage between the Confessional Church and the German Christians. Church circles in Germany have for long failed to realize that what is taking place in the German Church Conflict is actually a contest between State and Church. In his book *My Struggle* Adolf Hitler had some friendly words for the Christian Church, and the Programme of the National Socialist Party states that the Party stands on the basis of positive Christianity. Further, Adolf Hitler made a declaration in the Reichstag to the effect that the rights of the Christian Churches were in no danger. Church circles clung to these utterances and assurances and used them to quieten anxious or critical minds that viewed the situation with distrust.

But distrust was the only possible attitude. Only those who had no inkling of the real nature of National Socialism could be taken in by the assurance

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that the Party stands on the basis of positive Christianity. Was it really possible to fail to see what a glance at National Socialist literature makes as clear as day? Perhaps if Alfred Rosenberg's book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* could, in spite of its tremendous influence in the National Socialist Party, be regarded as expressing a private opinion, it might also be possible to treat lightly what appears in the Führer's book *My Struggle*, namely that in National Socialism there is advancing a world-view hostile to Christianity. To such a pass have things come to-day that the question is inevitably raised whether the Holy Scriptures or Hitler's *My Struggle* is to be the Bible of the German People. Even a superficial acquaintance with the spiritual history of the nineteenth century was sufficient to show that what was taking place in the National Socialist Revolution was that the myth which was being nurtured throughout the whole nineteenth century and which was slowly crushing out Christianity, had now taken shape and come forward with the claim to be *the* world-view of the German nation, the German People. In so doing it claimed to put an end to the chaos of world-views to which the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave birth, and to a "religion alien in its nature". There could be no doubt that in National Socialism Christianity found itself confronted with an opponent of immense seriousness. And one could not but see the seriousness of the situation when one realized what unheard-of political power was at the back of this world-view.

The myth of the twentieth century is the spiritual

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element that informs the life of the National Socialist State. It is just the Führer, more than anyone else, who sees clearly that the Third Reich can only be built upon the solid foundation of a world-view. But he sees also that the National Socialist world-view is something into which the people has got to be educated. Therefore a special authority has been created, entrusted with giving the National Socialist Party its training in world-view. Alfred Rosenberg was made chief of this department. The young people were gathered together in the "Hitler Youth", where they are educated in the National Socialist world-view; and the future district-leaders are trained in the citadels of the order where they are instructed by teachers whom Alfred Rosenberg has chosen. The aim of the State is transparently clear!

Less clear on occasion is the way taken to reach this aim. It goes without saying that no official intimation was made to the people that Christianity has to be resisted and extirpated from the German People. But there was released among the German People a legion of books and writings in which it is stated ever anew that Christianity is an alien religion and in which they are made familiar with old-Germanic conceptions and with the race and blood myth. Those writings which defend Christianity and oppose the neo-heathen religion are put upon the National Socialist Index by being characterized as negative by the "Decision Register" of the "Reich Department for the Promotion of German Literature", while those which subserve the myth are recorded as positive. In this way the people, and especially the young folks,

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are worked upon by a flood of anti-Christian literature.

Yet it was realized from the start by those who directed operations that the overcoming of Christianity was no simple matter and could not be achieved in a few years. The de-Christianizing is to be carried through in various stages. The first was to be reached by the creation of a German Christian Church coordinated to the State. Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller made the first attempt to reach this goal, and it seemed at the start when the Church Election in July, 1933, had given a big majority to the German Christians, that the goal could be reached. But the Constitution of the German Evangelical Church was strongly opposed to the founding of a Reich Church as the German Christians understood it. Article 1 of the Constitution runs: "The inviolable foundation of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is testified to in the Holy Scriptures and as it has come anew to light in the Confessions of the Reformation. By this the power which the Church needs for its mission is determined and delimited." This unambiguous foundation of the Church did not prevent the Reich Bishop from pursuing very aggressively with the help of Ministerialdirektor Dr. Jäger, his German Christian efforts. Courts of the Church which were not disposed to submit to his will, were set aside. The rule of the Reich Bishop wrought an indescribable havoc in the Church, a havoc both as regards doctrine and Church government. As to doctrine the Confessional Church defined its attitude in the Declaration of Barmen, and as to the question

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of Church government at Dahlem in October, 1934. The following are the main conclusions of the

DAHLEM DECLARATION

“ By means of the Police Force the Reich Church Government has followed up its removal of the Government of the Church in Hesse with the removal of those of Württemberg and Bavaria. Thereby the disorganization which had already prevailed for long in the Evangelical Church and which had been evident since the summer of 1933 has reached such a height that we feel ourselves compelled to make the following declaration.

I

1. The first and fundamental article of the Constitution of the German Evangelical Church of 11th July, 1933, says:

‘The inviolable basis of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is testified to in the Holy Scriptures and as it has come anew to light in the Confessions of the Reformation. By this means the authority that the Church needs for its mission is determined and delimited.’

This article has actually been set aside by the instructions, laws and measures of the Reich Church Government, thereby the Christian basis of the German Evangelical Church has been destroyed.

2. The National Church which the Reich Bishop is aiming at with the watchword ‘One State, One

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People, One Church' means that the Gospel is invalidated so far as the German Evangelical Church is concerned and the message of the Church surrendered to the powers of this world.

3. The usurped autocracy of the Reich Bishop and his legal administrator has set up an impossible Papacy in the Evangelical Church.

4. Inspired by the spirit of a false unscriptural revelation, the Church Government has punished obedience to Scripture and Confession as recalcitrance.

5. The anti-Scriptural introduction of the temporal leadership-principle into the Church and the consequent demand of an unconditioned obedience has bound the office-bearers of the Church to the Church Government instead of to Christ.

6. The elimination of the Synods has, in contravention of the Biblical and Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers reduced the congregations to silence and deprived them of their rights.

II

1. All the protests, warnings and admonitions which we have raised, taking our stand on Scripture and Confession, have been in vain. On the contrary, the Reich Church Government, appealing to the Führer and using and getting the co-operation of political forces, has continued ruthlessly its work of destroying the Church.

2. The violent measures adopted against the South German Churches have destroyed all possibility of

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retaining what has come from the past in the renewal of Church organization.

3. This has necessitated the Church emergency legislation, which we are compelled to proclaim to-day.

III

1. We assert: The Constitution of the GEC¹ is shattered. Its legitimate organs no longer exist. The men who have usurped Church Government in the Reich and in the Regions have, by their actions, divorced themselves from the Christian Church.

2. The Confessional Synod of the GEC creates new organs of government by virtue of the Church Emergency legislation of those Churches, congregations and clerical office-bearers who are bound by Scripture and Confession. For the work of governing and representing the GEC as a federation of Confessionally ordered Churches it appoints the Council of Brethren of the GEC and from that body the Council of the GEC to act as executive. Both organs are formed and organized in accord with the Confessions.

3. We urge congregations, their Ministers and Elders not to take any directions from the hitherto existing Reich Church Government or its officials, and to withdraw from co-operation with those who are willing to remain obedient to this Church Government. We urge them to hold to the instructions of the Confessional Synod of the GEC and of the organs recognized by it.

¹ GEC= German Evangelical Church.

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IV

We transmit this our Declaration to the Reich Government begging it to note the decision taken in it, and asking it to recognize that in matters concerning the Church, its doctrine and organization, the Church, without prejudice to the State's right of oversight (i.e. in financial matters), is alone called to judge and decide."

This statement of principles was supplemented by an order for the execution of the resolutions of the Dahlem Confessional Synod and directions to congregations as to how to act in relation to the Reich Church Government and its officials. The Dahlem Resolutions were published with the addition of an appeal to congregations. The appeal contained these sentences: "We summon the Churches which have borne with us the burden of the conflict, to continue, with all the confidence of faith, the fight for the true renewal of the Church. We also greet those who hitherto have looked on us with lack of sympathy or with hostility and who now, turning with aversion from the false way, want to join us. Let those come openly to our side who are resolved to drive from the Church unrighteousness and violence, lying and heresy, who are minded to let the Word of God have its place as sole saving power, who are convinced that in matters of Church doctrine and organization the Church alone is called to decide—Come to us! Unite with us in the struggle. 'Put on the whole armour of God, having your loins girt about with

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truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of *faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of *salvation*, and the sword of the *Spirit*, which is the Word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto.' (Eph. vi.)."

The important thing affirmed in the Dahlem Declaration is that the creation of Church organization is the Church's concern, and that it is to be carried out exclusively according to Church points of view. This was no matter of course. This statement contains no less than a clear and definite defiance of the State, which aimed at the co-ordination of the Church. In Dahlem the Church erected the dam against which the State's totalitarian or absolutist claim has been shattered and will continue to be shattered.

It has already been shown how the State thereupon withdrew again various measures that threatened the Church. Not that it surrendered its aim. In giving the Reich Church Committee control of the Church, it pursued it in a much cleverer way.

To disparage the scruples that led the Confessional Church into the feud against the imminent State Church, the idea is put out that an attempt must be made to save the People's Church. That would certainly be an important aim. But the question has got to be asked whether in Germany to-day a People's Church in the true sense of the word is still possible, or whether there was not the danger of sacrificing the Church to a fiction. A People's Church is possible

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only where the State confronts the Church positively and desires nothing else than that the Church fulfils its commission, the proclamation of the Gospel. The assumption is that the State remains conscious that its task is limited to the maintenance within the earthly world of a system of law, and that God is to be obeyed rather than man. The Church must renounce the help of the "secular arm", if from it the State is going to derive rights affecting the Church's mission and even limiting it in the fulfilment of its mission. Even where the State confronts the Church with indifference, a People's Church is scarcely possible: there the Free Church will have its place. But where the State confronts the Church as adversary, or demands the subordination of the Church to itself, then the only possibility is a Confessional Church, holding firmly to its Confession of Jesus Christ and, even in opposition to the State, confessing its sole Lord.

The fact that the Confessional Church remained conscious of this even when faced with the Reich Church Committee was what saved the Church from co-ordination. The experiment with the Reich Church Committee has proved abortive. In an elaborate examination of the position sent to the Reich Church Minister the Committee affirmed that the promise made in the autumn of 1935 on its assumption of office that everywhere, where two Church governments confronted each other, committees would be set up, had not been carried out in Thuringia, Mecklenberg, and Lübeck, not even when the Church governments of these districts bluntly opposed the Reich Church Committee. The promise

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that had been made that the Reich Church Committee should have freedom within the Church was cancelled by the confiscation of the official gazette of the German Evangelical Church. On the instructions of the Reich Church Minister, Superintendent-General Zöllner was prevented by the police from conducting a Church service in Lübeck. Thus even the Reich Church Committee appointed by the State was hindered in its work by the State as soon as it showed unwillingness to carry out its task in the sense of the extreme German Christians.

It was—and this is important—at that very moment when the Reich Church Committee resigned that the Reich Church Minister raised the veil which was spread over the State's intentions. His statements were so instructive that the gist of them must be set forth. The main contents of his declaration, drawn from various reports, can be put as follows:

The Reich Church Committee has resigned. It did not keep within its bounds. Its definite job was, not to carry out a Reformation, but to bring round the same table Confessional Church and German Christians. It had been expressly told that the primacy of the State must be acknowledged in the Church also. The presuppositions of the State, race, blood and soil are taboo for the Church. The Reich Church Committee was to carry out its work with a due regard for freedom of conscience. But it has carried out a heresy campaign against the Thuringian German Christians. Further, by not observing the boundaries of the Regional Churches, it has gone beyond its jurisdiction. Its judgments have been one-

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sided. The minister cannot agree when the Reich Church Committee represents the Church districts of Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden as in good order. He holds the opposite. There is good order in Thuringia, Mecklenberg and Lübeck.

The Reich Church Minister explained with all the clarity that could be desired that the Church was to be subordinated to the State, that the efforts of the Thuringian German Christians to set up a National Church correspond to the will of the State and that the intact Churches of Württemberg and Bavaria are a thorn in the flesh to the Church Government of the State. Reich Church Minister Kerrl has thus affirmed that he was wanting to attain by means of the Reich Church Committee exactly what Reich Bishop Müller and Ministerialdirektor Jäger were earlier striving after.

According to further remarks of the Reich Church Minister, he intended to carry through the co-ordination of the Church by means of State laws and orders which had already been prepared. Yet after a few days the Führer balked this scheme and commissioned the Reich Church Minister to draw up the necessary legislative decrees for the holding of a free General Church Election. The announcement of a "free Church Election" was to obliterate the almost shattering impression which the statement of the Reich Church Minister made on Church circles. The commentaries appearing in the whole press on the Führer's decree were designed to strengthen Church folk anew in the conviction that freedom was guaranteed to the Church.

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But the prospective Church Election was not able to awaken the intended impression in the Confessional Church, nor even in the circles closely related to the Reich Church Committee. It was recalled by what means the victory of the German Christians was gained in the Church Election of the year 1933 and with what consistency and with what varied expedients the State attempted to co-ordinate the Church. There was a whole array of such serious facts as could not be overlooked and as kept the Confessional Church from believing in a sudden conversion on the part of the government. Remembering the fundamental resolutions made in Dahlem in regard to Church organization, it made known the conditions upon which alone it could participate in the Church Election.

The Provisional Church Government declared that the Confessional Church could participate in a Church Election only if that was carried out in Church forms and with Church aims in view, with a complete regard for the Church Confession. An election which would give control of the Church to the Churchless masses and which would rob the faithful congregation of its rights in the Church could not but be rejected. It was further asserted that the Führer's decree represented an interference with Church law. This interference was on a par with those direct State intrusions that took place earlier. In face of the assurance that it was in complete freedom and by the Church people's own decision that the Church had to give itself the new Constitution and so a new organization, it was pointed out that up

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to now the Church had had to suffer under severe restrictions of its freedom. The offered freedom of Election presupposes that the restrictions on the Confessional Church and all the measures taken against its members would be cancelled, and that it would recover the right of free speech before the German public. Special objection was taken to the fact that by the Führer's decree it was the Reich Church Minister who was empowered to prepare for the Election of a General Synod and to take the requisite measures. In conclusion the Confessional Church emphasized that the Church must fashion its organization from within and that the best service which the State could do itself and the Church would be to give free scope to that evangelical spirit which was making itself so strongly felt in the people. In the varied communications sent to the representative of the Führer these scruples and demands were brought to the knowledge of the government.

Further, the leaders of the Confessional Church and of the Lutheran Council consulted together with a view to laying down a common line of action in relation to an eventual election. These discussions led to a Union. Success having been attained in clarifying grave dogmatic questions and in finding a common theological basis acceptable to Lutherans and Reformed, a decisive step was taken towards unifying all Confession-bound Churches. The fact which is, however, most gratifying is that since the Reich Church Committee went to pieces, there has been noticeable a real awakening of the German Evangelical congregations. These congregations will form the

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sure bulwark of the Church in the coming conflict. Also, to further attempts at co-ordination on the part of the State, they will offer resistance, and in the light of experiences up to now, one ventures to hope, successful resistance. The attempt to create a German Christian National Church may be regarded as having failed.

The greater the failure, the more the State attempts to take the young people from the Church and to educate them in the National Socialist world-view. Along with the fight for the freedom of the Church, the most important interest of the Church in its conflict with the State will be its fight for the education of the young. By allowing the Evangelical Youth organizations to be incorporated in the Hitler Youth, the Church exposed itself to a blow which has proved itself increasingly serious. One of the special aims of the leaders of the Hitler Youth is to educate the German young people in the National Socialist world-view. Nothing else was to be expected. But in process of time others also, holders of responsible offices in State and Party, have expressed themselves in public against Christianity. Attacks of all kinds are allowed to be directed against the Church, whereas the Church is prevented from defending itself.

To these distresses the Confessional Church gave expression in a Protest to the Führer in the spring of 1936. In this the question was directed to the Führer and Reich Chancellor whether the attempt to de-Christianize the German People was to become the official policy of the government through the further

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co-operation of responsible statesmen, or even only through their conniving at it and letting things take their course. It is further asserted that the whole Church population had clung to the assurance that the National Socialist Party stands on the basis of a "positive Christianity", but unfortunately it had become plain that authoritative personalities in State and Party gave arbitrary interpretations to the words "positive Christianity". The Reich Minister for Propaganda and National Enlightenment declared positive Christianity to be merely humanitarian service and the Reich Instruction Leader, Rosenberg, proclaimed his mysticism of blood to be positive Christianity, and following his example, Party officials have defamed as being merely negative Christianity that is Confessional and that believes in revelation. The harm done by such utterances is all the greater that the Church is never given the opportunity of confuting with the same publicity the misrepresentations of the Christian faith made from high places.

In this protest the Confessional Church also set itself against the destruction of the Church organization, and against the "de-Confessionalizing" that leads to the de-Christianizing of the German People. It declares in regard to the National Socialist world-view: "Evangelical members of National Socialist organizations are required to pledge themselves absolutely to the National Socialist world-view. (Minister Ley: 'The Party strives to exercise a totality claim on the soul of the German People. It cannot and will not suffer another Party or world-view to rule in

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Germany. We verily believe that the German People can become eternal only through National Socialism. . . . And therefore we demand the last German, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic!') This world-view is frequently presented as a positive substitute for Christianity which has to be overcome. When blood, race, nationality and honour receive here the rank of eternal values, the Evangelical Christian is compelled by the First Commandment to reject this estimate. When the Aryan man is glorified, God's Word testifies to the sinfulness of all men. When, within the framework of the National Socialist world-view, there is forced on the Christian an anti-Semitism which binds him to hatred of the Jews, he has, pointing in exactly the opposite direction, the Christian Commandment to love one's neighbour. It means an especially hard conflict in the consciences of members of the Evangelical Church when in carrying out their Christian parental duty, they have to combat the inroad of these anti-Christian ideas amongst their children."

In the Protest a stand was made no less definitely against the inroad of a morality, essentially foreign to Christianity, and threatening to disintegrate the people. That means, a stand was made against the proposition: "Right is what serves the People; wrong, what injures it." But the most serious objections were raised also to the arbitrary dealing so evident at the Reichstag Election in February, 1936: "Evangelical Christians are convinced on the ground of Holy Scripture that God is the protector of the right and of those who have no rights. Therefore we

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feel it to be a turning away from Him when arbitrariness enters into matters of law, and things are done which are not right in the sight of the Lord! . . . The Evangelical conscience which knows that it shares in the responsibility for people and government, is most grievously troubled by the fact that in Germany, which calls itself a state ruled by justice, there are still concentration camps, and that the measures taken by the Secret Police are exempt from all judicial investigation."

These are bold words, coming from consciences that are sore burdened. But the Protest utters plain words also against the deification of the Führer. "A few years ago the Führer himself disapproved of his picture being placed on Evangelical altars. To-day, with less and less restraint, his ideas are made the norm among our people, not only in political decisions, but also in morals and law, and he himself is invested with the religious dignity of the People's Priest, yes, of Mediator between God and People." And the conclusions reads: "We beg, however, that our people may be free to go its future way under the sign of the Cross of Christ, so that our descendants may not one day curse their fathers for having, certainly, built for them and left to them, a State upon the earth, but closed to them the Kingdom of God. What we have said to the Führer in this document, the responsibility of our office compelled us to say. The Church stands in the hand of the Lord."

That was in very deed a word from a Confessing Church!

The Confession was also made in face of the con-

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gregations. In the Pulpit Intimations of 23rd August, 1936, the gist of the Protest was made known to the congregations. The words with which the Intimation was introduced indicate the seriousness of the situation, but also, at the same time, the seriousness with which the Church is resolved to fulfil its duty to the German People. This is the proclamation that was made to the brethren and sisters:

“The German People is faced with a decision of the greatest historical importance. The question is whether the Christian faith is to retain its ‘citizen rights’ in Germany or not. There is to-day a war being waged in our midst, with force and systematically, against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The adversaries of the Gospel are not only those who reject all faith in God, but also those who, while not wanting to deny God, yet think they can deny the revelation of the One Living God in Jesus Christ. Forces of State and Party are being widely used against the Gospel of Jesus Christ and against those who confess Him.

“It is hard for us to say this. The Evangelical Church knows itself bound and tied to our people and its rulers by God’s Word. Every Sunday in Evangelical Services prayers are offered for the Führer and for our country. Four years ago millions of Evangelical Germans greeted with enthusiasm the new beginning in the life of our people. They did it all the more gladly since the Reich Government in its first proclamation of 1st February, 1933, declared that it would take Christianity under its protection as being the basis of our whole morality.

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“ For Evangelical Christians it is something almost inconceivable that in our beloved Germany organs of State could be directed against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet that is happening. For long we have refrained from saying anything. We have allowed it to be said to us that we have here only the action of a few individuals who would be called to order. We have waited. We have made remonstrances. We have even laid before the Führer and Reich Chancellor in writing the things that burden the heart and conscience of Evangelical Christians. . . . From now on we are compelled to abide openly by this word. We have now got to declare before the congregation the things that move us in regard to our people and our Church.

“ The Christian Church is ordered to oppose freely and publicly, without fear of man, attacks on the Gospel. It is ordered to open the eyes of its members, above all those of the rising generation, to the danger confronting us all. It is under this obligation that we speak. What will come of it, that we commit to Him Who has called us to His service. He has ordered it, He will see it through! ”

In the Fourth Confessional Synod in Oeynhausen in February, 1936, a manifesto on the School Question was issued, in which it was declared that, on the basis of Holy Scripture, the Church was responsible for the education of all baptized children; and that God had made it the Church's duty to struggle in order to ensure that not only house and family, but also the school in all its instruction affecting the life of the children, should be dominated by the Spirit of Jesus

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Christ. But now things had reached such a pass that the Christian basis of German education was being threatened with annihilation, and that already some not inessential parts of it had been dispensed with. Two mutually exclusive religious principles were fighting for the German school. The one was determined by the spirit of man's self-glorification, and it not only opposed the influence of the Church on the school, but it fought against the Christian message as injurious to the people. The other was the Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us men and risen again. It acknowledged the inalienable basis of all genuine education to be obedience to Him. It was further emphasized that the "de-Confessionalizing" of the school which had been started was in reality leading to the detachment of the school from the Church and from Christian proclamation, and was leading to its surrender to an erroneous faith. Things had gone so far that teachers were afraid to be politically suspect in the eyes of their pupils, when they made profession of their Christian faith in the course of instruction. On the other hand, it had already become plain that neither the German Faith religiosity, nor any other substitute religions were able to furnish the basis for education. They certainly knew what they were rejecting, but what they wanted to substitute for Christian truth was a hotch-potch of fanatical, romantic and liberalistic ideas. The fruits which an education guided by these ideas had to give to youth were: insecurity, doubt, rebellion against all authority and destruction of all the basic principles of moral and historical knowledge.

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The State is therefore asked to see to it that the secret anti-Christian propaganda comes to an end. Those teachers who are not Christians by conviction must in the name of sincerity, be compelled to cease giving instruction in the Christian religion. The abolition of Christian teaching and prayer in schools by the method of changing them into festivals to celebrate the world-view must emphatically be stopped. On the part of the State it must be made clear whether confession *of* Christ shall rule the German school or confession *against* Christ.

Holders of ministerial office are exhorted to keep incessantly before the eyes of their congregations their responsibility for the education of youth and for the Christian school, and with counsel and with action to stand by teachers and parents in their manifold troubles. The congregations, especially their ministers and assistant ministers, as well as Christian parents, are exhorted not to grow weary in the fight for the Christian education of baptized children. Along with the parents the whole congregation lies under the obligation to watch whether in their school children baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ are led to their Lord or are estranged from Him. When all efforts to stop the misuse of religious education have manifestly failed, parents have no other alternative than for conscience' sake to withdraw their children from a religious education of that nature and themselves to provide for them Church instruction.

If it is constantly kept in mind that the Third Reich's chief concern is to unite the whole people in the anti-Christian world-view, it cannot be surpris-

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ing that such demands by the Church do not get a hearing. With increasing intensity the State continues its fight against the Confessional School. In individual towns the Confessional Schools are almost completely abolished. To be sure, it did happen that in Nuremberg there was an increase in the numbers enrolling in the Confessional Schools in the year 1937 as compared with the preceding year, with the consequence that the Confessional Schools were closed, the explanation given being the remarkable one that they had ceased to have any importance! In the light of the Führer's speech of 1st May, 1937, surely the densest is under no misapprehension as to what the Church and Evangelical Church people have to expect in regard to the education of the young. Adolf Hitler's words were then: "There are old dotards of whom nothing can be made. But we are taking the children from them! We are educating the children to be new German men. When the youngsters are ten years old, we take and form them into a fellowship. At eighteen years we do not yet leave them at peace. At that age they enter the S.A. or the Labour Front, and then we stick them into the Labour Service, and then for two years they come to the Army." The influence of the parental home and the Church in the education of the children is reduced to a minimum. The National Socialist State here takes the same road as Soviet Russia has for years been travelling! National Socialism is not the opponent or conqueror of Communism, but the German form of Bolshevism.

If a stop is to be put to the de-Christianizing of

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German youth and so of the German People, then the Church must be ready and Christian parents must be ready for the utmost sacrifice.

In the meantime there is no cessation of the process of knocking the pith out of Church circles. The Church Election was the third great attempt to coordinate the Church within the State. It was soon realized that there was to be no such thing as a "free" Church Election. Regulations published by Reich Church Minister Kerrl clearly betrayed the design to rob the Confessional Church of its leaders in order to eliminate them from the Election. (With the flexibility which is so characteristic of National Socialist Policy the tactics—but not the objective—is capable of infinite change.) After the regulations of the Reich Church Minister forbidding Church collections and the intimation of the name of those leaving the Church had been declared invalid by the Provisional Church Government, and open resistance to them having been announced, a new wave of arrests broke over the Confessional Church. At the same time new regulations appeared forbidding the use of the Churches for election purposes and, till the publication of the date of the Election, forbidding also all public activities and the circulation of pamphlets for election purposes. Special regulations were provided for the time after the publication of the Election date. There could never be any question of a free Election, the Third Reich could not endure such a thing. A free Church is something that for the National Socialist State is intolerable.

It may at the moment appear as if the Church

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would have to yield to the power of the State. But time will show that imprisonment and concentration camp are not able to break down the Church's resistance. There can be no peace so long as the State clings to its totalitarian claim, and refuses the Church its freedom. In an open letter to Reich Minister Kerrl, General Superintendent D. O. Dibelius expressed this very clearly when, at the conclusion, he said:

"You must get the Church Ministry to confine itself again to exercising the general State supervision that belongs to it according to the agreement made by the State and according to the Constitution of the Churches. Make it refrain completely from further interference with the life of the Church, and make it restore to the Church those rights to which it has made claims that were never heard before and through which it has intruded deeply into the inner life of the Church. Leave the Church to manage its affairs in real freedom and independence.

"If this is done, the Church conflict can be at an end in three months.

"It is plain that the Thuringian German Christians, who according to the unanimous judgment of all the Churches of the world cannot claim for themselves the name of a Church, have got to form a religious community for themselves. If they get help from the State for this no one will have any objections. But the Evangelical Church, the Church of our fathers, must remain what it is—the Church in which it is proclaimed that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that the Will of God speaks to us in Him as the Living Word; the Church which holds in honour the

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Confession of Faith of its fathers and uses the Apostles' Creed in its services, the Church which preaches justification by faith; the Church which allows full freedom to the conscience of the individual because conviction and conscience cannot be forced, the Church whose leadership and whose proclamation are clearly and definitely orientated towards the Word of God.

“At last, at long last give this our Evangelical Church again its freedom!

“Germany needs the Gospel! It needs the unabridged and unadulterated Gospel! The hand that helps it to get that will be blessed! ”

The wish that the State would give the Church its freedom again, has not been fulfilled. A series of State regulations have hit the Evangelical Church very grievously. For one thing there was the prohibition to intimate the names of those who left the Church. The Church had to resist this as an intrusion of the State into the Church's sphere. A further regulation imposed a considerable limitation on the Church's right to make collections. This measure was unacceptable since it touched the scriptural obligation of congregations to make offerings for the Church. The regulation about the Financial Board essentially altered the powers of those already in existence by giving them authority in the sphere of Church Government. Nearly everything, even episcopal actions, were made dependent on the decision of the Financial Board, since every visit of a Bishop to a Church, every telephone conversation, even the nomination of ministers, have financial effects.

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Besides, the regulation transferred the representation of the Church from the Church's regular governing bodies to the Financial Boards. The Confessional Church was very sorely hit by the decree of Himmler, the Chief of the Secret Police, which forbade the Confessional Church's Training Colleges for ministers, thereby denying the Church the right to provide for the proper instruction of its future ministers.

All these regulations represented a serious interference of the State with the life and the rights of the Church. If the Church had acquiesced in this, it would have acceded to the co-ordination of the Church. That could not be. It resisted. In resolutions of 3rd and 17th June, 1937, the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union opposed particularly the regulation concerning the intimation of those leaving the Church and that concerning the right of making collections and contested their validity. Hundreds of ministers resisted the regulations. Thereupon the State attempted to break the Church's resistance by having the ministers who resisted the illegal regulations arrested and put in prison. The wave of arrests that broke over the Church carried much distress and sorrow into the parishes.

The State had not much good fortune with the trials that it conducted. There was a series of acquittals by which the courts established the illegality of the regulations. The great majority of the arrested were never brought to trial. The arrests were arbitrary actions of the State subject to no judicial control. In the year 1937, 806 persons—with few exceptions they were ministers—found their way into prison.

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This fact alone proves that it is not, as is sometimes maintained, a mere handful of ministers who stand by the Confessional Church. In Berlin, for example, 160 of the 400 ministers belong to the Confessional Church, 80 to the German Christians, the rest remaining neutral, i.e. they have not yet come to a decision. A fact that is worth stressing is that the real Church people in the individual congregations are backing up the Confessional ministers; it is not so with the German Christians. The many arrests have only served to put new life into the Churches. The great marvel is just this—that while the measures taken by the State have certainly succeeded in breaking the external power of the Church, they have failed to touch the congregations which in spite of all oppression continue to exist, and even if often small and modest, to live.

The brave minister of Berlin-Dahlem, Martin Niemöller, was longest in imprisonment. He was arrested on 1st July, 1937, and was not tried till February, 1938. The charge of treason had to be dropped, and he was sentenced to seven months confinement in a fortress, the time covered by his imprisonment on remand. The sentence was tantamount to an acquittal. But Pastor Niemöller did not get his freedom. Refusing to sign a declaration binding him never more to enter the pulpit, he was conducted to a concentration camp, from which the protests coming from all parts of the world have failed to release him.

On 9th July, 1937, therefore shortly after the arrest of Pastor Martin Niemöller, the Provisional Church Government and the Lutheran Council published in

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conjunction an address to the congregations of the German Evangelical Church in which they say:

“Bound to the Lord of the Church and to the commission which we have received, we turn in this hour of bitter distress for our Church to all the Evangelical congregations of Germany. We have united our ranks for a common call and common action. As members of the Christian Church and of our German People we have expressed our views to the State. We had to point out that it is impossible to reach an ordered relationship between State and Church along the road that has up to now been followed. In view of the steps which we have taken we forbear counting to-day all the serious interests that move you and us.

“Unanimously and solemnly we testify that we shall continue to carry out our duty in Church court and in parish in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Confessions of our Churches. We cannot submit to any measure that prevents us from performing this duty.

“We remind our ministers, elders and Church members anew of their duty under the vow which they took at their Confirmation and at their assumption of Church Office, and exhort them, joining with us in the struggle that is appointed for us, to hold true to the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.

“Pray for our Government, that it fulfil its difficult task for the good of the German People and that it may render to God the things that are God's! Pray for the restoration of an honourable peace between State and Church! Pray for all the brethren and

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sisters in prison and for the oppressed and orphaned Churches! Pray also for us that we may always have the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ before our eyes and that we give to the authorities what according to God's appointment they are able to ask of us.

"We ask congregations to come together especially at evening services for intercession.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the promise: 'Ye are the salt of the earth.'

"Luther said to us that God's Word and the prayer of Christians preserve the world. Let us hold fast our confession and not grow weary!

"Our faith is the victory that overcometh the world."

In a pulpit intimation which was signed by the Provisional Church Government of the German Evangelical Church, by the oldest serving Regional Bishop of the Evangelical Church and by the Lutheran Council, and which was read on the 29th August, 1937, it is pointed out that the urgent seriousness of the Church conflict had brought the representation of almost all the German Regional Churches together in Cassel. It is further stated in this manifesto that they had conjointly sent a memorandum to the Reich Government requesting personal negotiations, seeing that the course followed by the State could not lead to a pacification of the Churches, but on the contrary would inevitably increase the elements of disagreement. But such negotiations did not become possible; the Reich Government did not accede to the request.

In the message to congregations that follows it is

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asserted that the religious conflicts are confronting the politically united people with decisions capable of convulsing it to its deepest depths. "It goes without saying that more and more the question of all questions, the question of faith, the question about God, is being agitated. The passionately expressed claim of People and State encounters the claim of God, to which it is the Church's call to bear witness. . . .

"The conflict is about *God*, the eternal, living God. I am the Lord Thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me! This old Commandment, the first in our Catechism, is to-day at the focal point of what is happening in Germany. . . .

"It is about *Christ*. Faith in God, yes. Faith in Christ, no. That goes like a battle-cry through our people. They are willing to believe again in God, certainly, but Christ is alien to them. Alien His teaching, alien His suffering without defending Himself, alien His shameful death on a Cross, alien the—in their eyes incredible—story of His resurrection. . . . They ask: Does the Church really want to force this alien Christ on our people, which, after being for long under foreign influences, is, with fierce struggle, getting back to itself. We answer: No. We bring to our people no alien compulsion, but a glad message. . . . Jesus Christ came in the name of God and became brother to sinners, died and rose for our sakes that we might become children of God. This glad message is for all men, for all peoples, for our German People too. True freedom and power are to be got by it in Jesus Christ. Without Him, there is no deliverance, in His Name is salvation, is Heil. . . .

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“It is about the *Church*. Things have already come to the pass that the word Church has an unpleasant flavour. . . . It is said: In the community of people and Reich can there still be such a thing as Church, in which German men find their home, from which they derive strength for the battle with guilt, trouble and death? The man who as sinner stands in terror before the Holy God knows: My deliverance depends on God’s coming to me in His mercy. My salvation depends on God’s having spoken His Word to all the world and therefore also to me. His Word took form in Holy Scripture, became flesh in Jesus Christ, and is the living Presence of Christ in the Christian Church. . . . We testify to this Church before our people. . . . This Church is to-day the object of conflict. Over-zealous people are of the opinion that the Church would best serve our People and Reich if it too, like economics and culture, were subject to the political authorities. But we know that the Church can serve our people only when it is really and completely ‘Church’, when it proclaims the living God Who is Lord over all lords, when it really proclaims that Christ is Saviour and Lord of our people also! ”

The pulpit announcement concludes as follows: “In this situation we exhort and beseech congregations, elders, ministers: Do not let yourselves become embittered. Do not grow weary in fidelity of service. Do not allow any suffering or sacrifice to be too much for you. Do not forget for a moment that we owe our people the Gospel. Obedience to God the Lord, gratitude to Christ, our Saviour, loyalty to our

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Church, passionate love for our people mark out the way which we have to travel to the end: 'But go thou and preach the Kingdom of God.' We want to repent together that we have not been much truer in our service; we want to ask the Lord of the Church that our message may become more joyful, our obedience more willing, our love purer, the witness of our words and of our life more powerful. O land, land, land, hear the Word of the Lord! "

These documents, that were composed not only by the Provisional Church Government, i.e. the Confessional Church in the narrower sense, speak of the seriousness of the Church's position. It is completely wrong to assume that the conflict has only broken out where the so-called radical wing of the Confessional Church is leading the Church. Even in the intact Regional Churches there is serious trouble. In these areas, especially in Württemberg and Bavaria, the fight against Religious Instruction in schools is being waged with unrelenting vigour. What has taken place in this connection in Württemberg during the last two years may be set down in a few lines.

In April, 1936, the Confessional School was transformed into the Community School with the assurance of the Minister of Culture and of all authorities right down to burgomaster that in the German Community Schools there would be no alteration in religious education, but that everything would remain as before. Not long after there was published the decree of the Minister of Culture excluding chorale singing from the singing lesson and adding it to religious instruction, which means a considerable

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abbreviation of the time available for religious instruction.

Then in the spring of 1937 came the decree that in future religious instruction was to be given in the National Socialist spirit. That meant the elimination of the Old Testament and the surrender of religious instruction to the whim of the teacher. In the summer of 1937, 800 ministers were at once barred from taking part in religious instruction; the remainder also will in course of time be eliminated by being translated to districts where religious instruction is already in the hands of the teachers. And that it may become perfectly clear that imposition upon the ministers of the oath of loyalty to the Führer was only a means to the end of securing the school from Christian influence, a beginning has been made with removing the Christian-minded teacher from religious instruction.

In order to make the domination of the world-view complete, the Minister of Culture has ordered that those children of Christian parents who are excused from the school's religious instruction, are liable to compulsory instruction in world-view (two hours a week). The attempt is made to throw a veil over the face of this order by the statement that children of the German Faith Movement who claim exemption from religious instruction are also to be submitted to this compulsory instruction.

It is seen here with what consistency the State pursues its aim of educating German youth in the National Socialist world-view.

Towards the end of the year 1937 Reich Minister

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Kerrl made two speeches in which he declared that a Church Election was at the time out of the question since it had not been possible to bring order into the chaotic confusion of the Evangelical Church. At the same time the threat was held out to the Church that the State would stop its financial support if the Church refused to allow itself to be co-ordinated. It is not mentioned whether the State is prepared at the moment when the separation of State and Church is carried through, to give back to the Church its possessions and to concede to it authority to levy taxes.

At the head of the Church the Reich Church Minister placed the German Christian Dr. Werner. It is noteworthy that the order installing him in this office laid it down that the so-called intact Regional Churches were not to be subject to him. By this means Reich Church Minister Kerrl was trying anew to drive a wedge between the Provisional Church Government of the German Evangelical Church and the intact Regional Churches, i.e. the Lutheran Council. This aim has not up to now been achieved, even if an increased aloofness is again to be observed on the part of the intact Regional Churches.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GENERAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GERMAN CHURCH CONFLICT

It is obvious that the general significance of the fight which the Church in Germany is carrying on against heathenism and the totality claim of the National Socialist State cannot be set forth or judged with any sort of finality. Nothing more can be done than to give some indications. But there is one thing which can be said with certainty: the significance of this conflict can be underestimated, it can never be overestimated. We are standing at a turning-point of human history. That has to be clearly grasped. What we are told from Germany is absolutely true—that the world outside does not know how to estimate events in Germany properly. For Germany, they say, has become involved in a transformation of such a nature that everything is being fashioned anew, consequently foreign lands that have not yet been laid hold of by this process of renewal are not able rightly to understand what is going on. In truth it must be admitted that those people who are still living in the world of nineteenth-century thought, cannot understand what is happening to-day in Germany, for it is impossible to measure this revolution of thought with nineteenth-century standards. But it is just as little

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possible to understand the attitude of the Confessional Church from the world of nineteenth-century "Christian" thought as the National Socialist world-view from the philosophy of the last two hundred years. That is the reason why so many theologians are as perplexed when they are faced by the theological attitude of the Confessional Church as the philosophers in face of the National Socialist world-view.

The significance attaching to National Socialism must in a summary way be touched on again. The philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was built up on the conviction that scientific investigation and scientific knowledge lead to final results. Belief in science without presuppositions dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But when the discovery was made that philosophy was not able to overcome relativity and that this relativity led almost to a chaos or to an anarchy in intellectual life, there wakened up and became strong the longing to get out of this relativity. That was impossible unless the place of science without presupposition was taken by a new presupposition for all scientific work. This new presupposition was found in the myth of the twentieth century, in the belief that God reveals Himself in blood and race, in the People's life and in the history of the People. Science thereby gained new perspectives. So there must now be formed a new legal system that puts in the foreground the protection of the race; there must now be founded a new pedagogy governed by the demands of the blood; and there must be cultivated a new religion enabling man to hear the voice of blood and soil. And there must

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be formed a new art which places itself at the service of the People. In this way, National Socialism with its proclamation of the doctrine of blood and race as the one foundation of the people, its life and its striving, has rescued science from the bog of relativity into which it had fallen through its belief in science without presupposition. Science has got a new presupposition and a new purpose!

Even the Church is concerned—since there is a Dialectic Theology—with nothing else than to liberate the Word of God from the scientific and philosophic integument which had been drawing the Gospel down into the relativity of all human world-views. In the first chapter it was pointed out how the philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had broken away one stone after another from the Christian Creed. God's Word was humanized, it was made subject to human knowledge. It was necessary that God's Word should be released again from this subject condition. The clearest indication of how far man went in his faith in himself, in his folly, is the fact that he did not shrink from subjecting even the Word of God to his so modest and pitiful bits of knowledge. What a departure had been made from the Reformation that taught us to measure everything by the Word of God! The rod and staff that was given us in the Word of God, was changed for scientific knowledge that proved to be a crutch.

What the Confessional Church is concerned with is that the Word of God, testified to in Holy Scripture, be again recognized as Word of God, and that the

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Lord of the Church, Who is Lord of heaven and earth, be again acknowledged as sole Lord. It is not simply that it is fighting for one theology, which is opposed to another theology, it is not even fighting for the claim of the Church and its doctrine, not even for the claim of Holy Scripture, but for nothing else than the claim of the one Lord, beside whom there is no other Lord. This contest—as Karl Barth once put it—is not for the repute and the rightness of certain men, nor is it for the re-erecting of an old orthodoxy with its claim to sole validity, but it is for the truth: “I, the Lord of heaven and earth, am thy God. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” The fight about the Confession in Germany is very plainly in reference to this God as Lord of all men and of everything human, who is judge over life and death, to whom we are utterly accountable, to whom we all owe our lives. Anyone who does not know that the Church is concerned with this one Lord, and not with something else, which perhaps State or People or Science expects of it, is not in a position to understand the battle which the Evangelical Church is waging in Germany.

Thus two totalitarian claims stand confronting each other in Germany: the claim of God: ye shall have no other gods before Me, and the National Socialist claim that acknowledges as sole basis of the German People the National Socialist world-view, the blood and race myth. Two different worlds stand over against each other. Here the Church cannot enter into any compromise without denying its own Lord by whom and through whom it lives.

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Has this fight any lesson for other Churches and other states which are not faced with any National Socialist world-view? True as it is that it is scarcely possible for a blood and race myth to thrive in the Western democracies, and true as it is that the old democracies will not give in to a Führer-principle, that must not betray us into thinking that events in Germany do not affect us. We must carefully note that for all of us a spiritual history of two hundred years has come to an end. Belief in science without presuppositions has gone to pieces all along the line. Who is there to-day who still believes that science is pointing us the way out of our intellectual aberration and confusion? But there has gone to pieces too that belief in man and in his continuous upward evolution by which Liberalism and Socialism lived. To-day, in view of the catastrophe of the World War and of what we have lived through since then, who still dares to repeat the sentence: man is by nature good?

What are the spiritual forces by which we shall live in the future? Are the lines being laid down of a new view of the world that promises to become a solid foundation? Is not the characteristic of our time and of our situation just that our minds have lost their compass? The havoc wrought by an exaggerated individualism that threatens to rend our national fellowship, is open to the eyes of day. How can it be overcome?

There are not lacking to-day voices that call out for a new authority. Such a call is easily understood. Even with us national and family ties have become loose, that ought never to have loosened. Therefore

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the demand for a new authority opposed to the further dissolution of binding ties. But where is this authority to come from?

This question can only be answered for us by the Church, for only he who knows of God can know something of *authority*. Only the Lord, who created heaven and earth, and not man, has authority. Only the Creator, not the creature, has authority. The latter has authority only in so far as he knows himself bound to his Creator. And in the whole world there is authority only where men know themselves to be bound to their Creator. But where this bond fails, where the peoples break loose from the one Lord and want themselves to be Lord, or make their own God for themselves, then real authority is at an end, then its place is taken by a worldly substitute called might and force! Truly only a fleeting glance need be thrown at the world to see how with the de-Christianizing of the peoples authority disappears and in its place appear worldly might and worldly force. This worldly might is incorporated in the State, most completely in the total State.

It is worth while listening to the warning of an intellectual leader. Professor Dr. Max Huber, a Swiss, formerly President of the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague, stated in a lecture on "Gospel and National Movement": "The more the State realizes in its *nomos* the idea of community, the more it wants to be the bearer of the spiritual values residing in its people, the nearer lies the danger of its regarding itself as the historical embodiment of the divine will, and of claiming as its own most proper

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sphere the sphere of the moral duties of man to man, yes, the danger of its authority stepping into the place of the divine authority. This danger is especially great when man has lost his mainstay in belief in the Gospel or when this belief, if not lost, has been shaken and weakened. Then it is natural for man to see in the State the substitute for the authority of God which has been lost to him, and for the lost fellowship which springs from the Gospel. The State can apparently meet this quest of man, of the intellectually homeless man, 'fed up' with his unfettered freedom. And besides it is of the very essence of every political principle that it tends to realize itself in its utmost consequences in accord with a rational or a mystical logic; it tends to go on developing not in accord with empirical necessities, as is done in a healthy political system, but in accord with ideological necessities. Not only the idea of freedom, even the ideas of authority and community, can become demonic things. The criticism and the corrective of this development is the Gospel, the Gospel in its totality. It is the corrective of a double arrogance, the absolutizing of freedom whether of the individual or of the State, and the absolutizing of authority and of state community. Only the pure and the complete Gospel can exercise this critical effect, not one that adjusts itself to the demands made by the spirit of the age, or by Idealism, or by the myth of People or State or some hero myth. The Gospel comes from outside what we call 'world', but it is strength for living in this world. The fact that revelation took place once and for all in history excludes all possibility of its repetition, its alteration

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or development, its adjustment. And it is just this paradox which brings it about that the Gospel is the ultimate immovable spiritual unity of man and of mankind. Only the Absolute that has entered into history is able to remain the Absolute within history. The essential is therefore the pure proclamation of the Gospel". Dare we longer shut our ears—above all in the Church—to such words of warning?

A renewal of the Church can only take place by means of God's Word, that Word of God which comes to man. The struggle of the Evangelical Church in Germany teaches that clearly enough. The Church has nothing else to do than this one thing—to proclaim the Word of God. It is the mystery of the divine Word that where it is really proclaimed it itself opens up the way to men. Where much thought is devoted in the Church to ways and means of leading men to the Word of God, there too little trust is placed in the divine Word. It is no mere question of method that comes to the front when someone perhaps says: the best solution is that the Word of God should come to the man, but where that is not possible, then the man must be brought to the Word. Where that is the way of speaking and arguing, the Church of the Word has capitulated.

The Word of God is no more heard, because it is no more confessed before men. It is good when the Church has to suffer because it has not yet found a word for so many of those questions that rise gigantically in front of us. The Church, it is true, has often spoken. One has but to think of the many resolutions of our Synods! But what was the basis of the speak-

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ing? It was always a human, political, fanatical or other conviction of that sort. But it never came from a struggle for obedience to the Word and from a consequent confession before the world. Therefore the voice of this Church is never listened to. It has always spoken only a human word, and it has never confessed before the world on the basis of the eternal Word. Perhaps the most important thing to be learned from the Confessional Church in Germany is how stiff a fight has to be put up in the Church for the Word of God before the Church and its members can really confess before the world. If our Church has got so far that it addresses the world from out of the Word of God as clearly and as challengingly as at the time of the Reformation, then the world will again listen to this Word of the Church. It ought not to be forgotten how the Reformers gave answer to the great problems of their time, the problem of public authority, of war, of property, of the misuse of property, of marriage, of the family and so on. When the Church again places itself under the Word of God in such a way that it has final answers to the burning questions of the present, then there will no longer be any need of putting the timid question whether this Word is listened to or not. But pains must be taken in the Church to get these answers, and the Church must implore that in these answers it really confess Jesus Christ before men. Other methods cannot take the place of this struggle of the Church.

Certainly it is necessary to be clear as to the fact that the world will not listen to the Church so long as the Church gives a hundred different answers to

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the one question. Therefore the most important task of the Church is the struggle for unity in faith, i.e. the struggle for the proper understanding of God. In the conflict of the Evangelical Church in Germany it has been clearly seen that only a Church which possesses a clear and common Confession—the Declaration of Barmen presents it for the Confessional Church—really has the strength to confess. A Church without Confession in fact resembles a state without constitution and is defenceless in face of the powers of the world. The fight which the Confessional Church is waging for freedom in Germany arouses general sympathy throughout the world; but in wide circles there is no understanding of the “dogmatic narrowness” that characterizes it. It may be said that at the beginning in Germany also there was quite a large number who were wanting to co-operate in the fight for the Church’s freedom, but who had no use for a Confession. But all these people—the fact must simply be stated—proved to have little staying power in the fight. The Confession has not only its place in the Church; it gets its decisive importance in the fight against the world, against the totalitarian State and against all who oppose the claim of God.

There are others who say that Protestantism neglected in the post-Reformation period to develop on the basis of Reformation truth a Christian political science, a Christian sociology, etc., and that this want has become painfully evident in to-day’s contest with worldly forces. The contest in Germany teaches us that Protestantism had good grounds for neglecting to develop doctrines. Doctrines are interesting

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as matter for theoretical discussion. They give scope for brilliant debate. But in the concrete situation in which decision is demanded doctrines are no help. Certainly there is a Christian doctrine without which we shall never get on, and we do well to test our doctrines by the doctrines of the fathers, but it is not doctrine we are concerned with in the Church and over against the world, it is the living Lord. Even the Confessions are not concerned with doctrine, but with confessing, before the world and against the world, the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. One can go the length of saying that even in Germany "Christian doctrine" has broken down. It was so easy to hold to the doctrines of the Reformation and its Confessions, without really being tied to confession before the world. Proclamation of the Word of God does not mean giving instruction in Christian doctrine, but witnessing to Jesus Christ. The Church will always have to guard against making a doctrine out of a Confession; where that happens, all is up with the Confession. But the Church is always being challenged to confess. When the Church ceases to confess, it is dead, for confession is the Church's action. The Church is active not where there is great fuss and busyness in the Church, but only where it confesses Jesus Christ before the world. That was done in the Declaration of Barmen which has now been recognized as Confession. Here the Church confessed Jesus Christ and thereby the doctrine of the Fathers, and offered resistance to the anti-Christian National Socialist world-view. A confession of Christ always means resistance to belief in man and his

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might. But a confession of Christ means also resistance to the totality claim of the State, seeing that this is directed against the totality claim of God. No "Christian doctrine" is able to give protection against the intrusion of the totalitarian State. A doctrine is not able to offer resistance; that can be done only by the Church, the confessing congregation. Frankly, the trouble with the Roman Catholic Church in Germany is that it certainly has command on all sides and in all directions of Church doctrine, but not of confessing congregations. Where there are to be found really confessing congregations, where the Word of God is really once again the single guide, there the Church is not in perplexity. In the conflict of the Evangelical Church in Germany it has become plain that Christian doctrines, as these are to be met in the latest Protestant literature, have not been the slightest help to the Confessional Church. What saved and renewed the Church was nothing else than simple belief in God's Word and simple obedience to that Word.

But is it possible to live on the basis of God's Word? To this question also the German Confessional Church gives us an unambiguous answer. In Germany to-day one cannot well live on the basis of reason, or of culture: but one can live on the basis of the Word of God. Holy Scripture is again the book that has become for thousands and thousands their one support. One thing after another by which, besides the Holy Scriptures, the Church thought that it was able to live, has been taken from it. There has remained to it only the Bible. But this book with

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its witness to Christ has proved itself the power that enables the Church to resist and renew itself.

The resistance of the German Confessional Church to the powers of this world which it encounters in the National Socialist world-view and totality claim, arises solely from obedience to God's Word. Political motives are not the Church's affair, and the Confessional Church does not fight for them. And yet—yes, perhaps just on that account—decisive political importance attaches to this conflict of the Church. The Church's resistance to the State's totality claim is to-day the only resistance against which in the last resort the omnipotence of world and State must go to pieces. Face to face with the Church, the National Socialist State comes up against its boundary. Or will it not be of decisive political importance if the State's totality claim is shipwrecked on the Church?

But the Church conflict has an equally great cultural significance. It is simply a fact that in Germany to-day freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and freedom of speech are to be found only in the Church. To-day we are standing at the end of the liberal epoch, at the end of the age of individual and subjective freedom. During that period the Church was the sanctuary of the idea of authority and obedience. Now it has come to light during these last years in Germany that, when an epoch of force approaches, the Church knows how to become the sanctuary of freedom. Who to-day is able to measure the significance of this fact?

Thus the fight which the Evangelical Church is waging in Germany, is of importance not only for the

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Church; it is equally decisive for political and cultural development. There is no need to have fears about the issue of the conflict. The State has admittedly all worldly might at its disposal, but the Church has the promise of its Lord that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Happy the Church which no longer builds on human hopes, but knows that it stands only on the promise of its Lord.

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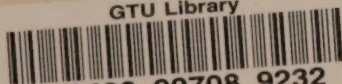
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