

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

OBJECTS :

1. *To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.*
2. *To elucidate by news and quotations the spiritual issues at stake in the war.*

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B.B.C. CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME FOR GERMANY

Messages to oppressed Christians from world-famous leaders

The recent sermons by the Bishop of Münster and the Bishop of Württemberg have shown that Christian leaders in Germany are speaking more clearly of the gulf which separates the Nazi way from the traditional ways of Christendom.

Although for obvious reasons it is impossible to give detailed information, our readers will be interested to know that the season of Christmas has not passed without several broadcasts directed towards this Christian element within the German State.

The German wireless does not broadcast services. It was considered fitting, therefore, to provide in the programmes addressed to Germany some services and messages calculated to strengthen Christian faith and resistance, and to keep alive some remnant of fellowship between the resisting Church in Nazi Germany and the Church in the free countries.

On Christmas Eve a service was broadcast from the German - Lutheran Church in London, and later a Midnight Mass was available for Continental listeners.

An interesting feature was a series of messages from Christian leaders outside Germany. These included one from the Archbishop of York, as Chairman of the World Council of Churches in process of formation, and one from Dr. Karl Barth. Short messages were also transmitted from Dr. Paul Tillich, the German theologian in exile in New York, Dr. Emil Brunner of Zurich

University, and Pastor Stosch, a German missionary working at present in North India.

The message from Dr. Karl Barth to the oppressed Christians of Germany is of such interest that we print it in full.

"My dear brothers and sisters,—I have gratefully and joyfully consented to send you a greeting this evening. It must be done from London in the short space of five hundred words and through the medium of a foreign voice. Because I know that you will receive in all sincerity what I shall say in all sincerity, I should not like to celebrate Christmas without thinking of you, my friends and pupils, the many with whom I was united in joy and sorrow, in strife and in peace. I shall remain firmly bound to you with these ties.

"But my greeting shall not be merely personal, but a greeting from the whole, holy, Universal Church.

"In these last years silence has reigned between the churches in Germany and those of other lands. We know but little of you and you know but little of us. But is not that little enough? You know and we know that one Lord, one Spirit, has united us in the same Faith, in the same Love, in the same Hope. You are confident and we are confident, that this strong City of God cannot be threatened with destruction. You wait, and we wait, for the Day when it shall be revealed, under a new heaven and on a new earth.

"Let me say one thing to you with special force: 'You are not forgotten.' We do not know all, but we know a great deal of how hard it is for you to celebrate Christmas joyfully this year; we know of the grief and sorrow in many of your families, of the oppression which is the price you must pay if you make confession of the Gospel; of the

terrible things which our Jewish brothers and sisters in Germany have had to undergo, and not least about the conflicting thoughts with which you must greet the tide of current events. You should know that prayers are offered for you. Pray also for us.

"Far more important than anything else which we can do and be for one another at this time is the fact that the Eternal God thought of us all, and thinks of us still, on this Day, when He became, and still is, our Brother, in order to take from us our sin and shame, and even death itself, to be our Saviour, the righteous Lord and Conqueror over all the mighty forces of our dark world. Incomprehensible though it is, this is gloriously true for us all. That is the great Promise given to us Christians, but valid for the whole world: that there is no human deception, presumption or disorder which does not find its restricting frontier in the truth, righteousness and peace of this Promise. This is our great charter of freedom in the world—also in the world of political activity. We need have no anxiety because of anything the world can do, for He has overcome it. Remembering this thought makes it impossible for us to restrict our Christian responsibility to our private inner life, or to the life of the Church. On the contrary, we should joyfully proclaim the message as true at all times and in all places. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And the government is on His shoulders.' Thanks and praise be to His name—this Sovereignty is not restricted, but absolute.

"I think just now of one of your German Christmas carols, and its last verse shall be the very special greeting which I give to you at this time.

" 'Rejoice thou everlasting heaven,
Rejoice thou kingdom of the earth,
For God has made of you one realm,
One kingdom caused you to become.
Because, dear Jesus Christ, Thou art,
Sovereign of the Eternal Realm,
Thou wilt espouse our threatened cause
And save us from our ghostly foe'."

"THE CHRISTIAN REFUGEE"

Christmas is a suitable time for bringing before our readers an interesting pamphlet just published by the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe. This little booklet deals especially with the spiritual needs of the refugees, who, though often "non-Aryan" from the point of view of German racialism, are nevertheless Christians by faith and practice. The

Council has done, and is doing, magnificent work, and readers at home and abroad will be interested to know something of what is being done.

"It is well known that large numbers of Jews have been compelled to leave Germany and Austria as a result of anti-semitic legislation. It is less often realised in this country that these laws, consistently with the National Socialist racial ideology, were directed against all who were regarded by the Nazis as Jewish by race, and not merely against the Jewish religious community. Hence the Nuremberg Laws (1935) and the more severe measures, taken at the end of 1938 after the murder of a Nazi official at the Paris Embassy by a demented Jewish youth of Polish origin, affected many who were Christian by religion.

"This is due mainly to the fact that during the 19th century there were many mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews and that as a general rule the children of such marriages were brought up as Christians. Others affected by the Nuremberg Laws were non-Jews married to Jews. These were less directly affected in that they could remain in Germany under the same conditions as other citizens, but often only if they were prepared to divorce the Jewish partner to the marriage.

"In all other respects the Christian 'Non-Aryans' were treated in exactly the same fashion as the full Jews. They, too, were deprived of property, excluded from remunerative occupation, sent into concentration camps and compelled either by force or economic pressure to leave their country. There were also some Christians who left Germany because of the impossibility of reconciling their religious convictions with the principles of Nazi totalitarianism, and others were obliged to flee on account of their political views. These, however, represent a relatively small group among the refugees from Nazi oppression, the great majority of whom, Christians and Jews alike, are victims of racial persecution. . . .

"In October, 1938, the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe, representing the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Church bodies, was constituted. . . .

"The Christian Council had a special responsibility in the religious sphere. Every effort had to be made to see that the spiritual needs of the Christian refugees, both Catholic and non-Catholic, were being satisfied. What follows is the story of the way in which that task is being carried out.

" A first necessity was obviously that of trying to link up Christian refugees with Christian congregations in this country. This presented least difficulty in the case of the Catholics, on whom their faith laid an obligation to attend the services of the Roman Catholic Church and for whom there was little or no difference between the ritual to which they had been accustomed in their own country and that observed here. The problem of the non-Catholics was clearly much more difficult. Although there have been for many years a number of German Lutheran congregations in Great Britain these are for the most part small and scattered and, consequently, quite inadequate to meet the needs of the refugees.

" It was necessary, therefore, to assist the refugee in his choice of an English congregation. To this end a letter was addressed by the Christian Council to the incumbent of every parish in which a Christian refugee was known to be living, explaining the situation to him and inviting his co-operation in helping these new 'parishioners' to find a home in that church most nearly in accordance with the tradition to which they had been accustomed in their own country. At the same time, a letter was sent to the refugees themselves telling them of the Council's concern and the steps that had been taken to meet their needs. A similar procedure was adopted in connection with Catholic refugees, who were put in touch with parish priests of their own communion in their respective districts.

" These endeavours met with great success and most appreciative replies were received from many of the clergy and from a considerable number of refugees, letters which made it clear that in many cases the happiest relationships already existed between German and British Christians.

" In certain centres, notably in Oxford and Cambridge, groups of Lutheran refugees have formed independent congregations which, however, maintain a close connection with the neighbouring English churches. In London special services and social gatherings have been organised by the Council for both Protestant and Catholic refugees. The Protestant services have been held monthly ever since the outbreak of war and have been jointly conducted by an English minister and a German pastor. . . .

" One of the most vital branches of the Council's work is the care of Christian children. The Council is responsible for about 1,100 of nearly 10,000 boys and girls brought to this country from Germany and Austria

by the Refugee Children's Movement in the nine months preceding the outbreak of war. To a large extent, through the kindness and sympathy of friends in all parts of the country, the religious instruction, general education and training of children have been provided for. . . .

" On this education, based as it is on the principles of truth, justice, freedom and love, must depend the success of these young people as future advocates of a better understanding between the nations and as champions of these principles against the pernicious doctrine now being so assiduously instilled into the minds of the youth of Germany. . . ."

Information about work for the refugees in England may be obtained from the Rev. W. W. Simpson, M.A., General Secretary of the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe, Bloomsbury House, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1, and in Scotland from the Rev. Robert Smith, B.D., Secretary of the Scottish Christian Council for Refugees, 42, Frederick Street, Edinburgh, 2.

HITLER THREATENS HIS OPPONENTS

Hitler, at the end of his recent speech in the Reichstag, in which he declared war on America, concluded with a very sharply-worded threat directed towards those who oppose his regime. Speaking of such offenders, he says that it is immaterial "under what camouflage" they try to disturb the German front. The use of this word "camouflage" has previously referred to opposition from religious quarters, and it may well be that Hitler, in this passage, was referring primarily to those leading ecclesiastics who have recently spoken so clearly against the injustices of the Nazi regime. We quote the passage.

" You, my fellow Party Members, know my unalterable determination to carry a fight once begun to its successful conclusion. You know my determination in such a struggle to be deterred by nothing, to break every resistance which must be broken. In September, 1939, I assured you that neither force of arms nor time would overcome Germany. I will assure my enemies that neither force of arms nor time nor any internal doubts can make us waver in the performance of our duty. When we think of the sacrifices of our soldiers, any sacrifice made by the Home Front is completely unimportant. When we think of those who in past centuries have fallen for the Reich, then we realise the great-

ness of our duty. But anybody who tries to evade this duty has no claim to be regarded in our midst as a fellow German. Just as we were unmercifully hard in our struggle for power we shall be unmercifully hard in the struggle to maintain our nation. At a time when thousands of our best men are dying nobody must expect to live who tries to depreciate the sacrifices made at the Front. Immaterial under what camouflage he tries to disturb this German Front, to undermine the resistance of our people, to weaken the authority of the regime, to sabotage the achievements of the Home Front, he shall die for it! But with the difference that this sacrifice brings the highest honour to the soldier at the Front, whereas the other dies dishonoured and disgraced.

"Our enemies must not deceive themselves—in the 2,000 years of German history known to us, our people have never been more united than to-day. The Lord of the Universe has treated us so well in the past years that we bow in gratitude to a Providence which has allowed us to be members of such a great nation. We thank Him that we also can be entered with honour into the everlasting book of German history!"

It may be noticed that this passage illustrates vividly one of the real "spiritual issues" of the war, viz., that our enemies, even when they speak of Providence, or God, think of Him as exclusively concerned with the welfare of *Germany*. However Britons may be accused of hypocrisy when they speak of *freedom* and *justice*, they at least avoid this type of nationalist partisanship.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP IN JERUSALEM

The Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Dr. Graham Brown, has issued a Christmas message which will come with special interest to the many who, at the present time, have relatives serving in or near the Holy Land. We quote from the message.

"Two thousand years ago Joseph and Mary obeyed Caesar's decree to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. There the Prince of Peace was born. To-day men and women who are enrolled in the cause of righteousness, justice, truth, plan to visit this Christmas the same Bethlehem. They will come from every continent, and from homes that are free and from homes of people seeking freedom. They will come from ships of the Mediterranean, from the Eighth and the Ninth British Armies, from Air Squadrons, from

nursing services, from auxiliary units of men and women, from the ranks of welfare workers, numbered in hundreds in this area. With the local residents will be these representatives of the British Commonwealth of Nations, of America, and of their allies of tortured Europe such as, for example, the choir of Polish refugee children. At the first Christmas through the darkness, which then as now was symbolical of the powers of evil, there shined a great light. Men had ever been seeking it. 'Those that walked in darkness saw a great light,' said the prophet. This light was the Light of the World. . . .

"The pilgrims to Bethlehem find blackout regulations. Inside the cave the electric light and candles will be the token of One in whom was light and the life was the light of men: a light which not even the revival of paganism can black-out from men of understanding and good will. These pilgrims who, like the first worshippers, are conscious of darkness outside will rejoice in this light. . . .

"Those who travel to Bethlehem in person or in spirit repeat Simeon's song on seeing the child: 'Lord, mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,' and worship Him who both revealed the things which belong to our peace and is Himself our peace. The powers that to-day seek to destroy those things that belong to our peace may learn the parable from the ruined palace and the tomb of Herod, who attempted to kill the Prince of Peace. From Bethlehem, to which our pilgrims are bound, can be seen Herodium, or Frank Mountain, and on its flattened top, hollowed out from the crater which flamed up for a brief space and was extinguished, are found the desolate ruins of the once magnificent palace of the Herod who was called 'the Great,' who murdered the innocents. To-day its crumbling masonry is the home of lizards and jackals; while near by, at the cave where the Christ Child was born, Christians from the ends of the earth, joyful and triumphant, come to sing His praises and adore Him."

"SPIRITUAL ISSUES" IN MALAYA

As the minds of many are concentrated on Malaya at this time, it may be of interest to mention that we have this week received a letter from a Presbyterian missionary in that country. He writes: "You have been good enough to send me *The Spiritual Issues of the War*; I have greatly appreciated this courtesy; the information has been of special use in a place like this, where authentic information is scarce."