

that should he choose to write an economic account of a section of history it will be essentially different from the pagan's economic history. But under whatever aspect the Christian studies the Why and the How of any historical data he will always have at the back of his mind the framework of a sound philosophy that knows the nature of man and of a complete theology that knows the purpose of God. He has then at his disposal a perfect instrument that of itself should lead to balance and perspective, seeing the partial as partial, not excluding the total and integral background; and Christ will always be in his mind, even though the particular view of history with which he happens to be dealing is not *consciously* linked with the Saviour.

Jesus Christ has taken up His Cross and swept it across the total age of the universe. In that magic sweep he has gathered all into one. All history is, in a sense, Bible history, it is history of the Word being made flesh, dwelling among us and offering His life for us. The historian of any period should be able to write with John the Apostle: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.'

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

NEW RELIGION FOR OLD

It needed a choir of angels to explain to some Jewish shepherds that the Babe in yonder manger was Christ the Lord: it needed a special star to show three Gentile sages the swaddling clothes of Holy Wisdom. Without such startling messengers men might not have noticed Salvation as it lay at their feet.

It has needed a world war and the destruction, enslave-

ment, maiming of countless millions to make men conscious of a religion which has not for one moment been kept a secret. 'Mein Kampf' has been translated into almost every language of the world: and the deeds and words of Hitler are its faithful confirmation. Do we now understand the 'why' which conjured up the Nazi *djinn*, the 'why' which gives it more than human power, the 'why' which gives us the key to its destruction? Do we now understand that Nazism is simply the conscious parody of Christianity?

What does Christianity teach us? That Adam's will was wounded—divided—when he chose to obey another voice than God's. Divided will bred conflict such that unhappy men and women groaned beneath the heavy yoke of each other's inhumanity; till their yearnings for deliverance were caught up in the single will of Mary, and the Desired of nations answered her desire, and Mary bore the Saviour of the world. A Saviour? From what? From man's selfishness and pride, which breed war and enslavement. From man's divided will, so that through single-hearted allegiance to one Lord he might learn unity within himself, unity with other men. 'My peace I give to you.' Man's utter misery cried to the heart of God: man's meanness drew upon himself God's magnanimity. Man's sterile thoughts were quickened with God's substantial Word: man's hungry will was filled with the Life of God.

But men have filled twenty Christian centuries with other words, with other life: with war and empire, with mastery and wealth. Filled? No, for men have never found total satisfaction in any of these things. And the wretchedness which twenty centuries ago fitted men to receive the total remedy of Christianity is greater still to-day. Who will give that remedy? The Christ-bearers? Those whom baptism has made partakers of God's life? Or some other saviour?

Let us see what has happened in Germany. A people which could not unite even its own divided territory har-

boured dreams of conquest the more grandiose that they were quite unpractical. At last Bismarck, with blood and iron, forged the German empire. In 1914 that empire matched its dreams against the world. And when it failed, it was not the legitimacy of its dreams which it doubted, it was the method by which those ambitions should be achieved. Germany began the post-war period in the paralysing condition of a man who has been caught *in flagrante delicto* but who denies that he has done anything wrong. This moral weakness was accompanied by political and economic conditions (disunion, inflation, unemployment, depression) which reduced millions to near starvation. Of course the German masses did not know that these conditions were largely engineered by other Germans who hoped thereby to drive them to despair and fit them for the totalitarian religion of conquest and revenge. What matters is that in fact pre-Nazi Germany was precisely in that state of material misery and weakness, of moral unrest and despair, which imperatively demands a *total* remedy. A totalitarian saviour.

The Saviour, of course, had come nineteen centuries before. But were Christians so sure of that? Did they bear Christ, as the Apostle enjoins, in their bodies? Did Christians give work to the workless? or bread to the starving? or thought to evolve a system in which human beings need not depend for their existence upon the bears and bulls of moody exchanges? No; Christians appeared either to have no saving doctrines of their own, or to support the new saviour who promised his people total salvation. Hitler would save them from their divided wills, from their lack of faith (they would believe in the eternal Race), from their lack of hope (they would hope in the infinite expansion of the Race), from their selfishness (they would count it a privilege to give their very lives for the Race). He would save them from impurity: he announced a Kingdom of Heaven which brooks no opposition, so people's liberties might be destroyed, antagonists might be

'purged,' Jews might be robbed and tortured and murdered, the whole world might be enslaved.

Hitler has delivered his people from the tyranny of conscience: henceforth the folly which nails God's Wisdom to a Cross is the wisdom whereby a man may raise himself to the place of God. His words reverse the meaning of every human and Christian value: not only is death life, lie truth, but liberty is the right (of Nazis) to enslave others, authority is the right (of Nazis) to use unbridled force, order—that attractive word!—is the justification for Europe's gaping wounds, for the flat ruins of Rotterdam, for the maddened mothers whose children lie shot or starving in their arms. It is indeed a 'New Order,' which depends for its success upon destruction, upon the total exploitation of every human weakness, upon division and suspicion and merciless use of force. Nazism denies the principle of contradiction: wrong is reconciled with right in a religious mystery enshrined in the person of the Leader, a mystery which demands perfect faith, total obedience, which relieves man of his personal responsibility, of his eternal destiny. His soul is surrendered to the total soul of this new 'mystical body.'

Our own weak faith makes it hard for us to believe that men believe in such a faith. But God knows how much men want faith: He brought it to them Himself. And if they cannot have Christianity (because they do not find it in the lives of Christians) they seize the parody—because, like Christianity—it is *total*.

None other than God's spirit can drive out the spirit of destruction which has enthralled the German people. The fate of the world lies in the hands of Christians, of the messengers of God's life. Men are desperately hungry for life. Total hope can answer—and by answering, destroy—totalitarian despair.

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