

IMPACT No. 181

HITLER'S EVOLUTION VERSUS CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE

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In 2016, Paul G. Humber added illustrations.

Nine months after this writer's *The Ascent of Racism* appeared¹ presenting strong evidence that Hitler was an evolutionist, Harvard's Stephen Jay Gould published an article² which provides still more support for the thesis. There he introduces Benjamin Kidd, "an English commentator highly respected by both academic and lay circles." Kidd believed, according to Gould, that in Germany, "Darwin's doctrine became a justification of war" and is quoted by Gould as follows:

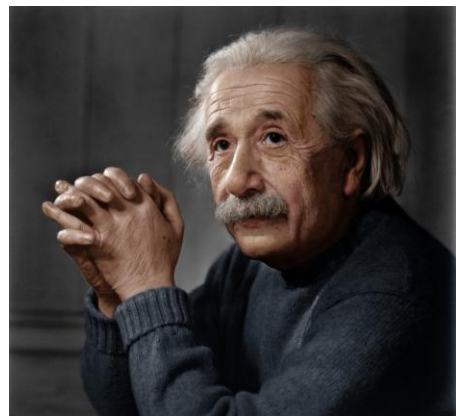
Darwin's theories came to be openly set out in political and military text books as the full justification for war and highly organized schemes of national policy in which the doctrine of force became the doctrine of Right.²

In the light of this association of evolution with Nazism, we seek to see if Hitler's agenda met with Christian opposition. Evidence would suggest that the resistance was in fact substantial.

EINSTEIN'S COMMENTARY:

In *The Church's Confession under Hitler*, author Arthur Cochrane presents the not sufficiently well-known statement of exiled Albert Einstein, the great physicist, cited by Wilhelm Niemoller in *Kampi und Zeugnis der bekennenden Kirche - Struggle and Testimony of the Confessing Church*, p.526.

Being a lover of freedom, when the (Nazi) revolution came, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers, whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks...



Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration for it because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.³

Roland H. Bainton reflects part of this, adding substantiation of its truth:

Some four thousand Protestant ministers, led by Karl Barth and Hans Asmussen, formed the Confessing Church, which at Barmen in 1934 declared that no human *Fuhrer* could stand above the Word of God. The Confessing Church lost its properties, its seminary was suppressed, its journals were prohibited, and when war came the members of its clergy of military age and not in prison were assigned to positions of greatest danger, while the older leaders were sent to concentration camps. Among them was Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran pastor who after more than half a year in solitary confinement was brought to trial under Hitler's law against "treacherous attacks upon state and party." His refusal to capitulate and his persistent resistance to Nazism made him the symbolic figure of the Protestant opposition until the downfall of the Nazis.⁴



Cochrane had magnified the significance of affirming that "by January 15, 1934, there were 7,036 members" of the *pfarrernotbund*, Pastor's Emergency League, which was organized by Martin Niemoller, the courageous Berlin pastor. Cochrane added that in "spite of heavy losses and in spite of the imprisonment of its founder on July 1, 1937, the League was never dissolved or banned, and it rendered service until as late as Christmas, 1944."³

AN OFFICIAL MESSAGE TO HITLER HIMSELF:

In a memorandum³ submitted to Hitler on June 4, 1936, the German Evangelical Church questioned whether the Chancellor was trying "to dechristianize the German people." (Hitler had little place in his heart for a religion that worshipped a Jew.) Of even more significance is the statement:

When, within the compass of the National Socialist view of life, an anti-Semitism is forced on the Christian that binds him to hatred of the Jew, the Christian injunction to love one's neighbor still stands, for him, opposed to it.³

CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE:

One cannot say without presumption that Christians actualized their faith as resolutely as they should have. Pressures were severe. Merely calling Hitler a "scoundrel" in the work place could result in castration,⁵ for example. One does have an obligation, however, to acknowledge and appreciate responsible Christian behavior as it was manifested. Periodically, new evidence of a concerned and caring Christian community comes to light.

The New York Times reported the death of Victor Kugler in 1981 and credited him as the one who "hid Anne Frank" in Holland.⁶ The article describes him as a "Christian" and quotes Charles Wittenberg's words that Kugler "was a man who opened the doors to shelter victims escap(ing) from the Nazi hell at a time when the whole world had closed its doors." But Victor Kugler was far from being alone, and "the whole world" had not closed its doors on the Jews during the Holocaust.



Corrie ten Boom, her sister, brother, and father, all also of Holland, were imprisoned (some died) in Ravensbruck because they too were shielding Jews from Nazi persecution.⁷

There were Christians in Poland whose hearts went out to Jews. Nechama Tec, a professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut, herself a beneficiary for three years of Christian compassion in Poland, has written a book, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*.⁸ Her thesis is that religion played a very important role in motivating Christians to compassion for the Jews.

Jacques Ellul, a Christian, furthered the Resistance in France. When asked if he had helped the Jewish community, he responded:

That is how I began. I tried to help people, especially Jews, who were being pursued by the Germans. I found false papers for them. I also organized local Resistance groups to serve as links with the *maquis*, the guerrilla soldiers in the outlying areas.⁹

There are many fish in the ocean that do not get caught, and it is likely that many who aided the Jews have been overlooked. Jews have established a foundation for "Righteous Christians," headed by Rabbi Harold Schulweis. It is called the Foundation to Sustain the Righteous Christians. Israel apparently has 31 such persons who receive pensions from the National Insurance Foundation. It also allowed Rose Warmer to distribute New Testaments to schools nationally because she "voluntarily went to the infamous Auschwitz death camp during World War"¹⁰

Joseph Bayly told of Dr. Ferenc Kiss, a creationist scientist affiliated with the Plymouth Brethren and a professor at the University of Budapest (Hungary) Medical School, who risked his life and freedom to protect Jews from Nazis.¹¹

WHAT ABOUT AMERICA?

It is lamentable that Americans, including many Christians, were so apathetic and inactive (paralleling the current lack of concern for the unborn). They did not believe, apparently, what William Jennings Bryan, the great American statesman and Christian spokesman, had learned - "that it was Darwinism that was at the basis of that damnable doctrine that might makes right that had spread over Germany."² The Editor of the *Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly* raised at least one voice, however. In 1943, he wrote:

What do these revelations of German atrocities do to you? Are you sick of heart? You should be. Too long have Christians been silent. Our voices of protest should have been heard long before this has happened. We are our brother's keeper and we are duty bound to help the helpless and to pray for them, to feed and clothe them. AND TO DEFEND THEM IF NECESSARY. We are not asking for revenge. We call for the defeat of Hitler and his philosophy. ¹²

CONCLUSION

The world today, for the most part, despises Hitler-Stalin, also. Both rejected the ethics of loving neighbors as set forth in the Bible, and both slaughtered millions. Stalin self-consciously chose Darwin.¹³ Hitler tried to ram survival-of-the-fittest down the world's throat.¹ Entomologist Vernon L. Kellogg, mentioned by Gould, summarized the position held, "That human group which is in the most advanced evolutionary state...should win in the struggle for existence..."²

By way of contrast, Jesus, a Jew, allowed his heart to be broken and His flesh to be torn for the benefit of His enemies. Is it any wonder that a sizable group of Christians, who worship Jesus as God, believe Him to be the Creator, and see each human being as one made in God's image, would find Hitler's philosophy utterly repugnant and seek to follow Jesus by opening their hearts of compassion to save suffering Jews?

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