

“Christ, the Mortal Enemy of Judaism!” (1937)

Abstract

The German Christian movement was founded in 1932 as a pressure group within the Lutheran Church to help promote a nationalist vision of the role of the church and Christianity in Germany. The German Christians argued that the Christian faith needed to be rescued from its Jewish origins and so-called womanly qualities. The many pastors, congregants, and theologians who belonged to this movement argued that Christianity and nationalism were natural allies in the struggle against Judaism in Germany. The German Christians hoped to make the *Volkskirche*, or the People’s Church, the center of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and an embodiment of the *völkische* traditions of the new Nazi state. On July 23, 1933, two-thirds of the Protestant Church elections were won by professed German Christians, thereby assuring the movement a powerful voice in the years to come.

The excerpt below, from the title page of the German Christian periodical *Die Nationalkirche*, shows the arguments the movement made to cleanse Christianity of its “Jewish spirit” [“jüdischer Geist”]. According to the German Christians, Jesus was murdered by Jews and Christianity had been in a constant struggle against the lurking evils of Judaism ever since. Thus, they tied the struggle of the German *Volk* to an ancient Christian one. The German Christians saw themselves as the natural partners of the National Socialists as they embarked on their mission to create a racial community – a sentiment clearly reflected in the opening lines of this article.

Source

For once it must be stated in all clarity: the German Christians are not a compromise between Germanness and Christianity, in that one could take a little bit from each and turn that into a new mixture. Of course, there are quite a few who would be happy if that were so, for then German Christians would have become a harmless affair that one could deal with sooner or later. With growing frequency you can now hear from circles of the Confessing front that one will likely have to grant German Christians the rights of a third denomination alongside the Catholic and Protestant ones. If the National Church movement went along and were content with what the Confessing front seems to offer in its tolerance, the German Christians would, with one stroke, cease to pose a danger for the old churches, for in the end everything would stay the way it is, only that one more splinter group would tear apart the churches and the people. But given the Christian jumble of denominations, would it make any difference whether or not there is one more or one less of these splinter groups?

You would delude yourself if you entertained such hopes! The German Christians are not a new theological or ecclesiastical experiment—today they are already a fact that the church will have to contend with very differently in the future than it has to date. And this fact was born from the work of Adolf Hitler and continues to be shaped in unconditional loyalty and followership to him. Because that is so, the German Christians are right in the middle as fighters in all the struggles that National Socialism is waging; not only do they see themselves as allies or even completers of National Socialism; they are National Socialists. Nothing other than that! But this wholeheartedly and undivided!

And so German Christians also stand in the middle of the main struggle of National Socialism: the struggle against Judaism. In their sphere it is the fight against the Jewish spirit in the teachings and ways of life in the church. That the Jewish spirit threatens and distorts the church from inside is not only a realization of yesterday and today, but knowledge that has awakened German people already since ancient times and called them to battle. The German people’s struggle for liberty against the tutelage

and unification of the church was not a struggle against Christianity as such; rather, it was a struggle against foreign teachings and ways of life and for a genuine German Christianity.

And we know that Christ himself is on our side in this struggle. If today one still tries to place Christ within Judaism and continues to insist on a redemptive history that stretches from Adam via Abraham and the Old Testament all the way to us, one does violence to Christ himself and distorts his message of the Kingdom of God. For that message is the perfect contradiction to Judaism.

This basic fact remains untouchable for all times: the Jews fought against and killed Jesus. Although it was Roman soldiers who erected the cross on which Jesus hung, behind them (typically Jewish: behind them) stood the representatives of the Jewish people as the intellectual originators and driving forces. It was not the degenerate rabble, but the best representatives of the Jewish religion, the guardians of the state and of piety: it was the priests and the scribes and the Pharisees.

Source: "Christus – Der Todfeind des Judentums," in *Die Nationalkirche: Briefe an deutsche Christen*, 1937, Mitteilungsblatt der Deutschen Christen. Produced by Siegfried Leffler. Weimar, 1937. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. Inv.-Nr.: Do 56/1584.15

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