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Box 74, Folder 3, Tillich, Paul, 1976.

BULLETIN OF THE COUNCIL FOR A DEMOCRATIC GERMANY

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NEW YORK CITY

OCTOBER 25TH, 1944

An Important Letter

In answer to an inquiry by Rabbi STEPHEN S. WISE as to the attitude of the members of the Council for A Democratic Germany toward the problem of anti-semitism and the persecution of the Jews, Prof. PAUL TILICH has sent the following reply in the name of the Council. As it involves a matter of such vital importance, we believe that Professor Tilich's letter will be of interest to all our readers.

October 1st, 1944.

Dear Dr. Wise:

As the Chairman of the Council for a Democratic Germany I have discussed your letter of September 14th with some of our Jewish members. They were very much surprised that you have not noticed the fact that practically all have fought a life and death struggle with the Nazi anti-semitism before they became victims of the political and racial persecution in Germany. They did this in a time in which many Jewish communities and especially Jews of the rightist parties did not see any real danger from the Nazi movement and were willing to make compromises with them. Not all

of our members and signers were of course able to protest publicly in this country against the Nazi atrocities. But those who were able to do so did it not once, but in numerable times. I myself spoke after the 9th of November, 1938, at Madison Square to more than 30,000 people of "the day of shame for the German people" as the most aggressive speaker of the whole evening. In all my printed contributions on the world situation I fought against the anti-semitic spirit in Germany and everywhere else. In a similar way acted all members and signers of our Council who are able to write and to speak publicly. And there are many of them.

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Underground, Resistance, Opposition

In his address before the Foreign Policy Association dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said he had "the hope — and even the faith — that in all peoples, without exception, there live some instinct for truth, some attraction toward justice, and some passion for peace — buried as they may be in the German case under a brutal regime."

Six days before the President made his speech, a Czechoslovak correspondent of BBC gave a report from Aachen, which was broadcast in German to Europe. Re-translated into English, it read as follows:

"On my way to the front, I met a procession of evacuated Germans. In none of the countries which the Germans invaded have I heard such maledictions against Hitler and his henchmen as I did here, in Germany. In none of the other countries has the brutal force of the German invaders, in unison with the cruelty of the quislings, thrown the people in such an

abyss of desperation as it did here, in Germany."

The Czechoslovak correspondent added: "Can you imagine that they greeted me, fear still gleaming in their eyes: "We have prayed for your arrival! Why didn't you come sooner?"

The broadcast was recorded by CBS short wave listening station.

* * * *

Paris has set an example again. "Le Populaire", Paris' Socialist newspaper, a copy of which reached this country, reported of a recent homage paid to German anti-Fascist who died in their fight against Nazism.

The people of Paris, it said, made a pilgrimage to the famous cemetery Pere Lachaise and marched along the "Mur des Federés", commemorating the death of all the French fighters who gave their lives for the cause of freedom.

And they also commemorated the death

(Continued on Page Two)

The President on Germany

From the address delivered on October 21st, 1944, by President Roosevelt before the Foreign Policy Association:

"As for Germany, that tragic nation which has sown the wind and is now reaping the whirlwind — we and our Allies are entirely agreed that we shall not bargain with the Nazis conspirators, or leave them a shred of control — open or secret — of the instruments of government.

"We shall not leave them a single element of military power — or of potential military power.

"But I should be false to the very foundations of my religious and political convictions, if I should ever relinquish the hope — and even the faith — that in all peoples, without exception, there live some instinct for truth, and some passion for peace — buried as they may be in the German case under a brutal regime.

"We bring no charge against the German race, as such, for we cannot believe that God has eternally condemned any race of humanity. For we know in our own land how many good men and women of German ancestry have proved loyal, freedom-loving, peace-loving citizens.

"There is going to be stern punishment for all those in Germany directly responsible for this agony of mankind.

"The German people are not going to be enslaved — because the United Nations do not traffic in human slavery. But it will be necessary for them to earn their way back into the fellowship of peace-loving and law-abiding nations. And, in their climb up that steep road, we shall certainly see to it that they are not encumbered by having to carry guns. They will be relieved of that burden — we hope, forever."

6 West 77 St.
New York, N.Y. 10024
Sept. 28, 1976

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 St.
New York, N.Y. 10022

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum,

Thank you for your time and consideration last week. I appreciated your attention and I hope that I lived up to Dean Stendhal's kind remarks. I am afraid that my desire not to appear over anxious may have made me appear a bit too low key. Please know that I would very much like to be a part of the work you are doing and that I feel competent to assist you in other areas than ecumenical relations should you need help with community programs, press and media work, social action issues, and issues like Soviet Jewry.

Since I did not want to glut you with materials I am sending you only two things. One is the brochure for the Doctoral Placement Service for Women in Religious Studies. I designed, lay-out, and wrote the copy for this brochure. Moreover, I set up the communications network which the brochure describes. The second enclosure is a paper which I wrote for Dr. Harvey Cox's seminar on Paul Tillich. I am hoping to get this published in the Tillich journal which Prof. John Carey of Florida State edits.

I hope these materials are satisfactory. If you are still curious about my work, I will be glad to show you more examples of it.

I will be in touch with you after Yom Kippur. Thank you again for your kindness and consideration.

Wishing you peace and a Happy New Year,

Diane Winston

Diane Winston



**PAUL TILlich AS APPLIED THEOLOGIAN :
REFLECTIONS ON JUDAISM**



Diane Winston

Paul Tillich's actions as an applied theologian may best be evaluated in an historical context. Accordingly, this paper will examine his responses to Jewish persecution during World War II. I have chosen to consider this particular period because of its unique theological dimensions. The implications of the Nazis racial policies still influence the Jewish - Christian dialogue and the enormity of the Jewish genocide witnesses to the durability of theological anti-Semitism and the problematic of faith.

The Nazis rise to power changed Tillich's life. To avoid political persecution he left Germany. Like many of his contemporaries, Tillich was horrified as the Nazis curtailed civil liberties and re-fashioned Germany into a fascist state. Anti-Semitism was a minor issue to many Germans and it was not unusual for a German theologian to be anti-Nazi and indifferent to Jewish persecution.

To ascertain Tillich's criticisms of Nazi anti-Semitism after he left Germany, I first looked at Christianity and Society from its beginnings in 1935 as Radical Religion to 1946. I chose Radical Religion knowing that Tillich was an academic colleague and personal friend of the journal's founder, Reinhold Niebuhr. Tillich also sympathized with the editorial staff's desire to forge Christianity and Marxism into a prophetic stance for American politics.

During this ten year span, Tillich has one article on "The Meaning of Anti-Semitism." This is a reprint of an address he delivered at Madison Square Garden on November 21, 1938. Tillich begins by discussing the attack on Christianity and Germany implicit in the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

... I desire in this hour of shame, repentance, protest and re-dedication to speak of the attack on Christianity implied in the attack on the Jews and of the destruction of the German mind and soul which is involved in the destruction of Jewish lives and homes. 1

Throughout the address, Tillich stresses the attack on Christianity and the devastation of the true German spirit. He pleads for the true Germany now gripped by forces of evil and destruction. The rise of these wicked forces is due to circumstantial events: post-war mistakes, bourgeois selfishness, the despair and the impotence of the German masses, and the spiritual weakness of the German clergy and intelligentsia. Tillich bemoans that the cost of the German empire will be the German souls:

For while the persecuted are destroyed physically, the persecutors are destroyed spiritually. 2

German Americans are advised to criticize the new Germany. In fact, such criticism is really loyalty to the true Germany since all true Germans opposed racism and fought for the humanitarian ideals of social justice and human dignity. These Germans were indebted to Jewish teachers, friends, pupils, and disciples. Tillich concludes with a word to his Jewish friends:

It is not idealism but realism which prompts me to voice the consoling assurance that it is not the persecuted but the persecutors who are ultimately destroyed in their minds and in their souls. Therefore we must resist the natural and inevitable temptation to bitterness and vindictive passion. Let us not be cut off from the true Germany which is today under the heel of persecution. 3

Tillich concludes this address with the suggestion that Germans and Jews who have suffered should unite on the shared ground of prophetic religion. From there both groups can begin to build a new community which transcends racial and creedal differences. Ultimately, Tillich hopes, this community will change the world.

This piece is Tillich's only work on anti-Semitism during the 1936-46 period. Neither the Tillich archives nor the Tillich bibliography lists any other extant work on German anti-Semitism or Jewish persecution. Therefore, I shifted my investigative focus from what Tillich was saying at the time to what he was doing. During World War II, Tillich was president of the Council for a Democratic Germany. In this capacity, he assisted German refugees, organized the German expatriate community and helped prepare the way for a new Germany after the fall of the Nazis.

In September 1944, Rabbi Stephen Wise wrote to the bulletin of the CDG to inquire about the attitude of its members toward anti-Semitism and Jewish persecution. Tillich's reply is included in the Appendix.

His reply sounds harsh to me. The speech on "the day of shame for the German people" explicitly bewailed the destruction of Germany rather than the Jewish genocide. Since his other printed contributions attacking anti-Semitism are unavailable, one can only wonder how his opinions changed from the 1938 address and if he ever criticized anti-Semitic policy as bad in and of itself rather than in relation to what it implied for Germany or Christianity.

Thus in evaluating Tillich as an applied theologian reacting to Jewish persecution during World War II, one is stumped by the lack of materials. In all fairness, one must formulate questions rather than answers. Did Tillich ever change his focus from the tragedy of the true Germany's existential devastation to the enormity of the Jewish tragedy? Did Tillich write or speak informally against anti-Semitism? Moreover, how can one evaluate his actions

when in comparison to other Christian theologians his one brief address was an important defense of the Jews ?

Tillich's post-war writings on Jews and Judaism are more numerous. A short discussion of these may help to flesh out Tillich's attitudes.

In a short paper written in 1946, Tillich asks "Can the Jew Return to Germany?" He answers himself by asking to what Germany? His hope is for a socialist state. In this environment synagogues as well as Jewish schools and hospitals would be re-built but there would be no restitution of personal property to the Jews. In closing Tillich wonders whether Germans are anti-Semitic by nature or by nurture.

An undated paper, "The Role of Judaism in Post War Reconstruction" admits to the Germans cruelty toward the Jews but adds "no nation shows more similarities in character and destiny with Judaism than the German."⁴ Tillich is referring to the shared experiences of religious catastrophes within their histories, the lack of balance between historical existence and human attitudes, the sociological split and the psychological wounds which heighten both creative and destructive powers.

The uniqueness of the Jews' present situation requires a unique solution in the world to come. For Tillich, the Jews very existence disproves any sociological reductionism of the importance of the religious element breaking into history. He believes that the Jews are a people of time and history rather than space and nature. In other words, the group lost their space for the sake of time and the future. As a dispersed nation they exemplify for Christians the evils of nationalism and nationalistic gods. However Tillich does admit:

... it would be utter cynicism if somebody who is not subjected to a tragic fate asked those who are in it to remain in it for the sake of an eternal idea. 5

For this reason, Tillich thinks that it is unfair to expect the Jews to live without a homeland for the sake of an intangible mission. However the prophetic spirit must outweigh the nationalistic and separatist elements within this homeland. In effect, Tillich envisions a cultural and religious center for the Jews rather than a political state.

Tillich offers three solutions to the Jewish problem. The first would have Jews in their homeland as reservoirs of their unique spirit, the second suggests that Jewish and Christian cultures merge through inter-marriage and cultural mingling, the third proposal would be for Jews and Christians, united by the prophetic spirit, to fight together for a better world. These three solutions are contradictory but they also are indicative of Tillich's thinking. He believed in an overarching prophetic, humanist spirit which transcends the Jewish-Christian dichotomy but he also understood the need for a Jewish homeland.

A late speech written in 1959, "My Changing Thoughts On Zionism", reconsiders the relation of time and space to religion. Tillich reiterates his post World War I position that the Jews need their own territory. Jews were called out of space to become a nation of time. Their claim to exclusive monotheism is based on their adherence to justice, their struggle to establish a kingdom of justice and their special election. The loss of their land illustrates the power of being grasped by the Holy which supercedes

even the need for space. Losing their land, says Tillich, was also a punishment for rejecting the covenant.

The Jewish remnants are bearers of history who warn the Christians against the "holy injustice of religious nationalism and religious sacramentalism"⁶ but "Christians reacted with injustice against those to whom they were supposed to be mirrors of their own injustice."⁷ Nazism was the culmination of Christian injustice to the Jews and the final proof that the Jews need their own territory. Even so Tillich wonders if the Zionist clamor is opposed to the Jewish destiny as a people of time. Nevertheless he observes that the average Jew cannot be expected to embody prophetic justice. "The attempt to play providence by forcing each Jew into a prophetic situation is a metaphysical injustice."⁸ Realizing this Tillich became a member of the Palestine Committee, an organization of Christians who supported Jewish statement.⁹ Jews need a place to live as any other national group does. Tillich hopes that there will be Jews among the Israelis just as there were Jews among the nations.

This insight on Zionism is courageous and true. Rather than deride individual Jews or the state of Israel for its humanness, Tillich accepts both. He also notes that the Christian attitude to the Jews should be conversational rather than conversional. Tillich's theologizing may be debatable at points. His speculations about the Jews as a nation of time rather than space and his interpretation of the Jewish presence as a warning to Christians are only his readings of history.

Tillich also wrote two articles on Christian anti-Semitism. One is on "Catholicism and Anti-Judaism", and the other is on "Protestantism and Anti-Semitism", neither is dated. In the former essay, Tillich says that Catholic anti-Judaism is the "transsociological antagonism of two historical substances."¹⁰ European anti-Judaism is a manifestation of the struggle by clerical feudal powers

against the liberal world. American anti-Judaism results from studying the New Testament and church texts.

The rise of modern secularism, nationalism and naturalism caused the reconstitution of anti-Judaism into anti-Semitism. Hitler's anti-Semitic laws were the same as Innocent III's anti-Judaism laws. Both men set up ghettos, prohibited inter-marriage, instituted the Jewish badge of shame, and prevented Jews from holding public office. But Innocent III, thinking that their conversion would testify to the sanctity of the Christian mission, also wanted to protect the Jews. Many of his laws segregated them for their own benefit. Hitler, on the other hand, had no use for the Jews and only wanted to get rid of them. Nonetheless, Tillich maintains that Catholic anti-Judaism was the precursor of modern anti-Semitism.

European clerical anti-Semitism seeks to destroy the liberal democratic world in which Jews are equals. In the United States the Catholic Church wants to gain enough power to conquer the majority and become the financial and political backbone of world Catholicism. Thus it is in the Catholics best interest to aid fascism (Tillich notes the Catholic hierarchy's tacit support of Father Coughlin). Tillich concludes that fascist clerical anti-Semitism can be discredited but reactionary clerical anti-Semitism cannot be since it is based on religious anti-Judaism.

In his essay, "Protestantism and Anti-Semitism", Tillich admits that Protestantism, like Catholicism, claims that since the Jews rejected Jesus they lost God's favor and that as Jews they are undeserving of salvation. The main difference between Lutheranism and Catholicism is that the former is not afraid of anti-Semitism as a competitor in totalitarianism claims; therefore, the Lutheran can accept a racist state as long as the state leaves the church alone. Since Lutheranism has no political ethics, it

leaves questions of political justice to the state and insofar as anti-Semitism is political, it is considered a civil matter. Protestant anti-Semitism in America is tempered by sectarianism, evangelicalism, religious tolerance and the stress on religion as a private matter. Tillich proposes the interesting suggestion that anti-Semitism may be a Christian self-accusation or a suppressed hatred of Christ. He ends with the thought that modern secular liberalism places the Jew in a strange position. He is free from attacks by orthodox absolutists and traditional anti-Judaists but he is vulnerable to the pagan fury of modern anti-Semites.

Tillich's essays on anti-Semitism are balanced by his 1952 paper on "Jewish Influences in Contemporary Christian Theology." Judaism, for him, is a permanent and essential corrective to Protestant theology. Jewish scholarship in the fields of Old Testament, church history, and religion and art has enriched Christian understanding of the materials. For example, Martin Buber influenced Barth and Brunner, and he discussed theological concepts equally valid for Protestants and Jews.

Most important, Judaism acts as a bulwark against Christian paganism. Radical Biblical monotheism is a commanding transcendence which shapes Judaism into an ethical and moral religion. The Jewish attachment to ethical imperatives corrects the Christian dependence on sacramentalism. Tillich understands that to the Jews the Law is a gift from God simultaneously liberating and an "eternal divine reality in history."¹¹ Without obedience to the moral law, ritual law is meaningless since the basis of the covenant is justice. Tillich distinguishes between Judaism's eschatological sacraments which underlie the messianic expectation and Christianity's churchly institutions which represent the kingdom of God and the messianic fulfillment. Because Christians believe that the Church is the kingdom of God, their demand for justice is less important than the stress they place on the sacraments. The lack of concern for prophetic

justice made it easy for Protestantism to accept the culture of the host nation and to evolve into a consecrated pagan nationalism. Thus clergy did not criticize the Nazis because "resistance and rebellion were broken down by the amalgam of nation and religion." 12

Insofar as he could transcend his German Christian bias, Paul Tillich brought humanitarian insight to his writings on Jews and Judaism. His glimpses of Jews as ordinary people in need of a homeland are profoundly accurate and touching. On an absolute scale Tillich's protests against anti-Semitism seem weak. His post-war essays are interesting but he seems unable to criticize German anti-Semitism in and of itself. His tendency to sympathize with the persecutors is unsettling in light of the catastrophic dimensions of World War II. Nonetheless he did say something which is more than many of his contemporaries did. One is reminded of the relativity of human behavior and how in a wicked generation those who are just a little bit good seem righteous:

And the Lord said unto Noah: Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 13

Footnotes

- 1 Paul Tillich, "The Meaning of Anti-Semitism," Radical Religion, IV (winter 1938), 34.
- 2 Ibid., 35.
- 3 Ibid., 36.
- 4 Paul Tillich, "The Role of Judaism in Post War Reconstruction," Andover Library, Harvard University, undated, unpublished manuscript, Series D MS Box D5.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Paul Tillich, "My Changing Thoughts on Zionism", 1959, Andover Library, Harvard University, Series D MS Box D5.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Tillich writes that he joined the Palestine Committee so that he could actively support Jewish statehood. His correspondence with them in the archives does not testify to any active support on his part. The Committee solicited his help in 1959, his secretary wrote him a little note to ask if this was the proper time to pull out. Apparently he thought so for there is a copy of the letter she sent back to the Committee saying that Tillich was withdrawing his membership because of failing health.
- 10 Paul Tillich, "Catholicism and Anti-Judaism", Andover Library, Harvard University, undated, Series D MS Box D16.
- 11 Paul Tillich, "Jewish Influences In Contemporary Christian Theology," Crossroads vol.2#3, (spring 1952), 41.
- 12 Ibid., 42
- 13 Genesis 7:1