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Niemoller, Martin, 1946-1947.

Editorial



The setting was perfect. . . . The auditorium filled to over-flowing with people eager to see and hear him; many young persons. The speaker was a man who had been a victim of Nazi Germany; a cleric who had defied Hitler, an inmate of a concentration camp for years. We, too, sat in anticipation.

Soon Pastor Neimoeller appeared. He spoke fluently and easily for three-fourth of an hour, solemnly. Everyone listened. Surely, after several harrowing years in a concentration camp, he would tell us, first hand, of the sinister influence of Hitler and Naziism; the stifling of education, literature and the arts; persecution of the minorities; the cruelty of concentration camps; the vicious fanaticism of her leaders; plea for a denazified Germany; and finally to stress the dignity of the common man.

We heard not a word of indictment of Hitler and Naziism, excepting as related to Hitler's opposition to the Church. True, there were references to the persecuted religious Christians and how this resulted in unifying them. Life in the concentration camp was not bad for him. After a short while, he shared an apartment with 3 priests, for the duration of his detention, with considerable freedom (a contrast to life at Dachau). We saw before us a strong nationalist subtly pleading for a strong, revived Germany.

Here was a rare opportunity to effectively plead the cause of the common man; to point up the consequences of Naziism; to stress the brotherhood of man. This was a leader in Germany, a liberal. . . . We went away, heavy of heart.

El Paso, December 16, 1946

Mrs. Marvin Kane
6101 East Broadway
Tucson, Arizona.

Dear Mrs. Kane,

I am very much obliged to you, that before I started again from Tucson, you let me know that at the mass-meeting last night a great deal of Jewish persons had been present. If I had known that beforehand, I should have liked to say a special word, just to them, as I often do and have done before, when I knew. But I was informed, that in Tucson a meeting was planned of a Christian interdenominational character, and therefore I made my address an example of Christian pronouncement.- Sorry, that what has happened, can't be revoked. But I should appreciate your kind mediation if you would give my greetings to those who felt disappointed, and if you kindly would tell them, that in Germany no single meeting goes by, without my mentioning the duty and obligation, which is laid upon our souls in helping those of our Jewish fellowmen, who have escaped the "gates of hell" during the time of Hitler and his set.-

When for the first time I was robbed of my ministry by Hitler's Reichsbishop Mueller in fall 1933, it happened, because I had written an article in favour of my Christian brethren of Jewish origin, and I did never forget, that ever since there is a special responsibility in my life for the people, from which our Lord was born.

You will kindly excuse my form of writing; but I am not accustomed to this American typewriter, and the train doesn't go too smoothly. Nevertheless I did not want to wait .

With my kind regards I send you my cordial and deep wishes for the work which you are performing for crippled children; may God's blessing guide you.

Most sincerely yours,

Marvin Mueller

STERNBERGER REVERSES POSITION ON NIEMOELLER IN LIGHT OF EVIDENCE

Estelle M. Sternberger at 5:15 P.M. over WLIB (Brooklyn)

January 15, 1947

"Within recent weeks, I have, on two occasions, expressed views in criticism of Pastor Martin Niemoeller, now visiting the United States, under the direction of the World Council of Churches. In my comments, I suggested that we should hardly be expected to view that visit in a spirit of warm friendliness and sympathy, in view of questionable items in the record of the German pastor, as I knew that record. I referred to his submarine service in the Germany navy. My comments also noted the report that the pastor had allegedly been a member of the Nazi Party from which he later withdrew.

"My comments have been challenged by Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches; and by Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, Executive Secretary of the American Committee for the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. I must confess that some heavy artillery went into action on that Niemoeller matter. I am glad they challenged me. None of us wants to perpetuate stories that can be denied by reliable evidence.

"Dr. Leiper informs me that there is no foundation for the report that the German Pastor had ever been a member of the Nazi Party. I have faith in the word of Dr. Leiper, and am ready to accept his assurance on that score. It is clear to me that such an ardent fighter against Nazism, like Dr. Leiper, would not make that assertion until he had carefully sifted the evidence. I have called to the attention of men and women, the report of Dr. Cavert that since his release after VE-Day, Pastor Niemoeller made this declaration, among others, on the subject of the Nazi wholesale murder of the Jewish population in several European countries: And I quote: 'When in the midst of a "Christian" people, 6,000,000 persons are deliberately murdered, only because they belonged to another race, no one can maintain that guilt is not a fearful reality.' End of quotation.

"I have also shown the same individuals this further quotation from an address delivered January 6th, of last year, by Pastor Niemoeller, in Frankfurt, before the representatives of what are known as the Confessing Churches: (And I quote) 'If I meet today a Jew whom I may have known in the past, I, as a Christian, cannot do anything else but say to him "My dear friend, here I am before you, and we cannot find each other because there is guilt between us. I have sinned, and my people have sinned, against your people and yourself. I beg of you, in the name of God, to seize and carry away my guilt so that we may rejoin again.'" The Pastor then went on to tell his audience that they and all Germans owed that confession of guilt to the Jews, if they wanted to choose the way of repentance.

"On several other occasions, the Pastor has made similar remarks. In an address, he delivered last May before faculty and students of Erlangen University, he pointed out that since his return home, he has heard his neighbors complaining about their suffering and hunger. He stated he heard none of his neighbors express sympathy for what happened in Poland or his horror about the depopulation of Russia and the five and one-half million dead Jews.

"After I had read this evidence on the earnest efforts of the German Pastor to arouse the German people to the savagery of the widespread Nazi murders of civilians, this question was put to me: Pastor Niemoeller cannot restore all these millions to life. However noble his present activities, they are too late. What

did he do before World War I., to stop the Nazi racial campaign, that was leading directly toward those eventual mass murders? I put that question to Dr. Leiper. The answer was more evidence--evidence on the attitude of Pastor Niemöeller, during the period preceding 1939.

"First of all, by 1934--just one year after Hitler gained power--the Pastor was put out of his pulpit for his attacks against anti-Semitism. He was called a 'Jew-lover'. Through the influence of his Army friends, he was permitted to resume his preaching. In 1936, the Evangelical Church of Germany addressed a letter to Hitler, which quoted his protests against anti-Semitism and against the general policies of Nazism. Incidentally, that letter to Hitler was published in an American publication in 1936. If you would like to have the exact place of its publication, please drop me a card and I shall send it to you promptly. It is only fair to recall here that the Pastor Niemöeller was placed in the concentration camp in the summer of 1937.

"At all events, I think even the limited evidence I have quoted will be sufficient to convince you that the German Pastor did do whatever he could, to mobilize public opinion against the racial policies of the Nazis. If he could have exerted the necessary authority and influence, and had really expected a Nazi policy as murderous as that finally employed by Hitler and his underlings, he would no doubt have called to civilization to hold Germany in check. It is a guilt that rests on each and everyone of us that we did not hand the signal that came to us through the Nazi butchery of Republican Spain. So many of us insisted on calling it a battle to save the world from Communism, when there was not the slightest chance of Spain going Communist, despite the presence of quite a number of Communists in the Spanish Republic. We had allowed ourselves to be fooled by Hitler, to be frightened by the spectre of Communism and to fail to see the spectre of Hitler's coming barbarism that erased millions of innocent civilians from this earth.

"Finally, Dr. Leiper explains that Niemöeller's request to join the Navy was during the war with Poland. Like other Germans, Niemöeller in the concentration camp had been persuaded to believe Poland had attacked Germany. Moreover, stated Dr. Leiper, his basic motive was to get out of the camp and to resume his activities against Hitler. Dr. Leiper has further assured me that General Eisenhower had expressed his confidence in the German pastor, and expressed the hope that his visit to the United States, will provide him with additional inspiration to do his job for world brotherhood, among the people of Germany. Let us do our end of the job here."



The American Committee for the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10.

GRamercy 5-3475

WORCIL (Cable)

January 31, 1947

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My dear Rabbi Silver:

I have been told that you have joined with Rabbi Stephen Wise and others in attacking our action in bringing Martin Niemöller to this country, and as your friend and colleague in many battles against Nazism and anti-Semitism, I want most earnestly to plead with you to look at certain of the facts which apparently you have ignored.

You have spoken frankly of your misgivings and I want to reply quite as frankly. It was your friends and not your foes who brought Martin Niemöller to this country. Dr. Cavert and I were principally responsible and my office has had charge of his program. Do you think we would bring him here if the things you say are true? I was with him in Germany in 1934 when he was already actively opposed to Hitler. Four times in that period he was bombed. He was called a Jew lover. Jewish friends of mine spoke highly of his courage. He was one of those

who signed the declaration of the Evangelical Churches in 1936. It included this statement: "When blood, race, nationality, and honor are raised to the rank of qualities that guarantee eternity the Evangelical Christian is bound, by the first commandment, to reject the assumption. When the "Aryan" human being is glorified, God's Word bears witness to the sinfulness of all men. 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."

At the same time he was protesting against the camps in which Jews were being imprisoned. These are the words he used: "The Evangelical conscience, that shares the responsibility for the people and the government, is most heavily burdened by the fact that there are still concentration camps in Germany, that describes itself as a country in which justice is administered, and that the measures and actions of the secret State police are exempt from any judicial control."

You will find both these quotations in "International Conciliation" published by the Carnegie Corporation, November 1936- #324, Pages 563, 566.

I am enclosing a document prepared by Dr. Cavert and another note which may be of service to you in acquainting yourself with the reasons why some of us have to dissent so very vigorously from your condemnation of a man to whom we all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for his courage, his outspoken denunciation of the Hitler program, and for the eight years in concentration camp which could have been terminated any day had he been willing to accept the offers made to him for his release.

Yours cordially,

Henry Smith Leiper

Henry Smith Leiper

HSL:LS

THE TRUTH ABOUT PASTOR NIEMOELLER

By Samuel McCrea Cavert
General Secretary, Federal Council of the Churches
of Christ in America

The presence of Pastor Niemöeller in this country is proving a spiritual blessing to the great number of people who are flocking to hear him. They see in him a living symbol of the fact that in Germany itself there was a courageous resistance to Nazism in the name of Christianity. They remember that he spent nearly eight years in Sachsenhausen and Dachau, although he could have been released at any time by agreeing not to attack the Nazi State. They have not forgotten that it was this evangelical pastor who so infuriated Hitler as to make him declare, "It is Niemöeller or I."

In the general chorus of welcome, however, a few captious voices complain that Pastor Niemöeller ought not to receive such a tribute from the American people. Curiously enough, some of these voices in the years between 1936 and 1944 were singing paeans of praise about him as an outstanding defender of freedom against Nazi tyranny.

The important issue, of course, is not their attitude toward him but the truth or error of what they are saying. Their criticisms are based on the following allegations:

- (1) that Niemöeller was once a member of the Nazi party;
- (2) that he had no quarrel with the political objectives of Hitler and was concerned only with a defense of the Church;
- (3) that he has not admitted the moral responsibility of the German people for their treatment either of the Jews or of the peoples of invaded nations.

Each of these allegations is false. Let us look at the record.

1. Was Niemöeller a Nazi?

Pastor Niemöeller, according to his own statement and the testimony of those who have known him long and intimately, was never a member of the Nazi party. No evidence has been brought forward by his critics to support the statement that he once belonged to the party. If there is any such evidence it ought not to be difficult to produce it, since the records of the party are now in the hands of Allied military authorities in Germany. It goes without saying that if General Lucius D. Clay or his office possessed such evidence he would not have given Pastor Niemöeller an exit permit to come to this country. I talked personally with General Clay in Berlin last July about Niemöeller's visit and at no time did he give the slightest intimation that he regarded the pastor as one who had ever been a member of the Nazi party.

It is true, of course, that before the evil genius of the Nazi movement became fully apparent Pastor Niemöeller was hopeful that it would do for Germany what it proclaimed it would do. He even voted for the party in a minor election in the earlier period. This was a time, however, when not even the Americans who had abundant opportunity to view the German situation objectively were yet alert to the menace of Hitler's leadership. In 1933 Niemöeller broke so completely with Nazism that the press and the radio of the world made it a feature story. This, it should be remembered, was five years before Hitler's triumph

at Munich - an achievement which was widely hailed in America and England as meaning "peace in our time."

It is also true that Niemoeller offered his service to the German navy in September 1939. But it must be remembered that at this time he had been interned for two years, most of the time in solitary confinement so had no accurate knowledge either of Hitler's foreign policy or of the international situation. Moreover, as he explained in a published statement, he assumed that there was a strong movement of underground resistance to Hitler among military and naval officers and that by identifying himself with them he could do more to overthrow the Fuehrer than by staying in a concentration camp. In any case, it is not fair to attach more importance to this single incident than to Niemoeller's whole anti-Nazi record.

2. Did Niemoeller Oppose Nazi Political Objectives?

It was the Nazi attempt to force the Church, along with all the other social institutions of Germany, into conformity with its own ends that awakened Martin Niemoeller to a heroic defense of freedom of conscience. But to infer that this meant that he was concerned solely with an ecclesiastical problem is wholly unjustified. The truth is that it was impossible to separate the particular issue of freedom for the Church from the whole issue of freedom for anybody or anything under the totalitarian regime.

This was illustrated in one of the earliest clashes between Niemoeller and Hitler. It had to do with the Nazi racialistic doctrine - more specifically, the so-called "Aryan paragraph", designed to eliminate all those of Jewish descent from any post of leadership anywhere in Germany. Niemoeller repudiated the principle by insisting, in an article in "The Young Church" in 1933, that it was contrary to Christian teaching and so must not be applied in the Church. The effect of this action (for which he was temporarily removed from his Dahlem church) was to call the entire theory of racialism into question.

If documented evidence of Niemoeller's opposition to Nazi political objectives is desired it is immediately at hand in the famous letter of the Evangelical Church to Chancellor Hitler in June 1936. This was widely quoted in the press and published in full in November of the same year by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This letter, which bore the signatures of Niemoeller and nine others, deals not only with the problems of the Church but also with burning issues of national policy. For example:

"When blood, race, nationality, and honor are thus raised to the rank of qualities that guarantee eternity the Evangelical Christian is bound, by the first commandment, to reject the assumption. When the 'Aryan' human being is glorified, God's Word bears witness to the sinfulness of all men. 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."

Again, listen to this, from the same document:

"The Evangelical conscience, that shares the responsibility for the people and the government, is most heavily burdened by the fact

that there are still concentration camps in Germany, that describes itself as a country in which justice is administered, and that the measures and actions of the secret State police are exempt from any judicial control."

In speaking as a Christian against the totalitarian regime Niemöeller was not merely defending the Church but attacking the whole totalitarian philosophy. It is worth while, in this connection, to recall Albert Einstein's testimony. After pointing out that all the other institutions in Germany, like the universities and the press, succumbed to the Nazi pressure, he adds: "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 because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom." For that record Martin Niemöeller - together with one or two others like Cardinal Faulhaber - is chiefly responsible.

The critics who today allege that Pastor Niemöeller did not oppose the political objectives cite the despatches of certain newspaper correspondents who reported an interview with him in Naples in June 1945, just after he had been released from concentration camp. But these despatches gave a gross misinterpretation of his views. When he said, in reply to a question, that he opposed National Socialism for "religious reasons" they jumped to the hasty and unjustified conclusion that he was interested only in Nazi intrusion into ecclesiastical affairs. Fortunately, there is convincing evidence that he meant something very different from what they inferred. Chaplain (Major) David L. Ostergren, who was then in Naples and in daily contact with Niemöeller, talked with him on the afternoon of the same day on which the interview took place, and before Niemöeller knew what the reporters had said. This is Major Ostergren's account of what Pastor Niemöeller told him:

"He said, 'Some people oppose National Socialism for political reasons, some for economic reasons and some for sociological reasons. My reason goes deeper than any of these and includes all of them. For example, National Socialism encouraged socialization of marriage... This violated the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." National Socialism took over property in a way that was none other than stealing. This violated the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." National Socialists murdered cruelly, without cause, the Jews and many others. This violated the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." National Socialism disregarded the rights of the individual, making him only a cog in the machine of the state. This is contrary to one of the basic ideas of Christianity which emphasizes the sacredness of human personality.'"

This makes it completely clear that when Pastor Niemöeller said he opposed Nazism "for religious reasons" he did not mean that he was interested only in the administration of the Church. What he was really saying was that all his standards of judgment were determined by his understanding of the will of God and his Christian interpretation of human life and conduct. This, surely, is the most deeply-rooted ground of opposition to a totalitarian regime and all its institutions that any man could have. As Pastor Niemöeller said in his address at Seattle before the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America on December 4, 1946, summarizing the experience of both Protestants and

Catholics in the fight with Hitler:

"The churches had to bear witness to the validity of God's commandments and of Christian moral standards both for the individual and the social life of the nation. This war could not be avoided and it had to be fought to the end, until either the state renounced its totalitarian claim on the very souls of its subjects or the churches revoked the binding character of God's will for human life."

3. Does Niemoller Confess the Moral Responsibility
of the German People?

During the period since he became free to speak to his fellow-countrymen after his release from Dachau, Martin Niemöller has again and again declared his conviction that the German people as a whole must accept moral responsibility for the terrible evil which Nazism let loose upon the world. These addresses are a matter of public record in Germany. They have gone so far in confessing the guilt of Germany that he has been the target of much criticism in his own country.

In his first address before a representative body of the German Church, in Stuttgart in October, 1945 (on an occasion when I myself was present) he affirmed that it was not enough to blame the Nazis. Christians also, he said, had to confess their share of guilt because they had not spoken out sufficiently, and it was because of their failure that tremendous suffering had been caused through the German occupation of Poland, Holland, Czecho-Slovakia, France, Norway, Greece and other countries.

Similarly, in an address at Frankfurt on January 6, 1946, before representatives of the Confessional Church he gave expression to his sense of responsibility for the treatment of the Jews by the German people.

"If I meet today a Jew whom I may have known in the past, I, as a Christian, cannot do anything else but say to him, 'My dear Friend, here I am before you and we cannot find each other because there is guilt between us. I have sinned and my people have sinned against your people and yourself. I beg you, in the name of God, to seize and carry away my guilt so that we may rejoin again.'"

In the same vein he said in an address in Berlin on October 27, 1946:

"So far, we have not taken seriously the conceptions of guilt and atonement. We were dreaming when we thought guilt belonged to the past. When, however, in the midst of a Christian people 6,000,000 persons are deliberately murdered only because they belonged to another race, no one can maintain that the guilt is not a fearful reality."

When Niemöller appeared before the faculty and students of Erlanger University on May 22, 1946, his central theme was the "mountain of accumulated guilt" of the German people. He said, in part:

"Today we must ask ourselves: 'Do we want to repeat our mistakes of 1918? Do we want to trust again in the old ideals?' It looks today as if there was quite a tendency in this direction. Some say: 'The ideals of Nazism were not all bad. And we can build upon what is left

to us, the good conscience of the man who is convinced that he only did his duty, the pride of the honest soldier who followed the call of his country.' For those who believe that, it is very hard to admit that they fought for falsehood and indeed a criminal cause. And if one tells them that everything they believe in was fraud, it creates a terrible situation for a man who thought he was doing something...And yet the sickness that grew into such a crime as the world had never seen before - this sickness started in our nation and nowhere else.

"We Christians must face this guilt and confess it. If we do not face it, it will remain. Remember, 30 to 40 million died as the result of our actions - and nobody in Germany seems ready to confess guilt. Adolf Hitler and Himmler got away, but they left us the guilt. And even after a thousand years this guilt will still remain unless we face it. We must start anew and we must begin by saying: 'We are guilty and deserve punishment.'"

Surely this record is such as to justify the conviction that those who are eager to see a Germany freed from the totalitarian philosophy have a great ally in Pastor Martin Niemöller.



PLAY FAIR WITH NIEMOELLER!

What DO the people of the United States owe Pastor Martin Niemoeller, who is now lecturing in this country? More than most of us realize. The least we can give him is a fair hearing, although some would deny him that. When Niemoeller arrived in this land to address the Federal Council of Churches, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "I cannot quite see why we should be asked to listen to his lectures." The Federal Council could see why. It replied that this minister of the Evangelical Church in Germany had earned the right to address the court of American public opinion. If he had not earned it in eight years spent in the Dachau and Sachsenhausen concentration camps, then the council invited consideration of his earlier anti-nazi record. "As early as 1933 he was forbidden to preach as a result of his speaking against Hitler's racialistic program," it said.

I

The American people are indebted to Pastor Niemoeller for taking his stand against tyranny with such fortitude that he became to millions in all lands the symbol of courage in the fight for freedom. Why not repay to Hitler's most famous prisoner a little of the debt we owe to many hundred thousand resolute Germans and citizens of other nations who bore the brunt of the first costly resistance to the nazis? The people who staged this often solitary and unorganized opposition are nearly all dead. We cannot express our gratitude to them, but we can do so to the survivors, including this church leader. A year ago he voluntarily returned to Dachau for the first time since he left after having been a prisoner there for five years. As he stood before the sign erected by the American army: "In this crematorium 238,756 human beings were cremated since 1938," he pledged that he would speak in behalf of the voices that are now silent and preach repentance for the crime that had sealed their lips forever. This he has done and is doing. We should at least be ready to listen.

Religion in America owes these things and more to Pastor Niemoeller. The Jews had a share in making him what he became and have good reason to appreciate what he tried to do. The Dahlem pastor was first disciplined by the nazis for writing an article for the August 1933 issue of the Young Church attacking Hitler's treatment of the Jews. Now that the war is over he has struck again and again at the surviving roots of anti-Semitism. Last October he declared in Berlin: "When in the midst of a Christian people 6,000,000 persons are deliberately murdered only because they belonged to another race, no one can maintain that ~~that~~ guilt is not a fearful reality." Roman Catholicism, three of whose priests shared a cell with Niemoeller in Dachau, also has ground for gratitude to this man. In concentration camp ancient differences fell away as Protestant and Catholic sustained each other in the cause for which they suffered together, while thousands of other Christians were doing the same outside the barbed wire.

The debt of Protestant Christianity to our visitor from Germany is one which could be measured only if one knew the number of times, while he sat in the silence of prison, that the story of his struggle to preserve

the integrity of the church was told from pulpits in this land. It is clear that few men have done more than Niemoeller to demonstrate that the fellowship of the ecumenical church grows stronger when it becomes a fellowship of suffering. The fact that he remained behind the barbed wire for eight years when he could have been released at any time on his promise not to attack the nazi state is one for which Protestants of all countries can be grateful. It invests the positions he holds today, as vice-president of the Evangelical Church in charge of its relations with Christians in other lands and as its representative on the World Council of Churches, with a power of conviction which strengthens ecumenical Christianity everywhere.

II

Pastor Niemoeller's visit to America offers the Christian community the opportunity to broaden its understanding of the issues faced by Protestantism in the land where the Reformation began. It also lays on us the obligation to tell the truth in reply to the false charges which continue to be repeated against this evangelical minister. One of these is that he opposed the nazis only because they sought to dominate the church. The accusation arises from his answer to a question posed by a heckling reporter in the famous mass interview which he gave in Naples soon after his release by American soldiers in the spring of 1945. His answer was simply that he resisted the nazis for religious reasons. Without inquiring what he meant by "religious reasons," hostile reporters jumped to the conclusion that he objected only to nazi interference with ecclesiastical administration. Chaplain David L. Ostergren, who talked frequently with Niemoeller before and after this interview, disposed of the charge in a letter which was first printed in the Lutheran and was quoted in The Christian Century for September 12, 1945. It bears recalling now:

I asked Pastor Niemoeller what his objection was to National Socialism. He answered that he opposed National Socialism for "religious reasons." I then asked him what he meant by this. He said, "Some people oppose National Socialism for political reasons, some for economic reasons and some for sociological reasons. My reason goes deeper than any of these and includes all of them. For example, National Socialism encouraged socialization of marriage. . . . This violated the commandment, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' National Socialism took over property in a way that was none other than stealing. This violated the commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal.' National Socialists murdered cruelly, without cause, the Jews and many others. This violated the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"National Socialism disregarded the rights of the individual, making him only a cog in the machine of the state. This is contrary to one of the basic ideas of Christianity which emphasizes the sacredness of human personality. In the beginning we hoped the evils of nazism would be corrected. However, as time went on they became more and more oppressive. It got so that every time I spoke I thought this would be the last. They must have been afraid to arrest me at first because of all my friends. Later they said that I was a Jew-lover and dangerous to the state. My underground activities were discovered. I was arrested and sent to the concentration camp."

Chaplain Ostergren, who served nearly four years in the United States army, came to the conclusion that "here is a man who would rather suffer solitary confinement and possible death than to betray a principle. To call him a nazi at heart, or even to imply that he had or has a sympathetic attitude toward National Socialism, is not only unfair; it is cruel." An American officer who was present at the mass interview said to Chaplain Ostergren in Naples: "It was a shame the way the reporters heckled Pastor Niemoeller. They shot questions at the man right and left and finally got him all mixed up. It was the most unfair interview any man could be given."

III

In connection with this claim it is worth remembering that two charges made a year ago by the so-called Writers War Board have been dropped. They charged that Niemoeller was a member of the nazi party and that the German general staff planned to build Niemoeller up, if Hitler was overthrown, as a future leader of Germany. Neither of these accusations was ever supported by proof, although they could easily have been documented if they had any foundation in fact because party membership rolls and general staff plans have all been uncovered by the armies of occupation. It is significant that the American army, which has all these records, permitted Pastor Niemoeller to come to America. It would hardly have done that if the charge that he was a nazi were true. These charges were out from whole cloth by persons who had their own motives for seeking to discredit the German minister.

What were these motives? It is necessary to examine them, because they explain why charges which have repeatedly been disproved are made again and again. Some persons seek to discredit Niemoeller because they hold the opinion that the time has not yet come when it is safe for the American people to be permitted to know that many thousands of Germans fought tyranny as courageously as did the citizens of any other country. Niemoeller's presence here, they say, undermines the tough attitude toward Germany which must be maintained if the hard terms of the Potsdam agreement are to be carried out. So long as thousands of victims of German aggression still suffer in camps for displaced persons and elsewhere, Niemoeller's detractors reason, it is better for Americans not to be given grounds for changing the nazi stereotype which they still place on everything German.

The answer to this view is that the only way we can possibly liquidate the effects of nazism is to discriminate between Germans who understand and sympathize with democratic aims and those who do not. During the war we promised we would do that in broadcasts heard by Germans who risked their lives to listen to the Allied radio. We pledged food and freedom to those who would aid in Hitler's overthrow. That pledge should be kept far better than it has been kept to date. Now the approach of formal negotiations on the terms of a German settlement warns us that the time has come when, if ever, we should recognize the existence of Germans who still believe in democracy and give them a chance to be heard.

Another motive for the attack on Niemoeller is hatred of Christianity. Active opposition to permitting any of its exponents to rise to positions of influence has developed in both Germany and Japan. In this respect the

attacks on Niemoeller and on Kagawa run a close parallel. Occurring in nations where the former leadership is discredited and a new leadership is emerging, the campaigns against these men are conducted by persons who know that the basic conceptions of the Christian faith are inimical to their own purposes. Some of the criticism of Niemoeller in this country comes from secular-minded radicals who are ideologically committed to systems of materialism which proclaim themselves rivals of Christianity. Such criticism must be forced into the open where its real purpose can be seen for what it is.

A third motive for objections to Niemoeller's presence in the United States is the apprehension of some churches and a few persons of German descent or affiliation that their own status may be brought into question if the German pastor becomes the object of a sustained attack. This fearful and selfish attitude is fortunately limited to a small circle, and it should be dismissed as beneath contempt. To refuse to give a man a hearing or to deny him sponsorship because of fear that such an act would bring disfavor or criticism is plain cowardice. It is a long way removed from the courage of Luther, who took his position on Christian principle and declared: "Here I stand, God helping me. I can do no other." From Luther to Niemoeller that spirit has spoken through German Christianity. Where it speaks, and only there, men are really free.

This discussion of the motives which underlie criticism of Pastor Niemoeller should not be misunderstood. It is not an attempt to reply to widespread vilification, for that does not exist. The general attitude toward our visitor is remarkably friendly, and in the churches friendship is suffused with the warmth of ecumenical Christian fellowship. That fellowship speaks its own language, which is well understood in the churches and by our visitor. To the American people as a whole it makes a simple request, to which they may be depended upon to respond. It is: Play fair with Niemoeller!

Pastor Niemoeller's visit to the United States, on invitation from the churches through the Federal Council, provides the clearest possible proof that the ecumenical principle is a living force in American Christianity. Wherever he appears, the churches witness to a community which the war did not divide, to a faith which nationalism has not undermined, to a love which the massed hatreds of this time have not destroyed. Attacks on him only serve to reveal the difference between the standards of the church and the ideologies of the society in which the church carries on its ministry. That ministry is still one of reconciliation. Niemoeller is an ambassador of reconciliation for the ecumenical church.

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THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY
by The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America
and the
American Committee for the World Council of Churches
297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10

Excerpts from Addresses

by Pastor Niemoeller

1. From an address on January 6, 1946 in Frankfort before representatives of the Confessing Churches:

"We cannot find peace in God if we do not confess our guilt to the men against whom we have become guilty. There is no possible confession of our guilt before God if we do not confess it, at the same time to the men against whom we are guilty. The Prodigal Son does not retire in solitude but goes to His Father and says: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against thee'. There is no escape without this confession and that means, if I meet today a Jew whom I may have known in the past, I, as a Christian, cannot do anything else but say to him, 'My dear Friend, here I am before you and we cannot find each other because there is guilt between us. I have sinned and my people have sinned against your people and yourself. I beg you, in the name of God, to seize and carry away thy guilt so that we may rejoin again'. We owe this confession of guilt to these Brethren, if we want really to choose the way of repentance, if we want to clear the way of which God comes to us with His forgiving love, through His Son whom God has sent for the forgiveness of our guilt....."

2. From a report of an address in Stuttgart on October 17, 1945, as reported by Dr. W.A. Visser't Hooft (Dutch), General Secretary of the World Council of Churches:

"The next speaker was Pastor Niemoeller who spoke with remarkable force. He read a passage from Jeremiah 14 and said that this lament was now the daily bread of Christians in Germany. Even in the Church it was not yet sufficiently understood that the last twelve years had been a visitation from God. It was not enough to blame the Nazis. The Church also had to confess its guilt. Would the Nazis have been able to do what they had done if Church members had been wholly faithful? A Gestapo man had asked him--and it had been a great joy to him to hear it--'Why have the churches in all these years of war not prayed for victory?' But the Church had not spoken out sufficiently and that could not be repaired. It was not only because of the Nazis, but also because of the failure of Christians that such tremendous suffering had been caused through the German occupation in Poland, Holland, Czechoslovakia, France, Norway, Greece and other countries. Repentance would have to express itself in willingness to bear each other's burden. One hope left was that a new day could be prepared by men who had the love of Christ in their hearts."

3. From an address in Berlin on October 27, 1946, as reported by an Associated Press dispatch in the New York Times:

"So far, we have not taken seriously the conceptions of guilt and atonement. We were dreaming when we thought guilt belonged to the past. When, however, in the midst of a Christian people 6,000,000 persons are deliberately murdered only because they belonged to another race, no one can maintain that the guilt is not a fearful reality."

4. From an address in May 1946, as printed in The Christian World (London) of May 30, 1946:

"There is now a mountain of accumulated guilt which we may not be able to remove in thousands of years. We have had the concentration camps since 1933, and the Communists became the first victims. We have the innumerable graves of the feeble-minded and the insane. In 1933 the persecution of the Jews by the Government began. Five to six million urns with the ashes of European Jews bear witness to it. We have the mass graves in Poland and Russia, the graves of killed hostages in Norway and Holland. And lastly those transports of misery and death, when concentration camps were transferred..... hundreds of thousands of human beings perished in them. In Dachau the arrival of 2,400 men was announced, but only 400 were still alive when they came. In Dachau a memorial has been put up showing that, from 1938 onwards, 238,756 human beings were burnt alive there. Whoever reads that will know what sin is, and will know that man is not good.. Confessing the guilt is something which weighs more heavily on us than just admitting the guilt to ourselves. That I am guilty, I believe and see; but confessing that guilt openly requires a strength and a will to truth which we find much difficulty in mustering; but it has to be. Otherwise that mountain of guilt will not become less."

5. From an address before the faculty and students of Eriangen University as printed in The Lutheran, May 22, 1946:

"Today we must ask ourselves: 'Do we want to repeat our mistakes of 1918? Do we want to trust again in the old ideals?' It looks today as if there was quite a tendency in this direction. Some say: 'The ideals of Nazism were not all bad. And we can build upon what is left to us, the good conscience of the man who is convinced that he only did his duty, the pride of the honest soldier who followed the call of his country.' For those who believe that, it is very hard to admit that they fought for falsehood and indeed a criminal cause. And if one tells them that everything they believe in was fraud, it creates a terrible situation for a man who thought he was doing something."

5. (continued)

It is understandable that the pride of an honest human being resents this talk that the German people are all criminals. And a German must ask: 'Is that really true? Are the others so much better than we are? Are we so much worse than the others? And - are these others able to teach us decency and morality?' So they asked then, and so they ask today. And their answer is No. And yet the sickness that grew into such a crime as the world had never seen before - this sickness started in our nation and nowhere else.

But then some say: 'We must not talk about this German guilt. We may confess it before God but not before men. For if we do that the men will say: 'You admit in yourselves that you are guilty. Don't complain if you are now being punished.' But that does not free us from the responsibility to confess our guilt before God and men. Without such confession there is a no forgiveness and no new beginning.

But the demand of Christ goes even further. 'Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.'

I met a Jew who had lost everything: Parents and brothers and sisters. Of the entire family, he alone was left. I could not do anything else; I had to say: 'Dear Jewish man and brother, before you say anything I have to tell you that I confess myself guilty and ask you to forgive me and my people our guilt.' Only in this manner can we open the way for our message and a new life.

We ought to know what it means that five and one-half million Jews were murdered. He who is not a Christian sees the suffering of humanity, but he does not feel responsible. But we Christians can't say that we know always that there was something wrong about this whole matter, indeed it was criminal. Talking like that does not justify us. Just because we saw more clearly our guilt is also greater. It is an open question whether the SS hangmen are more guilty before God than we who were silent when we should have spoken. It may be that our guilt weighs heavier because we knew the message of repentance and faith. We should have had a more sensitive conscience, but we also made life an idol.

We Christians must face this guilt and confess it. If we do not face it, it will remain. Remember, 30 to 40 million died as the result of our actions-and nobody in Germany seems ready to confess guilt. Adolf Hitler and Himmler got away, but they left us the guilt. And even after a thousand years this guilt will still remain unless we face it. We must start anew and we must begin by saying: "We are guilty and deserve punishment."

If we say that, the message of Christ may again be heard among our people and also among other nations. We Christians in Germany became guilty through the blindness and weakness of our love. We are guilty.

It is one of the most terrible experiences for one coming home and speaking to neighbors and listening to sermons and speeches, to hear much complaining and lamenting but little of our guilt. There is much talk about our suffering and our hunger but I did not hear anybody who expressed his sympathy for what happened in Poland or his horror about the depopulation of Russia and the five and one-half million dead Jews.

But you ask: 'Are the others not guilty?' Sure they are. There can be no doubt. But the sickness started among us. Here it found its worst expression. A Christian is not supposed to look first for the sins of others; he must first study his own sins. We may leave it to God to decide what shall become of the others. But we must not wait with our own confession of guilt until the others confess theirs. That will not work. That would only mean that we would push this guilt around until we would finally blame it on the devil."



The First Baptist Church

Fairmount Boulevard at Eaton Road

Cleveland, Ohio

MINISTERS

HAROLD COOKE PHILLIPS
FRANCIS CHASE WHEATON

January 31, 1947

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Ansel and E. 105
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Abba Hillel:

I noticed a report in the paper a day or so ago saying that you are opposed to Niemoeller's coming because he said nothing in opposition to Hitler's treatment of the Jews in Germany.

I wonder whether you have seen the article in the Christian Century of January 15, 1947. It's hard to square your statement, if that is your statement, with the facts as stated in this article, the authenticity of which I have no reason to doubt. For instance, here is one statement of Niemoeller's: "When in the midst of a Christian people six million persons are deliberately murdered only because they belong to another race, no one can maintain that that guilt is not a fearful reality." And here is another statement describing the reason for his arrest. He said, "They (the Nazis) must have been afraid to arrest me at first because of all my friends. Later they said that I was a Jew-lover and dangerous to the state."

I just thought I would pass this on to you because I know you are interested in the truth and I could not quite square this article with your statement in opposition to Niemoeller's coming.

I was very sorry to have to miss your paper on Monday. The Pastors' State Conference in Columbus made it necessary for me to be out of town.

Ever sincerely yours,

Harold

HCP:D

Grace E. Meyette

2196 Ambleside Drive

Cleveland, Ohio

COPY

February 3, 1947

Judge Julius Kovachy
The Cleveland Church Federation
Hippodrome Building
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Judge Kovachy:

The action of the Federal Council of Churches and the Cleveland Church Federation in inviting Pastor Niemoeller to this community can have only one good purpose, mainly the promotion of the fellowship of man. This action provides for Pastor Niemoeller, a German citizen, the acceptance and cooperation of American citizens before the treaties have been completed, an experience he never could have realized in any other country. This must sustain and strengthen him in his future work of changing the spirit of the German church members. I feel, however, that the Cleveland Church Federation's enthusiasm to share Cleveland's liberal community spirit with Pastor Niemoeller has endangered this very spirit.

The Cleveland Church Federation violates the tradition not only in hailing Pastor Niemoeller as a prophet and hero of anti-nazism but in inviting the whole community to participate in this occasion. I know that this unrestrained invitation has

Dear Abba:

For people with sore
hearts, I think you
& I did pretty well
in the use, ^{of} the gentle
answer, yes?

I think of you often &
would have been in
your congregation if
had health permitted,
that's where I wanted to
be.

I am but one of your
good friends who wish
you well -
Yours

aroused bitterness and suspicion among large groups who are willing to suffer discomfort and even some embarrassment in silence in the interest of maintaining free speech. Is it not too much to ask the mourners of the real heroes, prophets and victims of Naziism to publicly honor the Cleveland Church Federation's repenting symbol of the German people?

I hope the Cleveland Church Federation, which in the past has contributed so much to the liberal tradition of Cleveland, will find some way to overcome the suspicion and bitterness aroused by its very good intention.

Sincerely yours,

WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Grace E. Meyette
(Formerly Director of the
League for Human Rights)

gem/aja

P. S. This letter to you was prepared on Saturday, but unfortunately I did not have a typist available so that it could have been mailed before the meeting on Sunday which was my intention.

Feb. 3 - 1947.

Rabbi A. H. Silver

Dear Sir:

It is disgusting to
read all this hate-talk
from the Rabbis who
seem to have learned
nothing from the last
war of hate, where
millions of young & old

you Teaching the Hitler
method of Hate?

What are you doing
for the next Generation?

Are you Teaching them
Love or Hate? Will

you throw the coals
of Hate on the fire of
Bigotry & Intolerance?

✓
were slaughtered because
of the old fools in
this world who preached
hated either Jewish
Hated or Christian hated
and for which the innocent
died.

Are you supposed to
Preach Love and Love
your neighbor? or are

Are you and other stupid
 people going to start
 a race hatred and
 national hatred campaign
 for the next generation
 to furnish with Bullets?

As you can see you
 are not the only old fogey
 who is stirring up hatred
 Mr. Arthur Langman
 Student New School 66 W 12 St NYC.

RABBI NORMAN GERSTENFELD
WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FEBRUARY 3, 1947

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER
THE TEMPLE
CLEVELAND, 6, OHIO

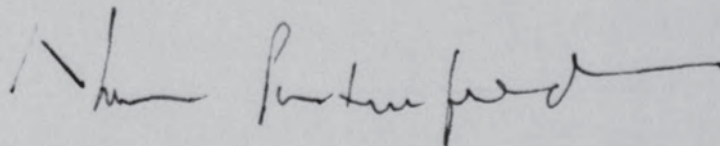
MY DEAR DOCTOR SILVER,

I HAVE JUST READ YOUR BULLETIN STATING YOUR THEME "PASTOR NIEMOELLER WHO DID NOT OPPOSE THE NAZIS." NEXT WEEK THE PASTOR IS SCHEDULED TO SPEAK FOR THE LOCAL FEDERATION AT CONSTITUTION HALL AND MY WEEKLY BROADCAST WILL FOLLOW. I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY A FEW THINGS IN CONDEMNATION OF HIS COMING AND WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE A COPY OF YOUR MESSAGE BY RETURN MAIL, IF IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TROUBLE FOR YOUR OFFICE, TO GUIDE ME IN PREPARING MY SCRIPT. THE LOCAL FEDERATION HAS NOT RESPONDED SYMPATHETICALLY TO SUGGESTION THAT I BE INVITED TO SPEAK ON THE SAME PLATFORM THAT WOULD PERMIT NIEMOELLER TO MAKE EVEN A GESTURE OF PENITENCE. THE PRESS AND RADIO WILL BE AT MY DISPOSAL AND I WOULD LIKE TO SAY SOME STRAIGHT THINGS, AS I HAVE TRIED IN THE PAST TWELVE YEARS.

MAY I ALSO TROUBLE YOU FOR THE INFORMATION AS TO THE TIME MEETING IN CLEVELAND. I NOTICED THAT FOR A RELIGIOUS MESSAGE THEY TURNED TO THE CATHOLIC SPOKESMAN OF FRANCO AND TO A PROTESTANT MINISTER. DID A RABBI PARTICIPATE? OR DID THEY ASSUME THAT THIS IS A CHRISTIAN NATION AND WE WERE "GUESTS"? I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE FACTS, IF IT IS NOT PUTTING YOU TO TOO MUCH TROUBLE.

I AM, WITH GOOD WISHES TO YOU IN YOUR BATTLE FOR THE RIGHT,

SINCERELY,



CALVARY EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Woodhill Road and Shaker Boulevard

CLEVELAND 4, OHIO

Victor Peterson, Minister
2763 Woodhill Road
Phone: CEdar 5186

Bentley Kennard
Treasurer
9605 Talbot Ave.

Alma E. Hanneld
Parish Worker
Phone: CEdar 0463

Winona Guscott
Church Secy.

February 3, 1947

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Ansel Road at 105th Street
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I am one of the Christian ministers of Cleveland who over the years has made a deliberate attempt to counter-act anti-Semitism, and build among the people of my parish understanding and good-will toward the Jews. Today I am asking the question, "Why do some Jews insist on making my task so difficult?"

Your sermon condemning Pastor Niemoeller of Dahlem has given the cause of Anti-Semitism a serious blow. Of course his record is not perfect, and he is the first one to admit it. But he was arrested and imprisoned because of a pamphlet he wrote on Anti-Semitism. For you as a leading rabbi of this city to use your entire sermon to speak against him at the very time when he was a guest in our city is simply exasperating to us who are truly concerned about Jewish-Christian relations.

I shall continue to love Jews and to battle against Anti-Semitism, but until my people forget this week-end, the going will be tough.

Sincerely yours,

Victor Peterson

Rev. A. J. Moncol

(CONGREGATIONAL)

PASTOR EMERITUS

3395 WEST 127TH STREET
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Feb. 4, 1947.

Dear Rabbi Silver:-

I agree fully with your attitude towards pastor Niemöller. I might say that all the Slavic peoples of Europe feel that way. It seems to me the American press is doing a false propaganda against Russia as to cover up all the horrible atrocities committed by the Germans on the Jews and the Slavs. The same thing was done after the First war. New York bankers were sending and giving money to German militarists and at the same time German and Hungarian reactionaries were coming here, speaking and begging for sympathy or against the "sins of Vareseialles". It was nothing but a false propaganda. And as Drew Pearson sometimes remarked that some bankers are beginning to ^{do} the same thing-to build a strong Germany against Russia or the Slavs and Jews.

Again I congratulate you for your courage to tell the truth in regard to Pastor Niemöller.

Sincerely yours,

A. J. Moncol

Church Phone:
Florida 7667

Residence Phone:
Florida 4817

Trinity Church

Evangelical and Reformed

3525 West 25th Street

Cleveland 9, Ohio

E. G. Wiest - Pastor
3608 Spokane Ave.

John Kuentz - Pres.
Verna Bartels - Sec.

February 5, 1947

Rabbi A. H. Silver,
Ansel Rd. & E. 105th St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver,

As one who admires your keen mind and generous spirit, I address this message to you.

Your writings and addresses have been stirring, prophetic, significant. Along with you I deplore the spirit of anti-Semitism wherever and whenever it may manifest itself.

In my small humble way, I am trying to influence my congregation of more than twelve hundred persons to rise above differences of race, creed, and class.

Your statements criticizing Dr. Martin Niemöller for his failure to protest against the Nazi persecution of the Jews have done your cause a great deal of harm. Many thinking people of my acquaintance have been shocked at your treatment of Dr. Niemöller. I hope you met him and heard him, as thousands of us did. He appears to be a man without hatred, bitterness, or self pity, but full of courage and conviction. He publicly confessed, as we must all confess, that he did not do enough to combat "Nazism" and all the cruelty that word implies.

But Dr. Niemöller suffered persecution, imprisonment, and affliction - yes, was willing to die.

Until I have done as much, I cannot condemn. Until I am willing to repent and offer forgiveness, I am not worthy.

My hope is that you will make it possible for our anti-Semitic efforts to bear fruit.

Let us encourage one another in love.

I certainly rejoice in the freedom of speech we enjoy. You enjoyed the right of saying what you feel and believe. Was it wise, necessary, or helpful to say what you did and when, relative to Pastor Niemöller?

Fraternally yours,

Elam G. Wiest

EGW/VB

Columbus, Ohio,
14 No. Oakley Ave.,
6 February 1947.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Rabbi Silver:

Subject: Your article
on the Rev. Niemöller
as published Feb. 3; Plain Dealer.

I was much interested in the article taken from your analyses of the Rev. Niemöller for, to my mind, it is a very fine critique. His criticism against the Nazis was based on his own pure, selfish, dull, narrow, concept of Christianity, and when he was not agreed with them Hitler became a bad man. If he ever attempted to have any race & religion discriminatory laws in Germany done away with we never heard of it here.

I often wonder if Nazism didn't partly start in this country. While a college student in the early to middle twenties I paid but little serious attention to race & religion bigotry, thinking it merely a few misguided youths seeking issues in college politics, but when I went to New York City to work I found it in big, the then largest, corporation. A man being paid nearly five thousand dollars per year, in a semi-public corporation, tried hard to "sell me" (over)

on race & religion ligatny by such statements
as "The don't live Hebrews" and "This is a
Protestant, Christian, organization". He was a
native of Baltimore, bragged about his ability
as a psychologist, and his fifty thousand
dollars life insurance. I worked there begining
1926, and got fired the end of 1928, when I
failed to respond to his ideas. Thinking me a
good prospect for his plans, I was flattered a
great deal by him the first year, promised a
very good position, but when I failed to respond
he began scheming to just "lose me out" as
a "green maintain hick". He fired me, then on
top of that falsified my record to read "left of
own accord". A co-worker, whose family was
half Roman Catholic, got fired before I did, and
he falsified his record too, to read as mine.
He was supposed to be a director of a Brooklyn
Y.M.C.A. too, but apparently hated Jews, and
Catholics a little less.

I took another job in 1929, and found the
same thing by a Christian, except Catholics were
his first hatred; Jews next. I suffered so
much from frustration that I began loosing
sleep in 1928, all through 1929, and after so
long in this condition I was put in an insane
hospital for a year. I was diagnosed "hopeless"
and have never had a regular, permanent, position
since 1930, due to the seriousness of my condition.
My health was seriously damaged directly by this company.
Yours truly, E. C. Crowell.

February 7, 1947

Rev. Charles W. Hamilton, Minister
The Emmanuel Methodist Church
139 East Center Street
Berea, Ohio

My dear Rev. Hamilton:

Permit me to thank you for your letter which is a bit chippy and ill-tempered. Nevertheless, I am pleased to send you a copy of the address on Pastor Niemoeller which I delivered last Sunday and which was taken down stenographically. It may perhaps correct some of your hasty impressions.

It is a far greater service to Martin Niemoeller and to his people to represent him as he is -- both his strength and his weakness -- rather than to beguile them with an inadequate vision and an impartial truth.

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

February 7, 1947

Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, Executive Secretary
American Committee for World Council of Churches
297 Fourth Avenue
New York 10, N.Y.

My dear Dr. Leiper:

Permit me to thank you for your kind letter of
January 31 and for your thoughtfulness in writing to me.

In my address at The Temple last Sunday I did not attack
your action in bringing Pastor Niemöller to this country, nor
did I condemn him. I am taking the liberty of enclosing herewith
a copy of the address which was taken down stenographically, as
are all my addresses at The Temple. I believe that you will find
it a fair appraisal. I had before me the circular of Dr. Cavert,
and as you see from my address, I quoted from it. I also had
before me quite a number of other articles which had appeared in
the Christian Century as well as other source material to which
I refer in the address. It is, in my humble judgment, a greater
service to Pastor Niemöller and to Germany to paint him as he
is rather than to represent him in a way which does not correspond
to all the essential facts in the situation.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordially yours,

Enc. ahs;bk

February 7, 1947

Rev. E. G. Wiest, Pastor
Trinity Church
3608 Spokane Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio

My dear Rev. Wiest:

Thank you for your kind letter of February 5 and for your thoughtfulness in writing to me. I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the address on Niemoeller which I delivered at The Temple. I believe that you will find it "without hatred and bitterness" and without condemnation.

I believe that it is a greater service to Pastor Niemoeller and to his people to represent him truthfully -- both his strength and his weakness -- rather than to build up a legend of a man which does not correspond to the essential facts, and which cannot help either him or his country.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordially yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

February 7, 1947

Rev. Victor Peterson
Calvary Evangelical Church
2763 Woodhill Road
Cleveland, Ohio

My dear Rev. Peterson:

Permit me to thank you for your letter of February 3. I regret that I cannot agree with you when you state that I used my entire sermon to speak against Pastor Niemoeller. I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the address which was taken down stenographically. I think that you will find it a rather fair appraisal. I believe that it is a greater service to Martin Niemoeller and to the German people to present him as he is rather than in terms not corresponding to all the essential facts.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

*Returned twice
address not good*

The Temple

EAST 105TH STREET AT ANSEL ROAD

TELEPHONES GARFIELD 0150-0151

Cleveland

JULIUS J. NODOL
ASSISTANT RABBI

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D. D.
RABBI

HARRY A. LEVY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

February 7, 1947

Mr. Arthur Lanquin
66 W. 12th St.
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Lankin:

In reply to your rather intemperate letter, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the address on Niemoeller which I delivered at The Temple. I trust that you will read it, and in so doing, I am sure that you will be persuaded that there was no "hate talk" in it.

With best wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

AHS:BK
Enc.

February 7, 1947

Mr. Arthur Lanquin
66 W. 12th St.
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Lanquin:

In reply to your rather intemperate letter, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the address on Niemoeller which I delivered at The Temple. I trust that you will read it, and in so doing, I am sure that you will be persuaded that there was no "hate talk" in it.

With best wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

February 8, 1947

Rev. Stanley J. Dahlman
Covenant Congregational Church
7411 Decker Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Mr. Dahlman:

I told Dr. Silver that you had called. He would have been very happy to see you except that he was again scheduled to leave the city and will be gone for a few days.

The address which Dr. Silver delivered on the occasion of Pastor Niemoeller's visit to Cleveland has been mimeographed and I am therefore pleased to send you a copy of it.

With best wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

BJK

Secretary to Dr. Silver



THE REVEREND WALTER GERHARD BOSS
GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

13001 CEDAR ROAD
CLEVELAND HEIGHTS 18, OHIO

February 12, 1947

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Ansel Road and East 105th Street
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver,

It was a matter of great Christian concern to me when you spoke to your congregation on the second of February on the subject of Pastor Niemoeller. The quotations from your address in the Cleveland Plain Dealer the following day indicated an unfamiliarity with the facts in the case. Pastor Niemoeller was most certainly opposed to Hitler and the ruthless persecution of the Jewish people. Facts and documents to prove this are available. (The Cleveland Church Federation has this material on file). As an unbiased searcher for the truth, you should have attended the public meeting in which Pastor Niemoeller spoke as well as the meeting with the clergy on Monday morning. Your absence from both of these meetings was construed by many to be an indication of unwillingness to learn the truth.

I regret that you made the address on Niemoeller above all, because it provoked much anti-Semitism. Any consistent Christian believer is opposed to anti-Semitism. I personally have preached against it time and time again. But your address, interpreted as anti-Gentilism by some of our people, makes our work difficult indeed.

A public and plain statement from you that you erred in the Niemoeller case would be a splendid and gracious gesture and would undo much harm.

Sincerely yours,

Walter G. Boss

February 13, 1947

The Rev. Walter Gerhard Boss
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
13001 Cedar Road
Cleveland Heights 18, Ohio

My dear Rev. Boss:

Permit me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of February 12. Since you base your conclusions on the quotations which appeared in the public press, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the address which I delivered at The Temple and which was taken down stenographically. I had read the documents and facts to which you refer before I delivered the address. I do not, as a matter of practise, jump to conclusions.

It cannot be helped if the speaking of truth incites prejudices in certain minds. It is the task of spiritual leadership to inform their people and to try to disabuse them of erroneous impressions.

It is a greater service to Pastor Niemoeller and to his people to tell the whole truth rather than through a process of selection build up a legend which does not correspond entirely to the recorded facts.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



THE MEMORIAL CHURCH

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
BOARD OF PREACHERS

CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

February 19, 1947

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Rabbi Silver:

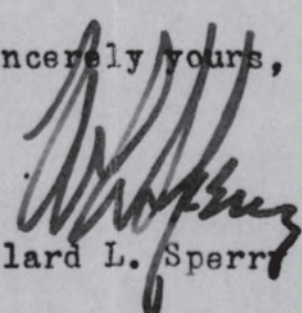
I was sorry that another appointment kept me away from Harvard when you were here. I do hope, however, that you had a happy day not merely at the Church, but also visiting in Lowell House.

Dean Washburn sent me the most glowing report, both of your reading of the dramatic story of the Old Testament and of your sermon.

The latest visitor we have had here at the Church is Pastor Niemoeller. I have been a little puzzled to see your name lumped with that of Mrs. Roosevelt criticizing the man and the propriety of his visit here. I am more perplexed because another report in the public press from a source which I normally trust says that Niemoeller first got into difficulties in Berlin because of his outspoken position in regard to anti-Semitism. I should be interested to know why you think it is a mistake for the churches to bring him over here.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,


Willard L. Sperry

February 21, 1947

Dean Willard L. Sperry
The Memorial Church
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Mass.

My dear Dean Sperry:

I was very happy to receive your letter of
February 19.

With reference to Pastor Niemoeller - I am
enclosing herewith the sermon which I preached at
The Temple and which was taken down stenographically.
I did not criticize Niemoeller. I merely called attention
to his record and cautioned against building this man into
a legend when there was so much in his past and I am afraid
present thinking not to qualify him for the title of prophet
or great spiritual leader.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordially yours,

AHS:BK
Enc.

[February 7, 1947]

The Emmanuel Methodist Church
South Campus
Berea, Ohio

CHARLES W. HAMILTON
MINISTER

139 EAST CENTER STREET
PHONE: BERE A 5503

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Rabbi,

What a disappointment you have been to some of us in the attitude which you took toward Martin Niemöller. I read that you were even unwilling to attend the Sunday meeting because of your dislike of him.

Be assured that some of us try to keep open minds and are constantly trying to understand others. That is the reason I have had "Religion in a Changing World" by Silver on my shelves for years and am now reading "Peace of Mind" by Liebman. I am tempted to just let Silver's book STAY on the shelf but no- I'll read it and drop around and listen to you once in a while.

Best wishes to you as you extend good will throughout the world.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Hamilton

NIEMOELLER ADDRESS SENT TO

Dr. Bernard C. Clausen
Euclid Ave. Baptist Church
1926 E. 18th St.

Muss Grace E. Meyette
2196 Ambleside

Rev. Stanley J. Dahlman
Covenant Cong. Church
7411 Decker Ave.

Dr. Norman Gerstenfeld
Washington Hebrew Cong.
822 - 8th St.
Washington, D.C.

Rabbi A. L. Feinberg
Holy Blossom Temple
Bathurst St. 'Ava Rd.
Toronto, Canada

Rt. Rev. Beverley D. Tucker
Episcopal Diocese of Ohio
2241 Prospect Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dr. Oscar T. Olson
1919 E. 107th St.

Dr. Harold C. Phillips
First Baptist Church

The On. Judge Julius Kovachy
Hippodrome Building - Cleve. Church Fed.
Cleveland, Ohio

Rev. E. G. Wiest
Trinity Church
3608 Spokane Ave.
Cleveland

Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, Ex. Sec'y
Am. Comm. for World Council of Churches
297 Fourth Ave.
New York 10, N.Y.

Rev. Victor Peterson
Calvary Evangelical Church
2763 Woodhill Rd.
Cleveland

Mr. Arthur Lanquin
66 W. 12th St.
New York, N.Y.

*- Student
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Rev. Charles W. Hamilton
Emmanuel Methodist Church
139 E. Center St.
Berea, Ohio

*Dr. Silworth Lupton
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