

# KARL BARTH'S SERMON FOR ADVENT 2, 1933 INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In his study of the anti-Semitism pervading the minds and moral sense of the German population that made possible the destruction of European Jews under the Nazis, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen writes,

Karl Barth, the great theologian, leader of the Protestant Confessing Church, and bitter opponent of Nazism, was also an anti-Semite. As the 1930s progressed, he became for theological reasons a defender of the Jews, despite his own deep-seated anti-Semitism, which had moved him, in his Advent sermon of 1933, to denounce the Jews as "an obstinate and evil people".<sup>1</sup>

From that short paragraph, an endnote refers to a book by an author named Schoeps<sup>2</sup> and also to Barth's admission in a letter of 1967 that "in personal encounters with living Jews (even Jewish Christians!) I have always, so long as I can remember, had to suppress a totally irrational aversion".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996) 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Leiden an Deutschland*, 58. I have not found further details in Goldhagen.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Barth, letter to Dr. Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, 5 September 1967, in Karl Barth, *Gesamtausgabe (= GA) V. Br 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975) 419-22, S. 420-21; *ET Letters 1961-1968*, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981) 261-63, p. 262. Barth wrote rather more vaguely, "so etwas wie eine völlig irrationale Aversion",

Goldhagen also uses as epigraphs to Part I,<sup>4</sup> among three brief statements, two from Barth in the following forms:

How is it possible that our ears, the ears of Christians, do not ring in the presence of the ... misery and malice [suffered by Jews]?<sup>5</sup>

We do not like Jews as a rule, it is therefore not easy for us to apply to them as well the general love for humankind.<sup>6</sup>

Later, Goldhagen writes,<sup>7</sup>

No serious historian would dispute the anti-Nazi theologian Karl Barth's verdict contained in his parting letter before leaving Germany in 1935: "For the millions that suffer unjustly, the Confessing Church does not yet have a heart" (quoted in Gerlach).<sup>8</sup>

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"something like a totally irrational aversion", and continued: "– naturally on the basis of all my presuppositions knew to suppress it at once and to conceal it completely in what I expressed, but yet did have to suppress and conceal it. To this so to speak allergic reaction of mine, I can only say, 'Fie!'. The complete edition of Barth's works is organised in six sections, of which e.g. I. contains sermons, and V., correspondence. Volumes are arranged in each section by the dates of their material and cited by appropriate abbreviations, among which *Br* (*Briefe*) means "Letters", *Brw* (*Briefwechsel*), "Correspondence", and *Pr* (*Predigten*), "Sermons".

<sup>4</sup> Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> "It may then be possible for someone not to hear any of the unspeakable misery, brought about by the anti-Semitic plague, that is right now crying to heaven in all German lands. But how is it possible that the ears of us Christians do not ring in the face of what this need and evil *objectively* mean? What would we be, what are we, then, without Israel?" (Karl Barth, "Die Kirche und die politische Frage von heute" [1938], in Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938-1945* [2d. ed.; Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948] 69-107, S. 90).

<sup>6</sup> "The Jewish question is the question of Christ. [...] And the fact that we do not exactly like the Jews, as a rule, so that it is not at all so easy for us to apply to them, too, the universal love for humankind, cannot alter [the fact] either that precisely they are the people of the Christ" (Karl Barth, "Verheißung und Verantwortung der christlichen Gemeinde im heutigen Zeitgeschehen" [1944], in Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme*, 307-33, S. 318).

<sup>7</sup> Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 437.

<sup>8</sup> "For millions who suffer injustice, it does not yet have a heart" (Karl Barth, Letter to Pastor D. Hermann Albert Hesse, 30 June 1935, in Barth *GA V. Off Br 1909-1935*, [ed. Dieter Koch; Zürich: TVZ, 2001] 336-53, S. 349). This volume of the *Gesamtaufgabe* contains open letters, *offene Briefe*.

Goldhagen is, at least in part, quoting Barth from secondary sources. Some quotations are supposed to show that Barth shared in the anti-Semitism endemic in the German population. Others serve as a witness against the indifference of German and Swiss churches to Jewish suffering. Put together, they do not give a coherent or fair picture of Barth's attitude and actions with regard to the Jews of Germany between 1933 and 1945. Their use partly reflects the considerable misunderstanding and misrepresentation to which he has been subjected. Publications of Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt's in the 1960's ought to have helped others on to the right track.<sup>9</sup> Eberhard Busch would later seem to have done all that was needed to set the picture straight.<sup>10</sup> But effects of the distortions Busch exposes still persist, and perhaps particularly in the English-speaking world, where authors do not always get sufficiently into the relevant works to be able to check out the negative information still coming to them second or third hand.

For that reason, it would be helpful to look more carefully at the sermon of 1933 in which Barth is supposed to have "denounced" the Jews. This present article introduces a translation of the sermon. Following ones will offer an appreciation and a discussion of it. Now, before the sermon itself, we note its historical setting.

The abdication of the *Kaiser* and all ruling princes in November 1918 left the German Evangelical (Protestant) churches in a precarious position.<sup>11</sup> In each territory, the prince had been head of the church, and its administration and finances, linked with those of the state. Left-wing parties in national and state parliaments contained strong anti-church elements. In the event, the new national constitution accorded

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<sup>9</sup> Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, "Wendungen im Verständnis Israels", in ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ (ed. Eberhard Busch, Jürgen Fangmeier and Max Geiger; Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1966) 617-38; *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie: Israel im Denken Karl Barths* (Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog 1; Munich: Kaiser, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Eberhard Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes: Karl Barth und die Juden 1933-1945* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996); "The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews during the Hitler Era", tr. James Seyler & Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, ed. Darrell L. Guder, *SJT* 52 (1999) 476-503.

<sup>11</sup> For this and following paragraphs, see Karl Kupisch, *Die deutschen Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte 4: 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1966) S. 98-103; Klaus Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*. Bd 1: *Vorgeschichte und Zeit der Illusionen, 1918-1934* (Frankfurt: Ullstein [Propyläen], 1977) 3-12, 19-22, 26-64, 153-59; ET *The Churches and the Third Reich*, vol. 1: *Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions* (London: SCM, 1987) 3-10, 15-18, 21-51, 122-26.

churches the status of public corporations; and the various state churches negotiated settlements that enabled them to raise taxes from church members in conjunction with state taxation systems. The polities the newly independent Evangelical churches developed, while including synods with a proportion of elected representatives, tended to be weighted in favour of ecclesiastical administrators. From the point of view of the leadership, the outcome of those developments called for self-congratulation, but some saw in that a serious failure to perceive the true nature of Christ's Church.

The earlier tie between church and monarchy, together with the expectation that "powers that be" ordained by God would provide strong and strict government, meant that few Evangelical pastors or officials felt much rapport with the new republic or the coalitions that ruled it. They largely accepted its God-giveness, but were alienated by the form it took. The majority favoured conservative nationalist parties. The Catholic Centre Party scarcely came into question; those of the Left were seen as opposed to the churches; but the Evangelical population did give much stronger support to the Social Democrats than Catholics did and, as Kupisch notes, voted strongly for democratic parties in the important elections for the National Assembly in 1919.<sup>12</sup>

The Evangelical churches were Lutheran, Reformed or United. There were many more Lutherans than Reformed, but most Evangelicals were in United state churches, in the majority of which individual congregations and pastors maintained the Lutheran or the Reformed tradition. Reformed congregations and churches practised the presbyterial-synodical system of government by councils of pastors and elders; and it had been maintained in the higher levels of the united churches of the Rhineland and Westfalia, as those states, too, were incorporated into Prussia. Some Lutherans, on the other hand, favoured a revival of the office of bishop; and bishops came to head some Lutheran churches. There was a growing feeling that the 28 separate state churches should be united into one Evangelical church for the *Reich*, rather than loosely confederated. For many, that would, while allowing a place for the Reformed minority, have to be a Lutheran church, for they held Luther to have given authentically German expression to the Christian faith; and some contemplated a Lutheran *Reichsbischof* as head of the national church.<sup>13</sup>

Defeat in the War had been extremely difficult for Germans to comprehend – or even to recognize. How could so much dedication and self-sacrifice be rewarded with

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<sup>12</sup> Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, S. 100-101; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 22; *Churches*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> On the idea of one united Evangelical Church for the German *Reich*, see Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 355-57; *Churches*, 280-81.

total failure and the loss of so much of the social and moral fabric of the nation? With the *Kaiser* gone and the *Reich* turned into a western-style democracy, it was difficult to centre loyalty on the State; and the people itself, the *Volk*, assumed fundamental importance. Lutheran theologians discovered in it an "order of Creation", divine gift and divine demand in equal measure.<sup>14</sup> In the prevailing bitterness and perplexity, an existing anti-Semitic element was able to sell the notion that Germany had been betrayed by a Jewish conspiracy and was being exploited by Jews in various spheres. Nationalism thus became fused with racism. Hitler had made a biologically conceived anti-Semitism a core element in the National Socialist Party's ideology and program and circumstances provided it with a fertile field.

Depression, unemployment and the increasing political violence practised and provoked by National Socialist storm troopers destabilised the Republic and allowed the Nazis to emerge as the strongest party, with more than a third of the seats in the *Reichstag*, the national parliament, by 1933.<sup>15</sup> Support for the Communists, too, had doubled between 1928 and 1932; and anti-democratic parties thus held over half the total seats. From 1930, Germany was governed by a conservative cabinet upheld, not by a parliamentary majority, but by the reserve powers of von Hindenburg, the President directly elected by popular vote. Particularly because of the Bolshevik regime in Russia, the Communists were generally seen as the real threat to the nation. In order to benefit from the support enjoyed by the Nazis, the then chancellor, von Papen, suggested that the President invite Hitler to form a coalition government as Chancellor. He did so on 30 January 1933. The storm troopers celebrated with torch-light processions and behaved from then on with increasing impudence and brutality. Seeking to gain an outright majority, Hitler called new election for 5 March. In the night of 27 February, the *Reichstag* building was set on fire. It now seems that the Nazis were themselves responsible, but they presented it as part of a Communist plot and Hitler got the President to issue an ordinance suspending constitutional rights and giving the authorities emergency powers. Armed with those, the Nazis effectively shut down the Communist Party and put increased pressure on other opponents.

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<sup>14</sup> Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, 130-31; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 124-50; *Churches*, 99-119.

<sup>15</sup> For this and the following paragraph see Walther Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1933-1945 herausgegeben, eingeleitet und dargestellt* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1957) 12-18, 42-47, 50-61, 268-70, 282-84; Michael Stürmer, "Das industrielle Deutschland", in Hartmut Bockmann, Heinz Schilling, Hagen Schulze and Michael Stürmer, *Mitten in Europa. Deutsche Geschichte* (Berlin: Siedler, 1984) 289-409, S. 325-44; Richard Overy, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 1996) 8-13, 16-17, 20-21, 36-37.

They still failed to gain a majority in the March elections, but thereafter won the support of the Centre and other parties, with the honourable exception of the Social Democrats, for an act to enable the government to rule without parliament. In that way, Hitler established his dictatorship on a “legal” basis.

German Jews were from the start exposed to the menace expressed in the Nazis’ racist propaganda and to haphazard acts of harassment, all greatly exacerbated by Hitler’s rise to power. Others whose conservative, liberal or left-wing views distanced them from the Nazi movement were also increasingly under threat. Many were arrested and detained in concentration camps. The Nazis suggested a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy against Germany and claimed just to have forestalled it. They reacted to early criticism abroad of unjust treatment of German Jews by organising a national boycott of Jewish businesses on 1 April 1933, represented as a spontaneous upsurge of popular feeling against horror stories spread by Jews. A law for the restoration of the public service was enacted on 7 April, with compulsory retirement of officials of Jewish descent (the so-called *Arierparagraph*) or who were seen as politically unreliable. On the insistence of the President, Jews were exempted, if they or their fathers had served creditably in the War. On 22 June, the Social Democrat Party was banned and, on 14 July, a further law declared the National Socialist Party the only political party in Germany and provided prison terms for any who sought to maintain other parties or form new ones.

The great majority of Evangelical church people had welcomed the initial coalition government under Hitler because it seemed to bring about a united front of central and nationalist parties under the Protestant President Hindenburg.<sup>16</sup> But the National Socialist movement itself also found some support in all churches. Hitler presented himself as a God-fearing person and expressed uncompromising opposition to Marxist atheism. He acted with firmness and authority, so that people could feel that powers ordained of God were properly in control. His program claimed to offer a path to moral and spiritual renewal and re-awakened a sense of national destiny, particularly for the young, and for church youth, too. During and after the War, a few theologians had been advocating a new approach to theology on the basis of complete identification with one’s people and full participation in its fate and destiny: One could only validly speak of God, if one accepted one’s own God-given place in the *Volk* and in what was happening for it.<sup>17</sup> From 1933 on, for an increasing number of others, too, German

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<sup>16</sup> For reactions in the Evangelical churches, see Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 277-99; *Churches*, 219-36.

<sup>17</sup> Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, 130-32; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 212-15; *Churches*, 168-70.

theology had to commence with affirmation of God's action in giving the German people Adolf Hitler as its leader.

In some, this involved a combination of theological and philosophical subtlety and political naivety, but also theological blind-spots that made such a combination possible. There were others whose enthusiasm for the Nazi movement went much deeper than their understanding of Christian faith and theology. Movements arose known as "German Christians".<sup>18</sup> In Thuringia, the Church Movement of German Christians sought to cultivate a new German spirituality in a renewed national church. Elsewhere, the Faith Movement of German Christians was formed as a party of National Socialist Evangelicals to contest elections for the Prussian and other synods. It emphasized mission, with the goal of winning the German people back to the Christian faith, and proposed that the way to do that was by getting the Evangelical churches fully to identify with the National Socialist program: By participating in the political movement, Christians would purify it and ensure that it helped to bring the nation back to faith in God and back into Church life. The leadership of the German Christians came, above all, from the generation that had fought in the War. It could readily believe that much of the old order needed to be overthrown in the churches, too, and brought a revolutionary spirit into Church politics.

Karl Barth was German-Swiss and Reformed.<sup>19</sup> He had studied in Germany and felt close bonds with former teachers and fellow students from the Liberal wing. From 1909 to 1911, he was assistant minister of the German-speaking Reformed congregation in Geneva and then, until 1921, pastor in Safenwil, a country town in the Swiss Aargau. Concern for the conditions of local workers involved him in industrial relations and the Christian Socialist movement.<sup>20</sup> Increasingly, he felt a disjunction between the theology he had brought with him and the responsibility of preaching to the

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<sup>18</sup> See K. Hutten, "Deutsch-christliche Bewegungen", in *RGG*<sup>3</sup>, Bd 2 (1958) Sp. 104-107; Wolfgang Tilgner, *Volksnomostheologie und Schöpfungsglaube: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1966) 218-32; Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, 132-38; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 245-74; *Churches*, 194-216; Kurt Nowak, "Deutsche Christen", in *EKL*<sup>3</sup>, Bd 1 (1986) Sp. 825-27.

<sup>19</sup> The major reference for what follows is Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth's Lebenslauf nach seinen Briefen und autobiographischen Texten* (Munich: Kaiser, 1975); ET *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (tr. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1976). See also Karl Kupisch, *Karl Barth in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten dargestellt* (Rowohlts Monographien 174; Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1971, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Barth's reminiscences in conversation with Wuppertal students 1968, in *GA IV. Gespr 1964-1968*, ed. Eberhard Busch (Zürich: TVZ, 1997) S. 505-506.

people each Sunday. At the outbreak of war in 1914, he was shocked by the full and uncritical support given by professors and church people he respected to the official German line and the call to arms. It was not that he particularly favoured the other side, but he considered that Christian faith should enable a degree of critical detachment. (He was also dismayed at the way in which Socialists of different countries swung in behind national governments in support of war.) Barth's relation to Liberal theology could no longer be the same. He found his own way ahead through the preparation of weekly sermons and related studies, concentrating on Paul's letter to the Romans. In time, he drew back from the Christian Socialist movement, but joined the Swiss Social Democrat party in 1915. It was as if, once he was seriously engaging in theology as theology, he felt free also to engage in politics as politics. He published a commentary on Romans in 1918/19, with a revised edition in 1921 attracting much attention. As a result of the first edition, Barth was offered a professorship for Reformed theology in Göttingen. From there, he was called to chairs of Systematic Theology in Münster (1925) and Bonn (1930). He still preached occasionally, often in University services, with over 30 sermons between 1921 and 1933.

As a German University professor and official of the state of Prussia, Barth sought to identify with the German people. He became a German citizen in 1926, while also retaining Swiss citizenship. He was greatly concerned at the extremely negative attitudes shown by the majority of German church leaders and academics to the young democracy of the Weimar Republic. He deplored the way their right-wing nationalism inclined them to reject policies that lay within the bounds of the possible. In May 1931, he joined the German Social Democrats, not in affirmation of their ideology, but in support of the one party capable of acting constructively and realistically.

Once the Nazis were in power, the German Christians began to press for more say in Church government and specifically for the formation of a *Reichskirche*.<sup>21</sup> Wishing to diminish disturbance in the churches, Hitler, a Catholic, appointed as his representative in Protestant affairs one Ludwig Müller, a military chaplain he had once met. A committee of the confederation of state churches hastened to approve a form of constitution for a national church and nominated the respected leader of the great caritative institution in Bethel, Fritz von Bodelschwingh, to be *Reichsbischof*. When Bodelschwingh was elected and summarily assumed office, Müller reacted sharply, supported by the German Christians, who had adopted him as their patron.

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<sup>21</sup> For this paragraph, Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, 134-37; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 357-69, 391-94, 411-24, 426, 441-46, 453-57, 560-70; *Churches*, 281-91, 308-309, 324-35, 336, 348-52, 357-60, 441-49.



The Nazi government seized the opportunity presented by dissension and resignations in the Church to appoint August Jäger as commissioner in place of the Prussian Church's supreme council. Jäger acted quite destructively, suspending many officials and installing radical German Christians into positions of leadership. A new constitution was approved for the Church; and the *Reich* government called general elections for the state synods. That put the decision in the hands of the vast nominal membership. Nazi officials, storm troopers and Hitler himself lent support to the German Christian party, which won majorities in church after church and then began to deprive minorities of a voice in government to an unprecedented extent. By early September, Ludwig Müller was Bishop of Prussia and president of its supreme council. Legislation was passed in parallel to what had been enacted for the State to exclude Jews from positions in the Prussian church's ministry or administration.<sup>22</sup> Other state churches had already passed similar measures or would soon do so. At the end of September, the national synod met and appointed Müller *Reichsbischof*.

But then, just when the German Christians seemed to be having it all their own way, a crisis erupted, possibly brought on by the restraint shown by Müller and his

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<sup>22</sup> "The General Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union has resolved on the following church law: § 1: (1) Only those may be called as clergy or officials of the general church administration who have received the education prescribed for their respective careers and support without reserve the national state and the German Evangelical Church. (2) Those not of Aryan descent or married to persons not of Aryan descent may not be called as clergy or officials of the general church administration. Clergy and officials of Aryan descent who marry persons not of Aryan descent are to be dismissed. Who is to count as a person of non-Aryan descent is determined in accordance with the provisions of the law of the *Reich*. [...] § 3: (1) Clergy and officials who by their previous activities do not offer assurance that they will support the national state and the German Evangelical Church without reserve at all times can be retired. (2) Clergy and officials of non-Aryan descent or married to a person of non-Aryan descent are to be retired. (3) Section (2) need not be applied where there have been special contributions to the building up of the Church in the German spirit. (4) The prescriptions of Section (2) do not apply to clergy or officials who have already been clergy or officials of the Church, the *Reich*, a state or another corporation of the public law since 1 August 1914 or who served in the World War at the front for the German *Reich* or its allies or whose fathers or sons lost their lives in the World War" (Extract from the church law on the legal situation of clergy and church officials of 5 and 6 September 1933, in *Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte in Quellen: Ein Arbeitsbuch* [2d. ed.; ed. Heiko A. Oberman, Adolf Martin Ritter and Hans-Walter Krumwiede, vol. IV, 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986] S. 128-29; also quoted in the opinion of the Marburg faculty in *Junge Kirche* [= *JK*] 1 [1933] S. 166-67 and note 1).

subordinates as they sought to quieten down dissension.<sup>23</sup> For radical German Christians, the impetus had been lost and the revolution in the Church had led to nothing but high offices for a few of their leaders. A mass rally was held in the Berlin Sport Palace on 13 November 1933, where Dr Reinhold Krause held a rousing speech calling for the Church to be purged of all Jewish elements. Not only the Old Testament was to go, but also Paul and other aspects of the New. Resolutions carried “by 19,999 votes” spoke of the goal of “the religious renewal of our people and the completion of the German Reformation out of the spirit of National Socialism”. They demanded immediate and strict application of the *Arierparagraph* to the Prussian church’s ministry and bureaucracy, the gathering of all Church members of non-German blood into separate congregations of their own kinds, the establishment of a Jewish Christian church, and the freeing of the German Church from everything “un-German” in its worship and confession, especially from the Old Testament and its “Jewish ethics of reward”, together with the proclamation of a simple Gospel, “cleansed of all Oriental distortions”, and of a “heroic Jesus-figure as the basis of a Christianity corresponding to the German national character”. The final clause read:

We confess that the only real divine service for us is service to the fellow members of our people and feel that our God lays on us as a combat community the obligation to contribute to the building up of an able-bodied and genuine church of the people (*einer wehrhaften und wahrhaften völkischen Kirche*), in which we perceive the completion of the German Reformation of Martin Luther and which will alone do justice to the totalitarian claim of the National Socialist state.<sup>24</sup>

Public statement of such an extreme position shocked many into withdrawing support from the German Christian movement. Müller gave up his own position as its patron and dismissed some of those implicated in the Sport Palace affair from leading positions in the Church. The Faith Movement of German Christians thereupon lost its momentum; but most of those it had helped into office remained there.

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<sup>23</sup> For this paragraph, Kupisch, *Landeskirchen*, 137-38; Scholder, *Kirchen*, 1: 701-706, 711-29; *Churches*, 550-54, 558-72.

<sup>24</sup> “Entschließung der Deutschen Christen”, in *JK* 1 (1933) 312; cf [Fritz] Sö[h]lmann, “Die Kundgebung der Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen am Montag, den 13. November 1933”, *JK* 1, S. 309-11.

Karl Barth did not react directly to the Nazis' coming to power. He continued his university teaching, retained membership of the Social Democrat Party and took steps to safeguard both of those involvements with the authorities. In face of the Church developments sketched above, he joined with others in producing two sets of theses setting out a current Reformed position in continuity with the Reformation, "A Theological Declaration on the Form of the Church" (the *Düsseldorf Theses* of 20 May 1933),<sup>25</sup> and "Demands on the Form of the Church" (the *Elberfeld Theses* of 4 June 1933). They held out for the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Scriptures in a way that implicitly countered German Christian teaching and explicitly stood against the imposition upon the existing pattern of Reformed ministries of a bishop as "spiritual leader" (*geistlicher Führer*) of the Church. Then, in response to demands from many sides, he published a pamphlet, *Theologische Existenz heute!*, "Theological Existence Today!",<sup>26</sup> in which he spelled out rejection of the German Christian position as a heresy. He also questioned the need that all Church leaders currently saw to affirm the Nazis' coming to power as a good gift from God that somehow redefined the task of the Church in the present and the suddenly discovered importance of heading the Church with a bishop in obvious imitation of the political *Führerprinzip*. The pamphlet sold extremely well and became the start of a series, also called *Theologische Existenz heute* (without the exclamation mark), of which Barth himself wrote the first five numbers and many subsequent ones. The series maintained the line that Barth had taken in his first pamphlet; and his prefaces, until forbidden, offered critical comment on current developments in the Church struggle. The sermon that we are considering was published in the fifth of the series, which bore the title, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, "The Church of Jesus Christ". It was preached within four weeks of the Sport Palace affair and appeared in print the same month.

<sup>25</sup> "Eine theologische Erklärung zur Gestalt der Kirche", in *Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche* (ed. Wilhelm Niesel; Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1938, repr. Zürich: Theologische Buchhandlung, 1985) S. 325, 327-28; ET in Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church's Confession under Hitler* (2d. ed.; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976) 229.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz heute!* (Beiheft 2 von *Zwischen den Zeiten*, repr. as ThExh 1; Munich: Kaiser, 1933; new ed. Hinrich Stoevesandt, 1984 as ThExh 219); ET *Theological Existence To-Day! (A Plea for Theological Freedom)* (tr. R. Birch Hoyle; London: Hodder, 1933).

**II. SERMON ON ROMANS 15:5-13, 10 DECEMBER 1933 (ADVENT 2)  
UNIVERSITY SERVICE IN THE SCHLOSSKIRCHE, BONN<sup>\*</sup>**

*Karl Barth*  
*tr. John Michael Owen*

*[5] But may the God of patience and consolation grant that you may be of one mind among yourselves in accordance with Jesus Christ, [6] so that you may unanimously with one mouth praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [7] Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed us to the praise of God. [8] But I say that Jesus Christ has been a servant of the Circumcision for the sake of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the Fathers, [9] that the Heathen may praise God on account of mercy, as it is written, "Therefore I will praise thee among the Heathen and sing to thy name". [10] And again he says, "Rejoice, you Heathen, with his people!". [11] And again, "Praise the Lord, all Heathen, and praise him, all peoples!". [12] And again Isaiah says, "There will be the root of Jesse, and he will rise up to rule over the Heathen; in him will the Heathen hope". [13] But may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may have full hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup>*

Dear friends! The church of Jesus Christ is a crowd, a band, a gathering – a “community”, as the lovely old word *Gemeinde* says,<sup>28</sup> which we must just learn to

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\* Karl Barth, “Predigt über Röm. 15,5-13”, in *Die Kirche Jesu Christi* (ThExh 5; Munich: Kaiser, 1933) 11-19; repr. in Karl Barth, *Predigten 1921-1935* (GA 31, Abt. I), ed. Holger Finze. Zürich 1998, S.296-305, translated with permission of Theologischer Verlag, Zürich. After completing this translation and the articles relating to it, I was told of the already published ET: “The Church of Jesus Christ: Sermon on Romans 15:5-13”, tr. Charles Dickinson, in *Letter from the Karl Barth Archives*, 1 (1998) 7-13, also (<http://www.unibas.ch/karlbarth/dokumente.html#letter1>)

<sup>27</sup> To aid the following discussion, I have inserted verse numbers in the epistle reading and numbered the paragraphs of the sermon with Roman numerals. References in the text with round brackets are Barth’s own. Those in square brackets are supplied by Finze in his edition. Finze states that Barth here follows the “newly revised” version of the Luther Bible of 1912, except for preferring the variant “us” to “you” in v. 7, as he already had in his Romans commentary. But Barth also reads in v. 8 the more literal translation, “of the Circumcision”, in place of 1912’s “of the Jews”. That suggests that he has reverted to an earlier edition, which Dr Hans-Anton Drewes identifies in a letter as probably being the “revised” version of 1892.

<sup>28</sup> “Die Kirche Jesu Christi ist ein Haufe, eine Schar, eine Versammlung – eine ‘Gemeinde’,

understand again completely afresh – a community that is not held together by common interests nor by the blood we share nor even by opinions and convictions we hold in common, but surely by the fact that, within it, there ever again sounds forth, not to be silenced and not to be faked and not to be confused with any other sound, this voice that we hear at the beginning and at the end of our text, “*But may the God of patience and consolation grant you ... !*” “*But may the God of hope fill you ... !*” The voice that talks to us in this way, so beseeching and, at the same time, bestowing so much, so serious and also so friendly, is, in the words of the Apostle Paul, the voice of the divine Word itself, from which the Church of Jesus Christ is born<sup>29</sup> and from which it must also ever again nourish itself and only can nourish itself. *God* knows who *God* is; and in his Word he *tells* us: He is the *God* who gives

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wie das alte schöne Wort lautet [...]”. Cf “Denn das Wort ‘Ecclesia’ heißet eigentlich auf Deutsch ein ‘Versammlung’. Wir sind aber gewohnt des Wörtleins ‘Kirche’, welches die Einfältigen nicht von einem versammelten Haufen [...] verstehen, wiewohl das Haus nicht sollt’ eine Kirche heißen ohn allein darümb, daß der Haufe darin zusammenkömmt. [...] Also heißet das Wortlin ‘Kirche’ eigentlich nicht anders denn ‘ein gemeine Sammlung’ [...] Darümb sollt’s auf recht Deutsch und unser Muttersprach heißen ‘ein christliche Gemeine oder Sammlung’ [...]” (Martin Luther, *Großer Katechismus*, in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche [...]* [2d. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1952] 656; ET “The Large Catechism of Dr Martin Luther”, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [tr. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959] 416-17): “For the word ‘ecclesia’ really means a ‘gathering’ in German. But we are used to the word ‘church’, which the simple people don’t understand to refer [...] to a gathered crowd, although the house ought not to be called a church except for the reason that the crowd comes together in it. So the little word ‘church’ doesn’t really mean anything other than ‘a common gathering’ [...] Therefore it ought to be called in proper German and our mother tongue, ‘a Christian community or gathering’”. Finze does not identify an allusion to Luther here, but Barth’s use of the old form “Gemeine” in par. IX and the following quotation show that Barth will have been thinking of Luther at this point: “[...] so dürfte es sprachlich und sachlich richtig sein, davon auszugehen, daß die Kirche auf alle Fälle ein *Volk* ist. Ein Haufe, eine Versammlung, eine Gemeine, wie Luther gerne und richtig sagte” (Barth, “Die Kirche und die politische Frage von heute” [1938], in Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme*, 69: “[...] it should thus be linguistically and materially correct to assume that the Church is at all events a *people*: a crowd, a gathering, a community, as Luther quite correctly liked to say”).

<sup>29</sup> “The holy Christian Church, whose only head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, abides in the same, and does not hear the voice of a stranger” (“The Ten Conclusions of Berne” [1528], in John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* [3d. ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982] 129-30, p. 129).

patience, consolation and hope. *God* knows that we have need of him like nothing else and do not at all have him at our command; and in his Word he *tells* us, pulls our thoughts and wills together and towards himself, that we must beseech him: *May he grant us! May he fill us!* And *God* knows how close to us, how ready for us he is; and in his Word he *tells* us, by laying it on our lips as a sigh uttered in the closest proximity, and in the deepest, most confident trust, to him: *May he, he give us! May he fill us!* This voice with which God tells us what he knows about himself and us may sound forth from far off – the Apostle Paul is indeed really a long way away from us and the whole Bible is very far away from all the books and newspapers that we otherwise read – but if only that voice does still just ring out with *its* sound, *its* message, *its* claim and encouragement, then the Church of Jesus Christ is there, in which I, too, as I hear this voice, “am and shall ever remain a living member” (Heid. Cat. q.54).<sup>30</sup>

[II] But in this season of Advent, we have occasion to think that the fact that there is a Word of God for us and a church of Jesus Christ as the locale of the consolation, patience and hope that come from God is not a matter of course. It is not like the air, always and everywhere real. It is not placed in our hands by nature or by history, so that we could deal with it as something that belonged to us. The fact that there is God’s Word in the Church is not established in human spiritual life, nor is it a cultural achievement, nor does it belong to the nature and character of any particular people or race, nor is it grounded in the necessary course of world history. It is much rather a mystery, with which our existence is – not, say, fitted out from within, but clothed from without, which is in no sense founded in us, but wholly in an alien power and force over us. That there are the Church and God’s Word is true because, and only because, as our text says, “*Christ has welcomed us*”, picked us up like a beggar from the street, taken us up as people who had not at all thought or been able to think of taking him up, but who could really only be taken up. We could also say: *adopted*, as an orphan child is adopted into the family, adopted as something that we are not at all by nature, viz. as his siblings and as children of his Father. We could also say, *included* or *taken in* into the sphere where he, the Son of God, leads, rules, bears the responsibility, and manages things so that no one apart from him may have worry

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<sup>30</sup> “What do you believe about the holy, universal Christian Church? – That, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, the Son of God gathers, protects and preserves for himself by his Spirit and Word in the unity of the true faith a chosen community for everlasting life, and that I am, and shall eternally remain, a living member of it” (*The Heidelberg Catechism, in Witness of Faith: Historic Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia* [Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1984] 87-108, pp. 94-95).

or anxiety. We should never of ourselves have come along and entered into this sphere. But he has taken us in. That is the message of Christmas, which we shall soon be able to celebrate again: Christ has welcomed us! And welcomed us, at that, “*to the praise of God*”: not as if it had to be that way, not in accordance with any law of nature or because God had had need of us, and also not for the sake of our needs and wishes, but because it suited him in his freedom to be great and glorious by his Son’s welcoming us, adopting us, including us and taking us in. That is why the angels sang on Christmas Eve: Glory be to God on high and peace on earth among the human beings of good-pleasure [Luke 2:14] – of his, the divine good-pleasure! But now, precisely according to our text, all of that is true in a double sense, which has to be borne in mind:

[III] It certainly means for a start the all-embracing fact that he has taken on being human, viz. taken it on in order as God to be our neighbour and, at the same time, as a human being to be God’s neighbour. So that, in him, God’s kingdom has drawn near to us human beings [Matthew 4:17]<sup>31</sup> and, in him, we human beings may, on the other hand, stand before God’s throne as well-pleasing to God. Because God himself has in Jesus Christ clothed himself with being human, we are clothed with the mystery of the Word and the Church.

[IV] But, over and above that, we are here given something special to consider. It is not a matter of course that we belong to Jesus Christ, and he, to us. “*Christ has been a servant of the Circumcision for the sake of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the Fathers.*” What that says is that Christ belonged to the people of Israel. *That* people’s blood was, in his veins, the blood of the Son of God. *That* people’s character he has accepted by taking on being human, not for the sake of that people or of the superiority of its blood and its race, but for the truth, i.e. for the proof of the truthfulness, the faithfulness, of God. On account of the fact that God had made a covenant with that people and with that people alone, a stiff-necked and wicked people [cf. Exod 32:9 and frequently],<sup>32</sup> but with *that* people of all peoples, had bestowed his presence upon it and given it the promise of an incomparable redemption – not in order to reward and distinguish the Jews, but to confirm, to fulfil, that free,

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<sup>31</sup> Finze supplies the reference to Matthew here, but Matthew writes of the Kingdom of *Heaven*, not of God. Barth himself refers to Mark 1:15 for the Kingdom’s having drawn near, *GA I, Pr 1921-1935*, S. 594, and Finze himself supplies that Marcan reference on S. 646.

<sup>32</sup> Israel is called “stiff-necked” Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 31:27; cf Acts 7:51. “Stiff-necked” is nowhere paired with “evil” or “wicked”, although Exod 34:9 does continue, “pardon our iniquity and our sin”. Deut 31:26-27 declares the chief function of the

gracious promise “given to the Fathers”, Jesus Christ has been a *Jew*. He has himself once said of himself: To the lost sheep from the house of Israel and to them alone is he sent (Matt 15:24; cf. 10:5-6). For us who are not Israel, that means a closed door. If it is now, after all, open, if Christ now after all also belongs to us, and we, to him, that must surely say once again in a special sense: “Christ has welcomed us to the praise of God”. We are reminded that that is the case by the existence of the Jewish people right up to this day. Frederick the Great is supposed once to have asked Zimmermann, his personal physician, whether he could name him a single completely certain proof of the existence of God; and he is supposed to have received the laconic reply, “Your Majesty, the Jews!”.<sup>33</sup> The man was right. The Jew reminds us by his existence that we are not Jews and therefore intrinsically “without Christ, alien and outside the citizenry of Israel and strangers to the testaments of promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). The Jew reminds us that it is something special, new and wonderful, if we are now, despite all that, “no longer guests and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household” (Eph 2:19). We are not that by nature. The Jew, in his so puzzlingly strange, and equally puzzlingly indestructible, existence in the midst of all other peoples, is the living proof that God is free to choose whom he will, that he does not owe it to us to choose us, too, that it is grace, when he does also choose us. It could well be that one is warding off this indeed stringent proof of God, warding off the God of free grace, when one wards the Jews off with all too much passion.

[V]<sup>34</sup> But the special, new, wonderful thing about the way in which Christ – although a “servant of the Circumcision for the sake of God’s truth” – has now also welcomed us, consists in the fact that Israel, the people blessed with God’s election and grace, has behaved towards this its redeemer in no other way than – all peoples of all times and lands would also have done in its place. It has namely rejected him and nailed him to the Cross, not in foolish precipitance, not out of a misunderstanding, but in precise, conscious continuation of the manner in which it had always behaved

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book of the law placed beside the ark of the covenant to be that of a witness against the people as rebellious and stiff-necked. Cf. the quotation of Isa 65:2 LXX in Rom 10:21.

<sup>33</sup> Finze finds authority for attributing the saying to Voltaire and, to Zimmerman, the role of reporting it.

<sup>34</sup> Finze has a new paragraph begin here, although there was not one when the sermon was first published. He may have MS evidence for the break, which certainly seems suitable or even called-for. The same applies to the break between parr. V and VI. In *Die Kirche Jesu Christi* (1933), the sermon ends on the last line of p. 19 and two paragraph breaks may have been sacrificed in order to avoid going over the page.



towards its God. "My people", as God had so often called this people, proved itself once more and now definitively to be "not my people" [Hos 1:9]. But the prophet Hosea had indeed said precisely the opposite; and now it became true in just this way in the crucifixion of Christ! "It shall happen in the place where one has said to them, 'You are not my people', that one will say to them: 'O you children of the Living God'" (Hos 1:10).<sup>35</sup> "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!" [Luke 23:34] – that was said to this people on Golgotha. Except that that could then no longer only be said to it. By putting itself on a par with the other peoples, Israel also put the other peoples on a par with itself. The closed door opened. Israel itself had to open it. God's covenant and truth were not broken, but came to fulfilment for those in Israel – but now also for those among the Heathen [–] who now recognized and accepted God's mercy as the work of his covenant and truth. For that was the fulfilment of the Covenant, God's faithfulness precisely in the death of Christ on the Cross: "God imprisoned *all* in disobedience, so that he might have mercy on *all*" (Rom 11:32).

[VI]<sup>36</sup> That is why it can now go on to say, "*The Heathen praise God on account of mercy*". Hear that properly: Not because they were better, purer, more upright than the Jews! If there were any advantage, the Jews would still have it today, not because of any good qualities, but because it has pleased God to choose *them*, with *them* to make the covenant that he fulfilled in Christ, in order to keep it with us, as well. So the reason why the Heathen praise God is that God has, in the Christ crucified in the midst of Israel, shown and confirmed upon them, who were not Israel, *his mercy to them, too*. Because the covenant with Israel became manifest for Israel and for the Heathen as a covenant of *grace* for *sinner*s who cannot boast of any faith that they have kept, who are only able to live from mercy, but who really are permitted to live from mercy.<sup>37</sup> That is the end of the Jews' advantage and of our disadvantage. That's what a real Jew cannot understand right up to the present day: That precisely the covenant that God certainly concluded with his people, and with his people alone,

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<sup>35</sup> Barth here gives the reference as Hos 2:1, but the verse is 1:10 in the English Bible. See also Rom 9:25-26. The change to 1:10 is also made below in par. VII.

<sup>36</sup> See note 34 above.

<sup>37</sup> "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation. [...] Secondly, the covenant by which they were bound to the Lord was supported, not by their own merits, but solely by the mercy of the God who called them" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, voll. 1-2; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960] II.x.2).

has become manifest in that people's rejection of Christ as the free, undeserved goodness that God wants to do for everyone. Precisely this covenant!, says Paul, and he allows precisely the book of this one, old and now fulfilled covenant to speak and to witness to the glory of God among the Heathen: "*Therefore I will praise thee among the Heathen and sing to thy name.*" "*Rejoice, you Heathen, with his people!*" "*Praise the Lord, all Heathen, and praise him, all peoples!*" "*There will be the root of Jesse, and he will rise up to rule over the Heathen; on him will the peoples hope.*"<sup>38</sup> It is *thus* then that Christ has received us to the praise of God. "Salvation comes from the Jews" (John 4:22). Jesus Christ was a Jew. But by his bearing and taking away, in the sin of the Jews, the sin of the whole world and our sin, too [cf. John 1:29], salvation has come from the Jews to us also. We rejoice in this wide opening door, when we rejoice that there is a Word of God for us and so a church of Jesus Christ. How should we not, each time we reflect on that, have to think above all of the Jews? And how should we not, each time that we reflect on the Jews, think above all how "the Heathen praise God on account of *mercy*"?

[VII] Now we can understand the other thing that our text has to say to us about the Church of Jesus Christ: As Christ has welcomed us to the praise of God, "*welcome one another*". That is a law that there is no getting around. That is a command, and a strict, inexorable command, at that. But the Heathen and the Jews, all those welcomed by Christ who praise God on account of mercy, fulfil this command. They welcome one another. "Welcome one another" means mutually to see each other as Christ sees us. He sees us all as covenant-breakers, but also as such with whom God wills, despite that, to maintain his covenant. He sees us in our religious and secular Godlessness, but also as those to whom the Kingdom of God has drawn near. He sees us as such as are utterly dependent on mercy, but also as such as mercy has already befallen. He sees us as Jews in conflict with the true God<sup>39</sup> and as heathen at peace with the false gods, but he also sees us both united as "children of the Living God" [Hos 1:10]. But we are, to be sure, unable of ourselves to see each other in that way. If we see each other of ourselves, then it is regularly the case that we miss both the first thing, that we are covenant-breakers, and the second, that, despite that, God maintains his covenant. We then take both the perfections and the faults that we perceive in each other much too seriously; we then praise each other much too loudly and we then censure each other much too vehemently. Either way, we do not then welcome one another. We are then in the market-place and not in the Church.

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<sup>38</sup> Paul quotes Psalm 18:49 (LXX 17:50), 2 Sam 22:50; Deut 32:43 (LXX); Psalm 117:1; Isa 11:10 (LXX).

<sup>39</sup> See the story of Jacob at the Jabbok, Gen 32:28; Hos 12:3-4, and the name "Israel".

The Word of God is then surely silent. But when it is *not* silent, when we consider that we have been welcomed by Jesus Christ to the praise of God, then we see each other with the eyes of Jesus Christ, and that surely means then that our deep breach of covenant, godlessness and pitifulness are not concealed, but that neither is the faithfulness of God steadfastly holding sway over each one of us, and that, overlooking all perfections and faults, praise and censure – however important they may be in their own place – we can only join hands in order together to praise God's faithfulness to us, the unfaithful Ones. When we see each other in this way, then we welcome one another, then we are in the Church of Jesus Christ. For that is what the Church of Jesus Christ is: the community of those who, listening to the Word of the God of patience, comfort and hope, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us. That is "the Communion of Saints". The praise of God on account of mercy has brought them together and will hold them together through everything, hold them together in a way that no friendship or common convictions or community of a people, or state can hold human beings together, hold them together in the way that, in the whole world, only the members of the Body of Christ are held together by him, the Head [cf. Col 2:19].

[VIII] And now we can close with a brief indication of the things that are *prayed* for in our text.

[IX] It is first of all this, "*that you may be of one mind among yourselves in accordance with Jesus Christ, so that you may unanimously with one mouth praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*". That means: From the mutual welcoming of each other as Christ has welcomed us, it would have to follow that, in the Church of Jesus Christ, *one* thought and *one* will would be alive and powerful in everyone – not, to be sure, some or other kind of human unity in thought and will, but a unity of perhaps very diverse human thinking and willing in the purpose of now letting the praise of God on account of mercy be heard, of passing it on, of arousing it also in those who do not yet know that mercy has befallen them. That purpose would then of necessity have to be carried out "unanimously with one mouth". But that means that the Church of Jesus Christ would have to be a community that together *knew* the heard Word, in order to *confess* it together. It would have to be! Is it? If it is, where are its knowledge and its confession? And if it is not, why isn't it? Our text tells us simply to pray for the Church that it may become a church of knowledge and confession. If only we would again just unanimously *pray* together for that. What does praying mean? Crying, calling, reaching out, that what is after all already true once and for all, that Christ has accepted us, may also be true for us. Church knowledge and Church confession would surely follow upon such a prayer, if it were serious [cf. Jas 5:16], as thunder follows lightning.

[X] The other thing is this: That God may “*fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may have full hope through the power of the Holy Spirit*”. That means: From the mutual acceptance of each other as Christ has accepted us, it would have to follow that, in the Church of Jesus Christ, all unhappiness would at least be on the way to joyousness, all discordance would at least be on the way to peace, all distress of our own present would somehow finally be swamped by hope for the presence of the Lord. Are confession and knowledge missing in our church because there is so much unmoved and immovable unhappiness, discordance and distress among us? Or is there so much rigid unhappiness, discordance and distress among us, despite our supposed faith, because our church is lacking in knowledge and confession? It will surely be the case that a certain connection exists here. And it is therefore understandable that here, too, it is simply pointed out to us that we have to pray for the Church, to pray that, in its believing, joy and peace may increase, that we may – not by the power of our own sentiments, but by the power of the Holy Spirit – share in a full, an overflowing hope. And indeed our prayer will again have simply to be that it may after all not remain so hidden from us that Christ has accepted us to the praise of God. If that does remain hidden from us, then we shall scarcely accept one another; and, as long as we fail to accept one another, how are we supposed to have peace, joy and hope? They are certainly waiting at our door. And they will be given us, when we seriously pray for the one thing for which one must pray.

[XI] The thoughts of many human beings are, at this time, more seriously concerned than previously with the question of what the Church lacks and of what we in the Church lack. Let us note that our text is not speaking of that, but that, where it could speak of it, it simply prays, and also tells us to pray, to the God of patience, comfort and hope, who is the Lord of the Church. If we hear that, and let ourselves be told that we should, may and can simply pray, then it may thereby become clear to us that there is one thing, and the decisive thing, at that, that the Church and we in the Church do not in fact lack today, either: the *Word* out of which it is born. When we hear that there is a *prayer* that can achieve much [cf. Jas 5:16], then we certainly *have* the Word of God. Let us *keep* it, by doing what we are thus urged by the Word of God to do! Perhaps this present time has come upon our church so that we may learn to pray differently and better than hitherto, and thus to keep what we have [cf. Rev 3:11].