

## **WHEN CHRISTIANS TALK IT—BUT DON'T WALK IT! THE SADDEST TRUTH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST**

### **Page 1 Cooperation with Demons**

It's not so long ago. At least it's not that long ago if you're my age. I was a little kid when it took place in the early 1940s. But it all started in the 1930's. Many of you already know what I'm talking about. The Holocaust!

The word "Holocaust" means "total destruction." It is a word that is reserved for one long act of some twelve years when Jews were equated as vermin to be exterminated from the planet. Europe would convulse with six million final sobs—one of every three Jews on the earth would meet death tormented by something that was worse than death itself—the realization that the world couldn't care less. And that world took in most of the Christian church. Only time and a lost war prevented Hitler's darkened mind from projecting further steps in his "final solution to the Jewish problem."

It has taken unending post-war analysis to even attempt to understand the Holocaust. Former President Jimmy Carter's Commission on the Holocaust stated that "It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence—the sheer numbers killed—but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian populations. The decision was to kill every Jew everywhere in Europe..."

The "Jewish problem," articulated by leading Nazis at the secret Wannsee Conference in the Berlin suburbs, could not be solved by subjugation but only by annihilation. As Carter's Holocaust commission stated: "The destruction frequently conflicted with, and took priority over, the war effort. Trains that could have been used to carry munitions to the front to retrieve injured soldiers were diverted for the transport of victims to the death camps." Wounded Germans were not as important to Hitler as were dead Jews. The Commission continued: "...when it had become evident that the Germans had lost the war, the killings were intensified in a last desperate attempt at complete annihilation."

Germany was held spellbound in a kind of "reverse miracle" as the land of Mozart, Bach and Luther turned into a dybbuk society in total cooperation with the demons of hell. Churches and health ministries supplied birth records to isolate Jews.

Churches!! Ministers! Pastors! Members of churches! Sermons about the love of Jesus! As long as you talk it—but don't walk it.

Post offices delivered the statements of deportation to the concentration camps and gas chambers. The Economic Ministry confiscated Jewish wealth. Universities expelled Jewish professors and students. German industry fired Jewish workers. Board members canceled out Jewish stockholders. Travel bureaus competed for the business of coordinating railroad schedules to carry Jewish victims to their deaths. How many of those businesses and agencies were owned by—staffed by—so-called “Christians”? We can only guess.

Christians even quoted Romans chapter 13:1 to justify their submission to Hitler. “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” They conveniently forgot another New Testament verse that warns Christians to take a stand against evil even when it originates in the highest councils of power: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Too late they would learn that those who came for Jews one day, came for Christians and other victims the next day. German pastor Martin Niemoller put it this way: “In Germany...they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew...then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.” And the world—yes, the Christian world—still has not learned that lesson!

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### **Page 2 The Madness Of Man**

Killing became a business for profit. Pharmaceutical firms tested drugs on Jews and companies bid for contracts to build ovens or supply the gas to kill Jews. They even protected their patents. Carter's Holocaust Commission stated: "German engineers working for Topf & Sons supplied one camp alone with 46 ovens capable of burning 500 bodies an hour.

German scientists discovered that the insecticide Zyklon B could kill 2000 persons in less than 30 minutes at a cost of one-half cent per body. Nazi efficiency soared to new heights when it came to slaughtering Jews.

But even if toward the war's end Nazis would find the basic necessities needed for mass annihilation scarce, they knew how to improvise. Again from the Commission Report: "Near the end of the war, in order to cut expenses and save gas, cost accountant considerations led to an order to place living children directly into the ovens or throw them into open burning pits."

Men murdered children by day and were loving husbands and fathers at night. Nazi indoctrination guaranteed that such would not be a contradiction in terms. Another of the findings of Carter's Commission on the Holocaust says: "The Holocaust could not have occurred without the collapse of certain religious norms: increasing secularity fueled a devaluation of the image of the human being created in the likeness of God." Does that sound like today? Does that sound like our laodicean Christianity? Listen to what Jesus says. Is he talking to us. Revelation 3:15-17, "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."

Centuries of religious triumphalism had gone before Hitler. Now, under the thin guise of a few "Christian" pronouncements, he would carry atheistic humanism (not to be confused with humanitarianism or the humanities) to its fullest stretch. Hitler's humanism would make man the measure of all things. But "man" would be cast in the Aryan image of the Fuhrer. Hitler's "Man" would know no God or absolutes. The Aryan man would determine his own destiny—and the destiny of

others. Does that sound familiar—like what we see, hear and experience today—as the world’s “smart people” determine what is best for “lesser” like you and me?

You must see that to blame only the German people for not defending Jews from the Nazis is to miss others equally, perhaps even more, guilty. At least Germans had the excuse of living under a totalitarian regime that often hid its crimes and punished anyone who deviated from the official Nazi line. But what about the world’s voice? The American voice? The Church’s voice?

Hitler had begun testing the waters concerning his “final solution” soon after coming to power in 1933. His Nuremberg Laws, singling out Jews for special “treatment,” had met with only muted protest—no major demonstrations were held in Western capitals for the persecuted Jews of Germany. No crowds of thousands of Christians gathered in Europe, America and Canada to say “We stand with the Jews. To Attack them is to harm us. We will not be silent or passive.” The devil would have his way with little opposition!

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### **Page 3 Locking the Jews Out**

In 1938, it became difficult for the free world to look the other way. It decided to hold an international conference at Evian, France, to discuss, among other issues, the problems of Jews emigrating from Germany. While the delegates took frequent dips in their lovely pools, they remained in the shallows on helping Jews. Thirty two nations refused to relax their immigration laws to receive the beleaguered Jews. Included were the USA, Great Britain, France, Canada, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand. Britain added a greater sin by locking the door to Jews escaping to Palestine. Only Denmark, Holland and the Dominican Republic helped save the human race by agreeing to accept some Jews. Again, where were the Christians? They were among those guarding our shores to make sure no Jewish masses would escape to—God forbid!—take some of our jobs.

The Nazis watched in amused interest—and knew they had an open field. They could crow—and did—that at least Hitler admitted to his dislike of Jews, unlike that of the hypocritical allies. Only a month later, Kristallnacht would happen as Jewish businesses and bodies would be smashed in Germany. It was an evil sanctioned by the equally evil disinterest of the West. Abraham Joshua Heschel was right: “Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself.”

What about the land of the free and the home of the brave? With American jobs scarce and the economy still feeling the effects of the depression, many Americans had sympathy for Jews as long as they remained far away in Europe. And President Franklin Roosevelt, always tuned to the political winds, knew this. So did the American State Department. Carter’s Commission on the Holocaust stated that in a 1944 memo presented to the President, senior officers of the Department of the Treasury accused State Department officials of neglect and acquiescence: “State department officials have not only failed to use the government machinery at their disposal to rescue Jews from Hitler, but have even gone so far as to use this government machinery to prevent the rescue of Jews.” Think for a moment with me on Genesis 12:3. “I will bless them that bless thee; and I will curse them that curse thee.” God is speaking about the Jews!

Jews were denied immigration to the USA when Nazis would have let them go. From the President's Commission: "American counselor officers demanded that immigration applicants produce certificates of good character from their government at the very time the Nazis considered Jewishness itself criminal." And even later when the American government went to war with Germany, the Commission reports: "Instead of being recognized as refugees, German Jews were considered citizens of a hostile nation and were thus excluded." The hideous fact was that while anti-Semitism was officially condemned, no one wanted the Jews, here or abroad. And Christians were not lined up by the thousands to offer sponsorship to terrified Jews. Fact is, we weren't lined up at all!

How bad could it get? Bad enough to practice a starkly visible Jew-hatred right on American shores. In 1939, President Roosevelt, hero to many Jews, ordered the Coast Guard to prevent the German ship "Saint Louis" from entering U.S. territorial water with her wretched cargo of 900 German Jewish refugees.

They had already been refused entry into Cuba, even though that island nation had first appeared to welcome them. The German captain, hoping to rescue the Jews, knew that America was their final chance. He deliberately slowed the ship down as he and 900 souls waited and hoped only a few miles from freedom. There would be no softening of conscience—no churches demanding we listen to a desperate plea. The ship's captain finally pointed the bow eastward—back to Europe where many of the 900 were eventually captured by the Nazis and killed. Was the German captain a Christian? I do not know. I only know when it came to loving his neighbor, he didn't talk it. He walked it!

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### **Page 4 Opinions Versus Convictions: The Vast Chasm**

The Christian Church was mostly silent across Europe and America. Only two countries—Denmark and Bulgaria—took a positive stand to save Jews. More on them later. But elsewhere—most silence was broken only by the courageous voices of a few individual Christians.

Hitler had in his book “Mein Kampf” (“My Struggle”) announced to the world how he would treat the Jews. No one took him seriously. Or, on a more sinister note, maybe the world did take him quite seriously! Hating the Jews was in season. And standing up for the Jews was out of season. Again. Especially when there was a cost to caring.

At any rate, Jews had tasted the bitter venom of Gentiles parading as “Christians” during persecutions and pogroms—crusades and inquisitions. Would they now finally see genuine Christians holding mass protest rallies to save Jewish lives? Would there be Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches banding together to demonstrate the unconditional love of Jesus by standing, and, if necessary, dying at the side of the Jews? After all, isn't that what Jesus is all about?!

The answer, of course, was no. Not that there wasn't “concern” voiced in many churches that, in their opinions, hatred of Jews was wrong. But there is a vast difference between opinions and convictions. Opinions cause thinking. Convictions produce action. While the churches uttered pious platitudes, the extermination fires of Treblinka raged. The death factory at Auschwitz/Birkenau worked to evil perfection. (When I was in Poland some years ago standing at those two hellish places, I could hear the ground crying—the collective sob of the blood of a people.) Beginning on the Jewish New Year in 1941 and continuing for 110 days until the Day of Atonement, some 80,000 Jews were brought to Babi Yar and killed there within earshot of downtown Kiev. The same Kiev, Ukraine, that is in the news today.

Light still appeared in the darkness. Roaul Wallenberg, a junior diplomat from Sweden serving in Hungary, went on a personal rampage for justice. Wallenberg rented buildings and flew the Swedish flag in his determination to offer haven to the Jews. He issued countless Swedish passports to Jews and may have saved as

many as 30,000 Jews from the death mills before Wallenberg himself disappeared into the Soviet Union at the end of the War—never to be heard from again. His courageous end was known only to God.



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### **Page 5 Lights To A Sea Of Darkness**

There were other Christian lights like the Dutch woman Corrie ten Boom and Irene Gut Opdyke, a Pole. The latter saved twelve Jews by hiding them in a Nazi villa where she labored as a servant. Discovered by the Nazi major toward the end of the war, Irene was given a choice. She could sacrifice souls to death or give herself to the aging major. Irene made the sacrifice and the Jews were spared—including a Jewish baby born during the months in hiding. Opdyke has been honored by Israel as a “righteous Gentile” with a tree planted in her honor on the Avenue of the Righteous at the Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Her greatest joy occurred when she visited Israel and was met by a beaming gentleman who owed Irene his life as the baby that was saved with the twelve. She was my radio and television guest many times as we fought modern anti-Semitism together. Later, I led her husband to the Lord Jesus before he died.

The few were so courageous. The many were so silent. As Eli Wiesel said to American leaders in Washington in 1979. “Every occupied nation, every underground movement received help from London, Washington and Moscow. Not the Jews. They were the loneliest victims of the most inhuman of wars. A single air drop, a single rescue mission would have proven to them, and to the enemy, that they were not forgotten. But Mr. President and friends, the truth is that they were forgotten.” Not a single bomb was dropped on the railway tracks to the death factories even though other “strategic” targets were bombed only a few miles away.

There is no way to convey the emotions that tore at the six million Jews before they uttered their final, individual, heart-stopping sobs. Deserted by friends. Abandoned by America and the allies. Ignored by the Christian Church. Left to perish by many American Jewish leaders who were fearful of being accused of “disloyalty” by those who pretended that the Allied struggle against the Nazis could not be burdened with saving the lives of one-third of the world’s Jews.

Perhaps Mordechai Anielewicz, the Jewish commander of the doomed Warsaw ghetto uprising, put it best when writing to a friend in 1943: “We are fighting. We shall not surrender. But as our last days are approaching, remember that we have been betrayed.” And so they were—not only in Warsaw, but in Europe and

America. Betrayed! It was a betrayal that God would use to awaken a 42 year old man—a follower of Jesus—to know that he could never again witness to the Jews about Jesus without being willing to stand at their side when others came to do them harm. That man was me. But that is a story for another time. This time I shall only leave you with the thought: when will the true followers of Jesus realize that the One who we say lives within us is MORE THAN TALK. And so it must be with us—cost what it may!