

Religion and Human Nature

by William Hermanns, PhD, Prof.em. ©1985

Waiting for my promised diplomatic position in the League of Nations at Geneva to open up, I looked for temporary quarters in Berlin. At the home of an elderly woman discussing the rental arrangements in her living room, my eyes fell on a huge painting of Hitler, before which burned two candles. After her remark, "Hitler will become our Aryan god; the Jewish god of the Bible is dead," I left.

Now, three generations later - the League of Nations has broken down, replaced by the United Nations, and I retired as an emeritus professor of the University of San Jose and became a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University - I took a trip to Europe with my son Ken. While waiting for permission to stay in two rooms in an old monastery in Tirol by Innsbruck, we visited the church. I noticed the painting beneath the pulpit, in which St. Bernard, surrounded by singing monks and nuns, held high a cross before numerous heretics being burned at the stake. We decided to immediately drive on to Innsbruck, since I did not want to be exposed to such vibrations of intolerance and murder in the name of Jesus.

My friendship with Einstein for 34 years has taught me a lesson: "One gram intuitive awareness is more worth than a thousand grams of intellectual knowledge." This intuitive awareness I had felt as a volunteer of the Kaiser in the Battle of Verdun in 1916, which had been blessed by Protestant and Catholic field chaplains behind the Front. From my shell hole I could see the two flame enveloped towers of the Cathedral of Verdun, whose cross blessed the French, defending their country against the invaders.

In my long career of teaching and lecturing, I tried to write these words on the hearts of my students: "How often are we inveigled by a smiling, yea religious face. Alas, the emotional abyss we cannot see." We deal with man as a compound of undercurrent drives forming his emotional makeup by karmic inheritance, by experiences in the first seven years of this life, and his status as an adult. This, what sociologists may call the personal equation of man, is the alpha and omega of man's behavior. If this behavior is perverted by drugs, poverty and war - we have recently witnessed the beast in man in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iran - it only affirms the infinite variations of the personal equation of man shaped over the aeons.

That the Church is concerned to attach man, rich and poor, evil and holy, to the promise of salvation preached from the pulpits, is as old as prayer. And the base of the Christian belief is established by the Jewish religion with its thousands of years old statement of *Shema Israel* (Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One). Jesus, who lived and died as a Jew, emphasized this oneness in his greatest prayer: "Our Father, who art in Heaven." That this oneness, this indefinable creative arch law called God, has been slowly undermined over the generations following Jesus' death can also be explained by a sociological law: To make a new movement prosper, one must consider two principals: 1) Coin two or three slogans that the last and least member of the new movement can understand. 2) Create an enemy outside this movement: "Step on him, crush him. He threatens our survival."

Regarding the foundation of the Christian Church, there came help from the cultures surrounding or invading Israel at the time of Jesus death. Educated youth, such as Saul of Tarsus (called Paul after his conversion), were influenced by the religious and philosophical cultures of the Greeks and Romans with their humanized gods. The beastly characteristics of human nature, which the Jews through the Ten Commandments wanted to hold in check, invaded Israel again. In the very Temple where Jesus preached, the Romans wanted to place a statue of Caesar to degrade the Covenant, which Moses had received at Sinai a

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thousand years earlier. Moreover, Greek and Roman cultures, marked by great thinkers, still influence our schools today. These cultures had colored the perceptions of Paul and his followers, especially the Greek and Roman converts.

No issue is so confused in history as is the development of the Christian faith. Paul's long arguments in his Letter to the Romans, does not ascribe the death of Jesus to the Jews. This does not hinder Jesus' zeal, as Albert Schweitzer told me, to crown his prophetic mission with death. Schweitzer also told me that a distortion of historical truth already occurred in the first century of the new religion's existence, especially in the writings of Matthew, Luke and John, mostly collected from oral stories about Jesus life.

Be it as it may, the sociological principal of creating easy slogans and an outside enemy is manifested now for two thousand years. Some Jews may have been responsible for delivering Jesus to the Romans, although the Romans had tortured and crucified at least two thousand other Jews at the time for belonging to religious sects which encouraged liberation from the pagan occupation of their country, among them friends of Jesus. The mass mind, even when Christianized under the Jewish command: "Love your neighbor, because he is like you," is as history has taught for two thousand years, first ruled by its basic characteristic, the human beast, for it is millenniums older than religious teachings. And this explains why some hundreds of millions. Christians in the world attach themselves to the slogan: "The Jews killed Jesus and therefore the Bible belongs to the Christian Church and not to those by whom it is written."

When Pope Pius XI made the Concordat with Hitler in 1933, under the influence of his Secretary of State and later successor, Cardinal Pacelli, who admired the Germans, a prelate in Fulda, organizing a Catholic movement of protest against the Nazis, told me that through the centuries the Church made alliances with political powers at the expense of the Jews, thus inviting again and again the beastly nature in man to fight for her interests.

When I, some thirty years later, visited the ninety year old Franz von Papen, a leading German politician of the Catholic Center Party and personal friend of Cardinal Pacelli, the Apostolic Nuncio to Germany who became Pope Pius XII, in his villa near Baden Baden, I was shocked that he showed me the decorations he received from two popes without any remorse for his pivotal role in bringing Hitler to power, in destroying the first democratic institution in Germany's history, and in invading Catholic Poland to annex "living space" for the "superior" German nation to construct death camps like Auschwitz. I alluded to Papen's alliance with the three financial giants, Krupp, Thyssen and Stinnes, who assured the rearmament for the new world war.

I asked him, "How could you of nobility on one hand help many Jews to escape, who on orders of Eichmann had been collected in the Balkan States to be sent to the gas chambers, yet on the the other hand influence the aging and politically inefficient Hindenburg to make Hitler Reichskanzler?"

Pointing at a painting where his father, a cavalry officer in the war of 1870, stabbed a French cavalry officer, causing him to fall dying from the back of his horse, he said, "The majority of Germans were sick of appeasement and Hitler had the masses behind him. I thought Hitler was the instrument for the return of our exiled Kaiser and the throne would be restored."

Papen's last words to me were: "I hear daily Mass in my home. If I had to live my life again, I would not do it differently." Had the Mass changed the ego-beast in Papen?

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It is of historical interest that when Hitler failed to conquer Russia, Himmler made secret investigations into Hitler's ancestry to prove he had Jewish blood, but the evidence was not conclusive. People in Linz and also in Braunau, Hitler's birthplace, told me later that they were asked the most intimate questions, especially about the illegitimate birth of Hitler's father to the unmarried maid Schicklgruber.

Again the blame for his lost war was placed at the Jewish doorstep. These tactics of the mass mind of blaming an innocent group for their misfortune are as old as group formations. This was brought home to me by the account of a Russian aristocrat, Mrs. von Wruck, who fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, found shelter with her two children in a Jewish home in Berlin. Her father, a general, witnessed the pogroms in some 160 towns and villages of Russia after the assassination of Czar Alexander II by revolutionaries on March 13, 1881. It was discovered that one of the revolutionaries was befriended with a Jewish girl, and immediately a newspaper whipped up rumors of a Jewish conspiracy. Soon a Russian book, Protocols of the Elders of Zion was promoted by the Czar and the anti-Semitic organization, the Black Hundreds. Thereafter, whenever financial difficulties or political setbacks occurred in Russia, this book would be mass distributed. I had the original edition in my hands in the Berlin State Library, which proved to be a forgery by the Russian Secret Police of a French political satire by Maurice Joly, though the anti-Semitic roots go back to the Church's resistance to Napoleon's emancipation of the Jews and his convocation of Jewish representatives in the Paris Sanhedrin of 1807. Mrs. von Wruck revealed that she had witnessed a pogrom in her city and that her father General Rofalsky, having known the falsification of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had mobilized his cavalry regiment and protected thousands of Jews from being murdered by the Russian mob. She added, "If I never had known that there was a God, then I know it now by living under a Jewish roof here on the Nollendorfplatz in Berlin without a penny to my name."

It has been estimated by historians that since the foundation of Christianity some 250 million Jews were killed through torture, lynching and burning. No hatred rooted in political or religious conflicts had produced such unwarranted violent and murderous attacks as those inflicted on the Jews. And why? Because Christianity's religious tradition claimed the crucifixion of Jesus, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, was done by the Jewish authorities in the name of all the Jews.

Has Protestant Christianity different undercurrents in its religious consciousness? Luther made a statement that had caused many Protestant ministers, as I was told by one victim, Probst Heinrich Gruber, to prefer a concentration camp than to accept Nazi hate of the Jews in the Church. Luther, already in his time as an Augustinian monk, learned to abhor the Jews. Later, when he broke away from Catholicism and translated the Bible into German, he used Jewish savants and rabbis to assist him with the Hebrew scriptures. At the beginning of the Reformation, Luther made this statement about the Church's anti-Semitism: "First we beat the Jew lame, then curse him when he limps."

Luther hoped the Jews would embrace his Reformed Christianity, but when they did not, he became as vicious in his attacks on Jews as many popes and saints before him in the Catholic Church. In 1936 when I was a refugee in England, the Anglican Archbishop William Temple of York and later Canterbury told me, "From Luther to Hitler is one step. We Christians have to repent."

The Archbishop alluded to what he called perhaps the greatest crime in Christian history, the Concordat of the Roman Catholic Church with Hitler. How true! Hitler boasted to his inner circle that having the Church

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off his back would make his task to create a new world order under the dominion of the German Aryan race much easier. Some months later the Nuremberg laws were enacted, relegating the Jews to subhuman status and stripping them of civil rights, without any official protest of the Catholic or Lutheran Churches. As Hitler could not oust Excellence Lehwald, who had Jewish ancestry and whom I knew - he was the Honorary President of the Humboldt Club in Berlin of which I was a Director on the Board - from the Presidency of the International Olympic Games Committee, he was given a new pedigree by Goebbels newspapers until after the 1936 Games were over, preserving one of the greatest Nazi propaganda spectacles from censure by participating nations.

Remember the sociological principle: "If you create a new movement, political or religious, make slogans understandable by the least intelligent member and point at an outside enemy as the threat to the movements survival and goals." An early example is John Chrysostom, a canonized saint officially honored as a Doctor of the Church, who feared the good neighborliness of the Jews and Christians in Antioch. In 387, no sooner was the Church settled in its role as the official state religion of the Roman Empire, he delivered eight sermons, attacking the Jews with all the rumors, legends and twisting of Bible verses collected over the previous centuries. Referring to Psalm 96:37, he preached that the Jews "sacrificed their sons and daughters to devils: they outraged nature; and overthrew from their foundations the laws of relationship." In a later sermon, probably due to the objections of some parishioners, he said that even if the Jews no longer sacrificed their children, they have murdered the Christ, which is worse. He charged that the synagogues have the Holy Scriptures in them "not to honor them, but to insult them, and to dishonor them." He further claimed that the synagogues were temples of idolatry and devils, even if their images are missing, so that for a Christian to go from a church to a synagogue is blasphemous, and to attend a Jewish Passover is to insult Christ.

Being a disciple of Einstein and having embraced Cosmic Religion, I would visit the churches of Quakers, Swedenborgians, Protestant denominations and Catholics, as well as the ashrams of Indian gurus, the synagogues of Jews, the temples of Buddhists, and the mosques of Moslems.

When visiting the Catholic shrine in Lourdes in the Fifties, I was invited to listen to an address given daily by a nun to hundreds of new pilgrims. What did I hear from the nun standing in her solemn black attire on the platform? "From the many books written about Lourdes, the most famous unfortunately is *The Song of Bernadette* by Franz Werfel. It should not be read, rather it should be burned, because Werfel as a Jew cannot have true feelings for Bernadette, the chosen one of Our Blessed Mother."

I asked the nun, "Do you know how Werfel came to write this book? In Lourdes, hidden away by a Christian admirer during the Nazi occupation of France, Werfel out of gratefulness created his literary masterpiece." She answered, "Don't forget that the Jews have crucified Christ!"

I left the nun and went directly to a leading prelate in Lourdes to complain. He said, "This nun does great service to the Church in her eloquence, and I agree with her, for there are other great books about Lourdes written by Catholics." For an unquestioning Catholic believer, Lourdes is certainly a beautiful and peaceful haven of hope, where in its century of existence about seventy miracles have been verified by a committee of doctors. But when the pilgrims leave this protected atmosphere, the seed of anti-Semitism planted by the nun could well be nourished in an economic uncertain milieu of their hometowns or nations. My experience in Lourdes confirmed

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that banning and burning books, and gassing and burning people is natural to the beast in man, which no religion has been able to overcome, rather the religions often ally themselves with the beast to consolidate or preserve power.

Now in the United States, there are news reports of a Protestant Fundamentalist movement, which encourages the removal and burning of what they consider offensive books from libraries and schools, among them the Diary of Anne Frank. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the foreword to the English translation of this Jewish Dutch girl's diary, penned down as she hid with her family from the Nazis in Amsterdam. Among the philosophical reflections of this innocent girl was this entry on July 15, 1944, one of her last before being discovered and sent to her death in a concentration camp:

I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us, too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again.

The German Cardinal Bea of the Curia in Rome, famous for his ecumenical work, told me that if Anne Frank had been a Catholic she would have been canonized a saint. Corrie ten Boom, the Protestant evangelist who described her family's hiding of Jews in Harlem and her imprisonment in Ravensbruck concentration camp in her book The Hiding Place, told me on one of my visits to her in Holland, that Anne Frank is an example of bravery and virtue for Dutch youth.

Learning of this intolerance in the new Protestant Fundamentalist movement, I am reminded of Francis Bacon's words: "For certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature."

This religious target of killing the Jews is as old as the Christian religion. Hitler said, "If I had no Jews I would have had to invent them." In November 1933 at a mass-meeting in the Berlin Sports Palace, presided over by the Lutheran Bishop Muller, Dr. Reinhold Krause called for the removal of the Old Testament "with its Jewish morality of rewards, and its stories of cattle-dealers and concubines." The New Testament, he urged, should be rid of the "whole theology of the Rabbi Paul," in order to proclaim a "heroic Jesus." Martin Niemoeller with a number of other Lutheran pastors formed an opposition group which would later turn into the Lutheran resistance movement called the Confessing Church.

Shortly after this I visited a German Christian Church and saw Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* on the altar beside the Bible. I was told by the minister, "The Jewish part of the Bible will soon be officially burned. We have the motto: The Swastika on our breast, the Cross in our hearts."

When I think of the new American Protestant movement, I cannot help thinking of the Bible: "What has been will be again."

The Catholic Church has now in her hands, tainted with blood for two thousand years, the prayer of Pope John XXIII:

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Today we are conscious, that for many centuries blindness covered our eyes, so that the beauty of Your chosen people was no longer to be seen and in their faces the features of our preferred brothers could no longer be recognized. We understand that a mark of Cain stands written on our foreheads. During the centuries our brother Abel has lain in the blood that we shed or he has wept tears that we have caused, due to our forgetting Your love.

Forgive us the curse which we falsely fastened on their name Jew. Forgive us, that we nailed You in their flesh for the second time on the cross. Because we knew not what we did..

What an historical truth! Repeatedly Christians accused Jews of ritual murder, the poisoning of wells, and the profanation of the host, and then proceeded to terrorize and decimate Jewish communities. Bishop Niemoeller told me, "Christianity will slowly die out unless we Christians reinstate the Bible as Jewish sacred scripture and center our lives around what Jesus considered the greatest laws: 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Mark 12:29-30) The first law consists of the most revered statement of monotheism, the *Shema* of the book of Deuteronomy, repeated twice daily by religious Jews, including Jesus and his mother, since antiquity, followed by the linking of love of God and neighbor, distilled from all of Hebrew scriptures, especially from Leviticus and Daniel."

Cardinal König of Vienna told me during our stay at the German spa in Worrishofen in the early Fifties that he considered his holiest task as cardinal to rid the Church of anti-Semitism, which caused the deaths of hundreds of millions of Jews throughout the centuries. Once he had challenged the directors of an Austrian spa near Innsbruck, regarding the lie that during the Middle Ages the Jews had poisoned the town well water but that the Blessed Virgin had miraculously changed the spring into healing water. A massacre of the Jews then took place. The directors defended the legend, saying that the valuable income from the pilgrims and spa guests would be diminished, impoverishing the town.

I said to the cardinal, that I as a sociologist had learned early from Hitler that the greed for power had given life to thousands of religions over the centuries, but also death. Hitler, perhaps the most venomous and powerful psychopath in human history, has told Ludendorff early in his political career that he hated Catholicism, but he had to conceal it as he needed the Bavarian Catholic vote; and he hated the Prussian Lutherans, but he needed their votes, too; but after his victorious wars he would give the Germans and the world a new Aryan religion. I had met them both.

Soon later curiosity drove me to visit Hitler's entrance into Berlin after he became Reichskanzler. Standing in the second row of some hundred thousand people lining both sides of the Boulevard Unter den Linden as the marching bands paraded, I noticed a woman standing in front of me with two small boys. She was teaching the boys how to step in time with the military music, "Left, right, left, right." I said, "Madam, you are teaching your sons early to march to war." She turned to me and exclaimed, "If the Fuhrer calls, I would even give him my third son still in the cradle. Who are you to criticize me?" My answer that I was

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one of the few survivors of the Battle of Verdun had no effect. The men around me joined in denouncing me, "Grab him, he is a Communist, a Jew, a Freemason!" I felt hands on my throat and arms. At that moment a large limosine passed slowly by: Hindenburg in his Fieldmarshall uniform and Hitler in a formal black suit with top hat. Everyone stood at attention and raised their right arm in the Nazi salute, yelling repeatedly in unison, "Heil Hitler!" When I felt their hands release their hold on me, I quickly sank to the ground, crept on hands and knees to the back, and hid myself behind the nearby basilica of . St. Hedwig. I did not even go home that night, out of fear that someone had identified me.

In the Sixties, Cardinal Tisserant, the Dean of the College of Cardinals in Rome, stooped from age and weeping, told me in his Roman villa that he would go to his death with a great hurt, that his warning to Pius XII against Hitler was ignored and he was denied any more audiences with the Pope. He said, "How can a Church, called to help humanity, make a pact with a criminal in order to protect her membership and property!"

Here was emphasized again, that the beast in man, whether in political or religious garb, has more power over the mass mind than the innate conscience in man. Is not this sociological truth confirmed once more some twenty-five years later by a new religious movement in their modern book-burning and censorship campaign?

When I asked Albert Speer, Hitler's armament minister, in Heidelberg after his release from a twenty-year prison term, "You used those Jews still able to work in your armament plants to meet your production goals, then after overwork and hunger weakened them, they were sent to the gas chambers. How can you deny knowledge of their fate?" - he answered only that it was not his duty to know for he had a task to fulfill. I knew that I dealt with the beast in man.

When in the beginning of the Thirties I met Hermann Göring, Hitler's Fieldmarshall and President of the Reichstag, collecting money on Alexanderplatz for the Winter Aid, I was asked by one of his uniformed helpers, why I did not make a donation. I said that I was sorry but had nothing on me. Seeing him stepping back to Goring and a companion to speak about me, I disappeared in a huge department store. I felt I had aroused the beast in Goring and his companions.

Not long after, on the night of May 10, 1933, I witnessed Goebbels give the Inquisition speech beside the burning mountain of books, including copies of my manuscripts and poetry, before the University, as thousands of students with swastikas on their brown shirts marched with torches, singing the popular Nazi songs of hate. One student recognized me from an afternoon encounter, when I tried to rescue a large gold-embossed Bible taken from a Rabbi's house. The students threatened to throw me on the pile, too, if I didn't take my hands off the "Jewish Testament of Lies." Now my life was confronted again by the beast in man, and I quickly hid myself among the crowd of onlookers.

Four years ago, when I was a Visiting Scholar in Stanford University, I listened to the sermon "Judaism and Christianity -the Need for a New Attitude" of Dean Robert Hammerton-Kelley of the Memorial Chapel, in which he attacked anti-Semitism in the churches:

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Let us Gentiles never forget that the God whom we adore is the God of Israel. He is not the God of Rome, New York, Paris, Berlin; he is the God of Israel. And his home town is Jerusalem, whether you like it or not! He is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and of David, and of Solomon. He is Israel's God, rich in grace and mercy, full of loving kindness and tender mercy, who demands truth and justice, not merely in words but in deed and in fact. He is Israel's God who is now also our God. God has never repudiated his covenant with Israel, rather he has widened it to include even us, unwashed as we are. . . .

I think our Christian error was not so much in our doctrine of Christ as in our doctrine of faith. For the humility and tentativeness which is proper to faith, we substituted political power; and it was that power that corrupted us. Without the kings and emperors on our side, we would have not have had the power to persecute. . . .

These words from the Stanford Memorial Chapel pulpit filled my conscience again when I learned of the fanatic campaign of the Christian Fundamentalists which burned *The Diary of Anne Frank*. What a horrifying truth! Some Christian seminaries and churches have not taken the Holocaust of six million Jews seriously.

It seems that Einstein's warning that we are headed for a third world war, which only one-fourth of humanity will survive, takes on a new urgency, due to the utter failure of the existing religions to live up to the two Jewish commandments of loving God and neighbor.

Einstein shared his intuition with me of establishing a cosmic religion, centered about the heart or conscience of man instead of his ego. He hoped the cosmic religion would serve to unite all the inclusive truths of the various religions, diffusing the dangerous exclusiveness of "We are better than you," or "Only our truth brings salvation." I feel that this is the best way to avoid a world catastrophe. If youth of the world would learn to trust in their innate conscience, the political systems of armament and power would lose their sustenance and be relegated to history's scrap pile.

Young generations are more fit to understand the impact of Jeremiah's words written thousands of years ago than the generations who have accepted the dependent identities assigned them by a political or a religious system which loves to flatter the beast in human nature:

Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another. Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say, 'Says the Lord.' (Jer. 23:29-31 RSV)

Note: Scanned OCR and pdf 8/7/2015 Ken. from folder with photocopies of this essay.