

NICK - 5.11.11 -
NIENHAYSE

file under Niemöller

Niemöller

September 20, 1945

My dear Chaplain Rose:

I was interested in your letter about Pastor Martin Niemöller and thank you for writing me as you did.

I certainly do not think that a man should be condemned without a hearing, and I did not write my article about Pastor Niemöller until after I had read his own statement. I was shocked by it, and wrote with only that in mind as previous to reading his statement I had greatly admired him. Pastor Niemöller is not condemned for speaking the truth and sounding like Hitler.

All of us who know Germans are aware that they like to be governed, but this attitude should not be encouraged. They should be made to realize that they are responsible for their leaders and for their form of government.

Very sincerely yours,

Captain Ben L. Rose, USA
Headquarters, 113th Cavalry (MECZ.)
APO 758
c/o Postmaster
New York, New York

HEADQUARTERS, 113TH CAVALRY (MEQZ)
OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN
APO 796, AHN, NEW YORK, NY

4 September 1949
Germany

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Hyde Park, New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

My heart was saddened by your attack on Pastor Martin Niemöller in your column, "My Day", of August 6, 1949. It was a surprise to me that you, whose eyes are usually so clear of prejudices, were this time so blinded by rage.

On several occasions recently I have had opportunity to talk with Pastor Martin Niemöller. A mere humble Christian man one will hardly find. He will disagree on several subjects, such as: separation of Church and State, but one cannot but be impressed by his sincere love of Jesus Christ, let that never be doubted.

In your column you quoted one of Pastor Niemöller's statements to the effect that German people like to be governed, not to mingle in politics, etc. etc. If you do not agree with that statement you simply do not know the German people today. A mere wish statement of the German press today could hardly be refuted. I have shown the statement to my number of my fellow officers (and we have been in Germany since September of last year, long enough to know a little about the German people) and they agree that it is absolutely true. I have shown the statement to a number of my brown friends (who lived under the German rule of their country, and who, by the way, hate with consuming passion anything that is German) and even they agree that the statement is absolutely true. How often Germans have said to me when I accused them of allowing Hitler to come to power, "Well, we must have a leader". Another Pastor Niemöller's statement sounds like Hitler or not, the statement is what it is, and I am refrain from speaking the truth simply because it sounds like Hitler!

To answer the opinions expressed in your article which I think do Pastor Niemöller great injustice, I am enclosing a copy of an interview which I had with him a few days ago. One of the 20 or so questions were prompted by your article.

It is a sad thing in our country that a man is not condemned without first being given a hearing. I feel that you have wronged and done great hurt to the name of a great Christian without first giving him a hearing.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

John L. [Name]
Chaplain (Ordained) USA

I know all of these things, but I'm writing letters

These are the things I...

I've read this and I think it's a very good thing to do. I'm sure you'll be very happy to hear from me. I'll be in touch with you soon.

Handwritten notes and scribbles at the top of the page, including a large 'X' mark.

HEADQUARTERS, 113TH CAVALRY (MECZ.)
OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN
APO 758, 4PM, New York, NY

4 September 1945
Germany

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Hyde Park, New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

My heart was saddened by your attack on Pastor Martin Niemöller in your column, "My Day", of August 8, 1945. It was a surprise to me that you, whose eyes are usually so clear of prejudice, were this time so blinded by it.

On several occasions recently I have had opportunity to talk with Pastor Martin Niemöller. A more humble Christian man one will hardly find. He and I disagree on several subjects, such as: separation of Church and State, but one cannot but be impressed by his sincere love of Jesus Christ. Let that never be doubted.

In your column you quoted one of Pastor Niemöller's statements to the effect, "The German people like to be governed, not to mangle in politics: etc. etc.". If you do not agree with that statement you simply do not know the German people today. A more true statement of the German attitude today could hardly be worded. I have shown the statement to any number of my fellow officers (and we have been in Germany since September of last year, long enough to know a little about the German people) and they agree that it is absolutely true. I have shown the statement to a number of my Dutch friends (who lived under the German rule of their country, and who, by the way, hate with consuming passion anything that is German) and even they agree that the statement is absolutely true. How often Germans have said to me when I accused them of allowing Hitler to come to power, "Well, we must have a leader". Whether Pastor Niemöller's statement sounds like Hitler or not, the statement is still true. Should one refrain from speaking the truth simply because it sounds like Hitler?

To answer the opinions expressed in your article which I think do Pastor Niemöller great injustice, I am enclosing a copy of an interview which I had with him a few days ago. One or two of my questions were prompted by your article.

It is a rule in our country that a man is not condemned without first being given a hearing. I feel that you have condemned and done great hurt to the name of a great Christian without first giving him a hearing.

Sincerely,

Ben L. Rose

Ben L. Rose
Captain (Chaplain) USA

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

*Review all 27
what (some) changes
Niemöller's
conclude it.
No York
Interview
Should be
Niemöller's
Sincerely
Ben L. Rose*

AN INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR MARTIN NIEMOELLER

Frankfurt on Main, Germany
September 3, 1945

by Chaplain Ben L. Rose

1. Exactly what was the accusation that the Nazis had against you?

A. The Nazis, and Hitler himself especially, were enraged that I dared to claim a public influence of the Church and Christianity upon the German people. I know that Hitler's wrath against my person dated from January 25, 1934 when I had the last word in a conference, held at Hitler's Chancellery, between Hitler and about 50 Church Leaders. I told him then, after a fierce debate, "we shall not cease to take care for the whole of our people, and no one, not even you yourself, is able to take that responsibility from us!".

2. Exactly what did you say that made them imprison you?

A. There were many things, and the document of indictment contained about 50 pages with citations of sermons, addresses and letters. Besides Hitler, several of his colleagues such as Rosenberg, Goebbels, Kerrl, and Ley, felt themselves attacked. I think the real and last reason was the memorandum of the end of 1936, signed by the Council of Brethren of the Confessional Church, which dealt with a number of grievances, including concentration camps, education of the youth, persecution of the Jews, etc. From then on Hitler knew that the Confessional Church would not cease from its complaints nor give in.

3. Then the Confessional Church did speak out against concentrations camps, persecution of the Jews, etc.?

A. Yes, it spoke against them to Hitler himself in no uncertain terms.

4. On exactly what points did you openly oppose the Nazis?

A. The best thing to do to have the full answer to this would be to read the bill of indictment. I spoke of the forgeries in the church elections, of the lies of the Goebbels propaganda, of the plan for the destruction of the Churches and of the Christian way of life, of the persecution of the Jews, of the education of party-members and leaders to enmity against the Bible and the Christian faith, and I showed by my sermons how these things must lead to the ruin of our whole nation and people. There is a volume of my sermons, published in the United States, entitled "Gestapo Defied", which will give a rather good impression of my preaching in 1936-37.

5. Why did Hitler not order you to be killed?

A. He didn't dare! He was afraid of the people, for he knew it would arouse too much public resentment. That was at first. As the war went on, I think Hitler just forgot about me. I was the personal prisoner of Hitler and because of this no one could do any harm to me without special orders from the "Führer".

6. Did you ever regret your stand?

A. No, not for one moment through all the eight years.

7. What passages of Scripture, or what part of your Christian faith meant the most to you while you were in prison?

A. The Epistle to the Philippians, the prophet Jeremiah, and the hymns of Paul Gerhardt, besides many prayers of the Roman Breviarium.

8. Wherein do you feel that your faith was changed by your eight years of prison?

A. My faith was not changed at all; but what became very clear to me was the fact that faith and love spring from the same well, and that a weakness of faith corresponds to a weakness of love. Another perception was the matchless power of faith which proves itself in the most desheartening situations - "If God be for us, who can be against us?".

9. When was your faith put to the severest test?

A. When a young SS-man, who was sentenced to death for homosexuality, came to me asking to confess and to be given the Lord's Supper in secrecy. It was then that I felt the dismal abyss into which humanity had fallen. It was the lowest tide of my soul; I almost had the feeling that all was lost. I gave the young man the Lord's Supper, which was my first professional duty after nearly seven years of imprisonment.

10. Is it true that some of the high ranking Nazis were Christians?

A. It is not true. I know of no high ranking Nazi who was a Christian.

11. While you were in the concentration camp did you offer your services to the German Navy?

A. Yes, I offered my services to the German Navy.

12. Will you give your reasons for this offer?

A. It was certainly not for the reason that I wanted to fight Hitler's war for him, and most assuredly not with any idea of trying to redeem myself with the Nazis. I was thinking only of my people and my country. At that time I saw three possibilities ahead for Germany: 1. total defeat, which would be bitter for Germany, 2. total victory for the Nazis, which would be even bitterer for Germany, and 3. to fight on in the hope that the Nazis might be thrown out of government and a negotiated peace reached. It was on the latter that I pinned my hopes. If the latter occurred, and I had good hopes that it might, I did not want to be in prison but wished to be free in order that I might do my part for the future of my country. I was also moved to this offer by the fact that my three sons were being drafted into the Army and I felt that the place of a father is by the side of his sons.

13. Did you say to U.S. reporters when you were freed, "Do not dare say that Niemöller is liberated"?

A. No, I had no reason to say that and never did.

14. Are the German people responsible for the war and Nazism?

A. They are responsible in one way inasmuch as they allowed Hitler to come to power with his party. In general they did not wish the war (and for this reason the war was begun without any enthusiasm) but the nation was too worn out to oppose with strength. It may be added that the Confessional Church held services praying for peace to the beginning of hostilities and that ministers were put into jail for doing this. It may be said too that in December 1944 I was asked by a high official of the Gestapo, "Why did the Church during this war never pray for victory?".

15. Can it then be said that the Church in Germany did not pray for Victory?

A. Naturally there were individual pastors who must have done so, but generally it may be said that the Confessional Church did not pray for Victory. When I heard this I was proud of the Church for I knew it had made a stand.

16. Should the German people be punished in any way for the war?

A. The German people have been punished already by God; its young people, and the old ones as well, have died at the front and at home; its cities and towns have been destroyed with all their contents; the people are starving, how much so the next winter will show; and the hopes and ideals of the whole nation have been shattered.

17. What then of Goering and the other war criminals?

A. By all means Goering and the other war criminals must be punished. If you do not do it, the German people will.

18. Should the world just say to Germany, "we forgive you", and then start against Are not punitive and corrective measures necessary?

A. "The world" will not be able to say, "we forgive you", but the Christians in the world should say so, and they should just start anew with us. Punitive measures against the nation will not help. The Christian people of Germany and many who begin once more to believe in God know that no man can punish them more than God has done. The others would only be made to say, "Hitler was not the worst, after all". So they would turn to radicalism and underground propoganda of all kinds. But corrective measures are necessary and wholesome, beginning with a new way of youth education and a slow re-education to public responsibility. I think the way in this direction will be open.

19. What is the remedy for Germany's "Militarism"? Can she be cured of it? How?

A. I think that Germany is cured of it for many years to come. The rest must be done by Christian education in family and school, and by Christian preaching from the pulpit and over the radio, etc.

20. Is the Church sufficiently strong in leadership and influence to become a real factor in the reconstruction of Germany?

A. That question is not to be answered yet. I hope that the influence of the Church will increase rapidly, and it will if she will be determined to go the right way, that is, if the leadership of the Church follow the way

of the Confessional Church in telling the people the truth concerning its guilt as well as its hope. A beginning has been made in the Church Conference at Treysa last week, where all Churches of Germany have pledged themselves to follow the rules of the declaration of Barmen (the Magna Carta of the Confessional Church of 1954).

21. In what way can the American Churches help you?

A. There will be no help in inner Church affairs, as the Church in Germany must find and go its way alone. But the Churches in America could help by supporting those works of the German Churches which are meant to help the people and the congregations with food for next winter, if it is not yet too late to do so. Most needed is food and medicine.

22. Do you think the influence of the Church in post-war Germany will differ at all from the influence of the Church in pre-war Germany?

A. Yes, the Church has learned by now that she holds a responsibility for public life, a responsibility which she has not seen before. It was due to this blindness (beside other reasons) that the Church did not speak as loudly and as clearly as she should have done. For the Church saw very well to what end Hitler was leading the German nation, but she remained silent because she thought that it was not her job or her duty to meddle with politics, which certainly was an error and a disastrous one. I believe this will never happen again.

23. What are your personal plans for the future?

A. As a clergyman my first thought after coming home has been to see that I should get a new Church job. At Treysa I was elected second Chairman of the Evangelical Church of Germany, which comprises all Protestant Churches with very few exceptions. But I have not yet found a real and lasting office in a congregation, so I do not know.

24. Are you and Dr. Karl Barth in complete agreement?

A. Two theologians are seldom, if ever, in "complete agreement", but basically and generally I am in agreement with Dr. Barth. He is a very good personal friend of mine.

245 WEST ELEVENTH STREET
NEW YORK 14, NEW YORK

October 1, 1945

Dearest Mrs. Roosevelt :

I am returning Capt. Rose's letter and the report of his interview with Pastor Niemoeller. Your letter, it seems to me, answers his questions though I am not sure he will understand after having misunderstood so completely your column. His interview proves nothing as you did not question Pastor Niemoeller as a Christian or even a Churchleader-- but only as a political leader, and there is not a single sentence in Capt. Rose's interview which proves that Pastor Niemoeller is not a pan-Germanist and does not want a soft peace for Germany. I do think professional Christians are very easily fooled.

My love to you,

Trude