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Professor Marcuse

History 133C

Nazi Repudiation of Christian Theology

English Translation of Source: Noakes, Jeremy and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 2: State, Economy and Society 1933-1939. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, p. 304.

Original Source: Himmler, Heinrich, “Rede vor den Oberabschnittsführern und Hauptamtschefs im Haus der Flieger in Berlin am 9. 6. 1942 (Gedenkrede für Reinhard Heydrich)”, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, 9 June, 1942, T-175, Roll 90, Frames 2664-2685.

On June 9th, 1942, at the funeral of Reinhard Heydrich, the *Reichsfuhrer* Heinrich Himmler delivered a speech against Christianity and introduced its reformed version, called “God Belief” (*Gottgläubigkeit*). He pushes for the re-configuration of Christianity, one that calls God “Wralda” (Himmler 1942, line 5) and argued that Christianity served as a justification for how special human beings are and that all are loved by God; however, Himmler desired uniformity and realization of human inferiority over individuality and humanity’s uniqueness. He wants human beings to understand their positions in a complex, indifferent “macrocosm” and appreciate the smaller, safer “microcosm” (Himmler 1942, line 6). Superficially, he seems to encourage a sense of duty and preservation of ancestral traditions, but instead attempts to instill surrendering of one’s will and working for a greater cause known as Nazi Germany. He says to “again be rooted in our ancestors and grandchildren […] By rooting our people in a deep ideological awareness of ancestors and grandchildren” (Himmler 1942, lines 15-16) and goes on to say that they must have sons. He believed that Christianity had marked women as the tumors to men. With the idea of Aryan-only population, Himmler praises and encourages women and mothers to birth more “pure-blooded” children (Steigmann-Gall). This is a tactic that Himmler utilizes to encourage the survival and superiority of the Aryan race, bringing the genocide of non-Aryan citizens and other religious groups in the 1940s. His speech was not just an address in honor of someone’s funeral; it was also a tool used to eradicate movements and ideologies that he found unfitting to the development of an Aryan-only world power. In this case, he encourages the singularity of one race as blessed through the *Gottgläubigkeit* and, by doing so, pushes for proliferation of the German race.

Biographical Information:

Heinrich Himmler, born on October 7th, 1900, served as the *Reichsfuhrer*, the highest position of the *Schutzstaffel*, from January 6th, 1929, to April 29th, 1945. As a child growing up, he had the privilege of having doting parents who cared deeply for his faith as a Catholic and his education since his father was a teacher at Willhelm Grammar School in Munich. He also grew up having a godfather, Prince Heinrich, who allowed the Himmlers to establish ties to the royal court. In a sense, Himmler grew up privileged, but developed a twisted perspective on religion (BF Smith, *Heinrich Himmler: A Nazi in the Making*), believing that only those who could be saved are members of the Aryan race. His upbringing and his sadism can be observed as developments together, providing explanations to Himmler’s religious radicalism in the 1930s to the 1940s.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

* Ackermann, Josef. *Heinrich Himmler Als Ideologe*. Musterschmidt, 1970.  
  Text is in German; unable to find an English translation nor the original speech using German. According to Peter Longreich, the text is a biography that gives insight on his beliefs and childhood growing up. Ackermann talks about the words “macrocosm and microcosm” (Makrokosmos and Mikrokosmos in Himmler’s untranslated speech) and the German obsession of establishing their own microcosmic society of Nazis.
* Smith, Bradley F., *Heinrich Himmler: a Nazi in the Making*. Hoover Institution Press, 1971.   
  The author does not make use of the speech here but gives insight on Himmler’s upbringing and how he was influenced as a child to become the terrorist he was before and during World War II.
* Smith, Bradley F. & Agnes F. Peterson, eds, *Heinrich Himmler: Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945 und andere Ansprachen*. Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1974, pp. 159-61.
* Noakes, Jeremy & Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 2: State, Economy and Society 1933-1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, p. 304.  
  Quotes the speech from Heinrich Himmler in the exact English translation as the GHDI document does. Noakes and Pridham use this speech to reveal not only his beliefs but also his ulterior motive to instill loyalty and honor as an Aryan member, thus establishing nationality as the epitome of human ascension above all others.
* Steigmann-Gall, Richard. “Rethinking Nazism and Religion: How Anti-Christian Were the ‘Pagans’?” *Central European History*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2003, pp. 75–105. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/4547272](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4547272).  
  At the bottom of page 99, Steigmann-Gall mentions the speech, although he does not quote anything from the speech itself, that was delivered to the SS and German police leadership with the purpose of exposing the “perversity” of Christian morality.
* Longreich, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler: A Life*. Oxford University Press, 2011.   
  The author quotes this speech in Chapter 9: “The State Protection Corps” to show Himmler’s passionate hatred towards Christianity and churches, seeing them as a harbinger of destruction as, he believed, had occurred in the past.