

NIEMOELLER TELLS OF CHRISTIAN FIGHT

Church Had to Oppose Nazis and Learned Oneness, Pastor Says to Federal Council

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SEATTLE, Dec. 4—Making his first public address in America, Pastor Martin Niemoeller of Germany, who spent eight years in Nazi concentration camps, told the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America at its biennial meeting tonight that the invitation to him to speak here "shows that there is a bridge that overcomes the gulf by which our nation is separated from the rest of the human world."

"Even though I am looked upon as a victim of National Socialism," Pastor Niemoeller explained, "the fact remains that I can't cease being a member of my German nation and that I signed the Stuttgart declaration, thereby affirming my personal share in the joint liability of my nation, just now in its present state of guilt and contempt."

The frail man, speaking in English, said that Hitler never was strong enough to overcome the dwindling troops of a few thousand ministers and congregations "fighting on our side."

"I think that has been a lesson from God," the pastor said, "and we are badly in need of it, all of us, and not only the Christian church in Germany. We have become accustomed to thinking in numbers and to measuring success by figures."

Another lesson learned, he said, was that all believers, despite their denominational differences "are one."

"Through centuries," Pastor Niemoeller continued, "we have lived on in the solitary confinement of our denominational seclusion, not believing that the barriers could be cast down, and not even allowing God to do so. But God does not heed our allowing or forbidding, for He Himself is the Lord and does as seems pleasing unto Him."

Only the church was left, as political factions and parties, trade unions, scientific and professional associations, teachers and civil servants were absorbed into Hitler's party. Even in the church inroads had been made by Hitler's fifth column, the "German Christians," the speaker said. But the church could not help resisting.

"We were to learn through many thousand days that God has a word for us which is able to renew courage and strength every single day and which proves even more powerful than the order and will of a tyrant," declared Pastor Niemoeller. "We knew this word quite well, we thought, and had known it for a long time. But we came to learn it and to understand it quite anew—the word, 'Jesus Christ.'"

"Hitler and his accomplices have gone. The church struggle has come to an end. The world has changed its face definitely. And we are only too glad that we may hope to forget what happened. But the lessons which God taught to his church must not be forgotten and they are by no means finished."

The pastor said "we shall have to learn this lesson of ecumenical brotherhood for many years to come until we know and know by heart what has been told us again and again, 'there is neither Jew

nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'

"In attempting to preach again after imprisonment, repentance was to begin in our own life and work. Only then could we hope to preach the real and full message of Christ's sovereignty in the midst of a world full of guilt, sin and misery."

SEATTLE, Dec. 4 (P)—Delegates to the general assembly of the Federal Council of Churches applauded at their opening session today a request that the council oppose the seating of Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi in the United States Senate.

The request, presented in the form of a resolution by the Rev. James L. Horace of Chicago, president of the Baptist General State Conference of Illinois, was referred to the business committee for action. It will be acted upon at a plenary session tomorrow.

Another proposed resolution asked that steps be taken to initiate acceleration of the reduction of armaments, the universal abolition of military conscription and to outlaw the use of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction.