

The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church

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# Paul Tillich

## The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church

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### I. THE IDEA OF A TOTALITARIAN STATE

#### 1.

In every historical event there are certain inherent structural forces which are characteristic of a definite condition of society. Every historical event also involves accidents, natural occurrences, the activities of particular individuals and the influence of external historical happenings. In so far as an event is determined by inherent structural necessities, it is capable of being traced and interpreted. In so far as it is dependent on chance it can only be established and described. The attempt will be made in the following presentation to deduce the idea of the totalitarian state and its practical application, particularly in Germany, from the structural necessities of contemporary social conditions and to interpret them in their wider historical relationships. This does not mean, however, that the occurrence of these events and the manner in which they took place were altogether independent of a surprising succession of chance events. I do maintain, however, and I think I shall demonstrate it, that certain inherent structural forces have found theoretical expression in the idea of the totalitarian state and practical realization in the attempts to bring such a state into being.

Structural laws and their resulting historical necessities seem the more general and vague the more the framework in which they appear is extended. And the scope allowed for concrete realization is greater. On the other hand they are more individual and definite and of narrower scope when the framework is smaller. Consideration from both wider and more restricted viewpoints is necessary when dealing with historical knowledge, particularly when concerned with a contemporary idea which lays claim to universal applicability. From a wider point of view such an idea appears to possess fundamental significance as well as the character of necessity and historical world significance. At closer range, however, its fundamental significance becomes diminished and it takes on the character of a transitory and chance phenomenon. For the contemporary observer there is no certain assurance as to what perspective, what appraisal of significance or what admixture of necessity and chance are appropriate. He is obliged to paint into his historical picture as much of the coloring of "necessity" as he possibly can. Enough of chance still remains. Such a procedure is made necessary not only by the manner in which the idea of the totalitarian state arose but also by its conflict with the church and the claims of the church. This conflict is so fundamental and touches upon such old basic problems of Christian life that it calls for a consideration of the problem in its widest aspects. The church is being opposed by tendencies such as have not arisen since the conflict with the Roman Empire. Even if the struggle is to be fought out on German territory alone, it is still of such general and fundamental significance for self-conscious Christianity that it can be solved only from the standpoint of a general explanation of the condition of present-day society.

Although it is impossible to limit precisely the scope of the question, it is nevertheless inevitable in an article such as this that the author will have to restrict himself to mere indications of many questions. Some of the material which is only briefly touched upon here is developed at greater length elsewhere. I refer the reader especially to my book, *The Religious Situation of the Present* [*Die religiöse Lage*

*der Gegenwart*, 1925; trans. by H. Richard Niebuhr as *The Religious Situation*, Holt, 1932.—ed.] and to my article, “The Religious Situation in Germany Today,” published in *Religion in Life* [Spring 1934 —ed.].

There are three groups of tendencies from which arose the idea of the totalitarian state and the attempts to bring it into being. The first and most comprehensive group is concerned with the world situation of late capitalism. The second and intermediate group has reference to the postwar situation in Eastern and Central Europe and the third and most limited group applies only to the German situation.

## 2.

The world situation of late capitalism presents the following picture: the interconnection between all parts of the earth, which has been brought about by capitalist expansion, has resulted in a general and mutual interdependence in both economic and political spheres. It is the era of world wars and world crises. The political and economic system of the world is so interrelated that any injury to one part is bound to exert a detrimental effect upon the whole structure. Efforts for economic security and peace, therefore, are the common concern of all interrelated nations. At the same time and in a peculiarly contrasting way, however, all attempts at effecting such security upon the foundations of late capitalism are doomed to failure. For the physiognomy of the world reveals a second aspect: the constantly diminishing latitude for the development of capitalist dynamics forces every national group to intensify its own political and economic aspirations and thus aggravate political conflicts and economic crises. The present world system is fundamentally fluid and cannot achieve any stability on the basis of its own peculiar structure. The menace to our historical existence has loomed up tremendously in the epoch of late capitalism.

There are two ways of meeting this menace: either a radical amalgamation or a radical separation of the interconnected parts. The first attempt, which has long been tried in vain and which has not as yet been entirely given up, was directed toward political and economic amalgamation. This attempt may be considered as having failed.

Hand in hand with this failure came the opposing tendency, which has led to growing economic isolation and to the aggressiveness of one political group against another. With this development the evaluation of the nation as a closed and economically self-sufficient political entity has made enormous progress. The belief in the armed and powerful nation as the last stronghold of historical existence seems to be the result of the failure of the forces of amalgamation.

The effects of the world situation with respect to the special social groups are similar. The general insecurity of proletarian existence becomes aggravated by long periods of unemployment. And a new social group emerges, in which the negative aspects of the proletarian fate become multiplied. The exclusion from employment removes the last vestige of the meaning which work, even in the service of profits, can give. Of even greater importance is the threat of decline in social prestige and of economic proletarianization through overproduction and crises which confronts the commercial middle class, the groups of lower officials, clerks and peasants. Lastly, even the ruling capitalist group exhibits an inner sense of insecurity which expresses itself in a feeling of bad conscience and in tendencies toward the suppression of competition and toward the utilization of state aid. The proletarian movements, when the threat to historical existence was first experienced, made the attempt to meet this threat by the elimination of class rule and by a supernational organization of political and economic groups. The newly threatened middle class groups have chosen the opposite course. They look to the national state for the security of their political existence, to measures of the national state for security of their economic existence, and to the winning over of the power of the national state for the purpose of establishing the security of their social privileges and class domination. They reject all supernational political or economic amalgamation such as was envisaged by the proletariat or even by the liberal bourgeoisie. The remnants of the feudal classes—the nobility, the hierarchy, the military and the upper bureaucracy—are, naturally, favorably disposed to this movement. The support of a large section of the new class of per-

manently unemployed may be explained in part by their opposition to those elements of the working classes which are relatively secure and partly by their own desperate position which drives them: into the arms of any movement which promises immediate salvation. The same applies to the youth among these threatened groups, who feel themselves robbed of their future. For all these classes the only security against the social threats and against the consequences of the world situation seems to lie in a strong national state, independent of the outside world and capable of independent action within the state.

This economic and political danger corresponds to a spiritual and psychical disintegration of the masses such as may only rarely be observed in history. The dissolving force of bourgeois society as regards inner security of either individual or social life, customs and morals, tradition and authority, faith and church has often been described. It has led to the mass disintegration of the proletariat; it has destroyed the effective forces of bourgeois society itself and now it has made wide inroads into the border groups of bourgeois capitalism, into the stagnating groups within the capitalist nations and also into the pre-capitalistic nations. Following the disintegration of the proletariat came an ever increasing disintegration of all groups as well as of all peoples linked with the capitalist system. This has resulted in making reintegration the central problem of late capitalism. Reintegration includes political and economic security as well as spiritual and social security, and also concerns the entire world which is enmeshed in one way or another in the late capitalistic scheme. The menace to historical existence, the growing disintegration and the yearning for security and new integration are everywhere apparent. In some instances it is the World War, in others the world crisis, which is most responsible for the latent feeling of insecurity and which has raised the question of possible security. In some cases disintegration has received its impetus from the religious secularism engendered by the propaganda of enlightenment among the masses and in others from the dissolution of forms of life through changes in social stratification. Often it is the product of all these factors. In all

cases, however, the national state is looked to for a solution. The roots of the national state, it is true, are found in the anti-feudal bourgeois Enlightenment, but it has undergone a fundamental structural transformation in relation to general capitalistic developments. It is at present much more in the service of all those tendencies which are in opposition to bourgeois democracy. Even where a communist world organization of economy and politics has been aimed at, the first and at present the only form of realization is the national state, as evidenced by the Russian example. Where a liberal world organization is attempted, as in the case of the League of Nations, final recourse is also more and more to the concentration of national political and economic forces. Such concentration, however, means that the national state must make itself as independent of the outside world as possible and internally must be prepared to act so that the program for security and reintegration may not be endangered by forces of disintegration. The fundamental liberal principles and constitutional rights, such as the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, the protection of private rights before the law and in social and economic life, the freedom of public criticism, political party struggles and economic class struggles, the wide latitude for conflicting ideologies, all these principles are considered as disintegrating forces which limit governmental freedom of action. The limitation of these rights and liberties may even appear inevitable in order to guarantee security and reintegration of the whole. Although the idea of a totalitarian state is not yet implied by these conditions, they do present the first general and decisive prerequisite for its emergence. This is what will here be called "concentration of the national state."

### 3.

The idea of a totalitarian state could never have arisen without the more limited anti-democratic tendencies appearing in Eastern and Central Europe. The peculiar position of these countries during the postwar period introduced a new element into the conception of the state. This was the idea that concentration of the national state is possible only

in an anti-democratic and authoritarian form. Even in countries with older democratic foundations there was an increase in the authority of the state in relation to national concentration. Special powers were delegated to the government, national truces served to restrict internal political battles, the constitution was adapted to the needs of the current situation and other measures of the kind were adopted. Fundamentally, however, the democratic basis in these countries has thus far been questioned only by small and relatively uninfluential groups. In Eastern and Central Europe the case was different. Here the anti-democratic attitude became elevated to a theoretical principle. At the same time the idea of national concentration assumed a more militant character. Inner concentration was, no doubt, hastened thereby but at the same time (in the dialectic used above) it increased the insecurity of the world situation and thus brought the desire for national security and reintegration to an inner contradiction, the consequences of which may be seen in the increasing danger of war.

The militant nationalism of Eastern and Central Europe is based upon three factors. The first is the establishment between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas of new national states whose first historical task is the consolidation of their national security. The second factor is the will of the nations defeated in the World War to regain their position of political power, wholly regardless of whether this power is to be used for war or not. The third factor is the dissatisfaction of certain of the victorious nations with their success, which was far below the national aspirations aroused during the war. The influence of this ever increasing militant nationalism upon the conception of the state is very apparent. Only authoritarian concentration of all forces and the ejection of all resisting tendencies provide a guaranty for the effectiveness of a militant nationalism. Only such a militant nationalism can secure the thorough and potentially military organization of an entire nation.

Militant nationalism receives support from the anti-democratic content of the culture of Eastern and Central Europe. Peoples like those of Russia and its border states never experienced democracy.



They either maintained the feudal absolutist tradition or immediately established Bolshevik rule. In Central Europe the bourgeoisie, which remained in political and military dependence upon the feudal classes, was very ready to sacrifice democracy and subordinate itself to a new and purely authoritarian form of government, in order to ward off the threat of socialism. When the danger of a proletarian dictatorship after the Russian model seemed to be imminent, an alliance was quickly effected between the remnants of the old feudal ruling classes and the traditionally subservient middle class. Militant bands, consisting of the unemployed and the youth, were formed and in this way the state of national concentration was turned into a militantly nationalistic and authoritarian state. It is obvious that the fundamental liberal rights and constitutional principles, above all the right of public criticism, were not only temporarily restricted but were either entirely or partially abolished. Of course all this is more characteristic of the general tendencies than of their actual realization. There are exceptions such as Czechoslovakia and there are weaker countertendencies to the authoritarian principle, such as the structure of the Communist party in Russia or the limitations upon the autocratic tendencies imposed by the bourgeoisie and peasants in the succession states. In these regions above all, the third element, the totalitarian state, is absent in theory, practice or both. In Germany alone are found both the theory and practice of the totalitarian state.

#### 4.

The widespread tendency toward national concentration of the state emerged from the insecurity and disintegration of the world situation during the period of late capitalism. In Eastern and Central Europe it assumed the character of a militant national and authoritarian state. It reached its fruition in Germany with the theoretical and practical realization of the idea of the totalitarian state. There have been instances of state intervention, particularly in the spheres of economic and social life, even in the older democratic countries. They were, however, neither fundamental nor totalitarian in character. The totali-

tarian tendency is very much stronger in the militantly nationalist and authoritarian state. Fascism has taken over not only those spheres, such as radio, press and film, which it deems necessary for the security of its authority; it has also imposed a censorship upon certain aspects of scientific learning, it has set up definite restrictions in education and it has subjected, ideologically at least if not practically, all economic life to its authority. Even leisure time, to a certain extent, has been appropriated. But neither in Austria nor in Italy has there ever been a claim to a totalitarian state. In Russia the totalitarian state has been more effectively realized than even in Germany. Economic life, culture and education are all equally subject to state centralization. The motivating force behind this subordination, however, is not the state but the individual and the full development of his collectivistic activities. This is due to the special situation in Russia, which has set for itself the task of assimilating the rational technological culture of the past centuries of European civilization, and making it the foundation of economic life, education and culture, without accepting Western capitalism. The totalitarian character of the Soviet state, therefore, is to be understood on the one hand as a bulwark against the penetration of bourgeois-capitalist elements and, on the other hand, as the education of an entire continent in communistic enlightenment. Every step forward in this educational process means essentially a strengthening of the critical, anti-authoritarian and anti-totalitarian forces among the people. Thus the more successful it is in the realization of its goal the closer does the totalitarian state come to digging its own grave. This corresponds precisely to the theories of Marx and Lenin on the state. According to them the state as a form of political power is ultimately to be dissolved into a free and self-administering society.

The totalitarian dogma as developed in Germany represents a complete contrast. Although it has not been carried out in practice as radically as in Russia, it has taken on a much more fundamental significance. Only here has the idea been systematized as a theory, because the disintegration of late capitalism has advanced farthest in Germany and therefore has aroused more intense passions, and

because of the traditional Prussian-German political thought, which received its strongest expression in the formulations of the older and earlier organological school but which was also echoed in the writings of Hegel. Out of the interaction of both factors has come the dogma of the totalitarian state.

The assertion that disintegration has advanced farthest in Germany does not apply to the almost heroic attempts of various individuals and parties during the republic to battle for security and reintegration even at the risk of personal and political self-sacrifice. It refers much more to the fact that Germany manifested more acutely all the factors in the threat to traditional society as revealed in the world system of late capitalism in general and in Central Europe in particular. The reasons are quite evident. One of the most important, particularly from a psychological point of view, was the Treaty of Versailles. In addition there were the internal political, economic, social and cultural factors which are rooted in the particular structure of Germany. These have been reenforced by the peculiar destiny of the German people, a destiny which reveals both greatness and tragedy. For Germany has experienced the age-old contradictions of Western history in a fundamentally more acute form and at the expense of its own unity. Only in the light of these facts can one understand Prussian political mysticism. Ever since the Reformation and the Peasant War, above all since the close of the Thirty Years War, the unified religious, social and cultural foundations, which in other nations made possible extensive limitations of state influence, were completely lacking in Germany. Only the state seemed able to assure the security and integration of all vital forces in the nation. Thus the organological school raised the state to an independent reality above all individuals and Hegel included the entire social and moral life within its scope. In Hegel's own system the power of the state was regulated by strong corrective forces which sprang from his bourgeois conceptions of freedom. After the discarding of these correctives and the complete triumph of the organological concept, the way was prepared for the elaboration of the idea of the totalitarian state. A hundred years after

Hegel's death this step was made possible by the new political and social conditions.

In view of the fact that the world crisis is to be understood primarily as an outcome of the world economic situation of late capitalism, the totalitarian state found it necessary above all to become master of the economic sphere. Such was the case in Russia even without the totalitarian theory. Although the subordination of economic life to the state was given clear theoretical enunciation, its realization met with the resistance of the capitalistic leaders and of the tendency of general economic development toward the emergence of a semi-feudal and monopolistic ruling class. A very patent gap in the totalitarian system thus remained, which has been covered up to some extent by emergency economic measures of the state. It is impossible at this time to predict what the permanent effects of this gap will be upon the totalitarian state: whether it will become wider, and disrupt the entire system, or narrower, and strengthen it. The claims of the totalitarian state upon the cultural spheres, education, science, art and social life were correspondingly greater. A presupposition for this was the suppression of all the fundamental rights of the individual, the concentration of all powers in the hands of a person responsible to no one and supreme even in matters of law, and the rejection of all constitutional correctives. Thus was provided the most extreme reinforcement to the totalitarian factor. Even the leadership principle, in its original sense, was subordinate to this tendency. In charismatic leadership there is something unique and non-institutional; there is a sort of dependence upon the free inner as well as the external recognition of those who are led. But as soon as the leader transfers his personal authority to the authority of his office, the interrelationship between the leader and his following is lost even if there is an attempt to maintain it. The original restricted power of personal authority becomes transformed into a derived but unlimited power of the authority of office.

## 5.

The concentration of all spheres of life within the unlimited authority of the national state is possible only when founded upon a world view which has the inherent power of encompassing man's entire being and driving him on to unconditional self-surrender. Such a world view is religious in character and finds expression in a myth.<sup>1</sup> The more unconditional and more inclusive the claims of the state are, the more fundamental and powerful must be the myth, which is the foundation of such claims. In an older democratic society, national concentration requires little of this mythical element in order to make itself effective. As in the case of the United States, any threat to its historical existence is sufficient to bring about the use of rational measures to effect security and reintegration. The question as to the permanence of the effects of such measures belongs to the future and upon its answer depends the destiny of these nations. The authoritarian state, however, requires a more powerful foundation, especially when it deprives the individual of his fundamental rights. In many instances, as in Austria and other succession states, the development of a militant nationalism is sufficient to reenforce the authority of the old secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies without the need of a new myth. When the totalitarian tendencies are more powerful, new myths are required in order to provide the basis for the struggle and for reconstruction. In Italy, for example, there is the myth of the Roman Empire, which is used for this totalitarian purpose. In accordance with the purely political character of this myth, however, it leaves the religious life entirely free and, as for education, it is able to come to an understanding with the church. In Russia the more powerful totalitarian tendency is bound up with the influences of deeper mythical forces. Marxist dogma, it is true, is considered a science. The mythical quality of the dogma, however, cannot be disputed. It is invested with the force of dogma and is not permitted to be questioned and, with its eschatological enthusiasm and expectation of a world of justice, it has released the tremendous energies which brought about the revolution and the defense and reconstruction of the Soviet state. The totalitarian claims of the Russian state

rest upon the myth of social justice, which, in the form of a rational doctrine, provides a foundation for the entire life of the Russian people.

The basic conceptions of the totalitarian state, as revealed in the German situation, are tied up with the strongest and most conscious elaboration of the myth. A series of intimately related mythical ideas have come to exercise a great influence and a national mythology has developed centering around the myth of "the nation" (*Volk*). Revolving around this idea are other myths such as those of blood, territory, race, state, leadership, etc.

The mystical character of the myth of the nation is clearly to be seen in the work of the leading theologian of the German-Christian movement, Emmanuel Hirsch (*Die gegenwärtige geistige Lage*, Göttingen 1934). Hirsch speaks of the nation in essence (*Volkstum*) as the "mysterious sovereign" (*verborgener Souverain*) whose ends all state activity must serve. The nation is to be founded upon the "mystery of the blood covenant" and the state authority upon the blood relationship of leaders and followers. The individual member of the nation has no real existence outside of this union of blood. His historical existence is based entirely upon his membership in the national group and his actions must follow the will of the "mysterious sovereign," which becomes manifest through the leader. His goal must be the realization of whatever is best for the creative and determining forces in the nation. The triumph of this myth and the reality from which it proceeds over all opposing forces represent the "sacred hour" of the nation, which must be experienced with enthusiasm and unconditional surrender. It is the "fullness of time," in the religious sense of the term. "Even the harshest measures of the state," even the resolution of the entire life within the state, is necessary and sacred if it serves the purposes of the nation, the "mysterious sovereign." He is not God, but he is an immediate revelation of God.

This is the totalitarian state, born out of insecurity of historical existence during the epoch of late capitalism and designed, through national concentration, to create security and reintegration. It arises in Central Europe where liberal rights and democratic tendencies

have been displaced by a militant nationalism and an old feudal authoritarianism. In Germany, where disintegration and insecurity have become most palpable, it receives theoretical elaboration, is nourished and suffused with the powers of myth and carried into effect with passion and unscrupulous consistency. It has received mystic consecration and stands, not merely as the earthly representative of God, as Hegel conceived it, but actually as God on earth. A God or a demon! Whether it is a god or a demon is determined by its relation to the Christian church. Does and can the totalitarian state stop short of the church? Must it not clash with the claims of the church and become involved in a life and death struggle with the church, irrespective of whether its leaders desire it or not?

## **II. THE CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH AND ITS CONFLICT WITH THE TOTALITARIAN STATE**

### **1.**

The claim of the church is based upon the absolute character of its teaching. Its gospel consists of proclaiming God in the sense of the first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me." Every word of the Old and New Testaments is a further development of these words. The whole Bible is concerned with the divinity of God as opposed to any human claims. This is revealed in the words to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto the land that I will show thee"; in the prophetic tirades against the pagan national gods and the religious nationalism of the false prophets of Judah; in the proclaiming of the Kingdom of God, embracing all peoples and destroying all the national world empires; in the crucifixion of Christ and its interpretation by the Apostle Paul as a judgment passed upon every human force and agency, every nation and religion which arrogates unto itself the power of God; in the words of Jesus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength," and proceeding from this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as

thyselves." In this respect there is no difference between the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament the claims of God wage a battle for a people and with a people until this people is destroyed. The Old Testament, therefore, is not a national Jewish book but a record of the struggle of God against the national aspirations of Judaism; a struggle not in behalf of another national claim but rather for the triumph of God over any and every national pretension. The New Testament takes for granted the experiences of Jewish history and the idea that a nation cannot belong to God as a nation. The community of Christ, which is the true Israel, is therefore not a group of superior people of a superior race, but an assembly of all nations and religions. They are called by divine will, "through Grace alone," and therefore never sure of not being cast aside as a visible church as were the chosen people. This principle is strikingly revealed in all periods of church history. It appears with the Church Fathers who waged successfully the first battle for the Old Testament and thus prevented the dissolution of Christianity into a Pagan-Gnostic movement such as that desired by present-day German pagans. Athanasius battled against the Arian interpretation of Jesus as a heroic demigod, an idea very familiar in the sermons of the German Christians. In Augustine it appears in his struggle against the belief that humanity has remained essentially untainted and in his forceful conception of the historical battle of the Kingdom of God against the Satanic kingdoms of the earth. Luther showed the same principle in his assertion of the sovereign rights of God to dispense grace, independently of any religious, spiritual or vital powers. Calvin showed it in his passion for the glory of God before which all human glories pale into insignificance and in his subjection of all peoples to the unity of the Kingdom of God which is to descend upon earth. This point has never been seriously questioned in principle in Christianity. Therefore in Germany, Christians of all confessions have joined in a common opposition when this cardinal principle of their gospel, the supremacy of God, has been laid open to question by placing other gods beside Him.



## 2.

The claim of the church is based on the claim of God as proclaimed by the church. It is not identical with it, however, for the Kingdom of God and the church are not one. The church proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God but it comes not only in the church. The church points the way to the Kingdom of God but the church may also serve to hide it. Various possibilities proceed from this dialectic relationship which emphasize the proximity or distance of the one to the other. The most dogmatic assertion of the identity of the Kingdom of God with the church is found in the Roman Catholic church; the separation of the two is expressed most clearly in genuine Lutheranism. Various gradations exist between these two positions. Of these we will here concern ourselves with the Greek Orthodox church and with Calvinism. A decisive factor in the relation of church and state consists in how far a church lays claim not only to the inner life of man but also to his external and social life, and how far it thus assumes a character similar to that of a state.

Roman Catholicism, with its political organization and its hierarchic structure, goes farthest beyond the immediate religious life. Grounded in Thomistic social ethics and aided by the political power of its followers in various states, it aspires to spiritual leadership in all aspects of life relevant to religion—therefore in all spiritual, social and communal life and its legal and political forms. It leaves in the hands of the state the immediate exercise of power for the ordering of life but it cannot concede to the state the determination of the content of human life. For the content of life is unconditionally subject to the claims of God and the church is responsible for its realization. The church, therefore, makes unconditional claims upon education and considers it a question which involves the very existence of the church. Despite its formal recognition of the supremacy of the state in education, it inevitably penetrates the content of this education.

In the case of the Greek Catholic church, particularly in Russia, the situation differs in the respect that there never was a political hierarchy. In contrast to Protestantism, too, there was no active com-

munal life. A religious and political title to leadership or a direct influence upon the religiously relevant spheres of life could not, therefore, come about. The Russian church was united with the state in the person of the Czar, and when this point of union was destroyed the church as an organism collapsed. The Russian Christians, however, lay claim to the sacred traditional cult and to the power to exercise and order this system of rites. On this point no compromise with the scientific dogmas of Bolshevism is possible.

Calvinism lays no claim to the absolutism of the church as such, but rather to the Will of God, proclaimed by the church and found in the Scriptures. This pertains not only to the inner life of the individual but also to the life of society. Thus Calvinism has set up norms not only for the doctrines of the church but also for its organization. Hence the struggle for the divinely ordained church organization and for the public influence of the church. Hence also the feeling that the Kingdom of God is progressively realized by the Christianization of society through the preaching and teaching of the church.

Early Lutheranism espoused no definite and divinely ordained constitution or social order. Any constitution was tolerated which permitted the unrestricted propagation of the pure doctrine through word and sacrament. Lutheranism thus can subordinate itself to any social order or political structure without attempting to exercise any direct critical influence. Only indirectly, by virtue of the fact that office holders are Christians, does Lutheranism attempt to infuse Christian spirit into those secular phases of life which are of religious consequence (cf. the social legislation of Bismarck). It is only through this separation of political from private morality, a fact which is historically understandable but in its ultimate effects quite disastrous, that one can explain that absence of public criticism of state activities which seems so incomprehensible to Anglo-Saxon Calvinism. It is this too which explains the silence of the Lutheran church on the boycott against the Jews, but which also explains the passionate struggle against the application of the Aryan clause within the church. The severely anti-clerical and anti-religious currents in the revolutionary

labor movement in Germany are also explained by the absence of public political criticism on the part of the Lutheran church. The failure of the religious socialist movement, which attempted to widen the horizon of Lutheranism by going back to genuine Christian and particularly Augustinian traditions, is also largely attributable to this Lutheran separation between private and political morality. It is not altogether unfair when early Lutheranism is charged with adopting Machiavellian social ethics.

The conclusion derived from these considerations may be briefly summarized as follows: all churches must claim the right to preach without hindrance and to realize within the church the divinity of God and his unconditioned supremacy in the world. The Catholic church deduces from this the demand that the hierarchically constituted church should direct the entire religiously relevant life of the people. The ultimate consequence of this demand is the mediaeval belief—and it has never yet been given up—that every political hierarchy must subordinate itself to the spiritual and priestly authority. The Greek church demands freedom for the preservation, exercise and interpretation of the traditional system of cults, with complete indifference to political and social problems. Calvinism demands the right to a freely elected church organization and the possibility of free exercise of influence by the church upon public life and the political decisions through which public life is formed. Lutheranism lays claim only to the unrestricted propagation of the pure doctrine and is inclined to leave all constitutional and administrative matters to the state.

All churches thus lay claim to one thing in common: to place man before the presence of God—whether it be through priestly mediation, through cult and sacrament, through proclaiming God's will in the world, or through the preaching of true doctrine. For this goal they lay claim to man's deepest experience and to all aspects of his existence. So long as they are what they are—churches—they cannot give up this claim.

### 3.

The Christian churches have no inherent reason for resisting national concentration in itself. Although from the standpoint of the expectation of the Kingdom of God they must welcome all tendencies toward uniting the forces of humanity, they still cannot overlook the danger to the historical position of the nations and the break up of the forces that united them. They must, therefore, affirm and support every attempt at historical security and reintegration, and therefore also the concentration of the national state in so far as it serves this purpose. But their task to keep alive the feeling of both an original and a future unity of mankind still remains.

One should not expect any resistance on the part of the churches to the anti-democratic and anti-liberal position of the militantly nationalistic and authoritarian state. The ecclesiastical hierarchies are at all times ready to renew their old alliance with the political hierarchies if it means the strengthening of the authority of both and an extension of church influence. This is revealed most patently in the alliance of the spiritual and the secular reactionary forces in Austria. The churches do, indeed, surrender many and often very decisive aspects of the claims which they are in duty bound to assert, above all in reference to social justice and the unity of mankind. This is a part of their general culpability, which has always caused the emergence of passionate opposition based on the very principles of the church. These ever recurring phenomena show the willingness of the churches to accept compromises with the ruling state power whenever it is agreeable to them.

The circumstances under which they reject compromise must therefore be very much more serious. Such circumstances arise when the state intervenes in the church itself or else in those spheres which the church is convinced will have to remain subject to the church. The actual occurrence of such intervention or the belief by the church that such intervention is taking place naturally depends upon the general complex of historical events. In Italy, despite strong totalitarian tendencies, the state was able to establish an accord with

the church by not making any claims upon factors of ultimate and external importance.

In Russia, on the other hand, there were serious conflicts. Marxist dogma, which is the foundation of contemporary Russian society, contains two elements. One is what we have termed the myth of social justice. With the substance of this myth the church has no controversy. On the contrary, it would be in duty bound to fuse this substance with its own doctrines after having removed the mythical-utopian elements of it. The church could and would have to give meaning to this substance and refashion it from the standpoint of the expectation of the Kingdom of God. A conflict on this question is possible only where the church, in contradiction to its mission, has become so intimately allied with definite social groups that it supports their struggle against the demand for social justice, or else when it feels bound to raise objections to the demonic methods of the revolutionary struggle. Neither of these conditions has led to the present-day conflict. It is rather the second element of Marxist dogma which is responsible for this conflict. This is the anti-religious form in which, for certain historical reasons, Marxism developed in Germany and was taken over in Russia. The claim of the state to fashion the entire life of man in this spirit inevitably clashed with the mystical and ritualistic tradition of the Russian Orthodox church and, despite the complete political passivity of the church, led to the attempt to eliminate it from any position of influence. It is true that the struggle has been carried on chiefly by the independent God-less movement rather than by the state itself. The state measures, however, have resulted in such a far-reaching debilitation of the church that in many ways it has already been proclaimed dead. It is not dead, however. Its inner existence is threatened, but less by terroristic acts than by the atheistic education imparted to the youth. The struggle against the Russian church is to a great extent a struggle against the Russian Middle Ages. This accounts for the weakness of the Russian church, which is in a position similar to that of the Roman Catholic church during the French Revolution. But just as the Catholic church was

ultimately able to assert itself against bourgeois atheism, so it may be expected that the Russian church will also assert itself against the proletarian atheism. The claims of the totalitarian state upon those parts of the human soul that are outside the technical and political realm will have to be surrendered here as in the former instance. And the churches in their turn will be forced to surrender their mediaeval claims. This problem, already settled in Western Europe, is the basis of the conflict between state and church in Russia.

#### 4.

The situation is quite different in Germany. Here there is no medievalism to conquer. There may be rather, as one often hears said, the dawn of a new Middle Ages. Problems are emerging which have not arisen since the beginning of the Christian Middle Ages. Since the triumph over ancient paganism and the Christianization of the Germanic tribes there has never been any independent non-Christian myth which gave the state unconditioned sway and which was made the foundation for the totality of life. This has now occurred in Germany, and with it has come a host of problems. The totalitarian claim of the state upon man clashed with the unconditional claim which God makes upon him. The myth of the German nation and empire confronted the message of the people and Kingdom of God; the myth of blood, the community of sacrament which transcends blood relationship; the unconditional tie of the individual to his nationality, the requirement to be able to leave homeland and father's house for the sake of God; the disparagement of the individual, the doctrine of the absolute value of the human soul; the leadership of the national state, the sovereign claims of Christ; the coordination of the spirit, the directing judgment of the Spirit of God; the consecration of the present, the hope of the future. The destiny of both the totalitarian state and the German churches, with either their possible union or their fundamental irreconcilability, is involved in the conflict between these opposing currents.

Every created reality has its value as creation, but its worth is derived not from itself but from the creative foundation from which

it springs. It is finite and transitory but it becomes blasphemous when it aspires to be infinite and unconditioned like God. Everything finite is guilty of such aspiration. This is true not only for the individual but also for all powers and creations of nature and history. It is also true of races, peoples, states, leaders and their followers. They can be elevated to the state of unconditioned worth only by wanton contradiction of their finite character. They attain to this state, however, as soon as they are spoken of, experienced and acted for, as if they were gods. The way in which this myth of the nation is propagated and the resulting activities are indications of such a tendency to attribute an absolute character to a conditioned being. If the expression "Myth of the Twentieth Century" is to be taken as seriously as it wants to be taken, then it elevates the nation to divine dignity and the believers in this myth cannot but draw the practical consequences from it. The simultaneous recognition of Christianity may mean only that the Christian tradition as a whole is too deeply rooted in national consciousness to be eradicated; but it must subordinate itself to the criticism of the new myth, that is, it must either be set aside, transformed or changed.

This has been attempted in various ways, such as the subordination of education to the propagation of the new myth, the rise of a frankly pagan religious movement which aspires to recognition as an independent church, or, above all, the attempt of the new mythical tendencies to penetrate into the old church organizations. Such manifestations reveal the earnestness and zeal with which the consciousness of the new myth determines the thought and acts of its adherents. The individual points of conflict between the new myth and Christianity are unimportant so far as concerns the general mythical position. Nevertheless, they are symptoms of great interest. There is above all the attack upon the Jewish prophetic ideal of piety and upon the use of the Old Testament as a book of religious instruction for the German people. There is also the supremacy in the national church of blood relationship over community of sacrament. Or there is the attempt to displace the highest Christian values of humility, love and

hope by the supreme pagan virtues of courage, power and enthusiasm, and thus to transform the New Testament image of Christ into that of a heroic figure. There is further the division of truth and justice into as many truths and ideas of justice as there are national spirits and corresponding national states. This accounts for the rejection of the prophetic transcendental criticism of state measures in so far as they serve the ends of one's own nation—for the nation is the "mysterious sovereign" and the final norm. There is no doubt that this idea stands in sharp contrast to the ideas of the New Testament, according to which all "mysterious sovereigns," angels and powers, have been vanquished and brought together in the cross of Christ. The new myth contradicts the unconditioned character of unconditioned beings and thus the mission of the church and the claims which it cannot surrender. This myth, however, is the basis of the totalitarian claim of the state.

##### 5.

The idea of totality contains a mythical factor within itself. Only that which is absolute can lay claim to totality. Were it not unconditioned it would have something else whereby it is conditioned; it would have to concede a sphere alongside of its own sphere and would thus have to circumscribe its totalitarian claims. Since a mere juxtaposition of spheres destroys the unity of man and the world, there is the quest for a third and higher entity to which both spheres are subordinated. The conflict between the totalitarian state and the church can only be understood in the light of this dialectic of conditioned and unconditioned.

The state attempts to avert the conflict in two ways: first, directly, by separating the spheres, and second, by inner assimilation of the spheres of the church. The first way is the official state method, the second is the ecclesiastical political method. The first method is formally applied to all churches, the second only to the evangelical state churches. The state has always declared that the churches, i.e. dogma and ritual, were to remain free from state intervention, that



public education was to be based on positive Christianity and that all atheistic propaganda was to be forbidden. The concessions in the concordat with Rome go much farther in some points, such as in the education of priests, than any other government has gone. The magnitude of the movement back to the churches seems to show that there is a strong, even though unofficial, political pressure behind it. The church organizations, in so far as they serve ritualistic purposes, are not suppressed. The Aryan paragraph has not been enforced in specific Catholic schools and hospitals. There seems to be a wide latitude of independent activity which the state has allowed to the churches, particularly to the Catholic church. The state thus seems to have effectually limited its totalitarian claims. It is also no doubt true that the churches would be ready to utilize for their own purposes the strengthening of their influence upon the people, the elimination of anti-clerical propaganda and the anti-liberal authoritarianism had not the fundamental opposition to the new myth deprived of their value all the elements of community.

It is impossible to isolate the dogmatic and ritualistic spheres and place them beyond the sphere of real life. There are aspects of life which are further removed from religious claims than others. Man's technical activities in all fields, including the political, have no direct relation to religion. They are subject only to the laws of utility. But every use points to a higher use for which it is but a means, and they all point to an ultimate goal which is an unconditioned and determining principle. From this standpoint the transcendent claim, religiously speaking, infuses divine necessity into all worldly spheres. For this reason all advances made by the state to the church are of no avail if these spheres, the most remote as well as the nearest, are subordinated to another determining principle; if, with its separation of spheres, it keeps the church and its claims far from the realities of life.

The sphere in which, up to a certain degree, all other spheres come together is that of the education of the youth, both in and out of school. It means but little to the church that it is accorded a far-

reaching influence on education if on the other hand the education by the state, and that means education based on the new myth, not only is imparted to the entire youth, but, with unlimited effectiveness, is made the necessary condition for all success in the life of the state. Those brought up in the spirit of church education thus become stigmatized as second-rank citizens according to the new ideal image of a German man. It is evident that all other compromises become illusory in this light and that a struggle must break forth in which there cannot be any real compromise for the church.

There are inevitable sources of conflict from another side. The system of the totalitarian state and that of the Catholic church are both systems of unconditioned authority. It is, however, impossible for two unconditioned authorities to exist together without both becoming conditioned. For that reason each one must attempt to undermine the other. Symbolic of the situation is the fact that the fundamental book of the new myth has been placed on the Papal Index and that the sale of a defense of the Old Testament by a bishop has been suppressed by the party. This indicates that in the spiritual realm too a separation of spheres is impossible of realization as soon as there is a question of basic world views. A further symptom is the fact that the filling of all important posts of cultural instruction is now dependent not only upon the scientific institutions themselves but also upon a cultural commission of the party, which is under the influence of the propagator of the new myths. This is also a public confession of the impossibility of separating the spheres of interest.

Since it is impossible to deprive the churches of their own world view and since no man can subscribe to two genuine world views, both of which provide the whole of the world and life with a meaningful principle, the individual finds himself forced to make a decision.

In the spheres of practical life this opposition has down to the present been of little consequence. This was due mainly to the fact that the conservative forces in the church were in accord with such anti-liberal measures of the state as involved the fundamental rights

of the citizen. Also in Austria there were no conflicts on these matters. The limits of toleration of the church were reached when the right and the duty of the church to dispense divine grace through intercession and sacrament to those excluded by the state from its community and from life could not always be exercised. The restriction of this last human right in some cases has deepened the internal tension and sharply illuminated the contrast between the two world views.

## 6.

The situation is quite different in the Protestant churches. Here there was also the possibility of indirect subordination of the church through inner ecclesiastical movements. The lay character of Protestantism, its democratic structure, the fundamental indifference of Lutheranism to questions of church constitution together with a profound and justifiable dissatisfaction with the rigidity and the aloofness of the official church circles, all made it possible to effect successfully a coordination of the church during the first period of the new regime. But the too rapid triumph was ominous. As soon as the new myth was made the regulating principle of church gospel in many places within the church and as soon as the attempt was made to transfer the race dogma and the authoritarian principle of leadership to the church, resistance arose. It became increasingly consolidated and has now taken on the form of a church within a church supported by world Protestantism.

It must always be emphasized in this connection that it is never a question of political resistance to the state. Not only do the repeated professions of loyalty of the opposition leaders testify to this fact; it is also deducible from the essential character of Lutheranism. The Lutheran church, which has determined the character of Protestant Germany, has always left the extra-religious phases of life in the hands of the state, so that the church was confronted with the growing danger of disappearing from public consciousness. Every semblance of meddling in political affairs has always been avoided on the part of Protestantism in so far as it is a question of political matters only. The external constitution and the whole legal and administra-

tive side of ecclesiastical life has, since the Reformation, been left by Lutheranism in the hands of the state, so that even now there would have been no difficulty in effecting an agreement concerning changes in the constitution and amalgamation of the state churches of Germany, had not the new myth brought on the break. The more evident this background of the ecclesiastical policy of the group of the Reichsbishop became, the deeper became the abyss between the two.

In this situation the oath demanded from every church minister appeared as a symbol. This oath meant, first, subjection to the church rule of the Reichsbishop. In the second place, the relationship between this subordination and the oath of loyalty to the state was made so close that rejection of the former would appear as disloyalty to the state. Third, the ecclesiastical oath was sustained by the state oath. This action of the Reichsbishop's synods has strengthened among many of the opposition clergy the determination for resistance even to martyrdom. This is very understandable in the light of church history. For that demand of an oath is reminiscent of the demand made upon the Christians of the early church to sacrifice to the emperor, in so far as it involves according recognition as a sacred power to the state. The early struggle was a tragic one: tragic because the existence of the Roman integration to the world seemed to hinge on the recognition of its sanctity. The almost unlimited toleration of the Roman state, which was far removed from totalitarian tendencies, became limited the moment it and its emperor myth were exposed to contradiction. The almost boundless loyalty of the early Christians to the Roman state came to an end when another myth which demanded subordination came to vie with the gospel of one God and His revelation on the cross. It is undoubtedly true that the contemporary situation has not reached the acute stage of the early church period. The destruction of the pagan myth by centuries of martyrdom in the Christian church is an irrevocable fact which is also an obstacle to the pagan tendencies of today. But there are possibilities which can lead to an analogous situation. The contradiction of principles is present and it must have its effect even if there is the desire to avoid the

struggle. It is inevitable as long as the state, on the basis of its determining myth, makes claim to an absolute and totalitarian character. Where the struggle is concerned with unconditioned and totalitarian principles, the separation of spheres is illusory. This is proved by the church struggle.

From the standpoint of the churches and their claim, the conflict can be solved only if the new myth is overthrown and with it the totalitarian idea. National feeling and state, authority and leadership can be affirmed only within limits which recognize the unconditioned character of the absolute or, religiously expressed, the godly character of God, who tolerates no other gods beside Him. Within these limits the church can and should affirm them and desires to do so. What is beyond these limits the church must reject. It cannot put itself and its gospel at the disposal of the totalitarian state as its determining myth. There is no identity of political and ecclesiastical activity in Christian countries whereby the state may lay claim to the unconditioned character of church gospel and be able to make it effective by means of its own force, such as power, organization and technological methods. The contrast between divine and human reality must always express itself by distinguishing between a church which, although not absolute itself, gives evidence of the absolute and a state which has the task of regulating the finite and social sphere, and which therefore has no right to a claim of absolute or totalitarian character.

## 7.

It is difficult to make any predictions regarding the outcome of the struggle. Perhaps the totalitarian system will be dissolved from within with the strengthening of the feudal capitalist tendencies and thus the churches will receive their necessary freedom of scope. Perhaps a church under the Reichsbishop will arise which will give free play to the new myth and which will be constructed on an authoritarian basis, more after the Catholic than the Protestant fashion, while the Protestant opposition will be organized into a free church. The

danger of such a free church will be, as it is already, that, in order to defend itself successfully, it will have to clothe itself in the mail coat of dogmatic orthodoxy. Even in this narrow form orthodox Protestantism, like Catholicism, which is socially pressed in another way, will break down the totalitarian system. The idea of the totalitarian state will founder upon the Christian church and gospel, which will destroy the new myth.

These circumstances are of fundamental significance, since the events in Germany are to be understood only through the world situation of late capitalism. The internally concentrated and authoritarian national state, which always seeks to encompass new fields of life, lies within the compass of the general world situation. Development has progressed farthest in Germany where the totalitarian state was conceived and to a great extent realized. But in Germany too it has found its limitations. Security and reintegration at the price of a myth which destroys the force of the Christian gospel is no reintegration but the deepest disintegration—in the individual, in the nation and among the nations. For it replaces the God, who alone is God, by many conflicting gods. It rends the individual consciousness and it tears apart both the nation and humanity. The twentieth century will go to its destruction if the myth of the twentieth century triumphs. The struggle of the churches for their own claims is at the same time a struggle for genuine foundations of real historical reintegration.

#### NOTES

1. The ideas of myth and mythology are used here, as in other instances, not in the sense of creations of the imagination but rather in the sense of real but conditional forces which have been elevated to the rank of absolute sanctity. The myth, therefore, possesses reality, but it also transcends reality in passing over into enthusiasm and mysticism.